Anti-Muslim Sentiment—Germany Takes Stock

2023
Foreword by the Federal Minister of the Interior

Muslims have been part of our society for many decades. Nevertheless, they are often attacked, marginalized, and excluded because of their faith. People who are perceived as Muslim also experience this.

Approximately 5.5 million people of Muslim faith live in Germany, the majority of whom are German nationals. So, when we talk about anti-Muslim or anti-Islam sentiment, we should always remember that this does not affect an abstract group, but specifically our colleagues, neighbors, schoolmates, and friends.

What exactly is anti-Muslim sentiment? How does anti-Muslim sentiment affect different areas of our lives and everyday life? And what can we do to counter anti-Muslim sentiment in Germany?

In recent years, the Independent Expert Group on Anti-Muslim Sentiment, working on behalf of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, has been addressing these and other questions—many of which have been seldom researched up to now. The final report by this group provides a first-ever comprehensive inventory of the phenomenon of anti-Muslim sentiment in Germany, its effects, and manifestations.

Ensuring that people can live safely in Germany is the highest maxim of government action. I have always clearly said that hatred and hatemongering must be prevented at all cost and that we must stand united against all forms of racism, extremism, and group-focused enmity.

We must be quick to stop exclusion and division, and we must stand up resolutely for the continuation of our free democratic coexistence.

I would therefore like to expressly thank the experts of the Expert Group on Anti-Muslim Sentiment for the concrete recommendations for action to better combat anti-Muslim sentiment in Germany. These recommendations are addressed to a variety of stakeholders in politics and administration, but also to non-government actors and society as a whole.

After all, the report also shows that it is up to us—each and every one of us—to open our eyes and to take action.

We need to seriously address the recommendations of this report and act decisively against anti-Muslim sentiment.

Nancy Faeser
Federal Minister of the Interior
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Summary

Equal participation: Mission and foundation of the democratic constitutional state

Equal participation of all people is the central mandate of the democratic constitutional state and a widely shared expectation in society and state institutions. Unprejudiced and respectful interaction in everyday life is equally important. This also applies to the Muslim population as one of the most pressured minorities in Germany. Working for equal rights for all is a task for society as a whole and may not be shifted onto those affected by disadvantage.

The legal and institutional mechanisms in place in Germany offer the potential to address the related needs in the wake of the growing plurality of society. However, there are many gaps when it comes to equality and equal treatment of Muslims. The legal system of the Federal Republic of Germany, for instance, is rooted in historical developments that were aligned with the circumstances and expectations of a society that was religiously rooted in Christianity. That’s why an extensive review is needed to identify whether and to what extent religious and ideological heterogeneity in the sense of equal participation has in fact already been implemented in the present time, and where there is still a need for action.

The state and society work closely together in shaping everyday coexistence, not only institutionally, but also in the self-image and expectations of the population. It is precisely here that problematic situations of anti-Muslim sentiment become evident, which begins long before the open, deliberate discrimination and attacks from the radical right-wing and right-wing populist spectrum of society and the party landscape. A wealth of representative research shows that anti-Muslim sentiment\(^1\) can be found in large parts of the population. Unconscious biases, misinformation, and generalized fears, but also structural discrimination, lead to a hostile division of society into an “us” and “them,” contrary to the rule of law. The “others” are ascribed with (supposedly) unchangeable and negative characteristics, which are first and foremost in contrast to the self-image of the “we” group. This “othering” (see subchapter \(\rightarrow 2.3\)) is a widespread phenomenon that affects not only Muslims but also other marginalized groups—as clearly demonstrated in the reports on anti-Semitism (Unabhängiger Expertenkreis Antisemitismus 2017) and anti-Romani sentiment (Unabhängige Kommission Antiziganismus 2021). In this respect, this report follows on from its predecessors in these two areas, highlighting parallels that can also be found in the first-ever situation report on racism in Germany (Rassismus in Deutschland) by the Federal Government Commissioner for Anti-Racism from January 2023 (see Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration/Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Antirassismus 2023). With a view to right-wing extremism, the clear ideological links that exist between anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Semitism become visible. Beyond this, a correlation at least can be seen between the two.

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\(^1\) Instead of “Islamophobia,” which is the more established English term for the phenomenon addressed, this report uses the term “anti-Muslim sentiment” for reasons given in chapter \(\rightarrow 2\).
Anti-Muslim sentiment: What is that?

What do we mean by the term “anti-Muslim sentiment”? This term initially refers to the socio-psychological dimension, i.e., prejudices against or the devaluation of Muslims. However, this only partially covers the existing problems. There are, for instance, forms of anti-Islam sentiment that are directed against Islam as a religion in general or based on misinformation and disinformation, and thus more indirectly against Muslims and those perceived as Muslim. Institutional and structural problems of (often unconscious) discrimination and devaluation also exist, which are described by the newly formulated term of anti-Muslim racism (AMR), which is not necessarily linked to an accusation of guilt. Such structural disadvantages are very evident, for instance, in access to the labor and housing market or in attacks on women wearing headscarves in public spaces, but also in institutional settings.

The working definition of the Independent Expert Group on Anti-Muslim Sentiment (Unabhängiger Expertenkreis Muslimfeindlichkeit, short: UEM) also includes the aforementioned structural dimensions:

Anti-Muslim sentiment (also: anti-Muslim racism) refers to the attribution of sweeping, largely unchangeable, backward, and threatening characteristics to Muslims and people perceived as Muslim. This consciously or unconsciously constructs a “foreignness” or even hostility. This leads to multi-layered social exclusion and discrimination processes, which take place discursively, individually, institutionally, or structurally, and may even result in the use of violence.

Like other forms of discrimination, anti-Muslim sentiment affects processes within society and the state as a whole. It is crucial that those who are not directly discriminated against also show solidarity. The essence of the rule of law lies in the protection of minority rights, sometimes contrary to majority opinion, as in the case of the impermissible restriction of the religious rights of minorities. This report therefore addresses all people and organizations in Germany, for instance, in the sense of political education that is necessary at all levels.

What is the purpose of this report?

Over a working period of two and a half years, the UEM identified and analyzed specific problem situations of anti-Muslim sentiment in important areas of politics, education, the media, culture, justice, administration, and everyday life and formulated recommendations for action. For capacity reasons, the work had to be restricted to examples as it was not possible to include all important topics and fields; those fields of investigation not yet addressed are named. In addition to taking stock of findings, one focus of the work was to conduct studies and hold hearings with relevant actors in order to shed light on areas that had not been sufficiently researched so far. The undisputed problems of extremism based on Islam as a religion are not the subject of the UEM’s work mandate but have been addressed elsewhere.
Summary of the findings from the different areas of action

The situation in society: Anti-Muslim sentiment widespread in large parts of the population

Based on data from scientifically convincing representative studies (study series), police crime statistics, and from documented cases of anti-Muslim sentiment collected by anti-discrimination agencies, counseling organizations, and other NGOs, it was possible to paint a first picture of the extent of anti-Muslim reservations and incidents as well as their manifestations and to identify gaps. The introduction of a separate category for recording “anti-Islamic crimes” in police crime statistics for politically motivated crime is an important milestone in the observation of anti-Muslim or anti-Islamic hate crime. However, some shortcomings are also still evident here.

Representative studies on the different manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiment are rare. Nevertheless, some renowned survey series deliver reliable data over a longer period of time which, when taken together, provide important indications of the extent and different facets of anti-Muslim attitudes in Germany. These survey series show that anti-Muslim sentiment is not a marginal phenomenon in society but is widespread in large parts of the German population, remaining at a consistently high level for many years—apart from slight fluctuations. Around every second person in Germany agrees with anti-Muslim statements. This leads to overlaps between various reservations and devaluations because Muslims are perceived not only as particularly “alien” immigrants but also as members of an allegedly “backward” religion. In the context of issues related to migration policy, Muslims are said to lack the ability to integrate, tend to consciously distance themselves, and avoid contact with people of other faiths. In the context of issues related to religion, Islam is generally linked with violence, extremism, and backwardness, and Muslims are accordingly assumed to have an affinity for violence, extremism, and patriarchal values. In this respect, Muslims (and people perceived as Muslim) are doubly affected by stigmatization. Particularly problematic is the equation of Muslim piety with fundamentalism, which goes hand in hand with a massive rejection of Muslim religious expression and even with a willingness to advocate restrictions on fundamental rights relating to religious freedom for Muslims and to deny them the right to equal participation. These reservations may arise from ignorance and may initially be an expression of skepticism, without automatically inferring conscious hostility. However, they provide a dangerous breeding ground and a gateway for anti-democratic groups that use anti-Muslim themes to appeal to the center of society. This breeding ground can take hold unhindered especially in regions where personal encounters with Muslims are rare and where there is thus no corrective to widespread reservations. According to data of the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, practical effects are particularly evident in experiences of discrimination on the labor market. The results of the quantitative studies reviewed also show that anti-Muslim sentiment is related to other forms of misanthropy, i.e., that people who display anti-Muslim attitudes, for instance, are also more likely to have anti-Semitic attitudes. Anti-Muslim sentiment in its anti-human dimension is thus to be understood as part of an anti-democratic ideology.

Muslim perspectives on anti-Muslim sentiment: Disparagement and hostility are part of everyday life for many Muslims and people perceived as Muslim

Anti-Muslim racism (AMR) is a social reality and a cross-cutting phenomenon. To understand it, the perspective of people affected by AMR is crucial. The UEM’s extensive research clearly shows that Muslims experience a generally high level and wide range of social discrimination. The experiences of discrimination differ depending on the
social standing of those affected. Younger people and people with a higher level of education tend to report experiences of discrimination more frequently, so that they appear to have a higher demand for social participation and a greater sensitivity to discrimination.

The most serious differences are to be found in the religiosity of the respondents. People who describe themselves as religious, are part of a Muslim organization, or wear clothing with religious connotations experience AMR the most. Women wearing headscarves in particular report very drastic forms of hostility. However, it also becomes clear that the phenotypical classification as a Muslim is already sufficient to experience AMR.

It is also clear that the persons interviewed see themselves exposed to gender-specific racist labeling. Muslim women describe how they are not perceived as self-determined. Men, on the other hand, tend to be labeled as aggressive and violent.

While gradual differences can be seen in the extent and intensity of the discrimination experienced—depending on social standing—it can be stated for almost all those affected that the experiences of devaluation and exclusion are not only singular events, but to varying degrees recurring and sometimes very stressful negative experiences.

Discrimination is mostly experienced in places of increased social interaction and participation. In addition to the public space, these are in particular the three key areas of education, the world of work, and the housing market. What's more, key discursive events, such as jihadist terrorist attacks, debates on refugee migration, or racist book publications, occur regularly and are very present in the media, leading to increased anti-Muslim, racist statements and greater hostility. The strategies for dealing with this are different, but those affected by it find it easier to process racist experiences if they can fall back on strengthening resources, such as social networks, social status, education, knowledge about racism, and positive self-esteem.

Since those affected have little knowledge of counseling and support services, they very rarely turn to professional services. Also, justiciable incidents, such as physical attacks, insults, or harassment, are rarely reported, so the number of anti-Muslim racist crimes is probably much higher than shown in police crime statistics.

Boys who ‘cause trouble’ and girls who ‘get married’²: Anti-Muslim sentiment in education as an individual and institutional phenomenon of violence

Muslim students and teachers in schools and universities experience many forms of anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Muslim racism in education. The focus on their Muslim identity references is generally disproportionate, often forming the largely culturalized interpretative framework for their behavior. In particular, challenging actions and behavior are attributed to “Islam” or “Muslim culture.” This complexity-reducing and culturalized view of Muslims also reveals gender-specific attributions and prejudices: Muslim girls are often seen as oppressed victims and boys as violent and misogynistic. The recurring identification and invocation of Muslims as (problematic) “others” have an exclusionary and disadvantaging effect on them. Being a Muslim is now considered to be an understandable pattern of justification for discriminating against Muslims, for instance, in performance evaluations or school recommendations. Tests of young people with an Arabic or

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² From Scharathow 2014: 255.
³ Philosopher Louis Althusser uses the term “invocation” to refer to the acts of identifying and thus of recognizing the self and the other, which produce subjects in the first place (see Althusser 1977).
Turkish name, for instance, are assessed more negatively rather than in relation to their ability.

In child and youth welfare, Muslim children and youths often face structural barriers and a lack of opportunities to participate. They are not explicitly reached by children’s and youth work, which means that they have fewer opportunities for political participation as possible, for instance, in the structures of youth association work carried out by Deutscher Bundesjugendring (German Federal Youth Council) and the federal-state youth councils.

Racist ideas about Muslims are also conveyed through educational materials. The analysis of nationwide curricula and textbooks shows that Islam is predominantly addressed in the context of conflict and that students are exposed to anti-Muslim positions and narratives. Furthermore, a security policy perspective on Muslims is becoming increasingly common in both school and out-of-school education. Prevention work against extremism and radicalization focuses primarily on Muslims, thus generating a stigmatizing effect. Muslims are additionally seen less as victims of Islamist violence but are identified in a discriminatory way primarily as potential perpetrators.

Anti-Muslim racism is only slowly being understood and addressed in education as a problem in societal coexistence. First specific training measures by civic education organizations can now be found, as well as sporadic mention in tenders for funding programs. Strangely enough, anti-Muslim sentiment is often ascribed to extremism and Islamism prevention instead of declaring it as an ideology of inequality in its own right. At the same time, attempts are increasingly seen in extracurricular educational programs to impart supposedly relevant knowledge about “the Muslims” or “Islam,” which further solidifies the idea of the fundamental and unchanging foreignness and otherness of Muslims. According to such logic, professionals need knowledge about “Islam” in order to be competent in dealing with a single Muslim individual. Overall, there is an urgent need for higher professional standards and more professional development and training on anti-Muslim racism for (prospective) teachers as well as other (educational) professionals.

Last but not least, one urgent question remains untouched, i.e., how to deal with religion and religiously motivated needs in education. Conflicts in schools and other places increasingly revolve around the question of how much religion an increasingly secular society can tolerate. This question is usually discussed in terms of Islam and the needs of Muslims. This is no coincidence, because the public discourse on religion (religious freedom), religious diversity, and secularity always (co)addresses the question of the role of Islam.

An abundance of bad press for Islam and Muslims

A representative study by the UEM showed that Islam and Muslims still appear in primarily negative contexts in major German media—in the local and national press as well as on television. Despite deviations in individual media, this conflict perspective is generally strong in newspapers and even extremely strong on television. While the media focus heavily on violence perpetrated by Muslims and debates about “integration” narrowed to religious factors, violence directed against Muslims as well as typically right-wing extremist violence are only marginal topics. The long-standing stereotypes of Islam (misogynistic, violent, fanatical) continue to be reproduced in today’s news media through selective topic setting. The range of topics lacks diversification which would incorporate more constructive aspects of the reality of Muslim life. Muslims still rarely appear as spokespersons and are objectified to a high degree.

The reasons for these distortions in the media image were identified during an anonymous hearing with leading German editors. Although there is certainly some potential and positive changes are
taking place in the German media, the reform backlog remains considerable. The problems here include limited awareness of anti-Muslim sentiment among editors-in-chief, the heavy influence of commercial interests, growing populist pressure on newsrooms, limited access to Muslim sources both in Germany and abroad, the strong position of controversial “Islam experts” as authors, still limited Muslim diversity in German newsrooms, and deficiencies in journalistic ethics and training.

Christian media also participate in one-sided media discourses on Islam to very different degrees. Accordingly, anti-Muslim racism can certainly be found here both in terms of topics and structures. Anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment as they occur within these media are not fundamentally different from existing anti-Muslim patterns. Balanced reports are definitely also found at times in the very media outlets that also publish biased or derogatory articles. Overall, however, the everyday lives of Muslims are not portrayed.

Despite certain gaps in research, the current state of research suggests that the widespread negative image of the media consolidates or even reinforces anti-Muslim attitudes in the population. The biased, negative image of Islam can lead to a loss of confidence among Muslims and promote right-wing extremist violence. In terms of language and content, anti-Muslim sentiment is even more drastic on the internet than in the mass media. The UEM initiated the largest data mining study to date on anti-Muslim sentiment in the German-language internet. This study warns of a strong tendency by large platforms, such as Twitter, 4Chan, Telegram, and Facebook, to characterize the religion of Islam and Muslims as generally violent, terrorist, intolerant, misogynist, and anti-Semitic, and to spread conspiracy ideas (for instance, about an impending population exchange). According to the report, German social media outlets form a “toxic discourse space” with racist speech acts that can promote pogrom-like violence, as happened in Hanau. The connection to low-threshold violence (against mosques, in everyday life) needs to be better investigated.

On a positive note, Instagram and YouTube comments in particular create a certain space for a Muslim counter-public, especially for young people. The focus here is not on religious issues, but on experiences with anti-Muslim sentiment and everyday issues. A growing reservoir of interlocutors for journalism is emerging that has yet to be fully utilized.

Anti-Muslim positions at the center of democracy? How anti-Muslim stereotypes are used in government, political parties, the Bundestag, and in courts

The German political system is based on the principles of liberal democracy, which demands the neutrality of the state and freedom from discrimination in the state sphere. In recent decades, the practice of the executive branch, however, has—with a view to Muslims—demonstrated a certain inconsistency in statements and actions by the political leadership as well as by the security, police, and other authorities. At the level of leading German political offices (German presidents, etc.), not only inclusive remarks, but also sweepingly exclusionary remarks are evident that implicitly do not classify Islam as “part of Germany,” but which must be discussed in the context of latent anti-Muslim sentiment.

With the establishment of the German Islam Conference in 2006, the German state took an important step toward the recognition of Islam and Muslims. However, this is countered by an excessive focus on Muslims as suspect cases and security risks rather than as victims of racism. This includes a lack of attention to right-wing extremist anti-Muslim sentiment in reports on the protection of the constitution and a lack of transparency in rules concerning the rejection of Muslims in the civil service. Contrary to the
public impression, robust studies on anti-Muslim sentiment in the police force are already available, indicating a high degree of susceptibility to anti-Muslim motives among the police. Furthermore, the identification, recording, and combating of anti-Muslim crimes by the police still need to be improved. As far as other German authorities are concerned, there has been little to no research on anti-Muslim sentiment.

For the legislature, it is true that political parties are legally entitled to a broader scope of opinion, but democracy as a whole must be defensively anti-racist. Following a comprehensive update of the state of research, the UEM concludes that the AfD is the only party in the German Bundestag with a manifestly anti-Muslim program. In the CDU/CSU and occasionally also in other parties, latent forms can be recognized through reduced recognition and a conflict image of Islam. However, all parties except the AfD now refer to the problem of anti-Muslim sentiment, although unclear formulations, program changes, and a lack of differentiation in the agenda are apparent. There is no clear commitment to improving the representation of Muslims, the largest minority in Germany, in political parties and offices.

In the Bundestag, even after the AfD’s entry, there has been no shift of discourse to the right and also—apart from a few exceptions—no contagion effect, but a clear anti-racist demarcation of the other parties vis-à-vis the AfD. Its presence, however, has led to a new polarization and a new speakability in parliament, where anti-Muslim positions are voiced by the AfD at the center of German democracy. Moreover, the strong focus on security in the Islam debate can be seen in other parties, while urgently needed reforms to counter structural racism (for instance, reforms of public authorities) are neither discussed nor decided.

According to its self-image, the judiciary cultivates a high professional ethos of neutrality and objectivity as inseparable elements of law. Deliberate violations of this ethos are very rare; as a rule, the applicable law is applied carefully and impartially. The potential for problems is primarily to be found in unconscious biases, negative generalizations, misattributions of non-religious problems, and misinformation or uncertainties with regard to Muslim issues. This is also shown by a first-time study on decision-making practices in the field of family law commissioned by the UEM. Social and religious-ideological diversity is still strongly underdeveloped, especially in the legal field. The far-reaching exclusion of Muslim women wearing headscarves based on insufficient factual determination is particularly harmful. Overall, legal training needs to be fundamentally supplemented and relevant professional development measures are required in order to provide better information and to raise awareness.

Only a topic when things get heated:
Germany’s Islam-related policy on religion

German constitutional law on religion has historically grown against the backdrop of a previously dominant Christian orientation. Today, this law is secular—albeit not laicist, but open to religion—and therefore fundamentally offers a good basis for equal participation, also in the public sphere. The core elements of constitutional law on religion are state neutrality and equal treatment of all religions and world views. This is reflected in a plethora of court decisions in favor of Muslim citizens. However, the actual implementation of constitutional law on religion in important areas, such as education, pastoral care, or financial support for social activities, does not yet sufficiently reflect the changed circumstances. In addition, preconceptions, especially with regard to dealing with religiously connoted clothing (headscarves), are felt in some areas that lead to restrictions on participation in public office that cannot be sufficiently justified on factual grounds. Furthermore, there is an evident need for outreach in large parts of the population regarding the importance of religious freedom as a fundamental right, also for
minorities. The public debate on the religiously based circumcision of boys sometimes showed clear signs of anti-Muslim sentiment as well as anti-Semitism. Furthermore, Germany still lacks legislation on individual and collective religious freedom for all citizens that is appropriate to today’s conditions as well as a coherent and systematic policy on religion that reflects social reality and the participation rights of all.

Partly due to this shortcoming, the topic of Islam is discussed in the Bundestag more in response to events than as a fundamental issue. The overview of the positions of the parties represented in the Bundestag with regard to issues related to Islamic policy illustrates the ad hoc nature of debates on fundamental questions related to the policy on religion in the ups and downs of daily political events. The interviews conducted with the political parties’ religio-political spokespersons further illustrate how insufficiently questions of Islam are addressed. With a view to all the individual questions concerning the topic of Islam in Germany and all democratic parties, a certain degree of skepticism comes to light combined with a—sometimes restricted—openness toward the concerns of Muslims. A clear willingness to recognize changing social conditions is also evident among all the parties—in part by naming certain conditions. This goes hand in hand with a constructive search for solutions to contentious issues and for sensible arrangements for cultural and religious diversity. The AfD parliamentary group is the only party to express markedly borderline racist, denigrating, and generalizing anti-Islam and anti-Muslim positions.

Interreligious dialogue in its many dimensions is well established in Germany, even if the playing field is not always level. This dialogue has been intensified and developed further, especially over the past two decades. In addition to interreligious initiatives and specialized academic institutions, it encompasses a variety of formats and levels of encounter and exchange. Islam is also increasingly being recognized and perceived as a domestic phenomenon. Islam-related policy on religion should therefore not be limited to integration policy or well-intentioned support programs to reproduce one-sided perceptions of Muslim believers. It is important to continue developing programs through which religious plurality can be recognized, religious diversity represented, and Muslim diversity in particular perceived.

**Terror, Islamization and Orientalization: A focus on the art and culture scene**

Anti-Muslim sentiment is a phenomenon that is also found in art and culture. A comprehensive analysis of the portrayal of Islam in German-language films, for instance, shows that almost 90 percent of the films examined have a negative thematic reference. The focus is on stories of terrorist attacks, radicalization, wars, and the oppression of women, thus narrowing the cinematic range of Islamic themes to a few conflict and crisis topics. A preponderance of problem-oriented film genres (drama, thriller, crime) and widespread use of visual stereotypes of Islam (women wearing headscarves as a cinematic reference to “ghettos”) contribute to the portrayal of Islam as threatening, repressive, and not-belonging. The diversity of Muslim lifestyles and stories remains largely invisible in German-language film productions. Instead of using the potential of fictional entertainment media to tell new and everyday stories and thus also to counter the conflict-oriented news agenda, the latter is rather perpetuated and solidified in cinema.

The presence of Islam-related themes on German theater stages suggests a similar problem. Even though research here is extremely patchy, the UEM was able to obtain initial indications of focal points in terms of content by means of a relevant expert report. The “Islamization” narrative, for instance, has been taken up in various theater productions, where culturalist stereotypes have been perpetuated instead of adopting a fact-oriented
criticism of Islam. Observers of this field have
for some time also criticized the lacking visible-
ity of Islam. Theater practitioners with Muslim
identity references are also still a rarity both on
and off stage. On the other hand, the emergence
of post-migrant theater and productions that
are decidedly critical of racism and oriented to-
ward diversity, most of which are rooted in the
independent theater scene, are having a lasting
positive effect. These developments are helping
to make Muslim theater practitioners, or those
perceived as Muslim, and positive themes of Islam
more present on German stages.

When it comes to museums, the experts invited
to a hearing described challenges both in terms of
content and structure. Developments in museum
history, for instance, contribute to the fact that
Islam is still predominantly presented today as
distant, foreign, and “limited in terms of cultural
space.” Present-day representations are also often
dominated by (well-meaning) clichés and ste-
reotypes. Although various innovative projects
highlight the commonalities and interrelations
between Islam and the “Western” world, there
still seems to be plenty of room for positive—and
above all structurally sustainable—developments
in the museum sector. One factor is the lack of
staff with specialist expertise in Islam combined
with a personnel policy that is not generally ori-
ented toward diversity. Moreover, artists who are
perceived as Muslim are frequently culturalized
and thus pinned down to “Islamic art.” Overall,
there is also a need for greater willingness to
critically examine one’s own (often stereotypical)
ideas of Islam and to transport this into the mu-
seum space.
Key recommendations for action

The following recommendations for action are designed to support the urgently needed consistent fight against anti-Muslim sentiment (or anti-Muslim racism) at all levels of government and society. It goes without saying that these recommendations are primarily related to necessary improvements. It should not be overlooked that many effective measures have already been taken, which are also named in this report. But much remains to be done. The following recommendations for action also partly concern other groups of society and overarching problems (for instance, anti-Semitism, classism). However, in accordance with purpose of this report, the recommendations largely refer to combating anti-Muslim sentiment.

Recommendations

The Independent Expert Group on Anti-Muslim Sentiment recommends:

1. That the state comprehensively guarantee the protection of Muslims in all public spaces.

2. That anti-Muslim sentiment be considered more in tandem with racism: Anti-Muslim sentiment does not result solely from reservations about Islam, but also feeds on racist motives. We therefore recommend the socio-political application of the concept of anti-Muslim sentiment in the sense of the definition elaborated by the UEM, which includes an anti-racist perspective. This aspect should be taken more into account, for instance, in official support measures.

3. The establishment of a broad-based expert council and the appointment of a federal commissioner for combating anti-Muslim sentiment. The council of experts would have the task of cooperating with and advising the federal commissioner and informing the public independently and regularly.

4. A Federal Government strategy for the sustainable development and promotion of equal participation and representation of persons with Muslim identity references in all government institutions and action structures. The state should assume a role model function and live up to this with binding targets, PR work, and targeted campaigns.

5. The establishment of anti-racist training, sensitive to both diversity and religion, for various professional groups and in all state institutions (for instance, schools, day-care centers, security agencies, municipal administrations, media houses, cultural institutions, in the justice (correctional) system, and in the healthcare system), in order to raise awareness especially of anti-Muslim sentiment and institutional forms of racism. This should become a compulsory part of training for future civil servants.
6. The establishment and expansion of centers for complaints, reporting, and documentation, and of anti-discrimination and counseling centers with expertise on anti-Muslim sentiment as well as the corresponding qualification of their employees. Especially at schools, there is a great need.

7. The promotion and sustainable expansion of empowerment measures for those affected by (multiple) discrimination against Muslims through corresponding federal and federal-state programs.

8. That the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs revise the curricula and textbooks across all subjects in order to remove anti-Muslim content contained there and to ensure a critical examination of anti-Muslim positions and narratives. For this purpose, suitable guidelines should be developed within the framework of the Federal Government/federal-state commission that create a binding effect at the federal-state level when dealing with anti-Muslim sentiment in the school context.

9. The expansion and consolidation of the fight against anti-Muslim sentiment as an independent thematic area of political education and its funding practice, for instance, via the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), the Federal Agency for Civic Education, and the federal-state centers for political education.

10. The equal participation of Muslim actors and organizations in state funding at the federal, federal-state and local levels, especially in cultural and social spheres (for instance, youth and welfare associations, care, sponsorship of educational institutions, study institutions, academies).

11. The initiation and promotion of anti-racist studies on anti-Muslim sentiment as well as the promotion of application-oriented basic research and practice-accompanying research on measures against anti-Muslim sentiment, for instance, through corresponding funding guidelines of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

12. Diversification of the still one-sided, conflict-oriented reporting on Islam and Muslims in many media, including a stronger consideration of lifeworld issues. This especially means raising awareness of the issue of anti-Muslim sentiment among media company executives.

13. A more consistent approach against anti-Muslim crimes on the internet (for instance, hate speech), among other things by adapting the Network Enforcement Act (Netzwerkdurchsetzungsgesetz) and expanding official structures for criminal prosecution.

14. Better anchoring of the issue of anti-Muslim sentiment in journalistic self-regulation, also by mentioning anti-Muslim sentiment in the Press Code of the German Press Council (section 12), and improved Muslim representation in public broadcasting bodies.
15. The sustainable promotion of film and theater productions that address the diversity of Muslim lifeworlds and thus make them visible in the public sphere. For the museum sector, the UEM also recommends targeted opening processes to represent Islam and Muslim life and so avoid widespread stereotypes in art and cultural exhibitions related to Islam.

16. Improved media literacy training related to anti-Muslim sentiment for schools as well as part of extracurricular education.

17. The improvement and expansion of anti-discrimination law at the federal and federal-state levels and its implementation, such as adequate (proactive) precautions against discrimination, documentation of the legal consequences of laws with a view to their discriminatory effect, and the right of associations to class-action lawsuits.

18. Initiating and expanding systematic documentation of anti-Muslim attitudes and practices among the police, security agencies, and other authorities (for instance, in relation to “racial profiling”). Anti-Muslim acts should also be explicitly reported in federal and federal-state statistics and in reports on the protection of the constitution.

19. A supplementary new version of section 5a (3) of the German Judiciary Act (Deutsches Richtergesetz) in the training of judges: “The teaching of compulsory subjects also includes a critical analysis of the injustices of the National Socialist regime and of the Communist dictatorship in Germany as well as of anti-Semitism, anti-Romani sentiment, anti-Muslim sentiment, and other forms of group-focused enmity.”

20. That all political parties develop strategies to combat anti-Muslim sentiment, that they make it the subject of parliamentary debates and bills, and that they work for more representation of Muslim politicians.
1 Anti-Muslim sentiment: A visible (invisible) and real problem for everyone!

Equal participation of all people is the central mandate of the democratic constitutional state and a widely shared expectation in society and state institutions. Non-discriminatory and respectful interaction in everyday life is equally important. This also applies to the Muslim population as one of the most pressured minorities in Germany. Working for equal rights for all is a task for society as a whole and may not be shifted onto those affected by disadvantage.

The legal and institutional mechanisms in place in Germany offer the potential to address the related needs in the wake of the growing plurality of society. However, there are many gaps when it comes to equality and equal treatment of Muslims. The legal system of the Federal Republic of Germany, for instance, is rooted in historical developments that were aligned with the circumstances and expectations of a society in Germany that was religiously rooted in Christianity. That’s why an extensive review is needed to identify whether and to what extent religious and ideological heterogeneity in the sense of equal participation has in fact already been implemented in the present time, and where there is still a need for action.

The state and society work closely together in shaping everyday coexistence, not only institutionally, but also in the self-image and expectations of the population. It is precisely here that problematic situations of anti-Muslim sentiment become evident, which begins long before open, deliberate discrimination and attacks from the radical right-wing and right-wing populist spectrum of society and the party landscape. A wealth of representative research shows that anti-Muslim sentiment can be found in large parts of the population. Unconscious biases, misinformation, and generalized fears, but also structural discrimination, lead to a hostile division of society into an “us” and “them,” contrary to the rule of law. The “others” are ascribed with (supposedly) unchangeable and negative characteristics, which are first and foremost in contrast to the self-image of the “we” group. This “othering” (see subchapter ↗ 2.3) is a widespread phenomenon and affects not only Muslims but also other marginalized groups—as clearly demonstrated in the reports on anti-Semitism (Unabhängiger Expertenkreis Antisemitismus 2017) and anti-Romani sentiment (Unabhängige Kommission Antiziganismus 2021). In this respect, this report follows on from its predecessors in these two areas, highlighting parallels that can also be found in the first-ever situation report on racism in Germany (Rassismus in Deutschland) by the Federal Government Commissioner for Anti-Racism from January 2023 (see Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration/Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Antirassismus 2023). With a view to right-wing extremism, the clear ideological links that exist between anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Semitism become visible. Beyond this, a correlation at least can be seen between the two.

Over a working period of two and a half years, the UEM identified and analyzed specific problem situations of anti-Muslim sentiment in important areas of politics, education, the media, culture, justice, administration, and everyday life and formulated recommendations for action. For capacity reasons, the work had to be restricted to examples as it was not possible to include all important topics and fields; those fields of investigation not

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4 Instead of “Islamophobia,” which is the more established English term for the phenomenon addressed, this report uses the term “anti-Muslim sentiment” for reasons given in chapter ↗ 2.
yet addressed are named. In addition to taking stock of findings, one focus of the work was to conduct studies and hold hearings with relevant actors in order to shed light on areas that had not been sufficiently researched so far. The undisputed problems of extremism based on Islam as a religion are not the subject of the UEM’s work mandate but have been addressed elsewhere.

Figure 1.1: Impact model anti-Muslim sentiment: social mechanisms and impacts

1.1 Members of the Independent Expert Group on Anti-Muslim Sentiment

The Federal Ministry of the Interior convened the Independent Expert Group on Anti-Muslim Sentiment in September 2020 following the racially motivated attacks in Hanau on February 19, 2020. This group was staffed by academics and actors from civil society organizations who deal with forms of expression, modes of action, and the fight against anti-Muslim sentiment.

Karima Benbrahim, Information and Documentation Center for Anti-Racism Work in North Rhine-Westphalia (IDA-NRW)

Saba-Nur Cheema, Goethe University Frankfurt am Main/Bildungsstätte Anne Frank (Education Centre Anne Frank)

Dr. Yasemin El-Menouar, Bertelsmann Stiftung

Prof. Dr. Karim Fereidooni, Ruhr-Universität Bochum

Prof. Dr. Kai Hafez, University of Erfurt
Özcan Karadeniz, Association of Binational Families and Couples
Prof. Dr. Anja Middelbeck-Varwick, Goethe University Frankfurt am Main
Prof. Dr. Mathias Rohe, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität (FAU) Erlangen-Nürnberg
Prof. Dr. Christine Schirrmacher, University of Bonn and Evangelische Theologische Faculteit (ETF), Leuven

The members Prof. Dr. Iman Attia and Dr. Yasemin Shooman resigned for health and professional reasons. Nina Mühe passed away; her early death came as a great shock to the members of the UEM. She is greatly remembered for her services.

The representation and coordination of the expert group were entrusted to Prof. Dr. Mathias Rohe with Karima Benbrahim as deputy and based at the Erlanger Zentrum für Islam und Recht in Europa (Erlangen Centre for Islam and Law in Europe) (EZIRE) of the Friedrich Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg. The coordination office was staffed by Nevruz Karadas, Dr. Sabrina Schmidt, and Kirsten Wünsche.

1.1.1 Aims of the Independent Expert Group on Anti-Muslim Sentiment

Almost every confrontation with anti-Muslim sentiment begins with irritation about how to name the problem: Is Islamophobia, anti-Islam sentiment or anti-Muslim racism the “right” term? Therefore, the UEM addressed the phenomenon of anti-Muslim sentiment in a fundamental way. It thus set itself the goal of making it possible to describe the open and subtle manifestations and effects of a phenomenon that has received little attention to date and has also hardly been researched. The aim was also to show why anti-Muslim sentiment should be understood as a problem for society as a whole—and not just a problem for the people affected by it. In addition to this information and knowledge about anti-Muslim sentiment in Germany, this report is intended as a contribution to (policy) consultations and will ideally serve at both the political and administrative levels as a guide when it comes to shaping issues and making decisions.

1.1.2 The work of the Independent Expert Group on Anti-Muslim Sentiment

The work of the UEM began in September 2020 and ended on June 30, 2023, six months later than planned due to the pandemic. In total, around 90 plenary sessions, working groups, and roundtable discussions with experts took place during this period.

The UEM was made up of people from different scientific disciplines and civil society contexts, testifying to a desirable plurality. This, of course, became evident in the work process: Since research into and the naming of the phenomenon of anti-Muslim sentiment are quite new, the approaches and analytical methods are in part very different. For instance, different preferences and definitions exist when it comes to the terminology used for certain phenomena. Although this report achieves a certain degree of linguistic standardization, plural authorship has certainly found its expression here. The contents of the report were adopted by consensus despite such differences of emphasis.
2 Anti-Muslim sentiment: Terminology

Up to now, there is no one agreed definition for anti-Muslim sentiment. This report therefore begins by clarifying the terms used in conjunction with this phenomenon and the concepts of anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Muslim racism mainly used in academic discourse today. Different theoretical emphasis is placed on what can generally be understood as discrimination against Muslims and persons perceived as Muslims, depending on the term and the concept behind it. What’s more, the concepts have developed in different ways over time. For the present report, this diversity of concepts constitutes an advantage since it is precisely this diversity that allows the phenomenon of anti-Muslim sentiment to become visible in all its complexity, social relevance, and scope.

The report is preceded by a working definition that takes up and connects the different concepts. It describes the diverse manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiment, locates them in their social contexts, and highlights their historical development. It also forms the basis for the recommendations for action formulated at the beginning of the report. The definition is followed by a detailed presentation of the core concepts of anti-Islam sentiment and anti-Muslim racism, which are critically discussed with a view to their merits and limitations. They are complemented by the terms stereotypes of Islam and image of Islam as the enemy, which describe processes of xenophobia and disparagement at the microlevel of social discourse. This chapter aims to explain the concept underlying this report without claiming universal validity. The members of the UEM use to some extent different terms and concepts in their own work and publications—above all anti-Muslim racism and anti-Muslim sentiment. The present report sees both of these concepts as being of equal value and uses them in part synonymously. We will use the term anti-Muslim sentiment in this report, for which we have developed a synthesized definition.

2.1 Working definition: Anti-Muslim sentiment

Prejudice research understands anti-Muslim sentiment as an individual attitude toward Muslims and all people who are perceived as Muslims. In our understanding, however, anti-Muslim sentiment also includes structural manifestations that express themselves in public discourse, social structures, and practices that lead to exclusions and disadvantages. Muslims are made into social others by attributing negative characteristics to them. They are often considered backward, dangerous, oppressed by their religion, or difficult to integrate. These foreign attributions declare Muslims to be either culturally, religiously, or nationally non-members. This is where processes of racialization and dichotomization take effect, causing seemingly opposing groups to be constructed and hierarchically positioned in relation to each other in a logic of we/they distinction. These processes have a stigmatizing effect and are closely interconnected with practical exclusion mechanisms. In its concrete manifestations, anti-Muslim sentiment is located at different levels of society and in different forms.
It is the aim of the present report to formulate suitable recommendations for action to reduce or prevent anti-Muslim sentiment based on empirically sound analyses. These recommendations are formulated both from a perspective that is critical of racism\(^5\) and against the backdrop of a specific idea of society based on the principles of plurality, recognition, participation, equal opportunities, and social justice.

The UEM defines anti-Muslim sentiment as follows:

Anti-Muslim sentiment (also: anti-Muslim racism) refers to the attribution of sweeping, largely unchangeable, backward, and threatening characteristics to Muslims and people perceived as Muslim. This consciously or unconsciously constructs a “foreignness” or even hostility. This leads to multi-layered social exclusion and discrimination processes, which take place discursively, individually, institutionally, or structurally, and may even result in the use of violence.

2.2 Discussion on the terminology of the core concepts

For years, various surveys have shown a consistently high level of rejection of Muslims and the religion of Islam among the majority population in Germany. The “Leipziger Autoritarismus-Studie” from 2020, for instance, shows that anti-Muslim sentiment is strong in both western and eastern Germany. Fifty-five percent of respondents in eastern Germany say they feel “like a stranger in their own country because of the many Muslims [... ]” (Decker et al. 2020: 64). However, more than 45 percent, i.e., almost half of the respondents in western Germany, stated likewise (ibid.). According to the Friedrich Ebert Foundation’s “Mitte-Studien,” which were conducted between 2002 and 2019, approximately 20 to 30 percent of respondents had anti-Muslim attitudes (see Zick/Berghan/Mokros 2019: 83). This was confirmed in the “Bertelsmann Religionsmonitor” from 2019 which found that 52 percent of German non-Muslims perceive Islam as threatening and only 36 percent see it as an enrichment (see Pickel 2019: 3). A comparison with other religions also shows that Christianity, Judaism, and Buddhism are seen in a much more positive light by society (see Pollack/Müller 2013: 37).

It must be noted that reservations about Islam and Muslims exist among a considerable part of German society. Various explanatory approaches have been established in scientific discourse to describe and explain this phenomenon. The English term “islamophobia” is used internationally and was established by the British think tank Runnymede Trust (see 1997). However, this term was quickly criticized for, among other things, falsely suggesting that anti-Muslim attitudes are “exaggerated feelings of fear and not consequential resentments” (Pfahl-Traughber 2019). In the

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5 A perspective that is critical of racism understands racism as a social phenomenon that is anchored in all areas of society. Racism is not understood as a problem of individuals, but as a social order that in turn influences actions, perceptions, and opportunities for participation, including social relations. Existing social contexts are examined to identify power relations and the distribution of privileges and discrimination structures (see Mecheril/Melter 2009: 13–22).
German context, on the other hand, the term “Islamfeindlichkeit” (anti-Islam sentiment) soon became established.

### 2.2.1 Anti-Islam sentiment: A focus on subjective attitudes

The term *anti-Islam sentiment* is rooted in the long-standing tradition of empirical research into enemy images and stereotypes, a discipline that is anchored in social psychology (see Zick 1997). The advantage of this term is that it can be used to precisely identify subjective and social causal factors for anti-Muslim attitudes and thus formulate recommendations for action for educational and social practice based on precise figures.

Even though studies on the prevalence of anti-Islamic attitudes are now regularly published, groundbreaking explanatory approaches and survey instruments are primarily to be found in the long-term study “Deutsche Zustände” (2002–2011) (see Heitmeyer 2015). This study focuses on the concept of *group-focused enmity (GFE)*, according to which various forms of disparagement of vulnerable groups in society (including Muslims) condense into a coherent syndrome, with an “ideology of inequality” at its core. It expresses the general conviction that those groups are worth less than the group to which one assigns oneself (see Zick et al. 2008: 366–367). According to Zick and colleagues, GFE is neither a marginal social phenomenon nor an isolated opinion. Rather, it reflects “a broad, collectively, and widely shared pattern of opinion” that is “not an individual disposition in the sense of a character trait [but] an expression of the disparagement of groups by groups” (Zick/Hövermann/Krause 2015: 65). Anti-Islam sentiment—in more recent editions referred to as anti-Muslim sentiment—represents one of the many forms of disparagement in GFE.

If we now look at the concrete definition of that term, we see that the concept was expanded over the course of the long-term study: While anti-Islam sentiment initially focused strongly on the individual, encompassing the attitudinal components of cognitive disparagement, affective rejection, and distanced behavioral intention (see Leibold/Kühnel 2003: 201), more recent definitions also take social effects into account. Thus, according to Küpper, anti-Islamic prejudices created “a sense of belonging and social identity for a majority society that defines itself less and less in religious categories” and also legitimized inequalities that “favor [this majority society] in almost all important areas of life” (2010: 212). The spectrum of anti-Islam sentiment is made up of various aspects. These include

> “religious justifications of inequality (generalized suspicion of Sharia), secular justifications (cultural fit), racist justifications (character, appearance), or political justifications (terror assumption)” (Zick 2012: 36).

In the GFE model, anti-Islam sentiment is operationalized as an attitudinal phenomenon with institutional, structural, and discursive manifestations in the backdrop. The study uses statistical methods to examine the possible causes of anti-Islamic attitudes. Based on the fact that not all people in a non-Muslim majority society are equally anti-Islam in terms of type and extent, the factors age, education, and religious affiliation could be identified as relevant explanatory variables. Older people, people with a low level of education, and those who identify strongly with the Christian faith, for instance, show significantly higher levels of hostility (see Zick 2012: 42). The same applies to certain socially shared dispositions, such as a high degree of identification with the nation, a tendency to authoritarian thinking, social dominance orientations, and a belief in cultural homogeneity—all of these factors are particularly pronounced among people who live in environments where feelings of threat and helplessness are widespread (“downwardly drift-
Summing up, the advantage of the term anti-Islam sentiment is that it focuses on individual attitudes that can be scientifically determined by means of established question items and statistical methods. Moreover, the term brings with it a number of explanatory approaches that shed light on the individual and social causes of anti-Islam sentiment. Even if the instruments of standardized attitudinal research do not allow latent, discursive, as well as “positive” forms of anti-Muslim sentiment, such as exoticism or paternalism, to be captured in their entirety, the concept of anti-Islam sentiment is very suitable for identifying openly racist and culturalist attitudes throughout the population.

2.2.2 Stereotypes of Islam and the image of Islam as the enemy: Focus on the micro-structures of anti-Islamic discourses

Research on enemy image and discourse, which primarily examines texts, can provide insights into the quality of publicly circulating images of Islam. These are central to the question of the emergence of anti-Muslim attitudes and their social contexts. In modern societies, these images of Islam are conveyed mainly through the media. In order to analyze them, relevant works in media and communication studies resort to the basic terms of stereotype and enemy image (see, for instance, K. Hafez 2002a; 2002b). While stereotypes are socially shared blanket judgments that can also carry positive connotations (for instance, Orientalist exoticization, such as belly dancing), enemy images are always negatively charged. They construct antagonisms by organizing complex social relations into a simple “friend-foe” scheme (see Kleinsteuber 2003: 208). In doing so, they function as a “specific form of social prejudice” (Nicklas 1977: 90), because in addition to generalizing attributions they also contain emotional elements and additionally suggest hostile intentions to act. In other words, enemy images rhetorically position themselves—social threat scenarios unfold within them. Enemy images call for a response to those threats with appropriate defensive measures.

Stereotypes of Islam and the image of Islam as the enemy are by no means phenomena of recent contemporary history. Even though the social perception of Islam clearly deteriorated in the aftermath of the Islamist terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (see Foroutan 2012), historical analyses show that anti-Muslim symbolism has existed for centuries (see below). Stereotypes of Islam have persisted as elements of anti-Muslim discourses—alternatively referred to as racist social knowledge.9 They are handed down through modern media, pop cultural expressions, and other channels of socialization (education, family), and are firmly anchored in cultural memory. Despite their essentializing basic structure, they are subject to contemporary fluctuations (see above), which often go hand in hand with major changes

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6 “Crisis region” refers to a living environment which the people living there perceive as precarious and particularly vulnerable to economic crises, for instance (see Zick et al. 2012: 43).

7 Exoticizing images of the “Orient” go hand in hand with a fascination for its supposed “foreignness and otherness,” whereby “one’s own fantasies and desires are projected onto these images.” In Orientalist discourses, for instance, the veil becomes a “symbol of eroticism and free sexuality” (Attia 2009: 99–100). According to Bühl, Orientalization “represents a variant of exoticization and uses the Orient as a kind of mirror of the Western colonial gaze, which in this way assures itself of its supposed superiority” (2017: 167).

8 Culturalist manifestations of anti-Islamic attitudes were surveyed in the long-term study “Deutsche Zustände,” which uses the GFE concept, among other things, via the items of “Muslim culture definitely fits into our Western world” (rejection) and “Islamic and Western European values can be reconciled” (rejection) (Leibold et al. 2015: 184).

9 Here, Dröge 1967 speaks of culturally enduring, culturally epochal images.
in social discourse. The opening up of citizenship law, for instance, which allowed migrants to acquire German citizenship, created a “new foreign category” (Bitzl & Kurze: 2021: 477), which now brought Muslims into focus.\textsuperscript{10}

Moreover, we are dealing with mirror image complexes in the case of stereotypes of Islam and the image of Islam as the enemy\textsuperscript{11} whereby all those attributes are outsourced to “the others” with whom one cannot or does not want to identify oneself. While stereotypes are again aimed at generalizing statements about Muslims and those perceived as Muslims, enemy images aim to create acute threat scenarios. These are expressed, for instance, in widespread narratives of “Muslim parallel societies,” “Islamization,” and “cultural alienation.”

Stereotypes and enemy images can also be distinguished according to how directly they are formulated. Enemy images are manifest, for instance, when Muslims are explicitly rejected and disparaged (for instance, when a lack of cultural fit is asserted). However, such openly racist rhetoric is hardly compatible with the liberal self-image of Western societies. For some time now, a change in public discourse toward latent and subliminal racist stereotypes has been observed. In the media’s coverage of Islam, these stereotypes can be found in problem interpretations (frames) and a predominantly conflict-oriented range of topics. As a result, the media discourse on Islam is predominantly one-sided and negative. So-called discursive hegemonies emerge, i.e., dominant perspectives on Islam that favor a negative perception of the religion and of Muslim people.

In summary, the use of the terms “stereotypes of Islam” and the “image of Islam as the enemy” makes it possible to specifically identify the textual and visual discourse elements of media or public discussions about Islam. In the context of the working definition of anti-Muslim sentiment, they are seen as elementary building blocks of anti-Muslim discourses. However, since these two terms—just like the term anti-Islam sentiment—are unable to explain structural and institutional forms of anti-Muslim sentiment, the theory of anti-Muslim racism is used for this area.

\textbf{2.3 Anti-Muslim racism: Focus on institutional and structural exclusions}

\textbf{Preliminary remark on the term racism}

The term \textit{racism} has many meanings, so it first needs to be classified. Its historical origins date back to ideologies and practices that hierarchically divided people into alleged “human races” based on biological characteristics. In the era of European colonialism and imperialism, this was used to justify exploitation, slavery, assimilation policies, and genocides, etc. The crimes committed under National Socialism or during state apartheid in South Africa were also based on racist ideas.

For many years, racism in Germany was mainly equated with such crimes. While the scientific meaning of the term has shifted in recent decades toward cultural dimensions as a central component of racist exclusion mechanisms, for large parts of the population it continues to evoke associations with right-wing extremist acts of violence. The use of the term and the thematization of racism therefore recurrently trigger outrage and firm rejection. In most cases, it is assumed

\textsuperscript{10} In this context, Spielhaus speaks of “a redefinition of the national self-image in distinction to the religious minority of Muslims” (2013: 171).
\textsuperscript{11} K. Hafez 2002b demonstrates the communicative construction of different enemy image types in the field of foreign reporting. In addition to cultural images of the enemy, there are also anthropological images of the enemy, the latter being a racialization of Muslim people in the classical biologistic sense.
that there must be a deliberate act or a reprehensible or even malicious attitude.

Racism research, however, now understands racism as a social relationship in our society that is characterized by power: a social “process of constructing meanings” (Miles 1989: 9) which serves to legitimize exclusionary practices by certain groups of society. Under the social conditions of different opportunities and resources, processes of racialization take place (defining supposedly natural groups and their nature, see subchapter 2.1). These provide justifications for the disadvantaged living conditions of the racialized group and thus make them appear legitimate.

Such social processes, in which “others” are first socially produced and then a distinction is made between “us” and the “others,” have the purpose of “producing identity and securing identifications” (Hall 1989: 919; see also Rommelspacher 1995). However, they are not to be equated with a popular understanding of racism as intentional, targeted, direct racist violence. Rather, it refers to a system of socially produced “racist knowledge” in which we are involved at various levels. According to Terkessidis, this system produces an “apparatus” in which discriminatory practice and bodies of knowledge mutually support each other (see 2004: 100–109).

**Anti-Muslim racism**

The concept of anti-Muslim racism (AMR) is now one of the most authoritative approaches to the study of anti-Muslim sentiment. Looking at the relevant definitions, AMR is a specific form of neo-or cultural racism, which is characterized by the fact that it is no longer the existence of different “human races” and their supposed differences in civilizational values that are asserted, but rather the “irreversibility” (Balibar 1992: 28) of cultural differences. The focus is no longer on biological factors, but on “culture and its determinant effect on the individual” (Scherschel 2006: 42).

According to Attia, AMR consists of the components essentialization and dominance, whereby the former describes several sub-processes, i.e., the homogenization of individuals into groups (“the” Muslims), their polarization and demarcation from their own (“we” vs. “the others”), as well as the naturalization or culturalization of social relations while largely ignoring in the process their historical, political, and social references (see 2013: 7–8).

If such essentializations take place in the context of social power relations in which the privileges of some are legitimized and the disadvantages of others are concealed, racism appears as a comprehensive social relationship. With it comes what Rommelspacher refers to as a dominance culture—a social structure in which “our entire way of life, our self-interpretations, as well as the images we create of the other are framed in categories of superiority and subordination” (1995: 22).

The concept of othering (see Said 1979) also makes it possible to understand that anti-Muslim images of others always reflect inverted self-perceptions. Castro Varela and Dhawan speak here of a “complex process of making other or different which functions through a dualistic logic, at the end of which ‘the others’ stand vis-à-vis the ‘occidental self’” (2007: 31).

As an analysis concept, AMR is now characterized by three advantages in particular: First, it understands anti-Muslim discrimination as a multidimensional and intersectional phenomenon. Accordingly, manifestations of anti-Muslim discrimination can be identified and analyzed on an individual, discursive, institutional, and structural level (see Attia 2013: 6). In this context, subjective patterns of attitudes, media representations of Islam, discriminatory routines of action in institutions, as well as socially anchored power dynamics not only appear as individual phenomena, they rather form a web of intersectional relations and mutual reinforcements that only become visible in a racism-theoretical perspective. For racism theorists, AMR can therefore only be
understood as a complex in which racializing knowledge elements—such as ideas of Muslims as representatives of a completely different culture—and exclusionary practices—such as the discrimination of Muslims in the labor market—are inseparably linked (see Terkessidis 2004: 100–101). For the present report, the concept makes it possible to localize the conditions under which anti-Muslim sentiment emerges not just within individual subjects, population groups, or social subsystems (for instance, in media discourses), but to discuss these conditions in their specific social contexts, their dependencies, and historical traditions. Ultimately, the dominance component represents the decisive commonality with other forms of unequal treatment (sexism, classism, heteronormativity, etc.), whose discursive and practical interconnections with anti-Muslim sentiment can also identified with the help of the AMR concept (for instance, in the case of sexually racist attributions to Muslim women).

Secondly, the concept raises awareness of how language shapes reality and the discrepancies that can arise between designations and empirical facts. For years, researchers have stressed that racisms are based on communicative construction processes—whereby the group of Muslims as a uniform collective was first created through linguistic attributions and objectifying knowledge productions (see Said 1979). In concrete terms, this can be seen in the fact that not only practicing Muslims are affected by anti-Muslim attributions, but also people who are marked as Muslim because of their migration experiences (see Shooman 2014). Shooman attributes this to an “ethnicization” of the category Muslim, which is often used synonymously with terms of origin, such as Turkish and Arab. In this case, “the Muslim identity” (ibid.: 65) becomes a classification feature that is attributed to Muslims and people who are considered to be Muslim based on their outward appearance. Moreover, in both private and public discourse about “Islam,” there is sometimes a disproportionate focus on Muslim identity or contextual references—aptly referred to as the “Muslimization of Muslims” (Amirpur 2011: 197)—pushing other personality traits into the backdrop. Since one of the central tasks of the present report is to track down anti-Muslim attributions within different social debate spaces, the concept of AMR also offers suitable heuristic access for this purpose. The fact that in a racism-theoretical perspective the focus is on the bodies of knowledge and the practices of their enforcement—and not on the question of motives and intentions—offers an additional possibility to make latent, everyday, and unconsciously reproduced forms of anti-Muslim sentiment (in the media, everyday conversations, political discourses, etc.) accessible for analysis.

Thirdly, the concept of AMR also allows for comparative analytical perspectives, for instance, on the question of how anti-Muslim imaginaries and images have developed historically or which traditional symbols are used today in discourses in the media, politics, and the public sphere. This is based on the epistemological insight that currently circulating anti-Muslim bodies of knowledge do not merely reflect real political conflict situations but are part of a historically evolved cultural memory. Various historical, literary, and cultural studies confirm the persistence of anti-Muslim symbolism (see, for instance, Said 1979; Attia 2009; Naumann 2010; Höfert 2010), even if there is indeed evidence of ambivalences and discourse fluctuations—such as the replacement of appreciative and exoticizing Oriental and Islamic discourses by threat narratives (see K. Hafez 2002b: 235–240). This classification of the AMR concept enables an in-depth examination of the sources of knowledge, actors, and modes of production of anti-Muslim symbolism in a contemporary, but also in a historical perspective. It is important to note in all of this that the AMR concept describes structures beyond individual responsibilities. In other words, even those who use certain expressions and narratives of anti-Muslim racism are not automatically racists in the classical
sense. Rather, this shows how established and “normal” anti-Muslim knowledge is.

The theory of anti-Muslim racism gives rise to various conceptual points of contact with the socio-psychologically based concept of anti-Islam sentiment. While the former focuses particularly on symbolic-practical interconnections, structural formations, and historical traditions, the latter looks at the subjective dimension of anti-Islamic attitudes and offers a number of explanatory approaches to better understand their causes. The theory of AMR, in which those subjective dimensions of anti-Islam sentiment are less addressed, can usefully complement the concept of anti-Islam sentiment.

2.4 Historical lines of tradition

Historically, anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment in Europe is not an entirely new phenomenon; describing Islam as the “other” in contrast to one’s “own” has a long tradition in discourse here. The history of the encounter between Middle Eastern Muslim societies and so-called “Christian Europe” has undoubtedly always been riddled with conflict, demarcation, competition, aggression, and corresponding polemics. On the other hand, far less attention was generally paid to times and circumstances of peaceful coexistence, understanding, and cultural exchange (such as the transfer of knowledge provided through the translation of Arabic works). The demarcation from Islam as the antithesis of Europe proves to be a consistent pattern here (see Konrad 2010: 46) with Islam and Muslims perceived as a territorial and religious threat from early on.13

Medieval theology and controversial anti-Islam literature of the Latin West contain numerous disparagements of Islam, which is initially understood as Christian heresy by a false prophet (see Bobzin 2018; Colpe 2002). Christian theology saw itself challenged especially by the claim made by the new religious community that the Quran was the ultimate revelatory scripture. Accordingly, not only was the Islamic prophet Muhammad and his way of life portrayed in polemical distortions as a “lying prophet,” the Quran was also belittled and disregarded as a dangerous “book of fables” and cited as the cause of “Saracen” violence. Knowledge of Islamic sources was generally low here. Numerous stereotypical attributions can be found, especially in high and late medieval polemics (spreading with the sword, sexual licentiousness, etc.). Texts that strive for understanding, on the other hand, remain few and far between and were not widely received for a long time (see Goddard 2020).

The prevailing pattern of fear in Western perception of Islam and its violent expansion was expanded primarily by the Ottoman wars in the 15th to 17th centuries (see Höfert 2010). During that time, the enemy image of the “Turkish threat”—in the sense of a threat to the Christian West by Islam—became firmly anchored in Europe and the dominant pattern of perception. Although these patterns also changed in the course of modern times and the Enlightenment, the modes of perception remained highly ambivalent with a no less problematic enthusiasm for the “Orient” emerging that was directed toward the exotic and where secular rather than religious criteria became decisive (keyword: Orientalism). This was accompanied by the development of European superiority thinking, which sought to define Europe and Islam as two opposing “civilizations”

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12 Europe is thoroughly Christian. Beyond this, however, there are also many other influences that create identity. In current debates about the “cultural identity of Germany or Europe,” the term sometimes seems to be used to “demarcate Islam from Europe” (Marx 2021: 61). In this case, it becomes an argument that asserts a supposed incompatibility of Muslims with “Western” values.
13 Although several peoples attacked the coasts of southern Europe and the Mediterranean islands in the Middle Ages, it was (in the narrative traditions) above all the Arab Muslims who were considered a hostile power to which the Crusades were to respond (see Cardini 1999: 31).
Anti-Muslim sentiment: Terminology

This intensified particularly during the colonial period, so that at the Berlin Colonial Congress in 1884, for instance, the “threat of Islamization” was also discussed in Germany (Keskinkilic 2019: 35).

2.5 The relationship between anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Semitism

The UEM has been tasked with examining anti-Muslim sentiment, among other things, “for intersections with anti-Semitic attitudes.” The discussion about the relationship between anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Semitism has been conducted in academic, educational, and public discourses for several years (see, for instance, Schiffer/Wagner 2021; Botsch et al. 2012). The central questions are different in each case: From an academic perspective, for instance, discussions focus on whether current forms of exclusion of Muslims in Europe can be compared with anti-Semitism in the 19th century in terms of their function. Occasionally, the thesis that “Muslims are the Jews of today” is discussed in public discourses. This was the case, for instance, with a conference at Technische Universität Berlin in 2008 that was titled “Enemy Image Muslims—Enemy Image Jews” and led to heated reactions and debates in the press (Benz 2009).

Official representatives of Jewish organizations draw attention to the danger to both faith communities from right-wing extremist actors, as frequently emphasized in the past by Josef Schuster, President of the Central Council of Jews. He pointed out that “Muslims are not the Jews of today” (2020), but that there are parallels in the respective discrimination. According to Schuster, right-wing extremism targets both Jews and Muslims. In this context, he also warns against the openly anti-Muslim AfD party, which is predominantly stirring up anti-Muslim sentiment today. However, this could also (again) increasingly affect Jews in the future (see 2017b). (See also subchapter 9.4.1.2 regarding Jewish-Muslim dialogue)

The relationship between anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment is also the subject of lively debate in educational work. Here, the focus is on the question of the extent to which raising awareness of anti-Semitism or anti-Muslim sentiment calls for different educational concepts. Is it sufficient to subsume both phenomena under the concept of group-based misanthropy or even to group them together as one of many forms of discrimination without naming the respective specifics?

All in all, there is clearly a need to define the relationship between (racist) anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Semitism. Three questions will be briefly outlined below:

1. What is the result of comparing anti-Semitism in the 19th century with current forms of anti-Muslim sentiment?
2. What distinguishes the ideologies of anti-Semitism and racism?
3. To what extent are current manifestations of anti-Semitism and racism against Muslims interconnected?

1. What is the result of comparing anti-Semitism in the 19th century with current forms of anti-Muslim sentiment?

First of all, there is a fundamental difference between equating and comparing the two phenomena in terms of the question. The former is not dedicated to serious debate, because anti-Muslim sentiment has not replaced or superseded anti-Semitism and both phenomena still exist

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today. There are parallels and differences in their current manifestations (see questions 2 and 3). In contrast, a systematic comparison with regard to the research question is permissible—at the level of semantics, discourses, and stereotypes as well as their functions—because it can lead to both a better understanding of the hitherto rarely noticed phenomenon of anti-Muslim sentiment and a sharpening of its distinction from the phenomenon of anti-Semitism. A comparative perspective can also show that both phenomena have in fact less to do with the real objects of rejection than with an idea of them that serves as a projection surface to stabilize one’s own collective identity (see Shooman 2015). Therefore, a systematic, science-based comparison does not trivialize anti-Semitism or even the Holocaust, as is often claimed by critics of a comparison. There is no serious work that claims that the situation of Muslims in Europe today can be compared with the state-organized, systematic disenfranchisement and persecution of European Jews during the Nazi era, which led to the industrially organized mass murder of six million people.

From a historical perspective, a permissible comparison is made, for instance, with regard to the anti-Semitic discourses of the 18th and 19th centuries. Debates about processes of Jewish emancipation—i.e., the legal equality and social advancement of Jews—can be understood as defensive reflexes and can thus, according to proponents of the comparison, be compared with today’s conflicts regarding the advancing social participation of Muslims (see Topolski 2018; Brumlik 2012). Brumlik suggests that the “fear […] or enmity against Islam” (2012: 76) had structural similarities with a historical form of hostility toward Jews in the 19th century. He compares the theses of right-wing populist book author Thilo Sarrazin with those of anti-Semitic historian Heinrich von Treitschke in his 1879 essay. In it, he wrote about German identity and the (non-)belonging of Jews to the nation, demanding that Jews should “become Germans, feel themselves to be Germans […]; for we do not want the millennia of Germanic morality to be followed by an age of German-Jewish mixed culture,” since many Jews were nothing other than “German-speaking Orientals.” In 2010, Sarrazin spoke about immigration policy in an interview accompanying his bestseller “Germany is Abolishing Itself” and stated that one must “make it very clear that those who immigrate should mix. We, the Germans, have always been very well able to do that, the Jews, by the way, to a large extent too.” (Sarrazin 2010) For Brumlik, such statements are exemplary for semantic overlaps between current anti-Muslim discourses and those of modern anti-Semitism in the 19th century, where fear of the alleged loss of one’s own values and cultural achievements is expressed.

Critics of such a comparison, on the other hand, emphasize the fundamental differences between anti-Semitism in the late Empire and today’s anti-Muslim sentiment (see Schwarz-Friesel/Friesel 2012; Bunzl 2005). Thus, the hard-won legal equality of Jews was fought against both vehemently and publicly: be it through the founding of the “Antisemitenliga” in 1879, the calling of the anti-Jewish congress in Dresden in 1882, or the foundation of “Anti-Semitic Day” in Bochum in 1889. The very term anti-Semitism and the associated ideology are brainchildren of German intellectuals who turned the exclusion of Jews into a political and cultural movement (see Bunzl 2005). What’s more, this took place in an authoritarian social context over 150 years ago, in which anti-Semitic attitudes and statements were publicly articulated and not sanctioned, so that this anti-Semitism solidified into a “cultural code,” as Volkov describes the political culture of the empire: “The commitment to anti-Semitism became a sign of cultural identity, of belonging to a specific cultural camp” (2000: 23).

The situation is very different, however, with anti-Muslim sentiment in Europe today, which is only becoming stronger and more vehement as the number of Muslims immigrating increases in
the face of geopolitical conflicts and the growing success of populist movements. At the same time, open and clearly anti-Muslim positions are at least questioned and often condemned in large parts of society—as well as in the media and politics. The present report is also the result of government intervention that aims to reduce anti-Muslim sentiment.

Another central difference between hostility toward Jews in the 19th century and today’s anti-Muslim sentiment concerns how it came about, as critics of the comparison point out (see Schwarz-Friesel/Friesel 2012): Thus, the hostility toward Jews was completely unfounded; rather, in the words of Adorno and Horkheimer, it was a “pathic” (1987: 219), i.e., pathological projection. In contrast, today’s hostility toward Muslims can also be explained by the perception of violent Islamism as well as the overgeneralization of certain phenomena prevalent in Islam. However, this distinction is not empirically proven and is argumentatively very truncated. It also runs the risk of “legitimizing” anti-Muslim sentiment.

Finally, it should be noted here that hardly any work on current discourses on anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Muslim racism omits the—justified—reference to the Islamist attacks of September 11, 2001. This leads to the question of possible causalities between Islamism and anti-Muslim sentiment being raised again and again. However, extensive further research is required in order to be able to seriously and scientifically analyze and illuminate possible connections.

2. What distinguishes the ideologies of anti-Semitism and racism against Muslims?

An essential difference between anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment or the racist exclusion of Muslims lies in the respective ideologies and their function. If anti-Muslim sentiment is used to refer to theories of racism (such as AMR), the world views of racist and anti-Semitic ideology can be compared.

In this context, Rommelspacher explained that anti-Semitism is different from racism,

“that, psychoanalytically speaking, it tends to be fueled by ‘superego projections’ and ascribes too much intelligence, wealth, and power to the others, whereas colonial racism is more determined by ‘it projections’ that impute special drive, sexuality, and aggressiveness to the others” (Rommelspacher 2009: 26).

Accordingly, the disparagement of Muslims can be explained by the racist world view: In racism, the racialized other is alienated through disparagement and accusations of lack of modernity and collective savagery. Both are, as it were, classic stereotypes and enemy images of anti-Muslim racism. In anti-Semitic thinking, on the other hand, “the Jews” are imagined as representatives of modernity and thus as destroyers of a better past. Dominant in anti-Semitism is the phantasm of the omnipotence of the “Jews,” which corresponds with the belief in a “world conspiracy” (Cohn 1998). Such a belief offers the opportunity to “see oneself as a victim and imagine being dominated and exploited” (Messerschmidt 2005: 139). The feeling of inferiority and powerlessness is diametrically different from (colonial) racism, in which the superiority of the “white race” justified exploitation and enslavement. In anti-Semitism, the destruction of the other is hence the goal, while in the racist world view, an imagined superiority legitimizes one’s own claim to rule.

By contrast, the question of religion plays a role in both phenomena. The racialization of religious affiliation is a process that is expressed in different ways both in anti-Semitism and in contemporary racism against Muslims. In anti-Muslim discourses, categories such as religion, culture, and ethnicity become intertwined (see Shooman 2015). Under the guise of criticism of Islam, racist assumptions
are often made about Muslims, which, however, do not represent an enlightened criticism of religion (see subchapter 2.6). Regardless of their own connections to Islam or whether they define themselves as Muslim at all, being a Muslim is linked to origin. That logic suggests that one can “descend” from Islam. This becomes clear, for instance, in an advertising text by the right-wing extremist publishing house Kopp-Verlag about a book published in 2015: “Best-selling author Udo Ulfkotte describes in detail and without regard to the prohibitions of political correctness how Europe is becoming a colony of Islam.” The racialization of Muslims is clearly articulated here, in that they are delusionally portrayed as colonizers.

Muslims who turn away from their religion or convert remain permanently marked as Muslim because of the link between religion, culture, and ethnicity described above. A special role is played by those ex-Muslims or converts from Islam who are described by parts of the public discourse and especially by right-wing populist actors as “enlightened” or “pioneers”—all too often in order to underpin an anti-Muslim agenda with “authentic” voices (see Shooman 2014). Nevertheless, this does not mean that these people are not still affected by anti-Muslim racism based on their appearance or name. From the perspective of racism theory, it is hardly possible to escape the “Muslim stigma,” because racializing attributions are made even if they do not correspond to the individual self-images of those affected.

In addition, there is a persistently reproduced idea that being Muslim and German are incompatible—a well-known anti-Semitic motif, as seen in the above example of von Treitschke declaring Jews as not belonging to the nation. Racial anti-Semitism emerged at the end of the 19th century and was based on modern, pseudo-scientific racial theories that declared any religious conversion and social assimilation of Jews impossible from the outset. The earlier stereotypes, images, and practices that arose primarily on a religious basis as anti-Judaism were passed on; thus, the constructed Christian-Jewish dichotomy became a German-Jewish one based on a racist, ethnic-nationalist understanding, forming the basis for National Socialist anti-Semitism.

Comparative debates have paid very little attention to one aspect, i.e., the conspiracy fantasies to be found in both anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim ideologies. While anti-Semitism has the “Jewish world conspiracy,” the phantasm of “Islamization” can be found especially in right-wing populist and extremist ideology. This is disseminated as a threatening backdrop against the realities of a migration society and discourses of openness. However, the belief in the danger of “Islamization” and the fear of Muslims expressed in this way contradict, in some ways, a racist feeling of superiority. This makes it clear that racism theory cannot sufficiently cover every expression of anti-Muslim sentiment. A systematic comparison of the semantics of the phantasm of the “Jewish world conspiracy” with that of “Islamization” could provide further insights into the interconnectedness of current manifestations of anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment (see Cheema 2020).

3. To what extent are current manifestations of anti-Semitism and racism against Muslims interconnected?

The fact that anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment differ from each other ideologically, historically, as well as in current manifestations is particularly relevant from an academic perspective. For the political fight against both forms of misanthropy, the focus should be on how both phenomena are interconnected. An example will be used to explain this.

Hatred against both minorities comes together in right-wing extremist ideology. The assassins of Halle, Christchurch, Pittsburgh, and Buffalo were all proponents of the far-right conspiracy narrative of the “great exchange.” This conspiracy
contains sexist, anti-Semitic, and racist elements, among others: Feminists are to blame for declining birth rates in the Western world and the resulting mass immigration from Muslim countries—supported by leftist elites—is orchestrated by Jews. In the manifesto of the Halle assassin (2019), this delusion was very clearly expressed. He originally wanted to attack a mosque, but then chose a synagogue, because this was the “only possibility” to kill “at least one Jew”—then “it would have been worth it” (from the manifesto previously published on the internet). The right-wing extremist confessional letter shows in some ways how “intersectionality from the right” (Mendel/Cheema/Arnold 2022) and thus the interconnectedness of different phenomena works. And yet the text also provides indications of the previously elaborated differences between the two ideologies, i.e., in the anti-Semitic phantasm about the “omnipotence of the Jews,” it becomes clear how the challenges of a complex modern society are interpreted here as “Jewish machinations.” Racism, on the other hand, is seen as a social dominance relationship that is about exploitation and domination. Thus, as Holz and Kiefer put it, in the binary order of racism Jews belong neither to the self-group nor to the foreign group of the others. In this dichotomous world view, Jews become a “figure of the third.” They are constructed as a “world enemy” and not as a “normal’ nation, race, or religion” (Holz/Kiefer 2010: 123–124).

While hatred against Muslims and Jews is explicitly expressed in right-wing extremist ideology, social science studies show that correlations can exist with other ideologies of enmity in society at large. Pickel 2019, for instance, showed that anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment often occur together, albeit to different degrees. The correlation thesis is, however, controversial, since a recent study by the Expert Council on Integration and Migration, for instance, estimates the correlation to be relatively low (see Friedrichs/Storz 2022).

In social media, on the other hand, interaction between anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment is more common. A study by the Institute for Freedom of Faith & Security in Europe showed how anti-Semitic hate messages and incitement against Muslims on social networks increased significantly during the COVID pandemic (see Rose 2021). According to the study, anti-Semitic postings were linked to conspiracy fantasies: Jews controlled the pandemic or exploited the measures to gain power. Muslims, on the other hand, were accused of waging a “COVID jihad” and deliberately spreading the virus.

With regard to the AfD and its voters, a study by the University of Leipzig also clearly shows how anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim positions go hand in hand. Although “pro-Jewish” voices are often heard within the right-wing populist and extreme party, this can be exposed as an insidious strategy. Schuster also commented on this early on: “Here, the topic of allegedly being particularly committed to Jews is simply used to once again massively agitate against Muslims, and to use the Jewish community for this is more than brazen” (Schuster 2017a). Jews, like Muslims, are threatened by the AfD’s propaganda. An examination of the party’s Twitter account shows that anti-Semitism is only mentioned in connection with Muslims in order to cover up the party’s own anti-Semitic attitudes (Niedick 2020: 209). This “one-sided instrumentalization of the accusation of anti-Semitism rather shows the intertwining of anti-Muslim racism and anti-Semitism within the AfD” (ibid.: 211).

Despite the relevant differences in terms of ideologies and their functions, it can make sense to consider anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment together at a political level with a view to possible action and combating all forms of racism—not least in view of the common threat from right-wing extremist groups. From the perspective of those affected, Jews and Muslims, common solidarity is an important aspiration for many
In public discourse, on the other hand, reference is frequently made to the “victim competition” (see Mendel/Cheema/Arnold 2022): Is anti-Semitism a greater threat than anti-Muslim sentiment? Here, too, we should again refer to Schuster, who regarding this issue made it clear some time ago:

> “Muslims are not the Jews of today. Anti-Semitism must not be equated with anti-Muslim racism. Both forms of discrimination are to be condemned in the strongest possible terms. But we have to be very clear: Parallels always exist, but in equating them we trivialize the different forms of discrimination, do injustice to the specific people, and give an unnecessarily large public space to a completely unnecessary victim competition.” (Schuster 2020)

The fact that anti-Semitic acts also originate from Muslims often plays a special role in this competition logic. This debate runs along two fronts: On the one hand, racism against Muslims is seen as a reason not to address anti-Semitic expressions among Muslims—which has devastating consequences for those affected and trivializes anti-Semitism among Muslims. Instead, reference is made to the danger of appropriation from the extreme right. And indeed, such incidents are used by right-wing circles for their anti-Muslim agenda, just as the AfD merely instrumentalizes anti-Semitism for its anti-Muslim agenda. The reference to the invented “Christian-Jewish Occident”\(^\text{15}\) is ultimately used precisely when it is a matter of differentiation from Muslims. On the other hand, Muslims are presented as the greatest threat to Jews—and the danger from the right is relativized (see Cheema 2019). However, the fight against anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim sentiment can only be credible and thus effective if it does not allow for hierarchization and victimization.

### 2.6 The discourse around criticism of Islam

Another buzzword in the discourse on Islam and Muslims is criticism of Islam. In public discourse, numerous experts are referred to as critics of Islam when they criticize the religion or certain forms of it, such as Salafism, or the religious practice of certain Muslims. Criticism of Islam is a vague concept because previous attempts to define it have not been able to clarify it conclusively or universally (see, among others, Bade 2013; Schneider 2012 and 2015; Schirrmacher 2022). In addition, anti-Muslim statements beyond concrete criticism have been labeled as criticism of Islam in public discourse for years. For example, in the case of the Pegida movement (short for: Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident), which today is classified as racist and extreme right-wing, but was initially considered an “Islam-critical” movement.\(^\text{16}\)

Despite the vagueness of the term criticism of Islam, criticism of certain forms of expression or actions legitimized by Islam is undeniably permissible. This has not been sufficiently addressed in previous research on anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment, and anti-Muslim racism. Three mechanisms will be used in the following to discuss the criteria to which criticism of Islam is subject and the extent to which these criteria make enlightened critical engagement with Islam more difficult.

**Generalization:** What can a human-rights-oriented criticism of Islamically articulated actions look like that at the same time avoids sweeping judg-

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15 The linguistic construction of a “Christian-Jewish Occident” refers to a supposed Christian-Jewish community of values that did not exist historically. It essentially focuses on excluding Muslims from a community imagined in this way.
16 Frequently, for instance, in the ARD Tageschau news program, including the interview with the former director of the Saxon State Agency for Civic Education, Frank Richter, on December 15 on tageesschau.de (see 2014).
ments about “the Muslims,” their disparagement and exclusion or a relativization of real problems (see Cheema 2020)? In order to differentiate between criticism of Islam and the reproduction of racist thought patterns, a boundary must be defined between enlightenment that is critical of religion and a culture-warring division of society (see Bielefeldt 2011: 135). Polarizing criticism that uses generalizations and ascribes an “unchanging collective mentality” (ibid.: 141) to individuals is not compatible with a critical discussion of religion. Sweeping judgments about “the Muslims” and “Islam” homogenize Muslims and place them under general suspicion. Violent acts that are justified by Islam—for instance, terrorist attacks, patriarchal conditions, or anti-Semitic violence—are not to be relativized, but must be analyzed in a differentiated manner. Biskamp criticizes that a “binary image of speaking about Islam and Muslims” (2016: 83) has emerged in research to date. He criticizes that the problematization of Islamic acts of violence is again too sweepingly delegitimized as a racist practice of attribution. The reason for this is the socio-political climate in which anti-Muslim resentment is widespread. Objective and differentiated criticism must therefore be possible.

**Perspectives:** In public debates, we repeatedly see that grievances in Islamic societies are “Islamized” and thus falsely explained as an inevitable consequence of a majority of the population belonging to Islam. A human rights-oriented perspective, on the other hand, first defines problems (for instance, “patriarchal structures or attitudes and their consequences”) and in a second step turns to the concrete actors or ideological justifications for such phenomena. This rule-of-law-oriented perspective avoids arbitrary attributions and an essentialization of Islam or Muslims. The example of patriarchal structures makes it clear that—even without making sweeping statements—criticism of Islam must track the course of its arguments and especially the framing. Phenomena associated with Islam can usually be interpreted from different (theoretical) perspectives. A *religion frame* that automatically blames religion for everything negative (along the lines of: “The Quran does state …”) cannot explain social phenomena. For example, social, economic, political, or psychological justifications for one and the same phenomenon—i.e., also for Islam-based terrorism—are important due to their diversity and to avoid an artificially well-founded or at least highly truncated criticism of Islam. Diversity of interpretation and perspective in the form of frames is essential in criticism of Islam, also in order to ensure global intercultural comparability. It is easy to speak of “Islamic violence”; “Christian violence,” on the other hand, still seems absurd for phenomena such as the Russian Orthodox justification of the Ukraine war or acts of violence by Protestant and Catholic sides in Ireland. The framing in these cases follows very different logics, under which the diversity of perspectives suffers. This additionally leads to unequal treatment of possibly equal problem situations for the state and society, which is contrary to the rule of law.

**Pluralism:** From the perspective of communication theory, the entirety of Islam-related discourse—for instance, in the media and political debates—must also be taken into account. Individual criticism of Islam-motivated conditions is both legitimate and important. However, the discourse on Islam as a whole can in turn generalize inappropriately through selective perception, constant repetition, and a biased focus on certain points of criticism that fails to appreciate the object of criticism in its various manifestations. It is truncated to reduce the reality of a world religion and its believers (more than 1.5 billion people) to negative associations and factual contexts (terrorism, misogyny, etc.) without taking note of a certain diversity of forms and life (popular religiosity, theological variants, secularized practices, etc.) (see K. Hafez 2002b: 59–65). Modern discourse analysis addresses these complex processes of representation not only in individual texts but in entire media genres. Müller et al.
Report of the Independent Expert Group on Anti-Muslim Sentiment

(see 2007) rightly noted that in the context of Islam stereotypes are often no longer manifestly formulated (“the fanatical Muslim”), but that they “indirectly [control] the thematic structure of reporting” (ibid: 141). We refer to this process as “anti-Muslim sentiment in discourse structures.”

The problem that arises here is similar to that between individual and structural or institutional racism. Even if an individual person is often justified in making a certain criticism of an Islamic-motivated practice, it is part of a discourse formation that in its entirety has a generalizing character and can thus lead to racist routines. Islam then ends up appearing more as a political ideology than as a religion with diverse teachings and practices. Images and perceptions of Muslims are circulated that either stigmatize or victimize them. This does not mean that criticism of Islam directed at a specific object is not correct and important, but that pluralism and diversity should be important guiding principles in the fight against anti-Muslim sentiment. This also means that it is not only individual actors in society who are responsible for anti-Muslim sentiment, gatekeepers at institutions and institutions as a whole are called upon, because they are the only ones with the overview and influence needed to fundamentally change discourse routines.

The transitions between criticism of Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment can be defined in summary using the three criteria presented. Criticism of Islam can be hostile to Muslims if

- **Generalization** takes place. For example, when violent acts are committed by Islamists, Muslims are accused of being violent and dangerous.
- **Perspectives** remain one-dimensional. When a sexist or homophobic act by a Muslim person is explained (solely) by their religious affiliation, while social, political, historical, and other problematic situations, such as explanatory approaches, are not taken into consideration.
- **Pluralism** is omitted. Even when there are no sweeping generalizations and other explanations for violent acts, but the discourse is dominated by negative headlines about Islam and Muslims. In this case, criticism may be legitimate, but the overall context must also be considered: Are diversity and other interpretative practices of Islam taken into account?

Based on the above criteria, a decision must be made in each individual case as to whether certain statements about Islam are to be understood as merely critical or hostile to Muslims. The above GPP test aims to provide assistance in distinguishing criticism of Islam from hostility toward Muslims—and thus to analyze and assess concrete statements in a differentiated way.

2.7 **Instrumentalization of anti-Muslim sentiment**

Anti-Muslim sentiment is a worldwide phenomenon that is characterized by certain image and discourse structures and is spread by various actors—individuals, groups, and institutions—in the most diverse areas and generates discrimination in everyday life. When considering the instrumental use of anti-Muslim sentiment, right-wing radicals, xenophobes, but also political institutions in the context of structural racism immediately come to mind. In contrast to other parts of this report that specifically address these questions, the following subchapter will show some examples of how Muslims themselves, and

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17 At this point, Israeli politician Natan Sharansky’s “3D test” (see 2004) on separating criticism of Israel from anti-Semitism provided inspiration for the development of a tool to help separate criticism of Islam from anti-Muslim sentiment. Sharansky assumes that anti-Semitism under the guise of criticism of Israel is always present when demonization of the state of Israel is sought, a double standard is applied, or Israel is delegitimized.
in particular Islamist actors, can instrumentalize the accusation of anti-Muslims sentiment under the opposite guise, i.e., as an ostensible defense of Islam. The generalized negative image of Islam is replaced here by the no less generalized accusation of anti-Muslim sentiment in the Western world. Islamist actors thus become co-constructors of an alleged Islamic-Western cultural and religious struggle on a global scale with concrete effects on the plural coexistence of Muslims and non-Muslims.

The case of Salman Rushdie will be used below to illustrate how anti-Muslim sentiment is instrumentalized. References to other cases of strategic instrumentalization are additionally provided. The selection does not claim to be exhaustive but is intended to highlight the problem itself. Rather than choosing cases of jihadist terrorism, lower-threshold campaigns from the Islamist sphere were deliberately selected, as these are aimed at debates in the middle of society.

The affair surrounding British-Indian author Rushdie, which has lasted for more than 30 years, was once again brought to public attention by the assassination attempt on him in August 2022. The controversy began in 1989, when Iran’s then revolutionary leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, issued a death sentence in an Islamic legal opinion (fatwa) to both Rushdie and his publishers for publishing Rushdie’s work “The Satanic Verses” in 1988. Khomeini did not provide a theological justification, so that it remained unclear whether the offense was one of apostasy (rejection of faith) or of blasphemy. What is crucial here, however, is that other Islamic actors besides the Iranian revolutionary leader intervened. It was their action over a longer period of time and the subsequent events (from violent demonstrations in the United Kingdom and South Asia to the later attempted assassination of Rushdie) that gave the fatwa its fatal momentum (see subchapter 4.6). The British-Muslim radical Islamist Kalim Siddiqui proved to be extremely influential (see Kara 2017). As a journalist for The Guardian, he had very good relations with the British government. However, the Iranian Revolution of 1978/79 radicalized his thinking to such an extent that he called for Islamic revolutions in the Middle East. He was financed by the Iranian government, founded the Muslim Institute in London in 1972, and even a “Muslim Parliament” in 1992. He saw Rushdie’s book as a sign of Western hatred and conspiracy against Islam. It is still unclear today whether Khomeini’s fatwa was originally Siddiqui’s idea, as he was in Iran immediately before the fatwa was announced and was in contact with the leading circles. In the UK, Siddiqui initiated a campaign against Rushdie and was a permanent guest in the press and on radio where he made accusations of a Western conspiracy against Islam. He thus strengthened the image in the Western media of a fanatical Muslim world opposed to freedom of expression—and this despite the fact that Khomeini’s fatwa met with widespread rejection outside Iran’s and some of Pakistan’s state-controlled media, for instance, in Arab media (see K. Hafez 2000; 2002b: 240–265). The campaign-like instrumentalization of the accusation of anti-Muslim sentiment to exacerbate the Islamic-Western conflict and to promote Islamic revolutions by a specific constellation of actors, which included not only Western media and actors but also Islamists like Siddiqui, becomes very apparent here.

Other recent examples of the instrumentalization of the accusation of anti-Muslimsentiment are also evident. For example, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan staged himself as the spokesperson of the “Islamic world” and called on Muslims worldwide to boycott France a few days after the murder of French teacher Samuel Paty who had shown Muhammad cartoons in class on the subject of freedom of expression. The wave of indignation against France and Emmanuel Macron stretched from Rabat to Islamabad, as
the French president’s reactions were seen as a further stigmatization of European Muslims (see El-Difraoui/Berges 2022). Large parts of the Turkish press interpreted the murder as an “inside job” by the French government that was staged ultimately to suppress Islam and Muslims in Europe (see Ercan 2022).

However, examples in which the victim narrative is strategically used can also be found closer to home. In this country, too, Islamist groups in particular instrumentalize anti-Muslim racism as proof of an alleged hostility of “the West” toward Muslims (see Korucu/Nordbruch 2020; Schmitt 2019; Schneider et al. 2019). Islamist groups, such as the “Generation Islam” initiative, the YouTube channel *Botschaft Islam* and on *TikTok* the *Muslim Interaktiv* channel, for instance, use right-wing terrorist attacks, such as the one in Hanau, online incitement against Muslim life in Germany, as well as stereotypical media portrayals of Islam and Muslims for their own purposes (see also subchapter 7.2.3). A blanket threat scenario is constructed from various set pieces, according to which a uniformly constructed Islamic identity and way of life are being suppressed, creating a dichotomous world view of “them against us.” Victim-perpetrator analogies are used to reinforce and emotionalize this accusation. Such interpretations can be connected in particular to discrimination and marginalization actually experienced by Muslims. Young people and those who are not yet firmly established are in danger of falling for the simple truths offered and the postulated strategies of self-delimitation (see Kulaçatan/Behr/Agai 2017).

Based on the examples listed, it should now be clear that striking events that promoted the image of “fanatical Islam” in Germany have also been deliberately scandalized with the participation of fundamentalist actors.
Facts and figures on the extent of anti-Muslim sentiment in Germany

For about 20 years, various studies have repeatedly shown how widespread anti-Muslim sentiment is in Germany and how strongly entrenched this negative climate has now become. According to Religionsmonitor by Bertelsmann Stiftung, every second person in Germany has an anti-Islamic attitude and this high figure has remained almost unchanged over time (see Pickel 2019: 81–82). Forty-five percent of the population rejects a Muslim mayor for their own municipality—purely on the grounds of religious affiliation (see Ahrens 2018: 2–3). Every third person demands the restriction of Islamic religious practice, thus voting against the fundamental right to freedom of religion (see Baumann/Schulz/Thiesen 2022: 422). These are just a few examples that show the consequences of anti-Muslim reservations—not just for the people concerned, but also for society as a whole. While restricting the equal participation of Muslims and people perceived as Muslim, such reservations can also undermine the foundations of our democracy if accompanied by demands for restrictions of fundamental rights, as illustrated in the example above. With its anti-Islamic agenda, the AfD party, which is part of the right-wing spectrum, was able to tap into widespread reservations, thus making it into the German Bundestag. Finally, the annual crime statistics, where anti-Islamic crimes have been recorded separately since 2017, also show that anti-Muslim sentiment can turn into violence, thus posing a massive security problem.

In order to effectively combat anti-Muslim sentiment, the extent and facets of this form of misanthropy first need to be overviewed. Thorough and differentiated documentation of anti-Muslim sentiment is therefore an important starting point. The aim of this chapter is to present current data on manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiment in Germany and how they have developed over time. The following data sources are used:

- Representative studies that provide information on the extent of anti-Muslim attitudes in the population, developments over time, and explanatory factors. Anti-Muslim attitudes are not to be equated with discriminatory behavior but can certainly express themselves in everyday life in the form of discrimination against Muslims or people perceived as Muslim, and can go as far as violence (see chapter ↗ 2). Representative studies thus provide an important basis for assessing the potential for anti-Muslim sentiment in society as a whole.
- Crime statistics that separately record anti-Islamic crimes since 2017.
- Documentation of anti-Muslim incidents by anti-discrimination offices, counseling organizations, and other NGOs, which have either established their own documentation offices or—as in the case of counseling offices—separately record cases with an anti-Muslim backdrop.

At the same time, the analysis of the available data reveals gaps that make it difficult to assess the actual extent of anti-Muslim sentiment. These gaps result on the one hand from the insufficient recording practice within the framework of crime statistics; the recording of anti-Islamic crimes introduced in 2017 can be described as an important milestone, but it still paints an incomplete picture of actual cases in Germany (regarding reported and unreported cases, see subchapter ↗ 3.2.2). On the other hand, the still weak data situation is due to the fact that many affected people are not willing to report incidents. Without that information, it is difficult to take action (see also chapter ↗ 4).
3.1 Anti-Muslim attitudes in the population

For about 20 years, research on anti-Muslim sentiment has been carried out within the framework of representative studies. Even though research on the rejection of Muslims and their religion is still relatively young compared to other forms of research on misanthropy, extensive and reliable data are now available on the extent and development of anti-Muslim attitudes in the German population. In particular, large and renowned study series, such as Mitte-Studien or Religionsmonitor, are important sources of data (an overview of the studies used and the corresponding publications can be found in subchapter ↗ 3.1.1 below).

Quantitative studies on anti-Muslim sentiment are based on concepts of prejudice research (see Zick/Küpper/Heitmeyer 2011), which cover anti-Muslim sentiment as an individual attitude pattern, thus making it accessible for quantitative research. Nevertheless, prejudices are not limited to the individual level in this research direction but are understood as socially shared categories that are present in society as a whole. Contextual analyses can identify those parts of the population where prejudices are particularly widespread, and this gives way to further conclusions regarding contextual conditions and mediation channels. In this respect, quantitative research on anti-Muslim sentiment based on socio-psychological prejudice concepts should not be understood as an alternative for concepts based on racism theories. Rather, socio-psychological prejudice research, which is a central pillar in the analysis of anti-Muslim sentiment, should be understood as a phenomenon of society as a whole, which can manifest in attitudes but also in institutional practices and social structures.

In the following, the most important data sources that were used to show the results will first be presented. The indicators for measuring anti-Muslim sentiment and its different facets will then be discussed. The results showing the extent of anti-Muslim attitudes will then be presented. Finally, central explanatory factors of anti-Muslim sentiment will be examined in more detail. A conclusion sums up the most important findings and identifies gaps.

3.1.1 Overview of the study situation

There are currently five active study series that regularly record anti-Muslim attitudes and usually repeat this every one to three years (for an overview of the survey dates, see ↗ Tab. 3.1). However, these studies use relatively few items, so-called short scales, as these are included in a very extensive questionnaire on different topics—so-called multi-topic surveys (see, for instance, ALLBUS). Therefore, only a few facets of anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment are covered in these study series.

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18 GMF-Surveys ended with the 2011 survey.
19 The individual questions of a survey are referred to as items. In order to measure anti-Muslim sentiment, different items usually need to be combined in order to arrive at statements regarding the extent of anti-Muslim sentiment. Different items on a topic are also called scales; a small number of items means that the scales are short.
Table 3.1: Nationwide study series with data on anti-Muslim attitudes

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A study is only listed here if the item wording for the question of anti-Muslim sentiment is at least partly the same in different survey years so that developments over time become visible. Marking in the year of the survey; linked cells mark a survey across the turn of the year.

1. The “Allgemeine Bevölkerungsumfrage der Sozialwissenschaften” (ALLBUS) (General Population Survey of the Social Sciences) has been conducted by the GESIS Institute since 1980. Its surveys in 2012, 2016, and 2021 (see Terwey/Baltzer 2013; GESIS 2017; Baumann/Schulz/Thiesen 2022) each used the same five items on anti-Muslim or anti-Islam sentiment, which are particularly interesting given the comparatively long time span.

2. With the so-called “Mitte-Studien” by Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES-Mitte-Studien; see Decker/Weißmann/Kiess/Brähler 2010; Decker/Kiess/Brähler 2012; Zick/Klein 2014; Zick/Küpper/Krause 2016; Zick/Küpper/Berghan 2019; Zick/Küpper 2021), a further series of studies was added in 2010 in a biennial, sometimes also annual, rhythm, which understands and surveys anti-Muslim sentiment as a facet of group-focused enmity (GFE).

3. The study series “Gruppenbezogene Menschenfeindlichkeit” on group-focused enmity by the Bielefeld-based Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence (GMF-Surveys: for an overview, see Zick/Berghan/Mokros 2019) continuously surveyed two items on the degree of agreement with the following statements every year from 2002 to 2011:
   a) “Because of the many Muslims, I sometimes feel like a stranger in my own country.”
   b) “Muslims should be banned from immigrating to Germany.”
   These two items were also included in other study series, so that results for these are available for a relatively long period of time.

4. Since 2002, the Competence Centre for Right-Wing Extremism and Democracy Research at Leipzig University has been conducting the “Leipziger Mitte-Studien” study series, which was renamed in 2018 “Leipziger Autoritarismus-Studien” (Leipziger M-A-S: see Decker/Kiess/Brähler 2014; Decker/Kiess/Brähler 2016: Decker/Brähler 2018; Decker/Brähler 2020; Decker/Kiess/Heller/Brähler 2022: 70–72). They also survey “anti-Muslim sentiment” in the German population every two years, always using the same two items.

5. Bertelsmann Stiftung’s “Religionsmonitor” has been conducted every four to six years since 2007, and since 2012 has regularly collected data on anti-Muslim sentiment as a partial aspect of religious tolerance (see Pollack/Müller 2013;...
Pickel 2013; Halm/Sauer 2017; Pickel 2019). The special feature of this study is the possibility to compare this sentiment with attitudes toward other religions and religious communities. In addition, the “Religionsmonitor” study compares countries, for instance, 21 countries in 2007.

6. The study series “Zugehörigkeit und Gleichwertigkeit” (ZuGleich) (Belongingness and Equivalence) conducted by Stiftung Mercator also surveyed anti-Muslim sentiment in the four studies Zick/Preuß 2014, Zick/Preuß 2016, 2018 in Zick/Preuß 2019, and most recently 2020 in Zick/Krott 2021. This is one of three facets of GFE, which also includes “xenophobia” and the devaluation of refugees.

In the ZuGleich study series, however, it remains unclear how the authors operationalize the items on anti-Muslim sentiment: The 2014 and 2020 surveys used different items, and the 2016 and 2018 surveys do not report items on anti-Muslim sentiment. Therefore, the items of the ZuGleich study series are not considered in the following presentations.

In addition to the nationwide series of studies, some recurring population surveys have also been established at the federal-state level, which record anti-Muslim sentiment as part of a larger complex of issues. The “Sachsenmonitor” series (see Pickel/Yendell 2021) began in 2016 with a recurring data collection on this topic. The “Thüringen Monitor” study (see Reiser et al. 2019) is also one of these instruments.

In addition to the regular monitoring conducted through the above survey series, there are also numerous representative studies that record anti-Muslim attitudes selectively for a specific point in time. However, by comparing them with studies with similar items, they can certainly give an impression of the prevalence, extent, and development of anti-Muslim attitudes in the German population (for instance, the SVR Integration Barometer, see Sachverständigenrat für Integration und Migration 2022).

3.1.2 Facets of anti-Muslim sentiment

Concepts to distinguish different facets of anti-Muslim sentiment are still being developed. The various study series that integrated the topic into their regular survey practice used—at least in the initial phase—different terms (see chapter 2) such as anti-Islam sentiment, the image of Islam as the enemy, stereotypes of Islam, anti-Muslim sentiment, and other synonyms. This means that the sometimes very different indicators used for measurement refer to different facets, which is also reflected in the results. For instance, agreement with the frequently used statement “Muslims should not be allowed to immigrate to Germany” (see, for instance, Frindte/Dietrich 2017) captures a rejection of Muslims as migrants, while agreement with the item “Islam is a religion of intolerance” (see, for instance, Zick/Küpper/Hövermann 2011) is aimed solely at how the religion is perceived. It can be assumed that people who see Islam as an intolerant religion also have stronger reservations about Muslims. However, both attitudes refer to different addressees and do not express the same thing. In addition, they have thematically different references; the first statement establishes the reference to the topic of migration, while the second is more strongly aimed at values. Empirical studies indicate that it makes sense to differentiate between the different dimensions of anti-Muslim sentiment in order to better understand the underlying causes as well as content-related shifts in the phenomenon and development dynamics (see Tab. 3.2). The first distinction must be made between different target groups against whom rejection or prejudice can be directed (see Diekmann 2022; Uenal 2016; Pfahl-Traughber 2012); these sentiments can be directed against Muslims on the one hand and against Islam as a religion on the other. Even though the report explicitly addresses anti-Muslim sentiment, findings on attitudes toward
Islam are an important addition—especially since the two phenomena are linked: The devaluation of religion is often linked to a devaluation of Muslims (see Diekmann 2017; 2022). Secondly, anti-Muslim attitudes are usually expressed with reference to four thematic areas (see Janzen et al. 2019; see also subchapter ↗ 3.1.5.5): the attribution of backwardness, which is especially expressed in the general insinuation of patriarchal gender relations, a lack of ability to integrate, a tendency toward violence and extremism, as well as a general perception of threat. Thirdly, another level of differentiating anti-Muslim sentiment is the distinction between anti-Muslim attitudes on the one hand and behavioral intentions on the other, i.e., the extent to which anti-Muslim sentiment is linked to potential discriminatory behavior.

The heuristic based on these considerations—presented in ↗ Tab. 3.2—is used in the following as a basis to systematize, select, and present in compact form the multitude of quantitative data on anti-Muslim sentiment, its extent, and development over time.

**Table 3.2: Facets of anti-Muslim sentiment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facet</th>
<th>Attitudes (example)</th>
<th>Behavior (behavioral intentions) (example)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Backwardness</td>
<td>Attributing the oppression of women</td>
<td>Approval of the headscarf ban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of ability to integrate</td>
<td>Attributing a segregationist tendency among Muslims</td>
<td>Demanding mandatory integration measures, for instance, integration test for Muslims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tendency toward violence and terror</td>
<td>Attributing a higher potential for violence and predisposition to extremism</td>
<td>Legitimating security measures against Muslims and stronger border controls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat and social distance</td>
<td>Abstract sense of threat due to the alleged (over)presence of Muslims</td>
<td>Approval of a ban on immigration for Muslims</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.1.3 Anti-Muslim attitudes in Germany compared over time

As already outlined, a number of representative studies now examine anti-Muslim sentiment as a sub-aspect of a larger complex of issues. However, only a few items have become established for measuring anti-Muslim sentiment and are replicated in various studies or collected over several years. The indicators and findings presented in the following are suitable for depicting the extent of anti-Muslim sentiment as well as its different facets; to compare these over time, surveys of different studies were used that included similar indicators at different points in time. Although some of these are not identically formulated and therefore cannot be compared on a one-to-one basis, their sum can nevertheless give a good impression of the prevalence of the corresponding facet of anti-Muslim sentiment.

### 3.1.3.1 General reservations: Feelings of threat and social distance

Items that are relatively generally formulated regarding feelings of threat and fear toward Islam and Muslims, as well as a general distrust of them, are particularly well suited (when they have no thematic reference) for determining the overall extent of reservations—regardless of the respective backdrops, which may vary considerably.

One good indicator that can depict general reservations about Muslims is agreement with the statement “Because of the many Muslims, I sometimes feel like a stranger in my own country.” This item was surveyed from 2003 to 2011 as part of the GFM-Surveys series and, since 2014 has been included in the Leipziger Mitte-Studien series (renamed Leipziger Autioritarismus-Studie in 2018) as well as in the Mitte-Studien series by Friedrich-
Ebert-Stiftung, so that we can show agreement with this statement over a relatively long period of time here (see Fig. 3.1). The statement suggests that Muslims do not belong (“othering”) and thus expresses a clear demarcation from them through an “us versus them” distinction logic, which stands for a perceived great social distance.

The results shown here over time consistently show relatively strong reservations: About one-third of the population already agreed with this statement in 2003. This proportion has risen over time, which suggests an increase in anti-Muslim attitudes in the population. In 2018, the Leipziger Autoritarismus-Studie series even reports values of over 50 percent, which dropped again to a share of 38 percent during the pandemic.

The FES-Mitte-Studie series arrives at significantly lower agreement ratings of between 32 and 35 percent in the same survey period from 2014 to 2018. The different results are probably due to the survey modes used in both studies: While the FES-Mitte-Studie series conducted representative telephone surveys—as did the GFM-Surveys series—the Leipziger M-A-S-Studie series works with face-to-face interviews, whereby these sensitive questions were answered using a questionnaire to be completed by the interviewees on their own and thus under conditions of anonymity. This can largely reduce social desirability effects, which cannot be ruled out when an interviewer is present during telephone interviews. It can therefore be assumed that the actual level of agreement with the statement is somewhat higher than that determined by the GFM-Surveys and FES-Mitte-Studie series.

**Figure 3.1: Agreement with the statement “Because of the many Muslims, I sometimes feel like a stranger in my own country” in various studies 2003–2022 (in %)**

The development pattern is more interesting than the exact percentages since it shows a relative continuity and situational increases in relation to certain events, for instance, in the context of the debate on refugees in 2016. During that time, both studies recorded higher approval ratings for this anti-Muslim statement, which returned to the initial level as the debate subsided. This pattern can be observed earlier in the GFM-Surveys series: They documented increases in 2006 and 2007 following the Islamist-motivated attacks in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005. Based on these values and development patterns, relatively strong anti-Muslim reservations can currently be found in around one-third to 40 percent of the population.

These results are also confirmed by the Religionsmonitor survey. In a follow-up survey of the data at the end of 2014, in which this item was used once, the survey arrives at around 40 percent of respondents agreeing with this statement (see Vopel/El-Menouar 2015: 8). Within the framework of the Religionsmonitor 2017 survey, the question of “How much do you trust Muslims?” identifies a proportion of 41 percent who state that they generally trust Muslims “not at all” or “a little” (see Pickel 2019: 74).

Another item that is suitable for depicting the degree of social distance to Muslims is agreement with the statement “I wouldn’t mind a Muslim mayor in my municipality,” which was used in the ALLBUS surveys at various points in time and which triggers particularly strong disapproval. Even the strongest form of disagreement (1 “do not agree at all” on a scale up to 7) already received 31 percent approval in 2012, 32 percent in 2016, and even 22 percent in 2021. If we also add the other response categories with partial rejection, we arrive at 50 percent for 2012 and 2016 and 37 percent for 2021. This finding shows that although the perception of Muslims as “others” has decreased, significant proportions of the population still do not perceive and recognize them as equal members of German society.

When it comes to general reservations about the religion of Islam, the overall values are even higher than those for the rejection of Muslims. The question of “How threatening or how enriching do you perceive Islam?,” which the Religionsmonitor survey by Bertelsmann Stiftung has been

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21 The data from ALLBUS can be accessed at the URLs provided in the References section. The page numbers refer to the respective variable reports, which can be downloaded under “Codebücher.”
asking since 2012, is particularly suitable for measuring anti-Islamic attitudes on a general level.\(^2\) Another item that is suitable for this purpose is the level of agreement with the statement “Islam fits into German society” surveyed in the ALLBUS series; results are available here for the years 2012 and 2021.

The results show that while approval of anti-Islamic attitudes fluctuates slightly over time, it is by and large consistent. Around half of the population generally perceives Islam as a threat; a slightly larger proportion is of the opinion that Islam does not fit into German society and thus marks Islam as not belonging.

\[\text{Figure 3.3: Blanket rejection of Islam compared over time (in \%)\]}

![Figure 3.3: Blanket rejection of Islam compared over time (in %)](image)

Source: UEM’s own representation based on Religionsmonitor (Pickel 2019: 13; Vopel/El-Menouar 2015: 8) and ALLBUS (Terwey/Baltzer 2013: 212; Baumann/Schulz/Thiesen 2022: 424).

3.1.3.2 Prejudices and attributions of backwardness

Representative studies on prejudices showing that Islam is perceived as a backward religion or associated with the oppression of women are rare. A recent study among young people aged between 14 and 29, which looked at different facets of anti-Muslim sentiment, concluded that around 38 percent of respondents agreed with the statement “Muslim women are oppressed” (Janzen/Ahrens 2022: 7–8). As a rule, prejudice is less common among younger people, so the proportion of those who agree with this statement is likely to be significantly higher in the population as a whole. About ten years ago, a large-scale study by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees already showed that discrimination against women is primarily related to socio-economic factors—and less to religious ones (see Becher/El-Menouar 2013).

\(^{22}\) The question is asked as part of an extensive array of questions: “When you think of the religions that exist in the world. How threatening or enriching do you perceive the following religions? Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, atheism, religious diversity in general.” Response options: very threatening, rather threatening, rather enriching, very enriching, neither threatening nor enriching (see El-Menouar 2023; Pickel 2019; K. Hafez/Schmidt 2015; Pollack/Müller 2013).
Earlier studies even report much more widespread prejudices against Muslim women: In a representative survey conducted in 2008, more than three-quarters of respondents expressed the opinion that “Muslim views on women contradict our values” (Zick/Küpper/Hövermann 2011: 70–72). In 2010, when asked what they associated with Islam, 82 percent of the population answered with “the oppression of Muslim women” (Pollack 2014: 20–21). The FES-Mitte-Studie series published in 2012 concludes that 58 percent of respondents believe that “the Islamic world [is] backward and [refuses] to face new realities;” a similarly high proportion, 56 percent, agree with the statement “Islam is an archaic religion, unable to adapt to the present” (Decker/Kiess/Brähler 2012: 92). With a view to general reservations about Islam, which, as explained in the previous section, are still as high today as they were ten years ago, it can be assumed that the general image of Islam as a backward religion, which is primarily associated with the oppression of women, is also still similarly widespread today. However, current studies do not adequately cover this facet of anti-Muslim sentiment.

3.1.3.3 Prejudices and attributions of violence and terror

In 2012, about half of the population, i.e., 47 percent, was of the opinion that Islam itself is the reason for the proximity of Islam and terror (see Decker/Kiess/Brähler 2012: 92). In 2021, around 17 percent of young adults aged between 14 and 29 agreed with the statement “Islam calls for violence” (Janzen/Ahrens 2022: 9–10). It can be assumed that this prejudice is more widespread in the population as a whole. This image of Islam is also partly transferred to Muslims. In a recent representative survey by ALLBUS, 46 percent of the population are of the “impression that there are many fanatics among Muslims living in Germany” (Baumann/Schulz/Thiesen 2022: 430–431). Five years earlier, a slightly higher number of people thought this way, i.e., 51 percent (see GESIS 2017)—but this proportion has not declined significantly to date. This means that Muslims in Germany and people who are perceived as Muslim are confronted with widespread general suspicion—even if only 12 percent go so far as to assume that the majority of the Muslim population consider Islamist terrorism to be justified (see Zick/Küpper 2021: 189–190). This can lead to far-reaching consequences and massive disadvantage. Insecurity regarding Muslim religiosity is considerable so that Muslim piety can be mistaken for fundamentalism. The Religionsmonitor survey has repeatedly shown that neither religion in general nor individual religions and religious communities are in conflict with democracy. Minorities with fundamentalist attitudes can be found across all religions, even among secular communities, and are not reserved for specific religious communities (see Halm/Sauer 2017; El-Menouar 2023; Pickel 2019).

3.1.3.4 Prejudices relating to integration

Another widespread prejudice is that Muslims supposedly only live among themselves, largely avoiding contact with the non-Muslim population. A large proportion, i.e., 43 percent, of young people in Germany aged 14 and 29 believe that “Muslims like to live in their own neighborhoods,” and 37 percent think that “Muslims prefer to keep to themselves” (Janzen/Ahrens 2022: 9–10). It can be assumed that in the population as a whole, a significantly larger proportion assumes that Muslims tend to segregate themselves (see Leibold/Kühnel 2006).

Large parts of the population also have the impression that Muslims do not integrate well. Between 44 percent (population without a migration backdrop) and 46 percent (with a migration backdrop) reject the following statement: “Muslims living in Germany integrate well into German society” (Friedrichs/Storz 2022: 14).
These findings show that the image based on a lack of willingness to integrate and a tendency toward segregation persists in Germany—across different population and age groups. Here, too, the considerable discrepancy between perception and the realities of life of the Muslim population becomes evident. The results of the Religions-monitor survey refute this prejudice (see Halm/Sauer 2017): On the contrary, the vast majority of Muslims living in Germany even have (very) frequent friendships with the non-Muslim population. More than three-quarters of Muslims report frequent or very frequent interreligious leisure contacts. The study “Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland” (Muslim Life in Germany) by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees also shows that the Muslim population—contrary to widespread prejudices—does indeed maintain many different contacts with the population without a migration backdrop (see Pfündel/Stichs/Tanis 2021: 164): According to this, 86 percent have at least occasional contact in their circle of friends, about 80 percent even in their own family, and about two-thirds in each case even have frequent contact. Conversely, only a small minority of the non-Muslim population actually has leisure contacts with Muslims, which leads to the conclusion that parts of the non-Muslim population have no contact with Muslims in their everyday lives (see Halm/Sauer 2017: 31–32; Vopel/El-Menouar 2015: 12).

3.1.3.5 Anti-Muslim demands

Anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic reservations and prejudices are often unconscious and are neither recognized nor reflected as such. But they can also be reflected in discriminatory behavior and are therefore no less consequential than conscious rejection. However, anti-Muslim and anti-Islam sentiment become particularly drastic when (political) demands are deliberately made against Muslims that violate human rights. This is the case, for instance, when restrictions on religious freedom and other fundamental rights are advocated or even demanded across the board for an entire religious community.

One item consistently used in various study series is the level of agreement with the following statement: “Muslims should be banned from immigrating to Germany.” This is a particularly serious anti-Muslim statement, as political demands are linked here with anti-Muslim attitudes.

Within the framework of the GFM-Surveys series, data are available from 2003 to 2011; from 2014 onward, the results of the two Mitte-Studien series are available, some of which arrive at very different findings (see Fig. 3.4). Here again, it can be assumed that these differences are due to the different survey modes. While the Leipziger Mitte-Studien series asked these sensitive questions with as much anonymity as possible, the FES-Mitte-Studien series was conducted on the phone. As previously mentioned, a stronger inclination to give a socially desirable response can be assumed for the latter. The differences in results are particularly large for the 2018 (18 vs. 44%) and 2020 (9 vs. 27%) surveys. From 2018 onward, the FES-Mitte-Studie series switched from a four to a five-point response scale and introduced a neutral response option; experience has shown that many respondents “take refuge” in this in order to avoid having to articulate a clear position. In addition to the survey mode used, the response scale used also influences response behavior, so that the results are not comparable on a one-to-one basis. The differences between the survey results reached around 20 percentage points each—except for the 2016 survey year, where the results of both studies were relatively close at 35 and 41 percent. This can be explained by the social debates in the context of the so-called “refugee crisis” and the very negative climate of opinion at the time, which was presumably accompanied by lower inhibition thresholds when making anti-Muslim statements.
Figure 3.4: Agreement with “Muslims should be banned from immigrating to Germany” (in %)


Figure 3.5: Demand for restriction of religious freedom for Muslims (in %)

Source: UEM’s own representation based on the ALLBUS studies (Terwey/Baltzer 2013: 211, 214; GESIS 2017: 226, 229; Baumann/Schulz/Thiesen 2022: 422, 428).
When the survey modes are taken into account, the results allow the following conclusion:

Overall, the percentage of the population calling for a ban on Muslim immigration has declined over the last 20 years and is now at 29 percent. Depending on the debate situation, however, these proportions can increase, which suggests a relatively high receptivity of the population to anti-Muslim debates and their mobilization and divisive potential.

This is also confirmed by the results of the ALLBUS survey on demands for restrictions on the religious freedom of Muslims living in Germany (see Fig. 3.5). In 2012, for instance, almost every second person supported the statement “Islamic communities should be observed by the state,” which is tantamount to general suspicion and stigmatization of Muslim communities. This share even rose to almost 60 percent in 2016 but dropped back to the 2012 level or even slightly below it following the refugee migration and as the Islam debates receded.

In 2012, a third of the population also called for restrictions on the practice of the Islamic faith, thus voting in favor of curtailing the freedom of religion guaranteed as a fundamental right. This share increased by ten percentage points in 2016, settling back at the 2012 level in 2021.

In a representative study comparing different countries, Germany scores particularly poorly in the implementation of freedom of religion (see Pollack 2014): While 81 percent (west) and 75 percent (east) of those surveyed still state on an abstract level that all religions should be respected, this agreement collapses when it comes to the specific question of building mosques: Only 28 percent (west) and 20 percent (east) are in favor of the right to build mosques—and only 18 percent (west) and 12 percent (east) are in favor of minarets. Conversely, another representative study asks whether the construction of publicly visible mosques in Germany should be restricted; 42 percent of respondents agree (see Foroutan et al. 2014: 35). These are remarkable results, considering that the building of mosques and the representation of Muslims through their own places of worship are part of successful integration and an expression of religious freedom and the recognition of Muslims as members of society (ibid.: 34–35).

Another study, using data from the Religions-monitor survey, points out that when it comes to questions of religious freedom, negative freedom of religion (freedom from any religion) is particularly emphasized and that people are willing to accept restrictions on positive freedom of religion (to practice religion). For instance, many people reject the wearing of religious symbols in public (see El-Menouar 2019), which is also due to the growing proportion of people without denominational affiliation.

These results indicate that Muslims come into focus from different directions—on the one hand with regard to debates on how to deal with immigration, and on the other hand with regard to processes of change in the religious field due to secularization and religious pluralization—both of which reach far beyond the Muslim population and affect society’s self-understanding as a whole.

3.1.4 Germany compared to the rest of Europe

The focus of this report is Germany. Therefore, a comprehensive presentation of the international state of research will be omitted here. However, to put the results in a broader context, selected data for comparable countries are presented below.

Cross-national studies such as the Religionsmonitor series show that anti-Muslim sentiment is not only a German phenomenon but is widespread in large parts of Western Europe (see Pickel 2019). In 2017, the proportions of people in France, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, and Austria who are generally distrustful of Muslims is similar to Germany, accounting for between 35 and 41 percent...
in each case, with distrust being most pronounced in Germany (see Fig. 3.6). Likewise, large proportions of the populations of these countries see Islam as a threat: Besides Germany, this is true for about every second person in Austria and Switzerland; in the United Kingdom and France, this perception of threat is also strong at 35 and 38 percent, respectively, but less drastic than in the aforementioned countries.

An earlier study from 2014 concludes that although Germany scores worst in this form of misanthropy, the situation is complex throughout Europe (see Pollack 2014). Overall, there is no EU-wide monitoring of anti-Muslim sentiment. However, the available studies provide evidence that anti-Muslim sentiment is also widespread in other European countries and therefore measures to combat it should be strengthened not only nationally but also at the EU level.

Figure 3.6: A European comparison of anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim attitudes (in %)

![Bar chart showing anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim attitudes in Europe](image)

Source: Religionsmonitor (Pickel 2019: 74, 82).

3.1.5 Explanatory factors and prevalence in different population groups

In the previous section, it was explained that anti-Muslim sentiment is widespread in large parts of the population. It is a problem for society as a whole that affects the center of the German population. A relatively large proportion also derives political demands from these views, which shows particularly clearly that attitudes can turn into behavior (intentions). In order to develop measures to prevent and combat anti-Muslim sentiment, it is particularly important to identify the relevant levers for sustainable action. Various studies point to significant correlations that provide information on the population groups where anti-Muslim attitudes are particularly widespread and under which conditions they are less prevalent. Central findings from these in-depth analyses will be examined in more detail below.

3.1.5.1 Anti-Muslim sentiment as a facet of group-focused enmity

Within the framework of the GFM-Surveys series, group-focused enmity is understood as a multi-dimensional construct with anti-Muslim sentiment being identified as a manifestation of
this. Analyses show that the correlations between these different dimensions are sometimes relatively high.23 The correlations between anti-Muslim sentiment and so-called “xenophobia,” which primarily covers attitudes toward immigrants, are particularly strong (see Heitmeyer 2005). The very high correlation of 0.9 suggests that little distinction is made between immigrants and Muslims; people who reject immigrants are very likely to reject Muslims. Another study also shows a strong correlation with attitudes toward refugees (see Celik/Pickel 2019). This means that reservations about immigrants, refugees, and Muslims overlap and that there are thus different argumentative possibilities for activating and reproducing anti-Muslim resentment—in the context of debates on integration, asylum law, and religious policy.

Moreover, statistical analyses show a relatively strong correlation of 0.3 and 0.4 between anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic attitudes. This means that people with anti-Semitic attitudes are also very likely to be hostile to Muslims (see Zick 2021; Zick/Bergham/Mokros 2019; Zick et al. 2016; Zick/Küpper/Heitmeyer 2011). A recent study by the Expert Council on Integration and Migration comes to similar conclusions: Respondents who agree with the statement “Jews have too much influence” are also more likely to be in favor of the state observing Islamic communities, to generally accuse Muslims of a tendency toward fanaticism, and to more frequently reject a Muslim mayor in their own community (see Friedrich/Storz 2022: 46–47); the correlations are relatively strong (correlation coefficient: 0.4). These correlations are also found among people with a migration backdrop, especially among (late) repatriates (ibid.). The available evidence indicates that anti-Muslim sentiment in this combination can be part of an anti-pluralist and anti-democratic world view (see Pickel 2019; Decker/Brähler 2018; 2020; Zick/Küpper 2021). Such a world view is thus not only characterized by the rejection of Muslims but is often charged with anti-Semitism and linked to anti-human demands (see Pickel 2019). Corresponding world views are also characterized by authoritarian attitudes and an orientation toward social dominance (see Frindte/Dietrich 2017). These findings suggest that anti-Muslim sentiment in this form is not an isolated phenomenon, but part of an anti-democratic ideology that is not directed against Muslims alone, but against the foundations of liberal democracy as a whole. Estimates suggest that although the proportion of the population with such a world view is a minority, i.e., at around 13 percent in western Germany and 20 percent in eastern Germany, its anti-Muslim resentments have a broad resonance and thus find points of contact with the center of society (see Pickel 2019: 13–14). Anti-Muslim sentiment can be described as a continuum with a spectrum that can range from unconscious reservations that are adopted without reflection to ideologically entrenched anti-pluralism that is often accompanied by an anti-Muslim political agenda as well as anti-Semitism and other forms of misanthropy.

3.1.5.2 Political orientation and religion

Political orientation seems to be important when it comes to anti-Muslim sentiment; it has the greatest potential to explain differences in anti-Muslim positions (see Janzen/Ahrens 2022; Öztürk 2021). For instance, people who place themselves on the right of the political spectrum demonstrate a particularly high level of anti-Muslim attitudes; 77 percent of them agree with anti-Muslim attitudes, which is much higher than the share of people who place themselves on the left (5 to 13%, see Zick/Küpper/
Berghan 2019: 94). The further to the right a person positions themselves, the higher the approval of anti-Muslim statements. Breaking down the results according to party preferences reveals that anti-Muslim sentiment is by far most pronounced among AfD supporters, followed by non-voters, FDP supporters, and CDU/CSU supporters (ibid.: 96–97; see also chapter 7 and 8). Moreover, correlations between anti-Muslim attitudes and attitudes against democracy are relatively high: People with an illiberal understanding of democracy, a distrust of liberal democracy, and people with a feeling of political powerlessness tend to be hostile to Muslims. This is particularly pronounced among people with a manifest right-wing extremist world view (see Zick/Küpper 2021: 204). These findings once again underpin the impact of anti-Muslim sentiment on society as a whole and its democratic foundations.

Religious views also play a role: More pronounced forms of anti-Muslim sentiment can be found among members of the Evangelical Free Churches as well as among Orthodox Christians (see Öztürk 2021: 356–357). However, more in-depth analyses show that behind this is a more rigid understanding of faith; religion or religiosity as such, on the other hand, have no effect on anti-Muslim sentiment (see Janzen/Ahrens 2022: 482). This already became apparent within the framework of the Religionsmonitor survey (see Pickel 2019: 49; El-Menouar 2023: 171–172).

In contrast, anti-Muslim sentiment is less prevalent among people with a high level of trust in democracy, with pronounced civil courage, and among those who think beyond the national context and see the cohesion of society at the EU level (see Zick/Küpper/Berghan 2019: 237–238).

A vignette study using data from the Religionsmonitor 2017 survey also explored the question of which factors play a role in the rejection of people with migration backdrops (see Helbling/Jäger/Traunmüller 2022): In this context, the study also examined how Muslim religious affiliation as well as religious orientation (secular, liberal, devout, fundamentalist) influenced hostile attitudes. In their analyses, the authors clearly show that Muslim immigrants and refugees are not rejected more than others because of their religious affiliation, but primarily because of a suspicion of fundamentalism. If respondents are randomly presented with fictitious individuals who are Christian in one example and Muslim (but otherwise identical) in another, their ratings will be similar if their religious orientation is held constant in each case. This means that secular and liberal religious Muslims and Christians are both rated comparably positively, while the rating for devout Muslims and Christians is somewhat more negative. However, the most negative attitudes are directed toward fundamentalist Christians and Muslims. In other words, fundamentalism trumps religious affiliation, which is just as negatively evaluated among Christians (ibid.: 3–5).

3.1.5.3 The role of socio-demographic factors

Anti-Muslim sentiment is widespread across the middle of society (see K. Hafez/Schmidt 2015) and is not only to be found in individual segments of the population. While education plays an important role in other forms of misanthropy and people with a higher education are less susceptible to reservations, a high level of education only has a limited correcting effect when it comes to reservations toward Muslims (ibid.; Uenal 2016: 78).

In the case of anti-Muslim statements, higher educated people agree with them less often; however, this only applies to a limited extent to anti-Islamic

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24 A vignette study, also called a factorial survey, is a special survey technique within the scope of larger standardized surveys that is used to measure how the characteristics of persons, situations, or other objects influence their perception, assessment, or attitude (see Auspurg/Hinz 2015).
statements, i.e., when rejection is directed against the religion. Here, people with a university degree show a comparable level of anti-Islam sentiment as people with a low level of education (ibid.; Dietrich/Frindte 2017). It can be assumed, however, that the motives for rejection differ; for the more highly educated, arguments about the alleged backwardness of Islam as well as a general skepticism about religion certainly play a comparatively more important role (see also subchapter ↗ 3.1.5.5). This is indicated by the connection between distrust of religious people in general and anti-Muslim sentiment (see K. Hafez/Schmidt 2015; Pollack 2014). This suggests gaps in the teaching of (inter)religious competence in general and on Muslim life in particular (see chapter ↗ 6). However, as the analyses in the previous section on connections with other forms of misanthropy have shown, there is a need for educational approaches that start with the acceptance of plurality in general and encourage a confrontation with one’s own stigmatizing—also anti-Muslim—attitudes.

In general, the socio-economic status of a person takes on a subordinate role (see Pickel/Yendell 2016: 296–297; anti-Muslim attitudes are also highly prevalent among affluent people. Regardless of income, however, the feeling of being disadvantaged is more closely related to anti-Muslim attitudes (see Yendell 2014) and goes hand in hand with demands for an immigration stop for Muslims (see Pickel/Yendell 2021: 165). Anti-Muslim reservations can be reinforced by fears of decline, which can intensify especially in times of crisis, as is currently the case, and which particularly affect the social center.

A relatively strong correlation can be found for age (see ↗ Fig. 3.7): Younger people are less likely to express anti-Muslim attitudes (see K. Hafez/Schmidt 2015: 19–20). This is attributed to the fact that they are more likely to have personal contacts with Muslims in school and education, while older people have often grown up in a homogeneous environment and have less contact with the Muslim population in everyday life.

**Figure 3.7: Perception of Islam as a threat according to age groups (in %)**

![Figure 3.7: Perception of Islam as a threat according to age groups (in %)](image)

Source: Religionsmonitor (K. Hafez/Schmidt 2015: 19).
Nevertheless, the proportion of young adults between 16 and 24 who see Islam as a threat is relatively high at 38 percent—although this figure is significantly lower than among older people.

Regional differences also point to the importance of personal contact and the extent to which a diverse living environment is perceived as a social normality. In eastern Germany, where an estimated two percent of Muslims in Germany live, anti-Muslim or anti-Islamic attitudes are much more pronounced than in western Germany (see Pickel 2019: 13). However, a similar gradient exists when the results are broken down for northern and southern Germany: In the north, such attitudes are less widespread (see K. Hafez/Schmidt 2015: 20–21). Moreover, analyses show that it is important whether a person lives in an urban environment and is thus more likely to come into contact with Muslims, or in rural regions where hardly any Muslims live (ibid.: 54). One study demonstrated that regional differences level out when the intensity of contact with Muslims is controlled (see Foroutan/Simon/Canan 2019: 8).

### 3.1.5.4 Personal contacts in everyday life as a possible corrective

According to the so-called contact hypothesis, contact with each other can reduce mutual prejudices (see Allport 1954). However, it is repeatedly pointed out that the contact must be of a certain quality and that not every contact is equally suitable for reducing prejudices or can even have the opposite effect (see Pettigrew 1998). This has been empirically confirmed in many studies: Those who frequently have interreligious leisure relationships have fewer reservations about Muslims (see Öztürk 2021; Pickel 2019; Halm/Sauer 2017). However, this link between contact and prejudice is only found up to a certain point. As soon as the impression is created of being in a minority, the exact opposite effect can happen, resulting in a stronger rejection of Muslims (see K. Hafez/ Schmidt 2015: 51–59). This is particularly the case if, for instance, the majority of people living in a person’s own neighborhood are of a different religion, which can be seen as an indicator of immigration-related diversity and socio-economic disadvantage. Low-income households and people who are increasingly exposed to social discrimination are often forced to move to and live together in low-cost neighborhoods with a lower quality of housing and life. In such socially disadvantaged urban areas, the proportion of immigrants is also very high, as is religious plurality. At the same time, the living conditions in these neighborhoods are particularly precarious when measured using the classic status indicators of education, occupation, and income. This refers to the potential for conflict that social segregation processes can harbor in disadvantaged urban areas. That being said, the segregation of affluent neighborhoods, which are relatively homogeneous in socio-economic terms and also have a low degree of both religious and migration diversity, can also exacerbate anti-Muslim reservations. Urban policy measures are urgently needed here.

Contacts at eye level, such as friendships, can protect against reservations if similarities and common interests become visible and the focus is not solely on differences. If, on the other hand, there is little or no contact with people of other religions and origins, especially with Muslims—as is the case in large parts of eastern Germany and in rural regions—anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic attitudes are much stronger. Fictitious, so-called parasocial, contacts may then occur rather than real experiences. For instance, information taken from the media can function as experiential knowledge (see Horton/Wohl 1956; Pickel/Yendell 2016). In this respect, it can be assumed that media debates on Muslims and their religion, which are predominantly one-sidedly focused on problems, have a massive influence (see El-Menouar 2019a; 2019b; 2016; El-Menouar/Becker 2010; Frindte 2013; Frindte/Haußecker 2010; K. Hafez 2010) (see chapter ↗7). However, this does not seem to apply equally to all media, as the preference for public
service television channels is linked to lower levels of anti-Muslim sentiment (see Dietrich/Frindte 2017; Müller et al. 2017).

3.1.5.5 Findings from qualitative studies

Qualitative research provides insights into typical thought and language patterns of anti-Muslim sentiment and the sources from which they are fed: for instance, family, friends, and the media. Focus group discussions—a moderated discussion with several participants often used in qualitative social research—also provide clues as to how these patterns are activated, spread, and reproduced in group situations.

In doing so, qualitative research primarily uses the concept of racism and builds on the work of Jäger 1996, whose study on racism in everyday life in Germany is considered a milestone in the study of racism in general. The core result is that almost all interviewees, who varied in terms of age, origin, and education, express a general distrust and rejection of a group perceived as alien. The group of people considered to be “alien” is seen as problematic across the board, without any self-critical reflection on this perception. It is also typical that these “aliens” are contrasted with an imagined “us” group. The alien group is not only perceived as particularly different, but “the aliens” are also given a negative evaluation. The author also finds a further characteristic of racism, the idea that these ascribed characteristics are immutable. Another study concludes that racism is a social resource that can take on variable content depending on social location and time in history and is articulated and embedded argumentatively in different milieus (see Scherschel 2006). For people with a lower level of education and occupation, devaluation usually stems from a feeling of threat with regard to their own status in the social texture, as they often experience members of the devalued group as people of equal status at work or in their own neighborhood, with whom they are in a competitive relationship. Here, racism functions as an explanation for social problems; a person’s own experiences of frustration are thus channeled and projected onto certain social groups. Allport (1954) concluded in the context of his so-called “scapegoat theory” that aggression is projected onto people perceived as “psychological minorities”—who may be immigrants, blacks, regional groups, or members of certain religions—and they are blamed for social ills. As gentrification of living spaces increases and social inequality continues to grow, this issue could become more acute in the future.

In contrast, people from academic milieus come into contact with members of the racially devalued group less frequently and, according to their own perception, have an “asymmetrical relationship to the alien” (Scherschel 2006: 148); academics articulate reservations more often with reference to values and assume that the ideas of the devalued group are incompatible with their own values or those of the local society. The sense of threat here stems from the fear of falling victim to violence or having to reckon with personal restrictions. A person’s own group or society is thereby designed as “modern, civilized, and, with regard to the gender question, as equal” (ibid.) and the devalued group is diametrically opposed to this image. With increasing social advancement processes, the milieu-specific sense of threat can shift.

A study published in 2007 uses the example of mosque building to examine the extent to which racist patterns of thought and language toward Muslims are effective (see Sammet 2007). The study shows that strong differences emerged in the positions represented and that the issue was particularly polarized. It also found that opinion leaders played a special role, either exacerbating or differentiating the discussion and significantly influencing its course. Group dynamics thus have an important role to play here. The reservations were primarily directed at assumed differences in values, for instance, the situation of Christians in Muslim countries and the alleged lack of separa-
tion of religion and politics there was addressed in almost all discussions. This means that problematic events in Muslim countries, which undoubtedly exist, have been attributed to Islam and projected onto Muslims living here. In summary, the study suggests: Islam is addressed both as an “alien culture” and as an “alien religion,” whereby tendencies toward exclusion become clearer in the cultural dimension while the search for commonalities is stronger in the religious dimension (see Sammet 2007). With regard to the question posed in this chapter, it can be said that Muslims are primarily demarcated with a view to assumed differences in values. Shooman (2014) also notes that the building of mosques is linked to fears of losing power and status, so that racist patterns of devaluation based on a perceived competitive relationship also take root here.

Another study concludes that anti-Muslim resentment is often linked to phenotypical characteristics, thus ethnicizing Muslims and constructing them as a “race” (see Attia 2009). A recent study among young people concludes that, conversely, many people who are perceived as “migrant others” or “cultural aliens” are assumed to be of Muslim faith, underpinning the “ethnicization thesis” (see Kaddor/Karabulut/Pfaff 2018). What’s more, racist concepts are often linked to everyday experiences and thus repeatedly confirmed and updated (see Schmidt 2022: 197–239); they are therefore structurally anchored and are often not recognized as reservations but considered objective knowledge. The debate around New Year’s Eve 2015/2016 in Cologne serves as an example here. In this case, anti-Muslim reservations were linked with criticism of patriarchal gender concepts, thereby reproducing such reservations and making them plausible (see El-Menouar 2016; see also subchapter ↗4.8).

### 3.1.5.6 Patterns and references of anti-Muslim resentment

Overall, qualitative studies on anti-Muslim sentiment reveal four typical patterns of thought and language for anti-Muslim attitudes that are comparable to general patterns of racism.

1. **Attribution of “alienness”:** Here, the term “othering,” which is commonly used in anti-racist research, is used to express that Islam and Muslims are “othered” in this process. Attributes are attributed to them that make the “others” distinguishable from the fictitious “us” and devalue them (see Kaddor/Karabulut/Pfaff 2018; Shooman 2014; Attia 2009). The findings of the studies highlight that the attested non-belonging of Muslims is perceived as immutable and a reduction to the supposed “otherness” takes place, in which this is always placed in the foreground.

2. **Devaluation and hierarchization:** Attia (2009), for instance, describes that the interviewees’ statements are often guided by the perception of their own culture as superior. This implies a devaluation of those perceived as “Islamic others.” Shooman refers to pars pro toto thinking as a similar concept, being the attitude of: “we are distinguished by the best, they by the worst” (2014: 196, emphasis in original). In addition, “common Orientalisms” are still present that characterize “western culture as a place of progress” and, in contrast, assume a general “regressiveness of Islam” (ibid.). The hierarchization of migrant groups also described by Shooman can also be traced back to a similar understanding (ibid.: 37). Attia (2009) observed the pattern of reinterpreting experiences in this context: Positive primary contacts with Muslims are not associated with “Islam.” This phenomenon is already known in stereotype research: If a member of the foreign group behaves negatively, this behavior is recounted in rather abstract terms in the description. This suggests that this negative behavior is the norm for the alien group. If, on the other hand, one of their members shows
behavior that is positively evaluated, this is specifically recounted in order to make it clear that this is the exception. In this way, the narrator’s own stereotypes are reproduced (see Maass 1999).

3. Homogenization: Homogenization of groups is another typical pattern in the attribution of own-group and other-group characteristics. For instance, Kaddor, Karabulut, and Pfaff (2018) explain that the Muslim faith is mostly attributed to people who are constructed as “migrant others” or “cultural strangers.” Differences within this group are largely ignored. Their study clearly showed “generalizing prejudices about the behavior and appearance of Muslims” (ibid.: 25). The attributed characteristics are sometimes perceived as so immutable that this is also referred to as naturalization, as a pattern of anti-Muslim racism (see Shooman 2014).

These patterns are primarily associated with the following typical themes or narratives (see also Janzen et al. 2019) and are repeatedly updated:

1. Patriarchal gender concepts and the oppression of women: An important thematic reference point in the anti-Muslim labeling of characteristics is the stereotypically attributed gender relationship. According to Attia 2009, this plays a central role in the essentialization and dichotomization of “Islamic” and “western” culture. Shooman (2014) also notes that emancipatory arguments are instrumentalized and thus positioned against “Islam.” Scherschel also describes that in the attribution to a person’s own group, “the gender question is designed as equal” (2006: 235)—in contrast to the alien group. Kaddor, Karabulut, and Pfaff 2018 see the narrative of oppression as linking the themes of gender and violence. Here, anti-Muslim reservations are based on the general attribution of a patriarchal image of men, dominance behavior, and a willingness to use violence, as well as a stereotypical assumption that Muslim men oppress their women and disregard their rights.

2. Lack of ability and willingness to integrate: Another recurring theme across studies is the integration debate. Scherschel (2006) notes that while integration is conceded, the “alien group” is divided into those capable and those incapable of integration, and thus the “alien group” is constructed as partly racist and partly non-racist. This point of reference is also typical of anti-Muslim resentment. Muslims are typically assumed to want to remain among themselves (discussion of parallel societies) in order to be able to live undisturbed according to their—deviant—values (see also Becker/El-Menouar 2014); however, several studies have already refuted the thesis of so-called Muslim parallel societies (such as Pfundel/Stichs/Tanis 2021). It should also be noted that integration “is seen as the sole responsibility of immigrants and their descendants” (Kaddor/Karabulut/Pfaff 2018: 25) and the role of socio-economic or disadvantaging factors is not taken into account. Shooman (2014) can offer an explanation for this: The utilitarian topos is often used, i.e., the alien group is upgraded or devalued in terms of its usefulness.

3. Affinity to violence and terror: The attribution of an affinity to violence and terror is primarily associated with Islamic “fundamentalism” and expressed by the interviewees with an associated “fear of a supposed Islamization of a non-Muslim majority society” (Kaddor/Karabulut/Pfaff 2018: 25). Such a narrative of Islamism also spreads “generalized prejudices about the propensity of Muslims to violence” and sees violence to be “legitimized” by religious sources (ibid.).

4. The threat narrative can be found as a further theme—also referred to as identity threat (see Janzen et al. 2019; Kaddor/Karabulut/Pfaff 2018)—which expresses a general feeling of being threatened by the presence of Muslims or “Islam.” However, this is not limited to certain content-related topics but condenses the patterns of thought and language already described into an image of an alien or even an enemy, which can go hand in hand
with a practice of demarcation and exclusion of Muslims. One important aspect here is the extent to which Muslims are perceived as belonging to a person’s own group and thus as similar to oneself, or as aliens and thus not so similar to oneself, or even as a potential threat. This is also described in sociological research as the extent of social distance (see Park 1924; Steinbach 2004). The degree of social distance and associated demarcation is expressed through general mistrust and a sense of threat, and thus an affective level.

3.2 Anti-Muslim crimes

It is only in recent years that anti-Muslim incidents have been recorded separately. The introduction of a separate recording system within the framework of crime statistics is a milestone and an expression of increasing public awareness of the existence and scope of anti-Muslim sentiment as a form of misanthropy. In addition to the official crime statistics published annually by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, some NGOs document anti-Muslim crimes and discrimination practices. They repeatedly note that there are far more cases documented in this way than recorded in the official figures (see Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration/Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Antirassismus 2023; Winterhagen 2020). However, they are difficult to compare because the NGOs use different criteria for recording. At this point, the UEM can only outline the available data sources in broad strokes and at the same time identify the gaps that still exist. A more detailed assessment would require an in-depth analysis, which would go beyond the scope of this report.

3.2.1 “Anti-Islamic crimes” in police crime statistics

In Germany, “anti-Islamic crimes” have only been recorded separately in police crime statistics as “politically motivated crime” since 2017. The category of anti-Muslim is not used here; the decisive criterion is the clear reference of the act to a person’s religious affiliation, i.e., anti-Islamic. Anti-Islamic crimes are a sub-category of hate crime—alongside so-called “xenophobic,” racist, anti-Romani, anti-Semitic crimes, as well as crimes directed against other religions and ethnicities.25 Hate crime is defined as follows:

“[P]olitically motivated crimes if, in the assessment of the circumstances of the crime and/or the attitude of the offender, there are indications that such crimes are committed on the basis of the offender’s prejudices related to nationality, ethnicity, skin color, religious affiliation, social status, physical and/or mental disability or impairment, gender/sexual identity, sexual orientation, external appearance.” (BKA 2023)

The crimes can range from insult (section 185 of the German Criminal Code (StGB, Strafgesetzbuch)), incitement of the people (section 130) and threat (section 241), to damage to property (section 304) and dangerous bodily harm (section 224). The number of anti-Islamic crimes totaled 1,075 cases in 2017, 910 in 2018, 950 in 2019, 1,026 in 2020, and in 2021 this figure dropped for the first time to 726 cases. The majority of crimes can be attributed to the phenomenon of right-wing politically motivated crime, i.e., crimes with a right-wing extremist motive.

25 A detailed description of the recording logic for politically motivated crime can be found in the expert report on anti-Semitism: (see Unabhängiger Expertenkreis Antisemitismus 2017: 29–35).
Table 3.3: Crimes with an anti-Islamic backdrop from 2017 to 2021 according to statistics on politically motivated crime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politically motivated crime—right-wing</td>
<td>994</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>856</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politically motivated crime—left-wing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politically motivated crime—foreign ideology</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politically motivated crime—religious ideology</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politically motivated crime—not assigned</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1075</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>1026</td>
<td>732</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3.4: Anti-Islamic crimes in 2019 targeting religious institutions, symbols or representatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crime</th>
<th>German Criminal Code (StGB, Strafgesetzbuch)</th>
<th>Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distributing propaganda material of unconstitutional organizations</td>
<td>Section 86</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of symbols of unconstitutional organizations</td>
<td>Section 86a</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public incitement to commit crimes</td>
<td>Section 111</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trespassing</td>
<td>Section 123</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disturbing the peace by threatening to commit crimes</td>
<td>Section 126</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incitement of the people</td>
<td>Section 130</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depictions of violence</td>
<td>Section 131</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewarding and approval of crimes</td>
<td>Section 140</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revilement of religious faiths and of religious and ideological communities</td>
<td>Section 166</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interference with the practice of religion</td>
<td>Section 167</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insult</td>
<td>Section 185</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodily harm</td>
<td>Section 223</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangerous bodily harm</td>
<td>Section 224</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coercion</td>
<td>Section 240</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat</td>
<td>Section 241</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
<td>Section 242</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damage to property</td>
<td>Section 303</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damage to objects of public interest</td>
<td>Section 304</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violation of the German Assembly Act (Versammlungsgesetz)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>184</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As part of the Criminal Police Reporting Service for Politically Motivated Crime (KPMD-PMK), a catalogue of attack targets was agreed nationwide as of January 1, 2019. Just like the thematic field catalogue, this is hierarchically structured and subdivided into higher and lower attack targets. In relation to the issue, the following targets are relevant: lower: “Meeting place/cultural association,” higher: “Cemetery,” lower: “Mosque,” higher: “Religious community,” lower: “Religious institution,” lower: “Religious representative,” lower: “Religious symbol” and/or lower: “Other religious site.” The LAPOS (Situation Analysis. Politically Motivated Crime) case number file for 2019 currently lists 184 cases under “anti-Islamic” and naming one or more of the above-mentioned attack targets.

Attacks against mosques have been recorded by a few NGOs and Muslim actors since 2010; since 2019, the target of attacks in politically motivated crimes has been recorded in a coordinated manner nationwide. This figure has fluctuated considerably over the years: While 22 cases were recorded in 2010, the number rose steadily to 238 in 2017 only to fall again in the following years to 54 in 2021 (see also subchapter 3.2.2). The extent to which the lower numbers in 2021 represent a long-term decline in anti-Muslim crimes is difficult to assess; this may be due to the COVID pandemic during which Muslim life was less visible and there were therefore fewer occasions for anti-Islamic crimes. If attacks on mosques are expanded to include attacks on cemeteries and other places managed by Muslims, such as club sites, as well as on religious representatives, the number of criminal cases in 2019, for instance, would total 184 (see Tab. 3.4).

Ultimately, the validity of the data also depends on if and how selectively a crime can be classified as anti-Islamic based on the underlying category system.

The assessment of a politically motivated crime follows a four-dimensional structure (see Fig. 3.8). The extent to which such a crime is anti-Islamic can be determined on the basis of the fourth dimension or by specifying the thematic field. Hate crime is one of several topics that provide information about the motive for a crime. Within this field, the specific reference group to which the hatred is directed should be named as precisely as possible. In addition to the “anti-Islamic” category, the “racist” and “xenophobic” categories are also suitable for describing an anti-Muslim crime (see subchapter 3.1). However, it is not only hate crime. The topics of asylum and foreigners can also include cases that can be classified as anti-Islamic or anti-Muslim. In the case of anti-Muslim sentiment, studies show that racist, anti-Islamic, and so-called xenophobic motives overlap and can also be directed against refugees and their accommodation. This means that the rejection of refugees and immigrants often conceals an anti-Muslim attitude; Muslims, refugees, and migrants are often equated.

**Figure 3.8: The four dimensions of statistics on politically motivated crime**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Propaganda crime</td>
<td>Politically motivated crime—left-wing</td>
<td>Left-wing</td>
<td>Overview of topic fields “Restricted information”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politically motivated crime (without a propaganda crime)</td>
<td>Politically motivated crime—right-wing</td>
<td>Right-wing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Politically motivated crime—foreign ideology</td>
<td>Foreigners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Politically motivated crime—religious ideology</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Politically motivated crime—not assigned</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lang 2018: 3.
In this respect, it can be assumed that many of the cases classified in crime statistics as racist and xenophobic\textsuperscript{26} as well as the separately recorded cases against refugees have an anti-Muslim backdrop. "Perpetrators may identify/perceive and attack a person as Muslim based on their ethnicity, skin color, religious dress, language, or name" (Hyökki et al. 2022: 8). Even the possibility of assigning a crime to several categories is unlikely to solve the lack of selectivity in these categories. The number of so-called xenophobic crimes alone amounted to 4,735 cases in 2021, more than six times the number of anti-Islamic crimes.

In addition to the lack of selectivity in the categories used, the investigating officers also need proven skills in order to correctly classify a crime as anti-Islamic. Politically motivated crime thus merely reflects the police assessment of a crime. In light of the current lack of awareness of anti-Muslim sentiment, it can be assumed that the anti-Muslim dimension of a crime is often not recognized (see also Lang 2018). The Federal Police has only been testing racism awareness among police officers since 2019 in the form of model projects.\textsuperscript{27} In addition, criticism has also been expressed that the affected person’s perspective is not sufficiently taken into account when crimes are classified. Civil society monitoring bodies that document counseling requests by people affected by racism sometimes come up with significantly different figures. In its annual report,\textsuperscript{28} the Association of Counseling Centers for People Affected by Right-wing, Racist, and Antisemitic Violence (Verband der Beratungsstel- len für Betroffene rechter, rassistischer und antisemitischer Gewalt) reports about one-third more right-wing acts of violence than the law enforcement agencies and the offices for the protection of the constitution (see 2018). This discrepancy is mainly due to the fact that the affected person’s perception is decisive for the counseling centers (see Kleffner 2018). However, it must be examined to what extent uniform criteria are used to record crimes and whether these figures can be compared.

The Federal Criminal Police Office does indeed want to take the perspective of the affected person into account: “When assessing the circumstances of a crime, the affected person’s view must be taken into account, in addition to other aspects” (2016: 5, footnote 1). However, the study published in 2017 by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights notes that the affected people see their religion as part of their ethnic origin and thus cite their ethnic references as the main reason for discrimination, without explicitly referring to the religious reference (see FRA 2017: 29–30). To make matters worse, statistics on politically motivated crime record the situation at the moment in time when the crime is reported to the police (see Lang 2018: 5). Often, however, the motive for the crime only becomes known during the course of the investigation and trial. This is why gaps in data collection are also attributed to the lack of statistics on the course of events and there are strong calls for a greater exchange of information between the police and the judiciary (ibid.: 8).

Furthermore, it can be assumed that only a small proportion of anti-Muslim incidents and crimes are in fact reported. The large gap between officially recorded anti-Muslim incidents and the attacks actually experienced by the affected persons is made particularly clear in the above study: Only

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\textsuperscript{26} The “xenophobic” category suggests that those affected are in fact “foreigners.” However, this often affects people who were born and raised in Germany. It is recommended that the term be replaced by “othering” as this denotes more clearly that those affected are denied belonging and made into “aliens” (see also subchapter 2.3.1.5.6). In the case of anti-Semitism, the Federal Association of Departments for Research and Information on Anti-Semitism (Bundesverband der Recherche- und Informationsstellen Antisemitismus e.V.) classifies othering as a manifestation and uses the term in its monitoring (for instance, 2021: 61).


\textsuperscript{28} For right-wing, racist, and anti-Semitic attacks in eastern Germany, Berlin, and Schleswig-Holstein.
12 percent of cases are reported by the affected people (see FRA 2017; see also subchapter ↗ 5.3.2). Accordingly, it can be assumed that the actual numbers of anti-Muslim incidents and crimes are significantly higher than the documented cases. This points to the importance of willingness among those affected to report and denounce anti-Muslim sentiment (this is addressed separately in subchapter ↗ 5.6.1).

3.2.2 Attacks on mosques

In addition to the statistics compiled by the Federal Criminal Police Office, anti-Islamic attacks are also documented by various civil society actors. With a view to assaults, the anti-discrimination office of the Turkish-Islamic Union of the Institute for Religion (ADS DITIB), which has documented attacks on mosques and other religious institutions since 2015, should be mentioned here. It records the following cases:

“The term ‘attacks on mosques’ refers to all incidents/acts that directly target the mosque building, buildings that directly belong to the mosque complex, as well as prayer rooms in public institutions (airports, hospitals, universities, etc.). An incident/act is defined as any form of criminal or non-criminal damage, insult, damage to property, assault, etc., which is directed against the mosque/prayer room as a symbol of the religion of Islam (i.e., not explicitly directed against individuals). For instance, ‘threatening letters’ addressed to mosques also fall under the category of ‘attacks on mosques.’ The motives for the crime are only classified when the motive is clear, for instance, swastika graffiti or results of an investigation.” (Paffrath 2017: 7)

In contrast to the statistics on cases of politically motivated crime compiled by the Federal Criminal Police Office, which narrowly defines the “mosque” target and separately records other religious institutions, ADS DITIB includes all religious institutions. Moreover, the latter also covers cases that are not relevant under criminal law. Therefore, the figures cannot be directly compared.

In 2019, the FAIR international—Federation against Injustice and Racism founded the “Brandeilig” initiative, which also documents attacks on mosques and is specifically working to make this form of anti-Muslim sentiment visible. It uses the following working definition:

“In the definition of an attack on mosques, we include all attacks on facilities used by Muslims for religious purposes or which perpetrators assume to be used as such. This also includes premises, objects, or events that have a legal or factual connection to such an institution (libraries, event rooms, residential units, youth facilities, club vehicles, trash cans, outdoor activities, etc.). We also consider threatening letters or even bomb threats as an ‘attack.’ Threats of any kind are categorized by the legislature as ‘endangerment offenses’ and are considered criminal offenses punishable by imprisonment.” (FAIR International [Brandeilig] 2019)

In contrast to the definition used by ADS DITIB, the focus here is on the perception of the perpetrator; targeted institutions, which are merely perceived to be Muslim, are also included.
Figure 3.9: Attacks on mosques (see respective definition of mosque)

Source: UEM’s own representation based on information from the Federal Ministry of the Interior, ADS DITIB, and FAIR international at the request of the UEM in January 2023.

ADS DITIB’s goal is to act as a contact point for people affected by discrimination and racism and it provides a digital reporting form for such incidents. It can be assumed that primarily communities belonging to the Turkish-Islamic Union of the Institute for Religion (DITIB) contact the anti-discrimination office of their association; however, their claim is to also record incidents that cover Muslim communities and organizations of other associations.

All in all, the numbers documented are difficult to compare due to the different recording systems; major differences were found, particularly for 2017; while ADS DITIB recorded fewer than 50 cases, Brandeilig documented almost 100 attacks; on the other hand, the Federal Criminal Police Office’s statistics on politically motivated crime contain more than twice as many with almost 250 cases—even with its narrowly defined criteria for “mosque” and “criminally relevant.” The statistics of the Federal Criminal Police Office provide the most valid figures, as they follow a clearly defined system—even assuming that a large number of cases are not reported (see chapter 74).

Nevertheless, supplementary documentation by NGOs can help to ensure that anti-Islamic crimes are reported and police investigations initiated.

### 3.3 Anti-Muslim attacks and discrimination

In recent years, various publicly funded organizations, networks, and hotlines have been set up with the aim of counseling and empowering those affected by hostility and discrimination. Most of these incidents are usually below the threshold of criminal liability. The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (ADS Bund) and the institutions at the federal-state level are important points of contact and complaints offices that are open to all people who experience discrimination. Furthermore, there are various initiatives and organizations in place that specifically target people affected by anti-Muslim sentiment. In this respect, the documentation carried out by these organizations is an important source of data.
It should be noted, however, that their annual case numbers are based on requests for counseling from affected persons and thus cannot reflect the actual development of anti-Muslim incidents, but only allow statements about the willingness of affected people to report.

### 3.3.1 Case figures of the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency

The Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency classifies counseling requests according to different discrimination motives. These are experiences of discrimination that are usually below the threshold of criminal liability and for the most part occur between private individuals within the framework of the characteristics and areas of life protected by the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG, Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz). According to the 2021 Annual Report, about seven percent of all counseling requests referred to the characteristic of “religion” as a motive for discrimination. This share has remained constant since 2016. An evaluation of enquiries regarding discrimination on the basis of religion and specifically in relation to Muslims, which was carried out at the request of the UEM, shows that between 22 and 81 enquiries have been made annually since 2010, with a significant increase between 2020 and 2021: The number almost doubled within one year, reaching 81 cases for the first time (see Fig. 3.10). To what extent this reflects a trend toward greater willingness to report cannot be assessed more precisely at this point.

**Figure 3.10: Requests for counseling submitted to the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency due to discrimination on the grounds of Muslim religion**

Source: UEM’s own representation based on information from the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency at the request of the UEM in February 2023.
Almost one in two of the 492 requests for counseling between 2010 and 2021 concern the labor market (see Tab. 3.5), for instance, private or public employers demanding that the headscarf be removed for employment or training. In other cases, due to wearing a headscarf, women are unable to find employment or to complete an internship in day-care centers or other educational institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of life</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% (rounded)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labor market</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>47.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private service/access to goods</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offices/public authorities</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public space</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing market</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet/social media</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising/media</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private environment/neighborhood</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judiciary/police</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure/volunteering/clubs/political parties</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other area</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/care</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other area/not specified</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, Muslim religious affiliation regularly plays a role in experiences of discrimination at offices and public authorities (5.5%) as well as with the judiciary and police (1.4%). This falls under public law and the Basic Law, but not under the General Equal Treatment Act. Driver’s license authorities, for instance, sometimes require Muslim women to show a photo without a headscarf or to prove their religious affiliation. Occasionally, people seeking advice also feel discriminated against by police officers because of being Muslim.

In addition, incidents outside the scope of application of and protection under the General Equal Treatment Act are repeatedly reported in public spaces (3.9%), on the internet and social media (2%), and in advertising and media (1.8%). Thus, people seeking advice are insulted on the street or on online platforms because of their headscarf. Or Islam is portrayed as “terrorist” in media coverage and people seeking advice perceive this as discriminatory toward Muslims. It would be helpful to compare these figures, such as those above, with the requests for counseling received by the anti-discrimination agencies at the federal-state level.

Looking at all inquiries to the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, an overall increase can be observed that relates to the “ethnic origin” characteristic; over the last five years, a significant increase was recorded from 738 cases in 2016 to 2,080 in 2021. These figures cannot provide any more precise findings regarding the number of anti-Muslim cases. Here, too, it would be interesting to know the extent to which the requests
Facts and figures on the extent of anti-Muslim sentiment in Germany

In the “ethnic origin” category were submitted by Muslims. As already described, there are overlaps and equations in these categories—both with regard to those affected and to perpetrators. The European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (FRA 2009: 5) shows that both religious and ethnic factors are relevant for 43 percent of Muslims who experience discrimination. Only ten percent cited religion as the sole factor for the discrimination experienced.

3.3.2 NGOs with a focus on people affected by anti-Muslim discrimination

Only about one in ten Muslims reports experiencing discrimination; this is the result of a representative survey of the Muslim population in Germany (see FRA 2017: 38; 2009). This means that the vast majority do not report experienced incidents that are motivated by anti-Muslim sentiment, let alone go to the police. The main reason given by people affected was that nothing would be done or changed anyway. Many also saw no point in reporting discrimination as it was “part of their normal everyday life” (FRA 2009: 3).

Furthermore, according to a study by CLAIM—Alliance against Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Hate, only every second counseling center has a procedure to identify anti-Muslim incidents in the counseling process (see Winterhagen 2020: 4). Therefore, the Competence Network on Islam and Anti-Muslim Sentiment (Kompetenznetzwerk Islam und Muslimfeindlichkeit), which has been publicly funded since 2020, is determined to better record and make visible attacks and discrimination motivated by anti-Muslim sentiment. This network is made up of four organizations involved in prevention work in the field of anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment and has the task of bundling information nationwide, providing expert advice, and ensuring the transfer of successful prevention approaches to federal, federal-state, and municipal structures.

In addition, the Cabinet Committee on Combating Right-Wing Extremism and Racism has adopted a package of measures that includes community-based monitoring of anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim attacks (see also Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration/Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Antirassismus 2023). The network also aims to create low-threshold reporting possibilities for affected people. A CLAIM reporting portal “I Report,” which is in the pilot phase, has been online since June 2021. The aim is to collect and combine data from different counseling centers in a uniform way. Assaults and cases of discrimination registered via the website www.i-report.eu meldens are first entered into a database and then supplemented and combined with case numbers from counseling centers.

The Association of Counseling Centers for People Affected by Right-wing, Racist and Antisemitic Violence (Verband der Beratungsstellen für Betroffene rechter, rassistischer und antisemitischer Gewalt) should also be mentioned here; this is another organization that bundles various initiatives and reporting centers for dealing with and combating anti-Muslim sentiment. Made up of a nationwide network of counseling organizations,

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29 CLAIM is a project funded by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth as part of the federal program “Demokratie leben!” (Live democracy!) and was launched in 2017. Fifty organizations are currently involved in this network. Above all, the initiative has set itself the goal of raising awareness of anti-Muslim sentiment—especially among decision-makers in administration and politics—and attracting public attention to this issue. The Day against Anti-Muslim Racism on July 1, which CLAIM coordinates annually with various actions and which was initially launched by Rat muslimischer Studierender und Akademiker (Council of Muslim Students and Academics), also serves this purpose.

30 The Competence Network on Islam and Anti-Muslim Sentiment is made up of the civil society organizations Teilseuend/CLAIM, Zentrum für Europäische und Orientalische Kultur, Verband binationaler Familien and Arbeitsgemeinschaft evangelische Jugend.
this association is dedicated to people affected by right-wing violence, which is why the focus here is broader; anti-Muslim sentiment is addressed as a possible motive of right-wing violence—alongside anti-Semitism and racism in general. The association currently has 15 counseling centers operating in 14 federal states with more than 25 contact points, providing online counseling for people affected by right-wing, racist, and anti-Semitic violence. In addition to professionalizing counseling, the association publishes annual figures, statistical surveys, and analyses on the motivation of perpetrators, the main affected groups, regional characteristics, and how law enforcement agencies deal with right-wing violence. The association calls for monitoring by specialist counseling centers to be anchored nationwide.

The case numbers provided by NGOs so far are thus not very reliable. The rising number of reports among Muslims can at best be seen as an expression of increasing awareness among affected people, which is partly due to the counseling work being carried out by the organizations. Therefore, the case numbers of individual organizations are not presented here, as these do not allow valid statements on the actual extent of anti-Muslim sentiment and are also difficult to compare due to different recording practices.

3.4 Conclusion

In order to effectively combat anti-Muslim sentiment, it is first necessary to have a sound knowledge of the extent of anti-Muslim reservations and incidents as well as their different manifestations. Based on data from scientifically convincing representative studies (series), police crime statistics, and documented cases of anti-Muslim sentiment collected by anti-discrimination agencies, counseling organizations, and other NGOs, it was possible to draw up a first picture of the situation and to identify gaps. Representative studies on the different manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiment are rare while those studies that are available often examine partial aspects of anti-Muslim sentiment in the context of other issues. Nevertheless, some renowned survey series deliver reliable data over a longer period of time which, when taken together, provide important information about the extent and different facets of anti-Muslim attitudes in Germany. These survey series show that anti-Muslim sentiment is not a marginal phenomenon in society but is widespread in large parts of the German population, remaining at a consistently high level for many years—apart from slight fluctuations. Around every second person in Germany agrees with anti-Muslim statements. This leads to overlaps between various reservations and devaluations because Muslims are perceived not only as particularly “alien” immigrants but also as members of an allegedly “backward” religion. In the context of issues related to migration policy, Muslims are said to lack the ability to integrate, they tend to consciously distance themselves, and avoid contact with people of other faiths. In the context of issues related to religion, Islam is generally linked with violence, extremism, and backwardness, and Muslims are accordingly assumed to have an affinity for violence, extremism, and patriarchal values. This kind of stigmatization affects Muslims in two ways. Particularly problematic is the equation of Muslim piety with fundamentalism, which goes hand in hand with a massive rejection of Muslim religious expression and even with a willingness to advocate restrictions on fundamental rights relating to religious freedom for Muslims and to deny them the right to equal participation. These reservations may arise from ignorance and may initially be an expression of skepticism, without automatically inferring conscious hostility. However, they provide a dangerous breeding ground and a gateway for anti-democratic groups that use anti-Muslim themes to appeal to the social center. This breeding ground can take hold unhindered especially in regions where personal encounters with Muslims
are rare and where there is thus no corrective to widespread reservations. The results of the quantitative studies reviewed also show that anti-Muslim sentiment is related to other forms of misanthropy, i.e., that people who display anti-Muslim attitudes, for instance, are also more likely to have anti-Semitic attitudes. It becomes very clear here that anti-Muslim sentiment cannot be seen as an isolated phenomenon—even if it does follow a specific logic—but can be understood in its anti-human dimension as part of an anti-democratic ideology.

The introduction of a separate category for recording “anti-Islamic crimes” in police crime statistics for politically motivated crime is an important milestone in the observation of anti-Muslim or anti-Islamic hate crime. However, some weaknesses are also evident here. It was not possible to make a detailed assessment of the recording criteria and practice in this report. However, initial analyses suggest that the classification system used is in part not very selective. Furthermore, investigating officers require specific skills in order to correctly classify an act as “anti-Islamic.” Considering the low level of social sensitivity with regard to anti-Muslim sentiment, it can be assumed that these skills are not always given. In addition, willingness to report a crime on the part of those affected is low, so that the number of unreported cases can be assumed to be high. Despite all its weaknesses, however, the statistics on politically motivated crime do provide a reliable collection of data on a broad basis of information, which is an important foundation for the punishment of anti-Muslim crimes.

In addition to police crime statistics, various registration authorities and NGOs also document relevant cases in an effort to provide indications of the extent of incidents below the threshold of punishable crimes. However, the validity of these reports is difficult to assess. Due to different recording logics, it is not easy to compare such reports and they also only provide information on how the willingness to report is developing. These figures therefore do not yet paint an actual picture of reality. According to studies, only every ninth or tenth incident is reported. Nevertheless, the reported cases can provide an idea of the areas of life that are particularly affected by anti-Muslim sentiment. According to the data of the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes), this mainly concerns experiences of discrimination in the labor market.

It is important that cooperation between the different agencies be strengthened and efforts to improve the comparability of data increased in order to gain greater insight into the extent of anti-Muslim sentiment in Germany. However, representative studies are essential in order to be able to make statements about unreported cases and the actual extent of anti-Muslim discrimination and violence. This is the only way that conclusions can be drawn about the social prevalence of anti-Muslim sentiment and developments in the discrepancy between reported and unreported cases.
3.5 Recommendations

The Independent Expert Group on Anti-Muslim Sentiment recommends:

› That anti-Muslim sentiment be considered more in tandem with racism. Anti-Muslim sentiment does not result solely from reservations about Islam, but also feeds on racist motives. We therefore recommend the socio-political application of the concept of anti-Muslim sentiment in the sense of the definition elaborated by the UEM, which includes an anti-racist perspective. This aspect must be taken more into account, for instance, in state support measures.

› Development of a funding guideline by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) to expand and network research on the topic of “Monitoring anti-Muslim hostility.” There is a need for comprehensive and regular monitoring of anti-Muslim attitudes in the population as well as their various facets and backdrops. We therefore recommend that existing research at universities, scientific institutes, and foundations be networked and strengthened in order to bring together existing knowledge, develop concepts, and suitably operationalize anti-Muslim sentiment as a multidimensional phenomenon. The establishment and institutionalization of cooperative relationships between research and civil society as well as political-administrative practice can also ensure the translation of findings into socio-political measures.

› The creation of educational formats for dealing with anti-Muslim sentiment and teaching skills for a society with a migrant population. Anti-Muslim reservations are widespread in large parts of the population and are often not recognized as such. Therefore, combating anti-Muslim sentiment should be anchored as a cross-cutting issue in teaching on democracy. Spaces are also needed for debate and reflection, for instance, in schools and extracurricular education, in order to increase social awareness of this form of misanthropy and to teach skills.

› The evaluation and further development of the system used to record anti-Islamic crimes in police crime statistics for the category “politically motivated crime.” Within the framework of the UEM, it was not possible to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the system used to record politically motivated crime; however, initial analyses suggest that a review of the recording criteria as well as their theoretical basis could enable the further development and improvement of the recording system, for instance, with regard to the selectivity of the categories used. For this purpose, we recommend including current knowledge from research and practice.

› The uniform and comprehensive recording and documentation of anti-Muslim incidents—also below the criminality threshold. Recording and documenting incidents below the criminality threshold (following the example of other countries that record “hate crimes” and “hate incidents”) facilitate a more precise assessment of social tensions as well as risk situations for Muslims and can form the basis for prevention and intervention measures. The publication of the collected data in a uniform, nationwide database can also contribute to greater transparency. Stepping up cooperation between state executive bodies (police authorities, judiciary) and NGOs as well as other initiatives in recording anti-Muslim crimes can also help to improve the data situation.
Conducting a regular dark field study on the extent of anti-Muslim incidents. The data available from counseling organizations and registration authorities currently only reflect the development of willingness to report incidents but cannot provide information about the actual extent of anti-Muslim incidents. In order to shed light on the dark field and to close the gap between reported and unreported cases, social awareness-raising measures are needed to increase willingness to report while the ongoing recording of the dark field is carried out by scientific institutions that are in dialogue with practitioners.

The establishment of continuing and advanced anti-racist training, sensitive to both diversity and religion, for police authorities and public prosecutors’ offices. The police and the judiciary must be made sufficiently aware of anti-Muslim racist crimes so that they can be recognized and correctly recorded. It is particularly important to raise awareness of how to deal with people affected by anti-Muslim incidents (in the sense of an approach centered on the affected people according to the EU Directive on Victim Protection) so that inhibition thresholds are reduced when reporting crimes.
4 Public debates: Case studies on anti-Muslim sentiment

Anti-Muslim sentiment is a phenomenon that manifests itself in various areas of society—be it in politics, the judiciary, the cultural sphere, or in media coverage. This ultimately becomes clear in public discourses in which Islam-related debates become visible to society as a whole. It is in fact the public space that plays a crucial role in any democracy. Public discourses provide information, but they can also polarize through an undifferentiated portrayal. They contribute significantly to the formation of opinion and thus influence not only the members of society and their coexistence, but also the political system and its development.

In the following, the UEM reconstructs nine public debates characterized by anti-Muslim rhetoric. This is not a complete overview of all relevant debates on Islam, but rather aims to analyze existing anti-Muslim discourses on the basis of concrete examples. What the selected case studies have in common is that they present Islam in a particularly negative thematic context. This negative focus is also the discursive problem with criticism of Islam (see subchapter ↗ 2.6), which often expresses important criticism, but remains problem-fixated and is also frequently put forward by the same authors and media.

4.1 Debate about the headscarf (hijab)

For more than two decades, we have experienced a sometimes highly emotional and polarizing debate about the headscarf (hijab) worn by Muslim women. This debate usually goes beyond the specific topic and is linked to fundamental questions about the relationship between politics and religion, religious freedom, and state neutrality, as well as cultural identity and the “integration” of a religion perceived as foreign and sometimes threatening. These disputes first came to a head when a Muslim teacher at a public primary school demanded to be allowed to wear the hijab. Legal action was then taken, passing through all court levels and finally ending with a ruling by the Federal Constitutional Court on September 24, 2003, which declared the grounds brought forward by Stuttgart Higher School Authority to exclude a teacher candidate who wears a hijab from appointment as a teacher to be insufficient. In response to this ruling, the federal-state parliaments sought legal regulations. Eight of them passed laws between 2004 and 2006 banning teachers from wearing the hijab. In 2015, the Federal Constitutional Court ruled in favor of positive religious freedom and decided that the blanket ban on religious clothing was unconstitutional.

The “headscarf debate” is not consistent with certain party-political camps, but runs through parties, churches, and the center of society. The hijab has sparked a controversial, often undifferentiated proxy debate throughout Germany, which is in fact about issues of integration, gender discourses, and secularity. The derogatory or at least insufficiently differentiated patterns of argumentation against the hijab sometimes assume that “Muslim women” or their religion and culture are more backward and less emancipated, so that their inclusion threatened a relapse into...

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“their own past” (Opratko 2019: 225; Boos-Niazy 2022: 12–16). Thus, Muslims and their religion are stigmatized as menacing and foreign, are observed and commented on with suspicion, and are accused of refusing to integrate and of undermining the free democratic basic order, so that discrimination against Muslims appears legitimate (see Attia/Keskinkılıç/Okcu 2021):

“In the threat scenario of Islamist terrorism, those (marked as) Muslims are targeted as a specific problem group according to their actual or ascribed religion, culture, and origin and placed under surveillance in the public, political, scientific, and educational spheres. The threat scenario results in policies of criminalization, suspicion, and surveillance of [those marked as] Muslim women as potential threats.” (Ibid.: 18)

In the patterns of argumentation against the hijab, hijab-wearing women are on the one hand perceived as foreign and dangerous and on the other hand stylized as victims of per se patriarchal and oppressive conditions—and paradoxically would even wish to legitimize these conditions. Muslims are hierarchized and homogenized on the basis of certain (ascribed) characteristics, such as a refugee backdrop, gender, skin color, religion, or culture. Depending on their positioning, they are granted different levels of recognition, appreciation, and opportunities to act. The basic form of distinction is based on the juxtaposition of a natio-ethno-cultural “us” and “them,”32 which are maintained through social and structural practices. The corresponding attribution and exclusion practices lead to social inequality and disadvantage for individuals and groups on an intrapersonal, structural, cultural, and institutional level (see Benbrahim 2019: 3). By attributing the hijab to others as a symbol of values that are not compatible with the constitution, it is thus assumed that hijab-wearing women do not share the same values, do not fit into society, and therefore cannot claim the same rights for themselves—thus depriving their rightful claims of legitimacy (see Rommelspacher 2010: 451; Boos-Niazy 2022: 29).

Even though it is now possible to address unconscious biases against the hijab and Muslims by including perspectives critical of racism, these counter-narratives are rarely perceived by the public. Instead, stereotypical perceptions of the hijab stubbornly persist, remaining widespread in the center of society.

The fact that women with hijab are constructed and addressed as a uniform group also applies to the thematization and criticism they experience by feminist organizations. The most prominent examples are the women’s rights association TERRE DES FEMMES (2006) and the feminist magazine Emma, which are particularly critical of patriarchal structures among Muslims. Contextualizations, such as different religious or cultural practices, and socializations, Muslim diversity as well as the community or community affiliation (for instance, Ahmadiyya, Alevi, Sunni, Shiite, as well as different currents within the diverse communities, etc.) are not taken into account and ignored. Ignoring these varying contexts leads to a generalization of Muslims and stylizes them as victims of a presumably male-dominated religious community.

Since 9/11, attacks on women and girls wearing hijabs have increased. This is due to the rise of the political right and the fact that anti-Muslim attitudes are gaining greater social acceptance. Due to the changed threat perception, anti-Muslim racist argumentations have become increasingly connectable, fulfilling a hinge function, as proven

32 This natio-ethno-cultural concept of belonging divides people into “us” and “not-us” (see Mecheril 2003) in an effort to construct one’s own emancipatory self-image through the ostensible otherness and perception of others. The term problematizes and draws attention to the everyday construction of otherness in which categories such as “nation,” “ethnicity,” and “culture” often become blurred.
in the Leipziger Autoritarsmus-Studie (Decker/Brähler 2020) by the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

The chairwoman of the board of the Aktionsbündnis muslimischer Frauen, Gabriele Boos-Niazy, speaks of an aggravation of the situation. She notes that because of the visibility of their religious affiliation through the hijab, Muslim women come into the line of fire of racist and right-wing attacks in public confrontations faster than Muslim men:

“For us, the current increase in assaults is clearly linked to a broad erosion of the understanding of the law. Important social actors are leading the way, and large sections of the population are influenced by it. Thus, even those affected perceive some discrimination to be so normal that they no longer take issue with it.”
(Boos-Niazy in Köhler 2019)

A look at the discourses around the topic of the hijab shows the huge impact of these discourses on those affected in Muslim communities. In addition, the recurring “headscarf debates” make it clear that not only socio-cultural origin and religious characteristics or attributions play an important role in the multiple discrimination of Muslim women, but also the characteristic of gender (see Weichselbaumer 2016: 108–110). Muslim women with a hijab and a non-German surname are severely disadvantaged and have relatively poor prospects on the labor market despite having high qualifications. As early as 2010, the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (see Frings 2010) pointed out the structural discrimination that takes place against women wearing headscarves. According to the study by Weichselbaumer (2016) from the Institute for Labor Economics (IZA) in Bonn, women with a hijab must send out four times as many applications for a listed job as applicants with no migration history but with the same skills and qualifications until they receive an invitation to an interview. The study also contradicts the recurring phantom debate that the problems facing Muslim women in the labor market are due to low qualifications. Instead, it confirms that even female applicants who have grown up here with an excellent command of German and who have been educated and trained in Germany are confronted with considerable disadvantages if they have a Turkish-sounding name—not to mention if they submit an application photo wearing a hijab.

The hijab often serves as a projection screen for anti-Muslim attitudes and is overlaid by religious-political debates about secularity. In doing so, parts of the media, society, and politics make use of clichéd and stereotypical images. The projections reproduce the image of the oppressed hijab wearer who is fundamentalist and secretly anti-constitutional, although the experiences and lifestyles of many Muslims in Germany show that faith and emancipatory thinking do not have to be a contradiction. It should be noted that the blanket ban on the hijab restricts the right to self-determination and religious freedom of its wearers and therefore appears disproportionate. What’s more, arguments for a “headscarf ban” testify to an ignorance of the foundations of a secular constitutional state (see subchapter 9.1.1). Freedom of religion is “a central human right that must not be restricted on the basis of a too narrowly understood concept of state neutrality” (Sacksofsky 2009: 290). Even more, prohibitions regarding religious clothing habits are not in line with an inclusive understanding of society (see Foroutan/Simon/Coskun 2019). Instead of facilitating the participation of multi-discriminated Muslims, they are stigmatized in large parts of the public and in other areas of society. The debates ignore the fact that racist and right-wing violence is particularly directed against them because of the visibility of a hijab and as women of color (see Benbrahim 2021a: 56). Anti-Muslim attitudes are often played down, but can lead to massive violence for those affected, and can even be fatal, as in the case of Marwa El-Sherbini. The signal effect of this anti-Muslim act on hijab-wearing women
remains present to this day. The need for security for women wearing a hijab has not been sufficiently perceived or taken seriously. A democracy is particularly measured by how it deals with and protects vulnerable groups or minorities.

4.2 The circumcision debate

At the end of 2010, a general practitioner practicing in Cologne performed a foreskin circumcision on a four-year-old boy at the request of his Muslim parents. The intervention took place in the doctor’s office, who stitched up the wound and additionally treated it during a subsequent home visit. However, two days after the operation, bleeding started, and the mother took her son to hospital for further treatment. Due to the language barrier, communication was difficult and suspicions arose that the circumcision had not been carried out professionally. It was noted on the admission form of University Hospital Cologne that the boy had been circumcised “in an apartment using a pair of scissors and without an anesthetic” (Musharbash 2012). The police involved informed the public prosecutor’s office, which in turn brought charges on suspicion of assault (see Çetin/Wolter 2012: 3). In September 2011, the Cologne District Court acquitted the accused doctor because the circumcision had been carried out professionally and according to medical standards. The public prosecutor’s office appealed the ruling. On May 7, 2012, the Cologne Regional Court ruled that the circumcision constituted bodily harm and argued that a medically unnecessary circumcision was illegal. Even if circumcision was religiously motivated and performed at the parents’ request, the parents were not permitted to order the circumcision of their son who is incapable of giving consent, as this would “permanently and irreparably alter” the child’s body. In this case, the child’s welfare was to be valued higher than the parents’ right to freedom of religion and their parental right of upbringing.33

It was only through a newspaper article a few weeks later that the ruling itself received public attention and subsequently triggered fierce controversy that lasted for months. Very soon, there was an abundance of articles on religiously motivated circumcision in various media, in which legal, religious, medical, and political arguments were put forward, sometimes with considerable vehemence and emotion. After all, one could argue, it was about the fundamental question of what freedoms religion and religious practice may claim or what limits must be set for them. It is nevertheless striking that various journalistic contributions and also statements by academics were carried by polemics, while the countless comments and expressions of opinion by readers were often even hostile and sometimes filled with hatred (see Widmann 2012: 219–227; Unabhängiger Expertenkreis Antisemitismus 2018: 245–251).

This train of thought is already familiar from various “integration debates,” which mainly revolve around the supposed incompatibility of Islam and therefore also of Muslims with Western secular societies. The debates each follow the notion of a binary opposition between an archaic, backward, and barbaric Islam on the one hand and a modern, progressive, and civilized “West” on the other. The ability of Muslims to modernize and thus to belong to society is repeatedly questioned in public (see Karadeniz 2021: 19–21).

What was new was that in the so-called circumcision debate, this approach expanded into a presumably general criticism of religion. Such religious rituals, according to the tenor, were cruel and belonged in a foreign and barbaric world.

33 See Cologne Regional Court: Judgment of May 7, 2012, file Ref. 151 Ns 169/11. Religiously motivated circumcision of the foreskin of a male infant, even with the consent of the child’s parents, is bodily harm pursuant to section 223 (1) of the German Criminal Code (StGB, Strafgesetzbuch). Available online: https://openjur.de/u/433915.html [Feb. 17, 2022].
of yesterday and not in our scientifically enlighten-
ed sphere (see Bielefeldt 2012b: 2). The criticism,
presented under the guise of enlightenment, was ini-
tially directed against the religious practice of
Muslims, but it also affected Jews. And they soon
spoke out in public. The Conference of European
Rabbis described the Cologne ruling on circum-
cision, just over two weeks after it was announced,
“as the worst attack on Jewish life since the Holocaust”
(Dernbach 2012), and its president added: “A ban
on circumcision poses an existential question for
the Jewish community in Germany. If the ruling
is allowed to stand, I see no future for Jews in
Germany.” (Ibid.) Also in view of the more than
1.4 billion circumcised men worldwide, of whom
slightly more than 60 percent are circumcised
for religious reasons (see Morris et al. 2016), the
ruling and the related debate gained international
attention. Germany’s historical responsibility
for the Holocaust also gave them a new political
dimension. Concerned about Germany’s reputa-
tion, the Federal Foreign Minister criticized
the Cologne ruling, stating that it had “caused
irritation on a global scale” (DER SPIEGEL online
2012a). He demanded: “It must be clear that Ger-
many is a cosmopolitan and tolerant country in
which religious freedom is firmly anchored and
in which religious traditions, such as circumcision,
are protected as an expression of religious diver-
sity.” (Ibid.) The Chancellor warned that Germany
should not be the only country where Jews were
not allowed to practice their rituals: “Otherwise
we would turn into a nation of comedians.” (DER
SPIEGEL online 2012b) She did, however, fail to
mention that the ruling also affected Muslims.

The debate not only led to outraged reactions
from representatives of Jewish and Muslim orga-
nizations, but also to solidarity among these
organizations and joint calls for protest. Support
also came from the Christian side, which saw the
ban as a serious encroachment on religious free-
dom and the parental right of upbringing. Unlike
previous “integration debates,” the circumcision
debate was relatively quickly contained by the
political side. That being said, the German govern-
ment’s efforts to swiftly end any legal uncertainty
and to establish legal peace were denounced in
many quarters as a “political rush job.” In addition
to populist and culture-war public exaggerations,
anti-Semitic conspiracy rhetoric was now added,
especially in internet forums, where members
of the Bundestag were said to be under “Jewish
pressure” (see Ionescu 2018: 289–311). Notwith-
standing this, the German Bundestag passed a law
in December 2012, 34 which largely legitimizes the
circumcision of male children.

As a study by the University of Oxford showed,
the German circumcision debate of 2012 had an
equally negative impact on both Muslims and
Jews. Nevertheless, there was a significant dif-
ference in perception. Due to the history of the
Holocaust, the Jewish population has rarely been
the focus of public discourse in Germany that
is hostile to or critical of religion; for Muslims,
however, this was already the norm. This also
meant that the “change in the social climate and
the culture of debate” represented a turning point
in German-Jewish relations for Jews, as a result of
which, according to the study, they experienced
strong insecurities and saw their previous sense of
belonging challenged. For Muslims, on the other
hand, the debate represented the continuation of
racist and anti-Muslim discourses of the post-9/11
era (see Öktem 2013: 43).

Even from a distance, the debate can be seen as
challenging as it relates to various fundamental
and human rights, such as freedom of religion,
parental custody, and the child’s right to physical
and mental integrity. It may in fact have been
a conflict that cannot be clearly resolved in our
constitutional state, so that the solution presented

34 See Bundestag printed paper 17/11295 of November 5, 2012: Draft law on the scope of personal care in the case of circumcision of
male children. Available online: https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/17/112/1711295.pdf [September 25, 2022].
made sense in order to preserve social peace. However, the circumcision debate was also particularly explosive because it contains the fundamental question of the status of religion in a secular legal system. And it is precisely this question that reappears, more or less openly, in debates about religious minorities. One reason for this is the “attempt to rationalize one’s own emotional reservations” (Pollack 2012). Moreover, dominant social positions and their historical development are rarely reflected in such debates. Many critics locate themselves on secular ground from which they claim universal validity for their supposedly neutral arguments. Neither the Christian understanding of secularity nor the atheist worldview that has emerged in distinction to it are critically reflected upon. Instead, following a very specifically Christian-European understanding, according to which religion is assigned a clearly delineated place in society, claims are formulated for religious minorities (see Amir-Moazami 2021).

4.3 Debate about the construction of mosques

The construction of new mosques in Germany repeatedly gives rise to conflict, which is at times highly controversial and attracts a great deal of media coverage. The arguments against the construction of a mosque are often an expression of anti-Muslim attitudes. In a special way, representative mosque buildings are the cause of heated disputes, i.e., above all those ten percent of German mosques that have a dome or a minaret and are thus recognizable as Islamic buildings (see Schmitt/Klein 2019). However, the majority of mosques and mosque associations in Germany are still located in converted commercial spaces, factories, warehouses, shops, or similar buildings (see Stoop 2017). The formation of mosque associations throughout Germany began in the 1970s, but only about 20 percent of Muslims in this country are organized in associations, and reliable figures are difficult to collect (see Rohe 2018: 117–125). For opponents of mosques, representative mosques are a particular expression of the “Islamization of Christian Europe” that they fear and are interpreted in this line of interpretation as “Islam’s” striving for dominance or territorial claim to power. In principle, conflicts over building mosques are not a new phenomenon (see Leggewie 2009). As early as the 1990s, they were taken up in the nationwide media and were very similar to more recent disputes in terms of the pro and con argumentation and topics discussed (see Schmitt 2012: 191–192). According to Schmitt, four—interwoven—levels of conflict can be distinguished: spatial-urban, ethnic-cultural, religious, and communication-related, whereby the procedure under building law usually determines the course of conflict (ibid.: 193; Stoop 2017: 321). The first level includes objections from residents, such as parking spaces being blocked during Ramadan, noise pollution from events in the mosque, or the alleged threat of parallel societies forming. These objections are often emotionally and politically charged (see Stoop 2017: 321). With regard to the second level, for instance, the fear among opponents of an “Orientalization” of their own neighborhood and their argument that the “foreign” architecture does not fit into the cityscape should be mentioned (see Schmitt 2012: 193). The third level addresses the relationship between the religion of Islam or Islamic organizations and the secular state, but also the relationship between the religions themselves; thus, in order to prevent mosques from being built, it is often claimed that Islam is an anti-democratic, totalitarian, or even anti-Christian religion (see Schmitt 2012: 195). It is here, for instance, that the language of preaching or alleged Islamist machinations are also addressed (see Stoop 2017: 321). The communication-related conflict dimension encompasses the processes of media communication. The manner of coverage is very important for the course of debates on mosque building, as is also evident in initial studies on the media representation of mosque debates (see Stoop 2017: 323). Here, the same objections by the opponents
are raised together with the question of financing the mosque and topics, such as fundamentalism, sexism, and terrorism (see the detailed topic frequency analysis in Stoop 2014). In this setting, Muslims are named as a problem, positioned in contrast to German society, and thus placed in the context of frequently negative reporting on “Islam”, within which Muslims are spoken about in predominantly racialized images (see Stoop 2017: 323). Even if, according to the UEM analysis, some local newspapers do make an effort to include everyday life (see subchapter 7.1.3), Stoop assumes a tendency toward the “de-thematization of everyday life typical for the media” (Stoop 2017: 324). He does not see any mention of religious issues, daily routines, or the social engagement of the communities here, which contributes to the charging and exacerbation of the conflicts (see Stoop 2014: 117)—because conflict issues address fewer questions of fact and more questions of recognition (see Stoop 2017: 324).

In addition to the media, political communication is of central importance. The attitudes expressed by local political leaders (city administration and council, mayor) are of enormous importance for a building project to succeed and be accepted. If the local actors are in favor of the mosque being built, its chances are good, provided there are no other conflicts (for instance, internal conflicts in the mosque community, conflicts between mosque communities, or due to the architecture). In addition to the public debate, the attitude of political actors is therefore decisive for the population’s approval of the construction project (see Stoop 2017: 322–323).

The construction of Cologne’s Central Mosque can be seen as a typical example of resistance to the construction of mosques. Since 2002, the regional, national, and international media have reported in dense succession on the construction and its planning, which was first discussed in Cologne City Council as early as 1992 (see Lindner 2008; Stoop 2014). In 2005, the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB) assumed responsibility for the new building as the sole sponsor. As early as 1996, the so-called citizens’ movement “Pro Köln” was founded, which only became known and significant through the nationwide media coverage of the protest organized by it against the construction of the mosque in Cologne-Ehrenfeld (see Überall 2010: 8). In 2004, the initiative entered the Cologne city council with the slogan “No large mosque!” with the goal of “preventing the Islamization of the city district,” and deliberately used a dichotomous pattern (“us” vs. “the others”) that devalues people of Muslim faith (Bozay 2008: 199). In the early summer of 2007, Pro Köln tried to misuse various citizens’ meetings and discussion events as a stage for its extreme right-wing propaganda, but in most cases the right-wing extremists were quickly expelled from the hall and received little approval. The sometimes heated debates, however, increasingly brought the conflict into the public eye. In 2018, the mosque was finally opened in the presence of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. On the one hand, the framework of resistance against the building of mosques was thus essentially determined by the extremely widespread anti-Islamic attitudes in civil society (see K. Hafez 2013b: 106–162); on the other hand, however, the issue in Cologne was also related to the role of the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB) and the Turkish government.

In addition to visibility, the audibility of Muslim religious practice has also recently been a matter of contention in Cologne: In October 2022, the DITIB Central Mosque in Cologne, which was opened in the face of opposition from the population, was allowed a five-minute public “muezzin call” for Friday prayers, as is quite common in other, especially smaller, towns in Germany. It is not surprising that the mosque in Cologne receives a different level of public attention than smaller mosques in rural regions due to the mosque’s visibility and the multiple criticisms of the DITIB’s entanglement with the interests of
the Turkish state. In Erfurt, on the other hand, the current construction of the Ahmadiyya mosque, which is being accompanied by protests, was subject to the condition that the call to prayer from the minaret be omitted (see Migazin 2023). However, these disputes hardly say anything about the legal facts, because the call to prayer fundamentally falls within the scope of the freedom of religion enshrined in Article 4 of Germany’s Basic Law (GG, Grundgesetz) (see Rohe 2021; see also subchapter ↗ 4.5). However, the usual opinion camps on the question of the call to prayer drown this out, and the degree to which the related debates are charged bears hardly any relation to the factually low relevance of the muezzin call for Muslim believers who usually rely on an app, for instance, to remind them of prayer time. In this respect, the debates about the call to prayer are ultimately sham discussions that obscure the view of the real, far greater challenges for Muslims in Germany (see Cheema/Mendel 2022).

It should be noted that conflicts over building mosques, in which Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment take effect, arise mainly around representative new buildings, mostly in large cities. Good local political communication and media coverage are useful tools for avoiding or limiting these conflicts.

### 4.4 Debate about “honor killings”

The murder of Hatun Sürücü in 2005 by her brother reignited debate on so-called “honor killings” and thus on the de facto or ascribed oppression of the “Muslim woman”. The victim’s brother, who was 20 years old at the time, stated that he despised his sister’s western lifestyle and wanted to restore the family’s honor with this act. After serving his sentence, the offender was deported to Turkey, his parent’s country of origin.

The act was widely covered by the media and discussed in the context of debates on the role of “Islam” in integration problems in the Muslim community (see Becker/El-Menouar 2012). It also made it possible to tie in with previously outlined scenarios of so-called “parallel societies.” An editorial published one year earlier in the weekly magazine DER SPIEGEL (2004) entitled “Allah’s Disenfranchised Daughters” directly linked these parallel societies to Islam:

“Under the guise of ‘cultural diversity,’ parallel worlds have formed in which the rule of law seems to be partially suspended. It is not only potential terrorists and political extremists of every hue who move into these niches. An unknown number of Muslim women are also the victims here, kept in their homes like prisoners far from their native countries. Behind closed doors, they live in forced marriages, not infrequently with unloved or even violent husbands. Veiling, oppression, and, at worst, honor killings are part of this microcosm that is completely incomprehensible to many Germans.” (Ibid.)

Over time, this narrative has been reactivated and reproduced by various events—such as the incidents on New Year’s Eve 2015/2016 in Cologne (see El-Menouar 2016; see also subchapter ↗ 4.8) and other so-called “honor killings.” This further promotes the culturalization of social problems. It additionally cements ideas of a supposedly homogenous and unchangeable Islam that is contrary to the values of the local society and not only restricts women’s rights, but also legitimizes violence against women and even murder (see Korteweg/Yurdakul 2010).

On a political level, this narrative was taken up, especially by the CDU/CSU and FDP parties, and used as a basis to legitimize increased demands for integration. Violence against women is constructed as a primarily migrant problem and Muslim women are stylized as victims (see Ercan 2015). The political parties Bündnis 90/Die Grünen and Die Linke, on the other hand, try to place the events in a broader context and frame so-called
“honor killings” as a facet of a problem that affects society as a whole, in order to break the cultural constrictions outlined above. Occasionally, media reports also plead for the murders mentioned to be recorded as femicides and not to make a distinction based on the attributed or factual (religious) origin of the perpetrator or the victim (see Lembke 2021). They urge for the recognition of the patriarchal structures that exist in a wide variety of cultural and national contexts and can be found in social milieus of the most diverse religious character (see also Rohe 2019). It was about recognizing the “potential lethality of patriarchal gender norms” (Lembke 2021).

An inventory of all “honor killings” that occurred in Germany between 1996 and 2005 and the analysis of 78 trial files come to the conclusion that these murders cannot be explained without considering the cultural backdrop. At the same time, the study points out that the killing of the female intimate partner is one of the most frequent homicides in social proximity in all societies (see Oberwittler/Kasselt 2011). Overall, about 12 out of an average of 700 such homicides are classified as “honor killings” each year. This shows that from the perspective of society as a whole, “honor killings” represent a marginal phenomenon accounting for 1.7 percent of all femicides and, in view of the proportion of the Muslim population (approx. 6%), occur with below-average frequency among this section of the population (ibid.). Femicides are therefore by no means limited to Muslims but occur across all religions. This bears no relation to their portrayal in the media, which often presents “honor killings” as typical of Muslim families.

An international analysis of 551 homicides that can be traced back to ideas of honor also shows a more differentiated picture (see Leonard 2020). Contrary to what is portrayed in the media, it is not only women who are affected by such violent crimes. The victims also include couples who live together out of wedlock, for instance. Men who live in homosexual relationships are also affected. It should be noted that violent crimes based on ideas of honor can be found across different cultures, countries, and religions. There is no particular predisposition for families from Muslim countries of origin (see Bates 2020). Furthermore, the researchers found that honor-based violence and homicide follow characteristic patterns and describe them as follows:

“An honor crime is an act of violence committed with the intent to prevent, conceal, or punish an act of deviance (e.g., behavioral, sexual, moral) that is perceived to bring potential harm to the reputation of an individual or family.” (Leonard 2020: 37)

Therefore, a distinction should be made between offenses committed for other motives—also in the interest of prevention and victim protection (ibid.).

A representative study on gender role concepts in Germany also shows that gender equality is a firmly anchored value among the Muslim population too. Ideas of family that put women at a disadvantage cannot therefore be explained purely by denomination or religiosity. Patriarchal gender perceptions are primarily linked to socio-economic factors, such as education level and age (see Becher/El-Menouar 2013).

The conclusion to be drawn is that violent crimes based on ideas of honor are a serious problem and should not be trivialized—even if they are a marginal phenomenon in the area of family-related homicides in Germany. However, the empirical findings indicate that the media debates paint a truncated profile of both victims and perpetrators, thus fueling anti-Muslim resentment. The focus on Muslim communities fails to recognize that so-called “honor killings” are empirically neither religion-specific nor country-specific. The problem with the prejudiced ideas about the victims and perpetrators of such crimes is that violent
crimes of this kind that take place outside of Muslim milieus may be overlooked or inadequately addressed at the level of society as a whole. The biased focus on women as victims also leads to an underestimation of risks for men, who are also affected.

Overall, it can be said that the public debates about so-called “honor killings” lead to a criminalization of the Muslim population by Islamizing social problems and stylizing “Islam” as a backward, misogynistic, and violent religion that allegedly stands in the way of successful integration. It is not religion, however, but the reservations thus fomented that stand in the way of successful coexistence, as they legitimize anti-Islamic political measures and lead to the exclusion of the Muslim population.

4.5 The debate about “political Islam(ism)”

The democratic constitutional state and its society are being challenged by different extremist ideologies and their representatives. In addition to right-wing and left-wing extremism, forms of religiously motivated extremism also pose a threat. This becomes apparent when violence is used or propagated. However, even the assertion of an ideology-based claim to power and efforts to weaken and abolish democratic constitutional conditions through excessive social pressure, i.e., through the abuse of one’s own freedom rights at the expense of the freedom rights of others, pose a threat to society and especially those directly affected by extremist activities (see Rohe 2022c: 5).

Such problems are also evident when it comes to extremist actors within the Muslim population. For more than two decades, this topic has been studied and discussed extensively in Germany, meanwhile mostly under the rather problematic term of “legalistic Islamism.” There is no doubt that the rule of law must defend its democratic and human rights orientation, but in doing so it must itself always adhere to rule of law principles. This includes a concrete identification of the problem and the fact-based determination of relevant actors primarily on the basis of their attitudes and actions.

For some years now, debate has been raging regarding “political Islam” or “political Islamism,” which has lost all of its problem-oriented line of thought in considerable parts of the media and political discussion, so that large sections of the Muslim population and their organizations are stigmatized and placed under general suspicion. One example is the reactions to a notice issued by the city of Cologne in accordance with the principles of the rule of law without concrete cause in 2021 (see Rohe 2021). This is an announcement according to which Muslim congregations can apply to have a call to main prayers broadcast over loudspeakers for five minutes on Friday at noon—taking into account local conditions and volume (see, for instance, Irmer 2022). In the ensuing debate, this was sweepingly branded by some as a “triumph by political Islam” although not one single application had been submitted. As a consequence, constitutionally guaranteed rights—i.e., to be allowed to call publicly to prayer under certain conditions—would have to be given up without further ado in order to be able to prove constitutionality—a remarkable distortion of constitutional principles. In the process, threatening claims, incorrect both in terms of content and grammar, were also spread regarding the content of the call to prayer. “Allahu Akbar” does not mean “Allah is greater than all religions, all enemies, all people” (quoted in Domradio 2021), but simply “God/Allah is (incomparably) great.” Some statements make it clear that the blanket rejection of Islamic practice, which is protected by fundamental rights, is used as a lever against any practice of religion in the public sphere, contrary to Art. 4 of the Basic Law (Grundgesetz) and Art. 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (see Domradio 2021 quoting “even church bells
are ‘no longer contemporary in the enlightened state’, and ‘political Islam’ grows and flourishes ‘in the shadow of the churches’"). Overlaps with anti-Christian sentiment become apparent here.

While the “retaliatory argument” often put forward, i.e., “as long as no churches are allowed to be built/church bells rung in Saudi Arabia or Turkey, Muslims are not allowed to make an audible muezzin call either,” points to the deplorable situation of religious freedom in these countries, it also adopts the very standards of religious dictatorships or states in which religious freedom is disregarded, thus abandoning the rule of law. This shows in an exemplary way (see subchapter ↑ 9.1 or statistics from Bertelsmann-Religionsmonitor) that clarifying the scope of religious freedom, especially for minorities, is a task that concerns all of society.

Such debates are particularly difficult when they are conducted in this manner by participants anchored in the basic democratic-legal consensus in central institutions of the rule of law.

One example of this is a motion by the CDU/CSU parliamentary group: “Disclose and stop the financing of political Islamism in Germany.” The fundamentally important concern to prevent the financing of extremism that threatens the rule of law is thwarted by a biased focus on Muslim organizations as well as by the demand to enter a dialogue with “the local mosque communities” regarding transparency in financing issues. The friendly wording (“dialogue”) does not hide the fact that it formulates a general suspicion that can only be dispelled from case to case. This contradicts the principles of the rule of law: The use of freedom rights (exercise of religion) is the rule and the—possible—abuse of such rights an exception to be proven by facts. The basic assumption is that the inhabitants of the country are law-abiding; state intervention requires at least fact-based, initial suspicion.

Generalizing suspicions and singling out individual population groups when dealing with overarching problems of extremism undermine confidence in the neutrality and equal treatment under the rule of law. As important as it is to efficiently address real threats, it is equally important to avoid collateral damage. Time and again, the livelihoods and development opportunities of Muslims have been massively impaired by false suspicions (for instance, unfounded obstacles to access to the labor market, denial of professionally necessary entry visas).

In this context, two aspects are of particular importance (for more detail, see Rohe, see footnote 37): There is an urgent need to distinguish between problematic extremism with a claim to power, on the one hand, and traditional, also religiously based attitudes to life (for instance, religiously connoted clothing, dietary rules, or views on gender relations) without such a claim, on the other. While such attitudes may be criticized, even sharply, in terms of their content, people must not be defined outside the rule of law consensus on the basis of traditionally oriented religiosity. Incidentally, this also applies to Jews, for instance, with regard to gender relations—an area that overlaps with anti-Semitism. The second significant aspect concerns the fact-oriented identification of representatives of religiously motivated extremism. In this case, attention should primarily be paid to the content represented, while a focus on encounters (“guilt by association”) with-

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35 Bundestag printed paper 20/1012 of March 15, 2022.
36 Ibid.: 3.
37 See the four statements made at the hearing on the motion by the CDU/CSU parliamentary group in the Interior Committee on September 19, 2022, by Mathias Rohe, Nissar Gardi, Aseim El Difraoui and Jamuna Oehlmann (Bundestag committee papers 204/103 A, F, H, and J) Available online: https://www.bundestag.de/ausschuesse/a04_inneres/anhoerungen/909590-909590 [Feb. 17, 2023].
out more detailed information on the backdrop is misguided. However, the analysis of content requires corresponding expertise, which is lacking among some of those activists considered to be experts. Rule of law must defend itself efficiently but avoid collateral damage that endangers people and the very rule of law itself.

4.6 Cartoon debate

In recent decades, heated controversies have repeatedly arisen over the portrayal of “Islam” in the context of satire and political cartoons. The best-known cases from a German perspective include Salman Rushdie’s novel “The Satanic Verses” and, in particular, the “Muhammad cartoons” published by the Danish daily newspaper Jyllands-Posten, and the satirical drawings in the French magazine Charlie Hebdo. A closer analysis of media coverage of these cartoon debates reveals recurring topos that make use of anti-Muslim symbolism—sometimes explicitly, sometimes latently. As elements of public debates, some of which have been ongoing for years, they shape the social image of Islam in a particular way. How can these debates be evaluated with regard to the phenomenon of anti-Muslim sentiment? Which positions were predominant in these debates and to what extent did they go hand in hand with traditional Orientalist ideas about “Islam” and “the West”?

One of the first key events in German coverage of Islam was the fatwa which Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini issued against Indian-British author Salman Rushdie in 1989. Rushdie had published his novel “The Satanic Verses” one year earlier, which fictionalized the life of the Prophet Muhammad using satirical exaggerations. The book caused worldwide outrage and triggered demonstrations, which—mainly initiated by Islamist fundamentalists—also took on violent forms. The media attention surrounding the book’s publication and the protests surrounding it was extensive, with the notion of a cultural difference between Islam and the West becoming the consensus in the liberal-conservative press spectrum (see K. Hafez 2002b: 263). This went so far that the continued existence of a multicultural society in which Muslims coexisted peacefully with other population groups was fundamentally doubted and calls for cultural assimilation became loud (ibid.).

That topos of incompatibility has also been repeatedly revived in recent debates about the appropriateness of Islam-related cartoons. This was the case, for instance, in response to the “Muhammad cartoons” published in 2006 by the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten, which fueled weeks of media reports, not least because of the related violent riots by Islamist groups (see Meyer 2006: 14). DER SPIEGEL ran the headline “The holy hate. Twelve Muhammad cartoons shake the world” (6/2006) and, by using various key codes for Islam—Arabic characters, the color green, the Quran, a veiled woman—suggested its congruence with violent jihadist actions and simultaneous incompatibility with “Western” value standards.

The question of the primacy of one of two fundamental rights under the rule of law, which were affected by the Islamic cartoons, also became a central point of debate in the media: the right to freedom of expression or the right to practice one’s religion. Here, too, a polarizing presentation logic was used that pitted both fundamental

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38 There is, of course, no question that the despotic treatment of cartoonists, artists, and writers who criticize religion by autocratic regimes and Islamist jihadist groups does not require academic classification, but rather unequivocal condemnation and sharp opposition. However, for the purpose of this report, it is worth looking at the culture of debate regarding these incidents.

39 Khomeini put a bounty on Rushdie’s head, which is now said to be over four million dollars (see Steinworth 2016). Rushdie’s book was burnt at demonstrations, bombings were carried out in several countries, and people were killed, among them the Japanese translator of the book, Hitoshi Igarashi. Rushdie himself was attacked and seriously injured during a reading in New York State on August 12, 2022 (see also subchapter 2.7).
rights against each other instead of exploring the possibilities of their simultaneous realization and compatibility. For example, in his article “In the Mouse Hole of Fear” (2010), the author advocated the unrestricted application of freedom of expression, while openly mocking calls for de-escalation and consideration and demonizing Muslims as ignorant bloodthirsty hordes obsessed by honor.40

From a legal point of view, there is no fundamental contradiction between freedom of expression and freedom of religion, as U.N. Special Rapporteur Bielefeldt made clear in his 2016 report: “Freedom of religion or belief does not protect religion per se, but the freedom of the individual to join or even to renounce a religion or belief.” Freedom of religion does not exclude a critical or even satirical examination of religion. “The perception that freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of religion or belief are in opposition to each other is based on a misunderstanding.” (Bielefeldt 2016) However, this misunderstanding was not clarified in German press coverage, as Naab and Scherer show in their analysis of the 2006 Muhammad cartoon controversy. Rather, coverage focused on the limitations and threats to freedom of expression—without reflecting on the central importance of this fundamental right for the political system as a whole (see 2009: 387).41

Various studies document recurring dichotomization of “Islam” vis-à-vis “the West” or democracy as a supposedly exclusively “Western-Occidental” achievement in the context of the cartoon debates (see, for instance, Sinram 2013; Naab/Scherer 2009; Görlach 2009; K. Hafez 2002b). Coverage of the attacks on the editorial office of the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in 2015 and the killing of the French teacher Samuel Paty are no exception. At the event level, they belong to a series of jihadist-motivated attempts to violently enforce a literal, ahistorical reading of the Quran and Sharia law over the human right to free speech.42 With a view to coverage, the topos of Islam as a violent and archaic religion can also be found here. The headline in the FOCUS magazine, for instance, read “This has nothing to do with Islam—Yes, it does! Why Muslims need to renew their faith now—and how freedom must be defended” (4/2015) and thus disqualifies in a single blow any attempts at differentiation that point to political or ideological motives of jihadist offshoots instead of blaming Islam as a whole. This is visually underlined by the image of a Kalashnikov machine gun shown in profile. The fact that such an abbreviation of complex causal relationships is poor journalism but extremely profitable in economic terms can be seen by the considerable increase in sales recorded by the magazine with this issue (see Hein 2015).

What is also striking about coverage of the cartoons is that criticism of the content of the Hebdo drawings was at best marginal. These drawings show hook-nosed Arabs, Qurans riddled with bullets, and mockery of victims of a massacre.

40 “Millions of Muslims all over the world who had not read a line of the book and had never heard the name wanted to see the death sentence carried out against the author, the sooner the better, in order to use his blood to redeem the soiled honor of the Prophet.” (Broder 2010).

41 The fact that there is a lack of social awareness of the value of an open yet differentiated (see Meyer 2006) culture of debate is demonstrated not least by the success of right-wing populist parties that instrumentalize jihadist acts of violence for their anti-Muslim agenda. Following the attack on the editorial offices of Charlie Hebdo in 2015, for instance, AfD politician Alexander Gauland said: “The massacre in Paris also shows the fragility and the need to protect the fundamental values of our society. [...] Against this backdrop, the demands by ‘Pegida’ become particularly relevant and important.” (Locke 2015) The Pegida movement addressed here, now classified as an openly racist and extreme right-wing group, managed to mobilize 25,000 demonstrators in Dresden only shortly after the attack on the satirical magazine, “who were able to pass off their hatred of Muslims as solidarity with Charlie Hebdo and as a defense of press freedom” (Schuhler 2015: 30).

42 The magazine became the target of Islamist terrorists who accused it of “publishing anti-Islamic cartoons” (Bauknecht 2018). Twelve people were killed in the attack in January 2015 and another five in the street and in a Jewish supermarket in Paris shortly afterwards. Paty showed Islamic cartoons in his classes under the rubric of freedom of expression. In 2020, he was beheaded in the street by an Islamist-motivated assassin.
After the attack, the first issue of the magazine showed a cartoon of pregnant women in abayas holding their bellies with the comment: “Boko Haram sex slaves in turmoil: ‘Don’t touch our child benefit!’” This invokes, among other things, the common stereotype of Muslim women as “birthing machines” (in the New Right, “birther jihad”). Large parts of the German media landscape failed to evaluate and classify the cartoons with a view to racism.

Such a (self-)critical analysis would also involve mentioning and constructively addressing forms of institutional and everyday racism that occur in different areas of society and ensure unequal distribution of opportunities between Muslims and non-Muslims. It is precisely this social and political context into which Islam-related cartoons are published and in which their aftermath is problematized.

In its original idea, satire shoots upward, its declared enemies are the powerful, the authorities, the elite in both the state and powerful institutions of society. The task of political cartoons is to “comment on absurdities, abuse of power, undesirable developments, areas of tension and contradictions in social and political life” (Knieper 2001: 266). It is true that Tucholsky’s famous bon mot “Satire may do anything” was a constant catchword in public debates. However, what people frequently forgot is that Tucholsky also noted that satire that “calls for subscription to a war bond is not satire” (Tucholsky 1975: 42; see also Schuhler 2015: 28). Tucholsky could be freely translated as follows: Satire that deepens existing social imbalances instead of revealing them in an effort to overcome them in the future fails to redeem its democratic potential.

An evaluation and classification of the cartoons that are critical of racism are essential for peaceful coexistence and a functioning democratic culture of debate. There is also a need for more informed media debate on the fundamental right of freedom of expression itself. This is important in order to be able to endure counter-positions within civil society and to peacefully deal with controversies—even if one does not agree with their content.

4.7 **Debate about “clan criminality”: Real problems and toxic debates**

Where is the connection between the debate on “clan criminality” and anti-Muslim sentiment? In the very context that constructs, without serious evidence, belonging to Islam as a (co-)cause of involvement in particular forms of coordinated crime.

What are we talking about? Group-based crime among people of diverse social, ethnic, or religious backdrops is not new. It is particularly dangerous for society and the rule of law due to the possibilities to strengthen activities and criminal energy and must therefore be fought with all legally permissible means. This also applies to coordinated criminal activities by members of so-called Arab, Kurdish, Lebanese, etc. “clans,” which have received a great deal of media attention since the 2010s (first Wagner 2011) and have since also become the focus of police investigations. Typical fields of action are, for instance, narcotics and property offenses, economic and smuggling crime (see BKA 2021: 24–28) as well as brutal offenses and offenses against sexual self-determination (see Polizei NRW/LKA 2022: 14).

From a rule of law perspective, the dense loyalty structures that exist among the participants, which generate a high penetrative power due to a willingness to use violence, are extremely prob-
leamic and make counter-measures by the state particularly difficult. In contrast to older group-based forms of organized crime (for instance, Italian or Russian “Mafia”), which as a rule attach great importance to inconspicuous activity, here, the rights of others are demonstratively trampled on by many participants. The rule of law and its representatives are openly attacked, ridiculed, and threatened (see Polizei NRW/LKA 2022: 17–20). This offensively raises the issue of power and calls into question the state’s monopoly on the use of force. Therefore, it is essential that the constitutional state respond in a clear manner. However, this response must meet the standards of the rule of law and this is where the problems begin.

The first fundamental problem with intersectional (ethnic and religious) discrimination effects in everyday life is the blanket suspicion of certain ethnic groups with Islamic or perceived Islamic religious affiliation (extended families, “clans”) without sufficiently robust facts. In media coverage, the very imprecise term “clan criminality” is often used to refer to entire or several extended families with the same surname (for instance, in an academically oriented article about the fascination of gold and a spectacular theft by members of “the notorious [XXX] clan,” Willmann 2022: 34), without regard to whether personal connections actually exist, and without reference to the fact that only a small proportion of all those who bear this name are actually criminally active. In fact, highly active criminal groups of members of these families are presented without evidence to represent the entire extended family. Discriminatory distortions also arise when police statistics list all offenses committed by certain bearers of a surname regardless of the nature of the offense (for instance, simple road traffic offenses), which triggers inflated threat scenarios (see Jaraba 2021: 9–10; Polizei NRW/LKA 2022: 94).

It is particularly important for institutions of the rule of law to provide public representations of the factual situation. Attempts to find precise terminology, for instance, “criminal members within [XXX] extended families” to avoid using simple but distorting catchwords (“clan criminality”) must be interpreted as positive (Polizei NRW/LKA 2022: 6). One example of the opposite of such diligence is the deliberate sweeping generalizations in a brochure intended for the Essen/Mülheim police force, which is also controversial within the police force. This brochure takes an allegedly “necessary collective view” because a basic relevant mindset is also anchored in non-criminal family members who also remain silent regarding the criminal activities of others (Dienstbühl 2019: 4). Regardless of the dubious factual basis of these claims (see Jaraba 2021: 6–8), this brings to light a form of mental collective liability beyond all principles of the rule of law. A threat scenario that ultimately endangers the rule of law itself is built up in the summary with the sweeping statement that it is a central understanding “of the clans […] that they are always at war,” which was documented by their “will to conquer” (Dienstbühl 2019: 18).

The second fundamental problem is the claim, which has not been seriously substantiated, that the religion of the criminals involved—in this case Islam—is an important or even the most important cause of their acts.

When Christian Mafia bosses fight over who gets to carry the canopy over the statue of the Virgin Mary in the Corpus Christi procession in order to plan the next crimes later, their criminal activities are not commonly attributed to the Christian faith. But this must then also apply to the deeds of a serious Muslim criminal when he goes on pilgrimage to Mecca or prays in a mosque. Thus, the misattribution of existing problems, which are primarily rooted in socio-economic (for instance, experiences of exclusion) or cultural factors, to
religious affiliation also appear anti-Muslim (see Rohe/Jaraba 2015; Jaraba 2021; Elliesie/Rigoni 2022). Sensationalist reporting that links actual problems, such as homicides, with so-called “clan criminality” and mixes possible socio-economic backdrops with Islam-related issues without any internal connection, such as school lunch protests against pork or headscarf debates (Dinger 2022: 13–16), must also be classified as anti-Muslim.

Such attributions become particularly dangerous when they are directed at representatives of state institutions, who run the risk of making wrong decisions on this basis. A further danger arises from alleged expert opinions by people who do not have the necessary academic knowledge of Islam. Examples of this are the attribution of criminal activities by members of the extended family to Islam, extreme generalizations of “life-worlds” and the statements on the religion of Islam that are no longer comprehensible in terms of content contained in the aforementioned brochure for the Essen/Mülheim police force (see Dienstbühl 2019: 5–8).

How can this be solved? A problem-oriented approach to combating and preventing crime that conforms to the rule of law (see Rohe 2019: 59–71; Elliesie/Rigoni 2022: 25–32; Ministerium der Justiz NRW 2022). Existing problems must be addressed openly and efficiently. A fact-oriented analysis of the problem and research into its causes are the only way to effectively combat crime without causing collateral damage. Generalizations and misattributions discriminate against people—for instance, when a promised training position is no longer open because of a “suspicious” surname, or when a young person resigns themselves to the fact that only a change of surname will give them a chance on the training market. The rule of law must protect everyone: the victims of the acts described as “clan criminality” as well as those affected by a discriminatory handling of this term.

4.8 Debate about “Cologne’s New Year’s Eve”: An emotionalized intersection and the defensive figuration of the sexually assaultive “other”

In 2015, a huge wave of flight and migration made its way to Europe, especially due to the wars in Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. That year, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees recorded about 890,000 first registrations in Germany. During that time, it was evident that civil society was committed to the newcomers. This commitment was supported by public debates in which journalists and politicians strengthened this civil society commitment. Between June and September 2015, for instance, refugees were often portrayed positively on public television (see Maurer et al. 2021).

However, the decision by the German government to take in stranded refugees led to media coverage becoming much more negative from September 2015 onward (ibid.). The media and politicians across all factions were alarmed and saw social peace threatened. Sustained crisis reporting manifested the impression of potentially uncontrollable momentum (see Klemm 2017; Kreft/Uske 2016; Weber 2016). During this phase, a distinction was already increasingly made between an ostensibly progressive German society with a liberal, emancipated set of values and the refugees who were described as fundamentally alien and different. This is illustrated by the statements made by Thomas Strobl, one of the deputy leaders of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group and leader of the CDU in Baden-Württemberg, in the plenary debate of October 1, 2015:
“From the very beginning, we need to correctly formulate and consistently enforce what constitutes our social order: The Basic Law is above religion. Women and men are equal. Everyone can live and love as they wish, believe what they want, or not believe, and express their opinions freely as long as they respect the laws. These laws are not made by the prophet in Germany. They are made by the parliament in Germany, ladies and gentlemen.”

The debate on asylum policy measures is linked to issues of gender, sexuality, and Islam, and is presented in a “morally charged us-them distinction” (Hark/Villa 2017: 36). Whether in the “headscarf debates” that have been ongoing since the turn of the millennium, the alleged sexual repression of Muslim women, the “oriental patriarchy,” the “discourse of honor,” or the attributed aggressiveness of young Muslim men toward homosexuality—the idea that sexism is inherent in Muslim or Arab communities is recurrent in immigration and integration debates and is used as evidence of their non-integration.

Even during the long “summer of migration,” the defense discourses in migration policy were dominated by a portrayal of those seeking refuge that was marked by public denouncement (see Karadeniz/Sabel 2021a). It was directed early on against the predominantly young, male refugees and their sexuality, which was described as backward and dangerous (see Dietze 2017: 18, 281). At the beginning of November 2015, Augstein summarized in the SPIEGEL magazine the then still almost exclusively fictitious sexual-politically motivated resentments that reached far into the liberal spectrum under the title “Men, Monsters, and Muslims”:

“The sexual rumor about the foreigner is spilling over right now. What’s frightening is that it is being fed from all sides. [...] Young, aggressive, medieval image of women, machos, treat women like fair game. The refugees haven’t even unpacked their things yet, but we already know everything about them.” (Augstein 2015)

It was above all the native girl who seemed to be threatened (see Dietze 2017: 282; Hark/Villa 2017: 42). This was convincingly expressed in autumn 2015 by the chairpersons of the Saxony-Anhalt Philologists’ Association in the editorial of their association’s magazine:

“Many of the men come without their families or wives and certainly not always with the most honest intentions. [...] As responsible educators, we also ask ourselves: How can we educate our young girls aged 12 and older so that they do not engage in a superficial sexual adventure with Muslim men who are certainly often attractive?” (Cited in Deutschlandfunk 2015)

During the course of the so-called “refugee crisis,” i.e., in a phase in which social order was questioned, the recurring invocation of the figure of the sexually dangerous young Muslim man quickly manifested a symbolic boundary to precisely such “other” (see Karadeniz/Sabel 2021b).

By the end of 2015, the social mood was already massively heated. There was much discussion about the question of when it would tip over completely. Then came New Year’s Eve in Cologne. “The night that changed everything” (see Aust et al. 2016). This headline ran in the WELT AM SONNTAG newspaper a few days after New Year’s Eve. The discursive impact of the “Cologne event” was immense. In Germany’s daily press alone, more than 33,000 articles were published on this within one year (see Goeßmann 2019: 11). Hark and Villa speak of a particularly emotionally charged,
moral juncture that could mobilize considerable feelings and thus also have the power to shape reality (see Hark/Villa 2017: 54).

The constellation, which resembled an intensified panic, quickly shortened the narrative material and at the same time resembled familiar narrative patterns (see Becker 2022: 206). The fact that the crimes were apparently (co-)perpetrated by refugees quickly led to a fundamental questioning of the so-called “refugee policy” and the welcome culture, which was then increasingly labeled as naïve (see Hark/Villa 2017: 45; Messerschmidt 2016a: 159). By January 7, various politicians had already suggested tightening legislation with regard to the right of asylum and deportation practices (see ZEIT ONLINE 2016). In the specially convened plenary debate on January 13, 2016, State Secretary Ole Schröder affirmed: “The night of New Year’s Eve makes it clear how difficult it is to integrate young, single men of Arab origin here in our country. New Year’s Eve also makes it clear that there is a limit to any society’s power of integration.”46 In the same debate, the former chairman of the Interior Committee of the German Bundestag, Wolfgang Bosbach, also stated: “This is not a challenge. It is overwhelming our country. That is why we need to correct the political course.”47

In hindsight, the events of New Year’s Eve in Cologne are often described as a “turning point in refugee policy” (de Maizière 2016). However, efforts to close borders had begun much earlier, as early as autumn 2015. Even then, politicians responded with legislation to the increasing number of refugees by passing the so-called Asylum Package I in the Bundestag in October 2015, with significant changes to asylum law and a series of restrictive measures (see Pro Asyl 2015). Asylum Package II soon followed in February 2016. It included the suspension of family reunification, acceleration of the asylum procedure, the classification of further countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia) as safe countries of origin, and also the easier deportation of criminal foreigners.48 In March 2016, the so-called refugee agreement between the EU and Turkey also came into force, which was intended to prevent the onward travel of people fleeing to the EU. Negotiations on this had started months earlier but were now quickly concluded (see Becker 2022: 209). In summer 2016, an Integration Act also followed, which raised the hurdles for a permanent residence permit (see Maurer et al.: 7). Finally, in July 2016, a fundamental reform of the Sexual Offenses Act was also adopted. Various parties had been urging for this reform for years, but it was only implemented after the events of New Year’s Eve. The central prerequisite for punishing sexual acts was now lack of consent (see Hark/Villa 2017: 44).

It is striking that in the public debates around the events of New Year’s Eve, the alleged origin of the perpetrators became more important than what happened to the victims. The social contexts of the men who had become perpetrators here, such as “illegalized immigration, social marginalization already in the country of origin, living conditions on the street, crime as an income prospect, fantasies of masculinity that are supposed to convey self-worth, dynamics in male alliances, etc.” (Messerschmidt 2016a: 159–160), were hardly considered. Rather, the threat was precisely assigned to the “bodies of the North African, Arab, Muslim others” (Mecheril/van der Haagen-Wulff 2016: 133) and a boundary was drawn between threatened and threatening bodies. This polarization allowed for the appearance of the need to close borders, despite the 3,770 deaths in the Mediter-

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46 Bundestag plenary protocol 18/148: 14573; cited in Klemm 2017: 42.
47 Ibid.
The question of “guilt by association”

In recent years, there has been an increasing number of cases in which Muslims have been accused in public of being close to Islamist groups or of having corresponding attitudes. The persons concerned are usually accused of having contacts to extremist circles or of lacking a critical distance to anti-democratic positions. The positions held by these people themselves are often irrelevant—it is enough to be seen publicly (for instance, at a conference) together with certain persons from these groupings. The actual quality of the contact—be it a deliberate or accidental meeting, a fleeting encounter, or lasting and intensive cooperation—is usually not discussed (see Rohe regarding the associated problem of the rule of law, see footnote 37).

Evidence of “(pre-)conviction” or “constructions of collective punishment” (Eißler 2018: 371) is often questionable and occasionally resembles a public witch-hunt that can ultimately destroy careers or even livelihoods. This process is called guilt by association—a “pseudo-argument” that “[...] discredits or excludes disagreeable or suspicious persons by linking them with persons who have a bad reputation (for instance, under surveillance by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution).” Anyone who has contact (directly, indirectly, at events, in conversations) with alleged enemies of the constitution is therefore themselves an enemy or at least a sympathizer” (ibid.: 371). The assumption of guilt by association was effective as an official instrument during the Cold War, for instance, in the U.S. during the persecution of actual and alleged communists under Senator Joseph McCarthy—and also legitimized by the courts (see Perels 1998). At that time, the so-called “Political Loyalty Verification Program” replaced the presumption of innocence principle enshrined in the rule of law.

The current issue of guilt by association used against Muslims is not of such a dimension. Accusations of guilt by association are often voiced by so-called “Islam experts” (see subchapter 2.6; 7.1.5) who try to inspect Muslim public figures and uncover their alleged problematic attitude (see Schiffauer 2020). In doing so, they make sweeping judgments and generate special attention through scandalization in the media. Many of them have hardly any well-founded professional expertise (see Schneiders 2015). Nevertheless, offices for the protection of the constitution and other agencies use them as scientific sources.

Although it is the constitutional mandate of the security authorities to pursue potential threats in order to protect the free democratic basic order (a mandate that is also derived from the historical experience of the decline of the Weimar Republic), in the recent past, however, it seems as if a real culture of mistrust and suspicion toward Muslims (especially those in more exposed positions) has become established. Thus, contact with a person, a visit to a mosque, participation in an event, or leaving a “like” on a social media post can already be enough to trigger accusations of being part of Islamist network structures. It was only recently that some isolated critical journalistic voices of dissent emerged to address the problem of the “self-proclaimed Muslim hunters” (Gezer 2017).

SPIEGEL journalist Gezer traces how, in 2016, a false accusation of extremism against several staff members of a counseling center in Hesse
was picked up by reputable media outlets.\textsuperscript{49} The accusations were made by biologist Sigrid Herrmann-Marschall, who for several years has been running a blog called Vorwärts und nicht vergessen. Her allegations led to the temporary suspension of the employees concerned and a repetition of security checks that had already been carried out. Herrmann-Marschall’s accusations subsequently proved to be untenable. The institution and its work suffered an immense loss of credibility and reputation damage—not least because a correction of the allegations went almost unnoticed by the public.

In her blog, Herrmann-Marschall refers to herself as an “Islamism expert,” despite her lack of professional expertise or relevant language skills. Among other things, Herrmann-Marschall researches social media profiles of Muslims in order to prove links to the Muslim Brotherhood, anti-Semitic attitudes, and infiltration strategies. Her research is conjectural and often fragmentary and without context: Person X “[…] comes from an institution that is close to the Muslim Brotherhood” (blog entry Nov. 26, 2019) or: “The mosque […] hosted […] problematic actors from the Muslim Brotherhood network” (blog entry November 29, 2020). Herrmann-Marschall assigns her observations to real individuals and institutions, and publishes them regularly. The format is recognized when these allegations are being perpetuated in right-wing conservative and anti-Islamic blogs, such as Henryk M. Broder’s \textit{Die Achse des Guten}. They also appeared in \textit{Jüdische Rundschau}, which is published by entrepreneur Rafael Korenzecher, and to which she has often contributed.\textsuperscript{50}

Journalist Ley also investigated untenable accusations of extremism against Muslims. She describes the phenomenon of “guilt by association” as a dilemma: On the one hand, there is a justified concern about Islamism and on the other hand, there is the danger of hastily declaring Muslims to be extremists (see Ley 2021). It is striking that such accusations of guilt by association are particularly directed against Muslims who have achieved social advancement or a prominent position in society.

One such example is the case of a Cologne-based lawyer and association representative, who journalist Goldmann examined in detail. This panel with a suspected person or to be networked with the ‘wrong’ person on social media. What is worrying is that parts of the reputable media landscape also pick up on this kind of research, thereby elevating it as a reliable source. \textit{Deutsche Welle} even praised Herrmann-Marschall as an “advisor on Islamism” (von Hein 2017), which is regularly taken up in the \textit{DIE WELT} newspaper (see Leubecher 2021). The conservative group “Berliner Kreis”, which belongs to the CDU party, extended an invitation to her together with the former head of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, Hans-Georg Maaßen (see Richter, May 12, 2019). She was invited as an expert witness for the AfD party in the North Rhine-Westphalian parliament.\textsuperscript{51}

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\textsuperscript{49} For instance, on March 17, 2017, FOCUS online ran the headline “Were Salafism advisors themselves extremists?” and \textit{Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung} wrote as early as February 27: “Salafism experts under suspicion.”

\textsuperscript{50} Not to be confused with the \textit{Jüdische Allgemeine} newspaper published by the Central Council of Jews. \textit{Jüdische Rundschau} is a private newspaper.

person was also a committed Muslim woman who could be considered a “prime example of a democrat doing voluntary work” (Goldmann 2020). When she was appointed advisor to the Foreign Office in 2020, the outcry initially began on social media and quickly spread. In the past, it was claimed, she had played down anti-Semitic protests and represented an association that also tolerated extremists in its own ranks (see, for instance, Monath 2020). Volker Beck (Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen party), for example, tweeted that he did not understand why the office had appointed “a representative of this problematic association” (July 26, 2020). Sevim Dağdelen, MP for Die Linke party, said that with this appointment the then Foreign Minister Heiko Maas was no longer credible in the fight against anti-Semitism (see Monath 2020). The then AfD vice-chairwoman Beatrix von Storch tweeted that the appointment was “the governmental kowtowing to Islam” (July 24, 2020). And the magazine EMMA also polemicized: “Migrants too are appalled, and there has been a wave of cross-party criticism. How did the Islamist get nominated in the first place?” (2020). The ensuing public debate lacked factual and differentiated arguments for the accusations. Rather, a self-validating narrative emerged with a media momentum that led to immense public pressure. Tagesspiegel, DIE WELT, Deutschlandfunk, and other media reported on the accusations against the Muslim woman (see Monath 2020; DIE WELT 2020; Engelbrecht 2020). Just how effective this kind of unsubstantiated accusation can be is demonstrated by the fact that within a few days the Foreign Office initially suspended cooperation with her and ultimately ended it altogether.

By taking over unsubstantiated accusations from individuals who initially write in private blogs or local newspapers, for instance, they contribute significantly to scandalization with their agenda-setting function. All it takes, for instance, is for large-scale media to report in this way—as Tagesspiegel and DIE WELT often do—and for other editorial offices then to follow suit in their choice of topics (“intermedia agenda setting”).

The cases outlined are exemplary for a series of accusations that made it into the public debate. However, there are also cases with similar consequences that were hardly noticed by the public. SPIEGEL journalist Winter (2020) reported anonymously on the case of a Muslim scientist in Saxony who was targeted by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution due to an article published in the local newspaper in 2007. The article mentioned his occasional work as a prayer leader for a Muslim student association. The association, which was funded by the university, had in turn been under observation by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution since 1997, with vague, “poorly constructed” justification:

“The association had presented itself in a student newspaper as a branch of the Muslim Student Association in Germany. The latter belonged to the Islamic Community in Germany. And the latter, in turn, was also ‘under surveillance by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution’ because of its close ties to the Muslim Brotherhood.” (Ibid.)

Although the scientist could not be proven to have any extremist tendencies, his activity in the student association was sufficient to construct an “ideological proximity.” As a result, the scientist was dismissed from his employment (several times) and banned from the university. In the meantime, the Office for the Protection of the Constitution admits that the action against him was partly illegal (Ibid.).
Unsubstantiated assumptions and denigrations, which are fed, among other things, by a lack of source criticism, receive a disturbing degree of consideration and acceptance in the media as well as from the authorities. The possible consequences for those wrongly accused drop out of sight. The climate in society as a whole toward Muslims is characterized by a readiness to be suspicious, which puts pressure on coexistence and can be classified as anti-Muslim in its structure. A social state of fear, in part nourished by racism, seems to serve as the basis for legitimizing the need for fundamental skepticism toward Muslims and the undermining of their fundamental rights. Journalist Gezer (2017) pointedly raises the question: “How much Muslim can there be? How much can this nervous country take right now?” She answers this question, adding: “The answer those days was: Nothing, not even their model Muslims of yesterday.” (Ibid.)
5 Experiences with anti-Muslim racism from the perspective of those affected

5.1 The relevance of the affected people’s perspective

In the debate on anti-Muslim racism (AMR), it must be noted that research and professional public debate has up to now been largely focused on the spread of anti-Muslim attitudes and their manifestation in the form of anti-Muslim motivated crimes. In contrast, there is very little in-depth knowledge on how affected people in Germany experience anti-Muslim resentment and anti-Muslim sentiment and what effects this has on the reality of their lives.

Experiences of social exclusion can have a variety of effects on those affected. Trust in the majority society and in public institutions, a sense of belonging in society and a person’s own sense of security can be just as affected as self-esteem. It has also been proven that experiences of devaluation and discrimination have a lasting impact on mental and physical health and can lead to withdrawal symptoms (see Paradies et al. 2015; Sequeira 2015; Yeboah 2017; Scherr/Breit 2020: 59; Madubuko 2021: 81–96). In addition, people affected also have a variety of strategies for coping and dealing with social exclusion mechanisms.

Discrimination and racism are phenomena that have increasingly entered the consciousness of the majority society in recent years and have thus also increasingly become the subject of public debate. It is not only the violent and even life-threatening consequences of racism that are now generating a stronger social resonance. Everyday racist acts, microaggressions, and structural discrimination mechanisms are also more often critically perceived and addressed by an increasingly aware public. These developments are largely due to the long-standing commitment of those affected who have campaigned for fairer conditions and thus triggered social awareness-raising processes.

Those affected not only have valuable knowledge regarding direct experiences of discrimination, they often have an awareness of social exclusion mechanisms combined with a profound understanding that goes far beyond that of the majority society. This is why various sides (self-organizations, interest groups, civil society organizations, critical migration and racism research, etc.) have for a long time been calling for the affected people’s perspective to be included more in the critical analysis of social discrimination relations (see, for instance, Baumann/Egenberger/Supik 2018: 108).

When social inequality is handed down through society, reflected in discourses and structures, and thus represents a kind of lived normality, a system of mutually supporting bodies of knowledge and discriminatory practice emerges (see Terkessidis 2004: 100–109). Challenging such a system is difficult. In the case of racism, this is aggravated by the fact that the term is primarily associated with right-wing violence. There is a lack of understanding that racism is a foundation embedded and widely accepted in society for discrimination.

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52 Social exclusion and marginalization mechanisms refer to structural forms of disadvantage that contribute to or perpetuate inequality.

53 The African-American psychiatrist Pierce coined the term “microaggressions” in the early 1970s. He was referring to the regular assaultive remarks in everyday communication by white people toward black people, which can be understood as attacks on dignity. Psychologist Sue expanded the understanding, describing three categories of microaggressions: Micro-aggressions as obvious assaults, micro-insults as clearly recognizable rudeness and micro-deprecations as messages that are dismissive and exclusionary (see 2010).
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against people who are classified as different and alien (see Balibar 1992). Despite an emerging social awareness of racism, there is therefore still a certain “difficulty in talking about racism” (Mecheril/Melter 2010: 162). Paradoxically, discussions about concrete experiences of racism or corresponding social problems are often accompanied by dismay expressed by members of the majority society and a pattern of social defense. People who raise the issue of racism are accused of lacking objectivity, exaggerated moralizing, polemics, and therefore of a distorted and untrustworthy perception.

“Following the pattern of victim-perpetrator reversal, attention shifts away from the concrete experiences of racism to the idea of being blamed. Racism itself appears unreal and becomes a term for accusations that are always unjustified.” (Messerschmidt 2010: 42)

Such reversals can go so far that processes of drawing social boundaries and exclusions are justified with sweeping racist labeling and thus appear legitimate or even necessary. In relation to Muslims, for instance, the insinuated affinity for violence, lack of tolerance, and general oppression of women are used to justify separate measures to ensure security, neutrality, and gender equality. Due to the widespread dissemination and high rate of approval of anti-Muslim resentment, discriminatory measures against Muslims and their religious practice are less likely to be questioned by society and are communicated relatively openly (see also chapter \[3\] and \[7\]).

Against this backdrop, it seems important to increasingly include the experiential knowledge of affected groups in both research and knowledge production. Research that elicits and makes visible the perspective of those affected is of central importance especially for the socio-political debate on discrimination and the development of anti-discrimination strategies and prevention concepts (see El-Mafaalani/Waleciak/Weitzel 2020: 174).

5.2 Studies on experiences of discrimination and challenges in recording them

“Discrimination is usually defined as statements and actions that are directed in a derogatory or disadvantageous manner against members of certain social groups” (Hormel/Scherr 2010: 7). There are several challenges when it comes to recording anti-Muslim sentiment or AMR. While circumstantial evidence and proof of experienced disadvantage can be found through qualitative and quantitative studies, it is not always possible to clearly understand or prove the reasons for the individual experiences of discrimination. People can be affected by discrimination in various dimensions of their identity and also experience multiple discrimination, for instance, as a Muslim,
a migrant, and as a woman (intersectionality). Moreover, racist discourses are constantly changing and, analogous to their conjunctures, racist labeling and practices of exclusion also change (see Demirovic/Bojadzijev 2002). Devaluations and discrimination can thus be directly directed against Muslims for being Muslim but can also be attributed to ethnic-cultural labeling. Other studies therefore investigate, for instance, experiences of discrimination experienced by Turks or refugees while also recording experiences of discrimination through AMR (for instance, Uslucan 2017).

Another challenge in recording discrimination is that people’s perceptions of it vary. They may perhaps perceive discrimination in a given situation, even though it may not have existed. Equally, however, a factually discriminatory situation may not be apparent to the addressee (see Sauer 2009: 146–147). In addition, the degree of sensitivity and the individual claim to equal treatment are particularly significant for how discrimination is perceived. The higher developed the sensorium and the higher the attitude of entitlement, the more discrimination is perceived. Furthermore, the social framework conditions influenced by lifestyle and circumstances are also significant for the degree to which discrimination is experienced. More opportunities for experiencing discrimination also tend to increase the amount of discrimination experienced (ibid.). In summary, it can be said that the subjective horizon of experience in relation to discrimination is quite wide and discrimination can be both overestimated and underestimated by those affected (see Peucker 2010: 32). Surveys related to the experience of discrimination thus do not provide a reliable indicator of the actual extent of discrimination in society. However, the studies provide important approximate values and can give various indications of social imbalances and grievances. Based on subjective perceptions, conclusions can be drawn about sensitive areas of life, social developments, the influence of various factors, or also about reaction patterns among people affected. “Society is shaped in many ways by the perceptions of its members. When people feel discriminated against, this has consequences” (Baumann/Egenberger/Supik 2018: 65).

In the following, reference is made primarily to studies that explicitly examine experiences of discrimination by people who are (co-)addressed in their Muslim identity.

5.2.1 Quantitative studies

The 2018 Minorities and Discrimination Survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (EU-MIDIS II, see FRA 2018) is among the largest studies to date outlining the extent of discrimination experiences. The experiences of more than 10,500 Muslim immigrants and their descendants in 15 EU Member States were evaluated separately. The results of the study show that Muslims experience discrimination especially because of their name, skin color, and visual appearance. More than half of Muslim respondents (53%) who were looking for housing and slightly less than half (44%) of those who were looking for work said that they had been discriminated against because of their first or last name (ibid.: 14). In the five years prior to the survey, 39 percent felt discriminated against in areas of daily life because of their ethnic origin or migration backdrop (ibid.: 13). More than a quarter (27%) of Muslim respondents reported hate harassment based on their ethnic or migrant backdrop in the twelve months prior to the survey. The experiences of second-generation respondents (36%)

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57 Racism is subject to constant change and adaptation. In the recent past, for instance, a way of speaking about groups that are racially marked as different—including Muslims—has emerged that is rooted in both culture and religion (see Mecheril/Melter 2010: 153; Attia/Keskinkılıç 2016). The mutability and transferability of racist labeling practices is also evident elsewhere. In the 1960s, for instance, young Italian men in the Federal Republic of Germany were still considered dangerous “knifemen.” In recent decades, this image has shifted and was transferred first to Turks and later to Arabs or North Africans.
Experiences with anti-Muslim racism from the perspective of those affected

are even more serious than those of the first generation (22%; ibid.: 15). In the five years prior to the survey, 17 percent of Muslim respondents had experienced concrete discrimination on the basis of their religion. In this respect, too, the values for the second generation are higher than for the first generation (22% and 15% respectively; ibid.: 14). About one in three (35%) Muslim women cited clothing as a reason for discrimination when seeking employment (ibid.: 14). In addition, about one in three Muslim women (31%) who wore a headscarf in public were harassed because of their ethnic origin or migration backdrop. In the twelve months prior to the survey, 16 percent of Muslim respondents had been stopped by the police, with 42 percent assuming that this was due to their ethnic origin (ibid.: 17). Less than a quarter of respondents (23%) reported experiences of physical assault by the police or another organization. Of the incidents carried out by police officers, 70 percent were not reported. The main reason given by Muslim respondents for not reporting incidents of discrimination was that reporting would be useless or wouldn’t change anything anyway (47%; ibid.: 16).

Other Germany-specific studies also show a high degree of discrimination against Muslims. An analysis by the Expert Council of German Foundations for Integration and Migration on experiences of discrimination by people with a migration backdrop shows, for instance, that Muslims experience discrimination significantly more often (55%) than Christians (29%) or people without a religious affiliation (32%; see 2018: 4).

In its regular surveys among people of Turkish origin in North Rhine-Westphalia, the Center for Turkish Studies (Zentrum für Türkeistudien und Integrationsforschung) (ZfTI) also collects data on experiences of discrimination. What’s striking here is that these people, many of whom are perceived as Muslim, recorded the highest levels of experiences of discrimination (81%), especially in 2010 at the “height of the Sarrazin debate” (Uslucan 2017: 136). Over the years, the study shows a decrease; as in the EU-MIDIS II, the first generation is less likely to feel discriminated against than the following generations. Experiences of discrimination in the search for housing, at school, and at work are mentioned very often.

A study conducted by the WZB Berlin Social Science Center in 2018 also confirms that Muslim applicants with a migration backdrop receive far less positive feedback when looking for a job than applicants without a migration backdrop, but also less than applicants with a migration backdrop from western or southern Europe or East Asia (see Koopmans/Weit/Yemane 2018: 23–24). This especially affects women wearing headscarves. In a 2016 study, the IZA Institute of Labor Economics found that in order to be invited to an interview, Muslim women with Turkish names and who wear headscarves have to apply four times as often as equally qualified applicants with German names who do not wear headscarves (see Weichselbaumer 2016: 12). In a study commissioned by the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes), women wearing headscarves in particular also report that they were not hired due to discrimination (see Beigang et al. 2017: 167). A study by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees concludes that in all the areas surveyed women with headscarves are more often disadvantaged than women without headscarves and men58 (see Schührer 2018: 50).

5.2.2 Qualitative studies

The increasingly negative image of Islam as “the other” of “Western civilization” is accompanied by a real “Muslimization of Muslims” (Amirpur 2011).

58 The following areas were surveyed: “In everyday life,” “At public offices and authorities,” “On the labor market,” and “When looking for a home.”
The discovery of the Muslim identity of people formerly perceived as Turks, refugees, or the like is also reflected in qualitative research. In recent years, a number of studies have been published that deal with racism and discrimination experienced by Muslims and the coping strategies of those affected while taking into account their perspective. They offer in-depth knowledge about the experiences of exclusion and discrimination of Muslims in various social spheres, institutional contexts, and special problem situations.

In summary, it can be said that the Muslims interviewed experience various forms of stigmatization and discrimination. The fact that “experiences of discrimination are not incoherent biographical experiences that can be assigned to a defined period of time” (Logeswaran 2022: 140) is particularly evident in the descriptions of negative blanket labeling experienced time and again. They not only lead to experiences of exclusion, but also to very concrete disadvantages. These are described in various areas of society, but especially in places where there is greater social interaction, i.e., the public space in general, but also the education system and professional life. It is also clear that the discrimination experienced sometimes has a very stressful effect on the people affected. Especially in asymmetrical power relations, such as those that prevail in schools between teachers and students, negative labeling and experiences of discrimination are perceived as particularly hurtful (see subchapter ↗ 6.3). It is evident that authorities who act within the framework of an institutional mandate have a special responsibility to bear (see Scherr/Breit 2020: 231–232).

It is also clear from the surveys that the interviewees see themselves exposed to gender-specific racist labeling. Muslim girls and women describe how they are not perceived as self-determined. This is especially true for women wearing headscarves, who are sometimes openly confronted with racist remarks. Boys and men, on the other hand, tend to be labeled as aggressive and violent. Jihadist terrorist attacks are described as a kind of catalyst for AMR. As a result, Muslims are increasingly confronted with a perception that classifies them as potentially dangerous, putting them under pressure to justify themselves. It can be concluded from the research that it is easier for those affected to deal with racist experiences if they have empowering resources such as social networks, social status, education, knowledge about racism, or positive self-esteem. It should also be noted that the recurring experiences of devaluation and exclusion among people who experience discrimination sometimes lead to re-ethnicization tendencies.

5.3 UEM hearing on the affected people’s perspective: Counseling centers, youth associations, Muslim associations

In recent years, various civil society organizations have become increasingly involved in the field of AMR. As specialist and counseling centers, they either specifically support Muslims who have experienced discrimination or have large overlaps

59 A differentiated reference to the qualitative studies available would exceed the scope of this report. The following studies are referred to in the summary: Attia/Keskinkılıç/Ökçü 2021; Becker et al. 2018; Bostancı/Biel/Neuhauser 2022; DeZIM 2022; Ferédooni 2016; Jenichen 2018; Jukatsch/Lehmann 2020; Karakayali/zur Nieden 2019; Kooz/Schorter 2022; Mühle 2019; Scharathow 2014; Soliman 2019; Spielhaus 2011; Stošić/Rensch 2020; Willems 2015; Yurdakul/Hassoun/Taymoorzadeh 2018.

60 Repeated experiences of discrimination can lead to the descendants of immigrants identifying more with their ancestors’ country of origin or religion than the first generation. These processes of withdrawal with a possibly disintegrative revival of origin-related characteristics or ways of acting in everyday life are referred to as “re-ethnicization.”
with this affected group. This gives these organizations valuable professional insights into social subsystems and knowledge about manifestations of AMR. Some of them are doing pioneering work and have important expertise in this field. In order to better understand the discrimination experiences of Muslims, the UEM conducted two hearings with representatives of the relevant specialist and counseling centers. A further hearing was also held with representatives of Islamic associations which have a multiplier function and can report on experiences from Muslim communities. The results of the hearings with representatives of a total of 19 organizations are not representative. The hearings also explicitly asked about different facets of anti-Muslim sentiment, so that the results summarized below focus on social challenges. The insight gained in this way is understood as a valuable addition. The results are reproduced below according to the survey structure and the areas identified.

### 5.3.1 Dimensions of anti-Muslim racism

The representatives of the organizations and specialist centers report a high level of racism experiences among Muslims. The spectrum ranges from everyday microaggressions and verbal assaults to physical attacks. In addition to everyday public life (streets, public transport, shops, car parks, etc.), special mention is made of contexts in which the affected people find themselves in a relationship of dependency, such as schools, the labor and housing market, or the healthcare sector.

The recorded cases of counseling and discrimination in schools cover all facets of AMR (see subchapter 6.3). The majority of complaints were related to teacher behavior. It is assumed that in schools the visibility of a Muslim identity tends to be perceived by students and teachers as a threat to school peace and is therefore unwelcome.

> “The ADAS data reveal a striking relevance of discrimination emanating from teachers: in 2021, 96 percent of the reported cases of discrimination involved students. In well over half of the cases, namely 72.5 percent, discrimination came from the school itself, and here mainly from teachers.” (Aliyeh Vegane Arani, Anlaufstelle für Diskriminierungsschutz an Schulen (ADAS) bei LIFE—Bildung, Umwelt, Chancengleichheit)

The complaints recorded by FAIR International—Federation Against Injustice and Racism—also mostly related to the school sector. It is reported that students at school are often approached as supposed representatives of Islam or of Muslims in general and are forced to give information on behalf of others, even revealing private information. In order to be able to speak and counteract experienced devaluations, many students feel compelled to deal with Islam more intensively.

Another context in which discrimination is often experienced is in working life where Muslims face derogatory statements. In job interviews, people are openly asked whether they are willing to give up wearing a headscarf or speaking Turkish or Arabic in a work context.

> “Above all, the people affected are forced to weigh up carefully whether they have to fear negative consequences at their workplace or in their school career if they file a complaint.” (Orgun Özcan, FAIR international—Federation Against Injustice and Racism)

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61 List of Muslim associations, counseling centers, and youth associations in the hearing on the affected people’s perspective see External expertise.
62 See also the ADAS study (2021): “Religion und Glauben an der Schule. Diskriminierungserfahrungen muslimischer Jugendlicher in Berliner Schulen” (Religion and Belief at School. Discrimination Experiences of Muslim Youths at Schools in Berlin).
According to the representatives of associations and counseling centers interviewed, many property owners do not want Muslim tenants. When looking for an apartment, a name itself is often reason for rejection. Municipal housing companies also made sure that not too many migrants or Muslims live in one property.

The healthcare system is named as another area where discrimination against Muslims is registered. Discriminatory questions not relevant to treatment are regularly asked during medical treatment. It is also reported that patients sometimes do not want to be treated by doctors who are perceived as Muslim.

“A doctor is told by his patient, ‘I will not let myself be defiled by a Nafri.’” (Engin Karahan, Mosaik Deutschland)

The fatal effect of anti-Muslim social discourses is especially criticized. According to the interviewees, politics and the media create generalized images of backward, anti-Semitic, sexist, and anti-queer Muslims. In this way, the institutions are contributing to an exclusionary social culture toward Muslims.

“Muslims and people perceived as Muslim continue to be understood as a homogeneous mass—i.e., Islam, the Muslim, the woman wearing a headscarf—and are thus defined through foreign labeling and prejudices, which leads to a deficient world view of Muslim people.” (Djalila Boukhari, Fachstelle #MehralsQueer)

According to the hearing, an undifferentiated and in parts generalized and discrediting use of language, for instance, in statements by top political leaders, in police press releases, or in federal-state reports on the protection of the constitution, is also reflected in practical exclusions and legislative demarcations against Muslims, for instance, in the amendment of the law on the appearance of civil servants. The handling of the NSU complex, the racist attack in Hanau, and right-wing extremist chats within the police also had a huge impact on trust in state agencies. There are also reports of high levels of hostility in social networks, which have sometimes even led to withdrawal and shutting down of social media accounts.

It is reported that representative places for Muslim life are a particular target. There are recurrent attacks on mosques with crime statistics showing around 100 attacks each year (see subchapter ↗ 3.2.2). According to Zekeriya Altuğ from DITIB, the frequency of assaults and the low importance attached to them by the majority society also lead to resignation among those affected, so that hardly any criminal charges are filed in the case of less drastic assaults.

“Since 2015, DITIB has been analyzing attacks on mosques and found that there is a clear correlation between negative reporting and attacks on mosques. About two weeks after negative media coverage of a specific event or discussion about Muslims, the number of cases increases significantly.” (Zekeriya Altuğ, DITIB)

A massive culture of mistrust and justification is reported in relation to Muslim organizations. As soon as they demand equal participation, the question repeatedly arises as to how they are faring in terms of liberal-democratic values.

“Muslim youths who want to get involved in an organization find it disproportionately difficult to participate. We need to change the political discourse to give Muslim organizations and actors a fair chance to be involved.” (Kofi Ohene-Dokyi, Regionale Arbeitsstellen für Bildung, Integration und Demokratie)

The situation of Muslim women wearing headscarves was described as serious during the hearing. They are increasingly exposed to anti-Muslim violence and the inhibition threshold toward them is particularly low:
“For women wearing headscarves, it is an everyday occurrence to be attacked in the public space.” (Lydia Nofal, Aktionsbündnis muslimischer Frauen in Deutschland)

It is also reported that many women do not report assaults and insults, so that a high number of unreported cases is assumed (see Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Antirassismus 2023).

Potentiated violence can always occur when relations of inequality are intertwined. In addition to women wearing headscarves, reference is made to the special situation of Muslim and queer refugees perceived as Muslim. Being Muslim and queer is often perceived as a contradiction. According to the participants in the hearing, this leads to gay men being subjected to humiliating processes in the asylum procedure, to being outed, or having to explain sexual techniques. In the LGBTQIA+ scene, they are sometimes made to understand that they have no business being there:

“Queer Muslims are defined as alien, exoticized, and attacked. Their identities are taken away from them, they are made invisible, and their multidimensionality is denied them.” (Djalila Boukhari, Fachstelle #MehralsQueer)

5.3.2 Changes in the extent and manifestations of anti-Muslim racism

Those interviewed in the hearing expressed concern about societal changes in the extent and manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiment. They see a shift in social boundaries in which taboos have fallen, so that inhibition thresholds for attacks have also been lowered. AMR has become so normal in parts of society that it is not even noticed.

The entry of the AfD into the Bundestag resulted in a noticeable shift in discourse and with it a worsening of the situation for Muslims (see chapter ↗8). With a strategically staged attitude (“I guess we’re still allowed to say that”), once subliminal racism is now formulated more openly.

There are reports of an increase in threats to mosques. Some congregations had reduced their visibility to the outside world for fear of attacks. A certain normality of anti-Muslim prejudice structures can be observed in parts of society. According to the experts, if prejudices like these can be expressed without restriction, they will multiply, leading to a risk of anti-Muslim sentiment gaining even more ground.

“Instead of clarification, as in other cases of discrimination, we too often experience a storm of indignation when addressing anti-Muslim racism, even in legally clear cases. It is either not perceived or defended as normality by many people.” (Aliyeh Yegane Arani, ADAS bei LIFE—Bildung, Umwelt, Chancengleichheit)

It is pointed out that an entire generation is now growing up that considers it normal to speak disparagingly of Islam. In this social context, it is difficult to develop a sense of injustice. Those affected need measures that create awareness of the injustice of their experiences of devaluation and exclusion.
One positive aspect is the growing social awareness of AMR. More and more people are alarmed and are addressing anti-Muslim sentiment. However, as this commitment grows, so too is the mobilization of right-wing counterforces, as was reported during the hearing. In this respect, society finds itself in a state of tension.

5.3.3 Dealing with anti-Muslim racism

AMR is a challenge for Muslims, and they often feel compelled to act in some way. At the hearing, strategies for dealing with the situation were described, which are outlined below.

Several participants describe the negative consequences of AMR for Muslims. According to them, a social atmosphere perceived as hostile sometimes leads to withdrawal symptoms among vulnerable groups. The limited sense of security in society also results in a calculated and limited use of public spaces. This is especially true for women and in parts of eastern Germany. Even committed young Muslims show signs of fatigue and resignation. Experiences of exclusion and a constant thinking in “us-them” opposites are partly internalized by Muslims. Therefore, it is not just AMR that needs to be combated, the tendencies of withdrawal and alienation in Muslim communities also need to be countered.

“My experience of anti-Muslim sentiment goes back to my childhood and continues to shape me today. Unlike many people around me, however, I am in the fortunate position of being able to reflect on and name discrimination and to deal with it.” (Serap Ermiş, Alhambra Gesellschaft)

5.3.4 Gaps identified in the fight against anti-Muslim racism

A critical look was taken at the data available from associations with counseling services. They were important, but in each case depend on their reach. Regular and thorough surveys based on reliable data are important here. It should be noted that the situation of Muslims is not necessarily getting worse across the board, but that reporting is also increasing due to growing awareness among Muslims and increased attention. That being said, however, it was reported during the hearing that only a small part of the anti-Muslim reality is currently visible. Although social awareness and willingness to report are growing, there is still a long way to go. In practice, the hurdles that have to be overcome before incidents are reported to the police authorities remain relatively high.

Criticism is expressed of the overall low level of understanding and awareness of AMR and its mechanisms of action. More knowledge and skills are demanded here, especially from state institutions and their representatives. Equal treatment and protection against discrimination should be
part of society’s self-image and be evident at all levels of government action.

“What is bitterly needed is further training—not only for professionals, but also for the administration. In the field of diversity and religion, we still have to deal with a glaring lack of skills.” (Aliyeh Vegane Arani, ADAS bei LIFE—Bildung, Umwelt, Chancengleichheit)

With regard to eastern Germany, it is pointed out that Muslims there are sometimes particularly stigmatized and exposed to greater discrimination. Many Muslims living there have fled and have only just begun to process their situation. They know less about their rights and are therefore less able to defend themselves against the discrimination they experience. In view of the poorly developed counseling and association landscape, there is still an urgent need to catch up here. There need for specialist counseling centers and staff with intersectional competences is considerable.

It is also criticized that the media regularly draw exclusively on a small circle of Muslim representatives, which means that many perspectives remain concealed. The media, especially public service broadcasters, bear a huge responsibility. They need to become more aware and report in a more differentiated way, the experts demand.

5.3.5 Summary and evaluation

In the hearings, the representatives of the specialist and counseling centers and the multipliers report on recurring experiences of discrimination that Muslims experience in different areas of society and at different levels (discursive, interpersonal, and institutional). The regular, generalized, and stigmatizing social debates about Muslims are perceived as fundamentally problematic. Negative labeling is seen as a justification for social inequality, exclusion, and various forms of discrimination, and are perceived as an obstacle to the participation of Muslims in society and to social cohesion as a whole.

With a view to the identified deficit in knowledge and awareness of AMR and its manifestations, further training and education are urgently demanded. There is also a need for better protection against discrimination for Muslims and people perceived as Muslim who are exposed to AMR. Furthermore, specialist counseling centers—also with regard to intersectional multiple discrimination—and empowerment offers for those affected are also needed. Due to a certain normalization of anti-Muslim resentment and the barriers in naming it, the number of unreported cases of discrimination is suspected to be high.

“It is important to expand anti-discrimination legislation, similar to Canada and the US, to include the duty to provide reasonable precautions.” (Aliyeh Vegane Arani, ADAS bei LIFE—Bildung, Umwelt, Chancengleichheit)

The experiences and professional assessments from the hearings underline the findings from the studies on Muslim women’s experiences of discrimination available to date. However, in order to better understand the extent of anti-Muslim discrimination and its impact on those affected, further systematic surveys appear to be necessary. Given the importance the UEM attaches to this perspective, it commissioned a study entitled “Muslim experiences and perceptions of anti-Muslim and anti-Islam sentiment in society (MuPe)” (see subchapter 5.6). Another exploratory study commissioned by the UEM, which looks into attacks on mosques, complements the findings.
5.4 UEM case study: An exploration of the impact of mosque attacks on community members

The Cologne-based anti-discrimination association FAIR International—Federation against Injustice and Racism—launched the #brandeilig project in 2019 (website: brandeilig.org), the first nationwide reporting center for attacks on mosques in Germany. Since then, #brandeilig has been collecting information on mosque attacks, making it accessible to the public, and clarifying the impact of these attacks on the affected people. In 2022, the team published the first quantitative surveys on mosque attacks (see FAIR international 2022). According to the report, mosque communities in Germany are the target of an attack every week on average. The damage caused ranges from racist graffiti and smashed windows to bloodstained properties and pig carcasses left behind to bullet holes and fire damage. The clearance rate of the reported incidents is low (ibid.: 8–9).

Since no other research has been conducted on the topic of attacks on mosques in Germany, the UEM commissioned #brandeilig to prepare an exploratory case study (see Gök Akca et al. 2023) to shed more light on the impact of such attacks on community members. The surveys were conducted in one major German city and one large city in both western and eastern Germany. They were based on problem-centered interviews with board and community members who have witnessed a massive attack (arson attack or shelling) on their community.

Mosques are not only places of contemplation and prayer, but often places where people come to meet and learn. For the people interviewed, they not only have a religious significance, but also represent a place of inner and social peace. As such a place, the attacks had a considerable destabilizing effect. They are described as severe shocks that triggered long-lasting insecurity. The congregations responded by stepping up security measures, for instance, locking doors during prayer times. Some members of the congregation no longer let their children go to the mosque unaccompanied, others stay away from the congregation’s services altogether. Overall, there are reports of stressful psychological consequences, such as fears that come to the fore in certain situations.

What was criticized in the interviews was the widespread absence of solidarity and concrete offers of support from the majority society. The lack of sympathy on the part of political representatives is interpreted as a sign of indifference and exclusion. After the attacks, the attacked mosques received support primarily from migrant organizations, other mosque communities, and from foreign officials. There were reports of visits by Turkish consular representatives after the attacks, who also provided financial and legal assistance. It became clear that the support coming mainly from other communities and from their own or their parents’ country of origin strengthens the sense of belonging in this direction.

Some criticize the work of the security authorities. The communities would have welcomed a temporary police presence after the attacks, but this was seldom provided. Criticism was also leveled at the police’s lack of sensitivity. In one mosque, officers entered the prayer rooms with shoes and dogs. Elsewhere, investigations were carried out regarding technical defects in the building, although the arson attack was documented by a surveillance video. It was also described with chagrin that a court hearing failed to recognize setting fire to a rubbish container at the mosque building as an attack. As a consequence, the case was also not considered to be a politically motivated act and therefore not included in the police crime statistics.

A certain habituation effect with regard to racist attacks can be recognized again and again in the
Experiences with anti-Muslim racism from the perspective of those affected

Community members already routinely remove without much fuss residues of “minor attacks,” such as swastikas on walls or destroyed objects. The interviewees are aware that the damage and attacks should be reported to the police, and this is being increasingly demanded by the responsible mosque boards.

In the interviews, there are repeated references to racist experiences in everyday life. For instance, individuals casually mention that they avoid certain places, no longer go out in the evening, or try to ignore the insults they frequently experience. While the community members interviewed seem to have partly come to terms with such racist attacks, similar experiences by their children are described as very hurtful.

The exploratory study reveals that the attacks on mosques experienced have harrowing consequences for the community members. They attribute extremist acts such as attacks on mosques to an anti-Muslim mood in society. The lack of solidarity on the part of the majority society and its representatives reinforces this assumption. The communities themselves would like to change this state of affairs. In return, they hope for less prejudice, more trust, and better relationships.

5.5 Study by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees on experiences of discrimination in the Muslim population

Conducting representative studies among the Muslim population is a very time-consuming exercise because, unlike the Catholic or Protestant churches, for instance, there are no comprehensive membership registers of Muslim communities that could serve as a basis for representative sampling. Information on the size and composition of the Muslim population is based on estimates first made by the research department of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in 2008 and updated in 2020 (see Haug/Müssig/Stichs 2009; Stichs/Pfündel 2023). The studies by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees provide representative statements on Muslim life in Germany.

The UEM received a yet unpublished evaluation of the study by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees on experiences of discrimination in the Muslim population entitled “Muslimisches Leben in Deutschland 2020” (Muslim Life in Germany 2020) (Pfündel/Stichs/Tanis 2021). This evaluation provides reliable data on the proportion of Muslims in Germany who regularly experience discrimination in everyday life and on the role of religious affiliation for the discrimination experienced (see Stichs/Pfündel 2023).

A total of 4,538 people with a migration history were interviewed for this study, who were assigned to one of 23 Muslim-majority countries from the following regions: the Middle East, North Africa, south-east Europe, and Turkey. Eighty percent of the respondents are Muslim, seven percent declare a Christian religious affiliation, and about one in ten do not classify themselves as belonging to any religion. In addition, 582 people without a migration biography were interviewed, so that the findings for the Muslim population can be seen in the context of society as a whole.

In this study, experiences of discrimination were measured using the Everyday Discrimination Scale (Williams 2020), among others. This scale also deliberately records seemingly subtle experiences of discrimination since it can be assumed that not only serious life experiences, but also small, everyday devaluations are experienced as stressful (see Uslucan 2017).

The page numbers given refer to the manuscript version of the study; therefore, these may differ in the layout version.
Fig. 5.1 shows how often people from Muslim countries of origin state that they have such experiences in their everyday lives. They most often report experiences where “people act as if they are better” than them; about 18 percent of the respondents say they experience this regularly (at least several times a month), and another 30 percent experienced it at least once. A majority of 52 percent say they have never experienced it. A similar percentage of people with roots in Muslim countries of origin reported less polite treatment compared to others.

A summary analysis of all nine experiences of discrimination surveyed shows that “almost every third person from a Muslim country of origin experiences discrimination in everyday life a few times a month in at least one of the nine situations surveyed. For people without a migration history, this is around one in five” (Stichs/Pfündel 2023: 16). This shows that disadvantageous experiences are much more common among people with roots in Muslim countries of origin than among people without any migration backdrop. If the former are differentiated according to their religious affiliation, there are no significant differences between Muslims and Christians. However,
the specific region of origin is relevant: People from south-eastern Europe, for instance, report significantly less disadvantages in everyday life than people from the Middle East, Arabic-speaking countries, and Turkey. The differences by country of origin remain significant even though only people of Muslim faith are considered. The authors conclude:

“It appears significant for the interpretation of these results that in everyday life people often meet who know little or nothing about each other, so that people are assigned to a stigmatized group based purely on assumptions. Characteristics such as accent, phenotype or, in the case of women, wearing a headscarf, are obviously also decisive when a person is categorized as Muslim. Accordingly, people who do not belong to Islam but who are perceived as Muslim, for instance, because of their region of origin, can also be affected by disparagement in everyday life in connection with anti-Muslim prejudice.” (Ibid.: 69)

This suggests that being Muslim is often equated with originating from certain countries such as Turkey or Syria and is thus “ethnicized” (see chapter 2.2). Analyses of correlations also indicate that people who have connections to Muslim countries of origin but were born and grew up in Germany, as well as people with higher educational qualifications, more often report disadvantageous experiences in everyday life. This is explained by their higher expectations of social acceptance and belonging. It can also be assumed that more highly educated people are more aware when it comes to misanthropy and are more likely to recognize discriminatory or derogatory behavior. This finding can therefore also be interpreted to mean that people without a corresponding awareness underestimate discriminatory behavior toward them by others. People with corresponding references to origin who live in eastern Germany also report more frequent experiences of discrimination, although anti-Muslim attitudes are no more widespread in the eastern German federal states than, for instance, in southern Germany (see chapter 2.3). However, it can be assumed that due to the political climate in some eastern German regions, anti-Muslim attitudes are more likely to be translated into pejorative behavior.

The authors also analyzed the role of visible religious symbols for experiences of disadvantage in everyday life (see Stichs/Pfündel 2023). The comparison of Muslim women with and without headscarves shows that women who wear a headscarf more often report worse treatment in everyday life. Every third Muslim woman with a headscarf, for instance, reports regular experiences of discrimination, while only every fourth Muslim woman without a headscarf reports similar experiences (Stichs/Pfündel 2023: 35). The fact that women wearing headscarves are clearly more often disadvantaged has been proven several times by experimental studies that record the behavior of third parties in everyday situations. One study, for instance, showed that women with headscarves receive assistance less often than women without headscarves (see Choi/Poertner/Sambanis 2022). Nevertheless, the differences between women with and without headscarves are three times more likely to be invited to a job interview than women with headscarves despite having the same qualifications (see Weichselbaumer 2020). This is a difference of 300 percent, while in the study presented here it is only 50 percent (see above). The findings thus indicate that although the differences in perceived discrimination reflect real preconditions in important areas of life, women with headscarves partly underestimate experienced discrimination, which can perhaps be interpreted with a “normalization” of frequently experienced experiences (see subchapter 5.6.2).
When asked about the causes of discrimination, origin or descent was named first, accounting for 71 percent, followed by religion (35%). Muslims attribute experiences of discrimination to their religious affiliation more often than average, with a share of 41 percent, but not as the sole cause: A large share of the respondents suspect that both origin and religious affiliation play a role. For those affected, it is therefore difficult to distinguish whether belonging to Islam or their origin is a motive for discrimination.

A summarized evaluation of the results across all three areas shows that almost every second person (48%) with a migration history from Muslim countries of origin reports worse treatment in at least one of the three main areas of life—school, work, and housing—compared to people of German origin. This proportion is above average for people with Turkish roots who account for a share of 56 percent. The authors conclude:

“This is a sobering finding considering that people of Turkish origin form one of the largest groups of origin in Germany and that the majority have lived in Germany for many years or were born here. It clearly shows that the majority assume that the premise of equal participation opportunities does not apply to them, despite longstanding life references” (Stichs/Pfündel 2023: 72).

Overall, the study reveals that it is not the actual religious affiliation or religiosity that is decisive for experienced discrimination, but rather the assumed religious affiliation and religiosity based on appearance or country of origin. Religion and origin thus work together, as the study proves. People who appear to be Muslim and additionally wear religious symbols such as headscarves are thus particularly affected. This means that different characteristics may overlap, for instance, Muslim women with a migration history can be discriminated against on the basis of at least three characteristics—as a woman, as a Muslim woman, and as a person with a migration history (on the topic of intersectionality, see also subchapter ↗ 2.3).

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64 Only about one in two to two-thirds of the respondents were able to answer these questions. Either the respondents did not go to school in Germany, or it was too long ago, or they had not looked for an apartment or job, so that the disadvantage percentages refer to the valid answers in each case.
5.6 UEM study on Muslim perspectives (MuPe) in Germany

Various representative studies show how widespread anti-Muslim resentment is in Germany and how stubbornly it persists (see chapter 3). This resentment can be expressed in everyday coexistence through derogatory and discriminatory behavior toward Muslims and people perceived as Muslim. The results of the study by Pfündel, Stichs and Tanis (2021) on the experiences of discrimination of people with a migration history from Muslim countries, as presented in the previous section, impressively show that about one third of these people are regularly confronted with sometimes seriously derogatory behavior. But how do they deal with such experiences? How do derogatory and disadvantageous experiences affect their lives—for instance, their life satisfaction or their sense of belonging to Germany? So far, there are no quantitative studies that systematically investigate these questions and allow general statements to be derived about coping strategies and the effects of anti-Muslim sentiment on the everyday lives of the people affected. Against this backdrop, as well as under the guiding idea of the study format “Jewish Perspectives on Anti-Semitism” (Zick et al. 2017), the UEM commissioned a mixed-method study on “Muslim experiences and perceptions of anti-Muslim and anti-Islam sentiment in society” (MuPe study: Zick et al. 2023) which is discussed in the following subchapters. In view of limited time and finance, the UEM was only able to take a first step toward closing the research gap by commissioning the study; this is why the study reaches its limits when it comes to questions of representativeness. In order for academia, civil society, and politics to gain a more comprehensive insight into the extent and impact of anti-Muslim incidents in the everyday lives of those affected in the future, it is absolutely necessary to conduct a representative study on these issues as well as to record the Muslim perspective at regular intervals and compare it with that of the statistically covered majority society.

The quantitative part of the MuPe study is carried out at the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence under the direction of Prof. Dr. Andreas Zick and provides information on the connections between experiences of discrimination and racism of a formally and relatively well educated and young sample. The qualitative part, led by Dr. Meltem Kulaçatan at the Goethe University Frankfurt am Main, investigates deeper questions about experiences and perceptions of anti-Muslim and anti-Islam sentiment. The two methodological approaches complement each other and are related to each other in terms of conception, discussion, and interpretation—which is the strength of the MuPe study. Through the mixed-method approach and similar to the study format of “Jewish Perspectives,” it is possible to map a broad spectrum of experiences of devaluation and the corresponding effects on the affected people as well as their coping strategies.

5.6.1 Results of the quantitative part

The quantitative results of the MuPe study are based on an online survey of Muslims in Germany who were interviewed as part of an online access panel, i.e., a group of people registered online who agreed to participate repeatedly in surveys. Although the data from the 473 respondents in total is not representative of the Muslim population, they do provide first important indications of the impact of experiences of discrimination on those affected. The sample is heterogeneous and contains data on a broad spectrum of experiences of discrimination, how they are dealt with, and their effects on the affected people, so that important insights can be gained through group comparisons and correlation analyses. In this respect, the present study provides an opportunity to use the data to compare the differences between people with no or rare experiences of discrimination and those with regular experiences of discrimination and to work out the multi-layered experiences of anti-Muslim sentiment as well as the complex modes of action and coping strategies.
The socio-demographic composition of the sample shows that it was possible to reach an above-average number of Muslims born in Germany, younger people with above-average education, and members of Muslim organizations: around 68 percent of the respondents were born in Germany, 92.5 percent are between 18 and 50 years old, 48 percent have graduated from high school or university, and one in two is a member of a Muslim organization.

The findings on personal experiences of anti-Muslim sentiment (see Fig. 5.2) also show that it was mainly people who were particularly affected by experiences of discrimination or who were particularly aware of the issue who were reached. Nearly every second respondent says they experienced non-verbal devaluation, such as staring or other derogatory gestures, several times or regularly in the past twelve months. One in two also reports repeated or regular covert innuendos. Half even report specific insults and harassment. Rejective behavior such as ignoring is reported somewhat less frequently, but this still affects around 44 percent of the respondents. With a share of around 30 percent, almost every third person states that they have been physically assaulted several times in the past year.

The findings show that especially people who experience more drastic forms of anti-Muslim sentiment were reached. Compared to the study by the Federal Office on Migration and Refugees (Stichs/Pfündel 2023: 16; see also subchapter Fig. 5.5), in which only six percent of the respondents reported repeated experiences of threats and harassment (experiences of physical assaults were not recorded separately), Muslims with such experiences are strongly overrepresented in the MuPe study. The following results are based on the UEM’s own analyses. The comprehensive study report is currently being prepared by the researchers and will be published in due course. At this point, only some excerpts from the overall data can be presented.

**Figure 5.2: Personal experiences of anti-Muslim sentiment (in %, n=473, valid cases, unweighted)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical attacks</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejective behavior (e.g., ignoring, not answering questions)</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insults or harassment</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>38.3</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hidden innuendos</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal devaluation (e.g., looks, gestures, stares)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UEM’s own analysis by means of the data set of the quantitative MuPe study (Zick et al. 2023).
5.6.1.1 Who feels particularly affected by anti-Muslim sentiment?

For the following analyses, the respondents were divided into three groups based on the intensity of experienced anti-Muslim sentiment based on the five forms of manifestation queried (see Fig. 5.2) and compared with each other.

1. 24.4 percent of the respondents had little or no experience of anti-Muslim sentiment (“rarely or never”).
2. 50.9 percent definitely have more frequent experiences of anti-Muslim sentiment but are not regularly exposed to it (“several times”).
3. According to their own statements, 24.7 percent are confronted with massive hostility; experiences with anti-Muslim sentiment are part of the everyday life of these people (“regularly”).

In order to work out who is particularly affected by anti-Muslim sentiment, the three groups thus formed were compared with each other with regard to their socio-demographic composition as well as religious characteristics (see Tab. 5.1).

The results show clear differences in some cases. Men, for instance, accounting for around 68 percent, report significantly more regular experiences of anti-Muslim sentiment than women. In addition, there are clear age differences between people who report experiences of anti-Muslim sentiment and those who state that they have had no or only isolated experiences of this. With a share of about 60 percent, younger people between 18 and 35 years of age are thus significantly more frequently represented among people with some repeated and those with regular experiences of anti-Muslim sentiment than among those who reported no or infrequent experiences (37%). With regard to the level of education, the results show that people with a low level of education tend to report experiencing anti-Muslim sentiment on a regular basis: Only nine percent of those respondents who have completed compulsory education or have not graduated from high school rarely or never experience anti-Muslim sentiment; their share rises to 14.4 percent when it comes to regular experiences. However, the differences between the various levels of education are small and experiences of anti-Muslim resentment and hostility seem to be common across all educational groups. Clear differences can be seen, however, among respondents with a degree; accounting for around 29 percent, they are represented significantly more often in the group with no or infrequent experiences than in the group with regular experiences (14%).

When it comes to place of residence, there are no significant differences—unlike in the study by the Federal Office on Migration and Refugees—so that Muslims who live in the eastern federal states do not report experiencing discrimination more frequently than those living in the western federal states.

Serious differences can be seen especially with regard to the religiosity of the respondents. Those who report particularly frequent and drastic forms of anti-Muslim sentiment are more often than average members of a Muslim organization (68.8%), those who describe themselves as (very) religious (69.7%), and those who wear clothing that makes them recognizable to outsiders as Muslims (41.1%), for instance a headscarf or caftan (long garment for men). The results show that especially Muslims for whom their religion plays an important role in everyday life, are exposed to hostility.
Table 5.1: Socio-demographic characteristics and religiosity among persons differently affected by anti-Muslim sentiment (in %, n=473, valid cases, unweighted)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences with anti-Muslim sentiment</th>
<th>Total respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rarely or never</td>
<td>Several times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 25</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 35</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 to 50</td>
<td>48.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Birthplace</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>70.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still a student</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None/compulsory education</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abitur (German higher education entrance qualification)</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic degree</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place of residence</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western federal states</td>
<td>89.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern federal states</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Member of a Muslim organization</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-assessment: (very) religious</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wearing Muslim clothing: (very) often</strong></td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Any deviations in the primary rows and the total row are rounding errors.
Source: UEM’s own analysis by means of the data set of the quantitative MuPe study (Zick et al. 2023).

5.6.1.2 Strategies for dealing with experienced hostility

The results on dealing with experienced discrimination or hostility show that a large share of those who are regularly exposed to it primarily look for support in their private environment, turning to family (20.5%) or friends (24.1%). A large proportion (29%) look for help and support, but do not know where to turn, i.e., a large proportion of those strongly affected by anti-Muslim sentiment feel left alone with this problem. In addition, the more severe the hostility, the higher the number of respondents who openly address the issue in the respective situation and perhaps attempt to educate themselves about the anti-Muslim dimension of the behavior; this percentage is a quarter among Muslims with regular experiences of anti-Muslim sentiment. In contrast, the proportion of the affected people who seek professional support is minute and less than one percent. When asked about what they know of
counseling services, only one in ten respondents said that they knew of one or more such services. This means that many of the respondents who are exposed to numerous forms of devaluations and even hostility in everyday life, have no knowledge of counseling and reporting centers for people affected. With a view to those respondents in the study who are already aware of anti-Muslim sentiment, it can be assumed that knowledge about counseling options is even less widespread in the Muslim population as a whole. Moreover, only a small share of less than ten percent reported the incident to the police. Looking at those who report justiciable incidents—such as physical assaults, insults, or harassment—the percentage reporting these incidents is only marginally higher at 11 percent. This finding shows—similar to the FRA 2017 study—that the number of anti-Islamic crimes could be nine to ten times higher than the figures that appear in police crime statistics (see subchapter ↗ 3.2).

5.6.1.3 Psychological and social consequences of experienced devaluation and hostility

There is hardly any reliable data available on the psychological and social consequences of anti-Muslim sentiment. The MuPe study was the first study to comprehensively investigate the possible effects of experienced devaluation and hostility toward Muslims. Within the scope of this report, only selected results can be presented, which already provide important insights into how those affected cope with anti-Muslim sentiment. A distinction must be made between psychological stress, personal coping strategies, and the role of experiences of discrimination in life planning. Fig. 5.3 shows selected results differentiated according to the degree to which people are affected by anti-Muslim sentiment. The first thing to note is that the more respondents say they are affected by the issue, the more often they report perceived stress and nervousness. Among those who are hardly or not at all affected, this proportion is around a quarter, among those moderately affected around 39 percent, and among those severely affected even a good half. The available analyses cannot show whether the cause of the increased stress experience is actually due to the anti-Muslim sentiment experienced. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that people for whom this experience is part of everyday life show strong signs of psychological stress. The connections are more concrete when it comes to avoidance behavior or thoughts of emigration as a result of insecurity due to anti-Muslim sentiment. For instance, around 46 percent of the respondents who are regularly affected report that they avoid certain places because of these experiences; among those who are rarely or not at all affected, this share is eight percent. This illustrates that perceived discrimination strongly impacts people’s everyday lives and leads not only to considerable insecurity, but also to strong restrictions.

For more than one in two respondents with regular anti-Muslim experiences, these experiences also trigger thoughts of emigration, which for around one third are already linked to concrete plans. This is not surprising because three quarters of these people report fear of being attacked, so their everyday life includes not only experiences of anti-Muslim sentiment, but also the fear of repeated hostility and of being attacked. Among those with repeated but comparatively still moderate experiences of anti-Muslim sentiment, around one quarter still have concrete plans to emigrate. The fear of being mugged is also reported by a lower share of 52.6 percent. This only affects a minority of Muslims who have had merely isolated or no experiences of anti-Muslim sentiment.

Nevertheless, with a share of around 42 percent, many of them are very concerned that anti-Islam sentiment could increase in Germany. Even people who are hardly affected by anti-Muslim sentiment themselves are aware of the social scope of the problem.
Overall, however, the respondents are confident about how German society will deal with anti-Muslim sentiment. Regardless of the degree of concern, the vast majority of the respondents trust that Muslims in Germany will be protected in the future. The respondents’ close attachment to Germany is also not affected by the degree of concern with two-thirds to three quarters stating that they belong in Germany and feel comfortable here—regardless of how much they feel discriminated against in everyday life (see Fig. 5.4).

Against the backdrop of findings from other studies that identify “re-ethnicization processes” (see subchapter 5.6.2), these findings may also suggest a reinterpretation of social belonging in Germany with migration history being possibly reframed in this understanding, in much the same way as minorities in the U.S. often emphasize their origin even if they see themselves as American (African, Asian, or Latin American).
5.6.2 Results of the qualitative part

In contrast to the quantitative part of the study, the qualitative part focuses on alternative interpretations and scientific quality criteria, i.e., “not so much [on] the validity, reliability, and objectivity of statistically recorded, scaled, and weighted data, but rather [on] the reconstruction and plausibility of the orientations and interpretations of the meaning of what the people involved in conversations say and how they say it (i.e., the determination of the relationship between the explicit and the implicit).” (Zick et al. 2023)65
For this purpose, the research team conducted and analyzed 31 qualitative interviews throughout Germany during the MuPe project period of almost one year. The qualitative part of the study traces the ways in which the respondents experience discrimination and racist hostility in all areas of life. Anti-Muslim and anti-Islam sentiment or anti-Muslim racism (AMR) can thus be identified as a cross-cutting phenomenon. The basic results are presented below according to the areas named in the interviews.

5.6.2.1 Visibility and perception of experiences of anti-Muslim racism and discrimination

All the interviewees welcomed the intention of the research, i.e., to be interviewed specifically as a Muslim about experiences of racism and discrimination and to be able to comment on the topics. It is important to the respondents that people talk to them rather than about them. This is already an indication of how important this topic is for these people. Their strong desire to communicate is a first sign of an awareness of the problem that is activated in each case and goes beyond everyday perception. At the same time, some respondents express concerns that their views as the affected people may be considered less relevant. The concomitants of uncertainty about the future are significant because they point to the experiential spaces where respondents and those perceived as Muslim live and shape them. They also provide insights into the social climate.

5.6.2.2 Normalization of anti-Muslim experiences within society

In many cases, the respondents point to a kind of normalization or even habituation with regard to AMR. In doing so, they establish a connection between their everyday experiences of discrimination and racism and media coverage. The frequent use of negatively framed images and narratives (framing) is criticized, for instance, the portrayal of racialized (and migrantized) people as a constant threat. This not only creates the impression that, as Muslims, they first have to prove that they do not correspond to these media and discursive stereotypes, it also leads to the normalization of racist and discriminatory assumptions, statements, and actions (see chapter 7). Different generational perspectives on racist experiences and discrimination are evident among the respondents. The first generation of Muslim immigrants seems to have largely come to terms with hostility and racism (“That’s just the way they are. They don’t want us because we’re foreigners.”) (Zick et al. 2023). The younger generation, on the other hand, seems to have a different self-image with regard to social participation and also correspondingly higher demands. Several respondents expressed disappointment that their far-reaching efforts to adapt to the ideas of the majority society had not led to fewer experiences of anti-Muslim racism.

5.6.2.3 Key global and national events and their aftermaths

In their descriptions of anti-Muslim experiences, the respondents recurrently refer to various global and national events that have reinforced discrimination in their lives. These include

- the events of September 11, 2001, in New York,
- the refugee migration to Europe, especially in 2015 and 2016,
- especially the handling of the racist attack in Hanau on February 19, 2020.

The terrorist attacks of 9/11 were identified by the respondents as a decisive turning point in public media perception. Since then, Muslims have been seen as potential aggressors and repeatedly suspected of terrorism. An immediate consequence is that the respondents feel compelled to distance themselves from violence and terror. This meant constant pressure to explain and legitimize Islam.
The statements regarding refugee migration in 2015/2016 stand out from the other key events named: Unless the respondents themselves come from this cohort, they distinguish themselves from the “new Muslims.” Some of the respondents sympathize with the new immigrants to Germany and see them as part of a Muslim community in Germany. Others say that they share existing prejudices against refugees. They see their hard-won status in German society and the recognition they have received endangered by the negative labeling of refugees. Tension can be identified here between social pressure to adapt on the one hand and established rights on the other, which go hand in hand with processes of exclusion and recognition.

The respondents also demonstrated strategies to avoid being equated with people who have recently fled to Germany. For instance, they avoid such groups in public spaces, seemingly reproducing social reaction patterns that they themselves have sometimes experienced.

Younger respondents report additional mental and personal stress since the racist attack in Hanau. There is frequent talk of a personal caesura, resulting in different consequences. The respondents express disappointment with the majority society, media coverage, and the Federal Government and federal-state governments in dealing with the attack in Hanau. In this context, a discrepancy can be observed between the perception of political measures against racism and the social impact on those affected by racism. Because shortly after the racist attack in Hanau, the Federal Government decided, for example, to establish the UEM.

In this respect, a desire for more religious literacy or the ability to distinguish between religion, ideology, and politics is expressed.

It is also clear from the respondents’ accounts that their religion gives them strength to face the difficulties in life. With daily prayer, they followed a ritual practice that no one could take away from them. It is striking that among the young respondents, spiritual interest is more pronounced and mixed with other cultural practices. Younger people demonstrated a great interest in other monotheistic religions, especially Judaism; this can be perceived as a desire for Muslim-Jewish dialogues or formats.

5.6.2.4 The importance of religion

The interpretations of Islam or certain Islamic beliefs diverge among the respondents, showing very different levels of knowledge and attitudes regarding their own religion as well as religious education. These range from religious and religious education literacy to limited religious knowledge.

Many of the respondents refer to their role as involuntary mediators of religion. They constantly find themselves in different situations where they are required to explain Islam or explain why certain forms of violence that are justified with Islam cannot be equated with the religion.

“In, I would like to see a bit more interreligious dialogue being promoted, more education, and perhaps these differentiations, for instance, between ideologies, being made clear once again: What, for instance, is the Islamic religion yes, where are more political goals yes, interests [...].” (Zick et al. 2023)

In this respect, a desire for more religious literacy or the ability to distinguish between religion, ideology, and politics is expressed.
Many of the respondents speak of a division within the Muslim communities, which they regret or consider disruptive for peaceful coexistence. It is also clear from the interviews that condemnation of anti-Semitism and of AMR differs: AMR is less visible in the media than anti-Semitism (see subchapter ↗ 2.5); attacks against mosques and Muslims are not as widely addressed, and the inhibition threshold for anti-Muslim statements is lower than for anti-Semitic statements. The differences in raising awareness and the thematization of anti-Semitism are rooted in Germany’s long history of anti-Semitism and the crimes committed under National Socialism.

5.6.2.5 Consequences of direct, overt, and subtle forms of anti-Muslim racism

In the MuPe study, experiences of anti-Muslim discrimination and racism are described as stressful. The results focus on the socio-spatial environment, school, occupation, and religious visibility. It is in school and at the workplace that negative labeling and hostility are experienced most. The respondents report a culture of negative acceptance that allows anti-Muslim and anti-Islam sentiment or AMR and also other forms of discrimination and racism to go unsanctioned. These experiences can be described as a comprehensive lifeworld shock that significantly affects the individual and their societal sense of security. Another precarious area is public transport, but also the public space itself, especially in that those affected receive little or no active support from those around them.

Respondents report vandalism against mosque buildings (see subchapter ↗ 5.4) in their hometown, swastikas on doors, and racist slogans like “Turks out!” Sometimes there is also talk of “inexplicable hatred.” In addition to these obvious phenomena, the social space of school is highlighted as problematic (Zick et al. 2023; see chapter ↗ 6).

The interviewees report about direct and subtle racist speech by their teachers during their school years, but also about similar situations at university. Certain incidents illustrate the extent and intensity of AMR experienced at school and university: anti-Muslim jokes or dressing up as terrorists in carnival season, with students shouting “Allahu Akbar!” and running around with the Quran in their hands (Zick et al. 2023).

More subtle forms of AMR, such as hostile stares or staring, are described as unpleasant experiences. The respondents report that the visibility of their religious affiliation is a target for anti-Muslim attitudes and attacks, especially in public spaces and on public transport. One of the central findings in almost all interviews is the perception that, despite all efforts, the presence and participation of Muslims in Germany is not a matter of course.

5.6.2.6 Anti-Muslim experiences at school and university: Unsafe places for Muslims

The respondents very often mention school as a place where AMR is experienced (see chapter ↗ 6), with a focus on derogatory statements and actions in relation to Islam, which is representative of a wide range of attributions of supposed “otherness” in terms of origin, appearance, language, lifestyle, religious practice, ethics, and morals. The othering described takes place through derogatory labeling of Islam as backward, anti-enlightenment, with an affinity for violence, anti-democratic, and misogynistic. Interestingly, it seems that successful educational biographies and an associated change of milieu tend to lead to more experiences of racism and discrimination. Especially at high schools, AMR seems to be articulated from a middle-class center.

Racist remarks by teachers are described as particularly painful and upsetting. The interviewees report direct and subtle racist speech by their teachers during their school years, but also about similar situations at university. “Why do you
need to graduate, you’ll be marrying your cousin anyway” (Zick et al. 2023). One respondent describes how her former teacher pointed to one of her classmates wearing a headscarf in English class and marked her as an example of a suspected generic terrorist type: “Terrorists look like [student’s name].” (Ibid.)

The sovereign mandate of teachers and the related sovereignty of interpretation as well as the age difference combine to form a power imbalance and make students vulnerable. The descriptions also repeatedly reveal the lack of anti-racist skills among teaching staff when it comes to dealing with religion and diversity in the school environment.

5.6.2.7 Gender-specific characteristics of anti-Muslim sentiment in house hunting, at work, and in public spaces

The results of the MuPe study point to changed forms of expression of anti-Muslim sentiment with regard to gender-specific characteristics of the persons concerned. For instance, applications for apartments and jobs are rejected based on gender-specific, racist, and stereotypical attributions. One interviewee reports how she applied via an internet portal for a room in a shared apartment at the same time as her friend; her friend looks German and has a German name and is therefore perceived as being of German origin. They both appeared together for a subsequent roommate casting. The roommates rejected her, saying that they didn’t “want honor killings” (Zick et al. 2023).

Another interviewee records the following experience when looking for an apartment:

“Despite being a civil servant, I spent two and a half years looking for an apartment. When I asked a property owner directly what was wrong with me as a tenant, he told me that he didn’t want to encourage the neighbors to invite little bombers into the building now.” (Ibid.)

Other forms of anti-Muslim and anti-Islam sentiment or AMR are experienced when job hunting. Although women with headscarves looking for work are welcomed because of their qualifications, they are told that they must take off their headscarves in order to work in the respective company.

In particular, Muslim women who wear a headscarf speak of physical assaults, which they experience mainly in public spaces. The reports by the female respondents also indicate an intertwining of sexual harassment and AMR.

Male Muslim interviewees, in turn, report increased arbitrary police checks that they experience in public spaces. They are also questioned about violence and terror on a regular basis.

5.6.2.8 The healthcare system and consequences of anti-Muslim racism on health

Even though the healthcare system was not mentioned very often in the interviews, it can be identified as a place where anti-Muslim racism is experienced. Relevant prejudices against non-German patients are also evident among doctors and nursing staff with a frequency that seems to be significant for many professions that have a high number of interpersonal encounters and frequent social contact. In this context, however, the aversions toward patients are intertwined, sometimes expressed as decidedly anti-Islamic attitudes, sometimes disparaging attitudes and statements toward patients and their (family, other) companions.

Some of the interviewees described that they preferred doctors with a migrant backdrop if possible because they felt understood and more secure with them. They are obviously more likely to be sensitive to racism.

Regardless of age, milieu, and origin, all the respondents report psychological and mental consequences of their experiences of discrimination and
racism. Feelings of fear, frustration, and powerlessness can be identified. They manifest themselves in constant mental conflict (thought carousel), declining self-esteem, and thus a lack of confidence in one’s own abilities, in (depressive) mood swings, anxiety disorders, auto-aggressive behavior, and withdrawal or isolation tendencies.

In particular, the visibility of religious affiliation to Islam is a target in the public sphere. Despite a strong sense of belonging in Germany, the people affected subsequently withdraw from parts of society and the public sphere. Mothers (with headscarves) also report a kind of permanent tension situation in public spaces. They almost always anticipate hostility and try to protect their children from such situations.

5.6.2.9 Coping strategies

Different coping strategies can be identified from the respondents’ descriptions of how they handle AMR. Religion is cited by some as a source of strength and support in dealing with adversity and also with AMR. Some respondents try to minimize their daily points of contact with members of the majority society. Others, however, report that they face increased pressure to be prepared for anti-Muslim communication scenarios:

“I am always ready for a squabble; I have the crassest idioms at hand and am the only one who speaks High German at school” (Zick et al. 2023).

The efforts taken to adapt but which are hardly recognized, together with the disappointments and injuries experienced, lead to forms of re-ethnicization for some respondents (see subchapter 5.2.2), which manifests itself in a stronger reference back to their ancestors’ country of origin. However, forms of self-ethnicization are also described, a process of deliberate undermining and productive reinterpretation of hegemonic attributions. Some respondents also report how fluid their personality has become and how they can adapt to all kinds of situations.

Younger respondents in particular report that they have created so-called safe spaces (also called “empowerment spaces”) that offer them the opportunity to exchange experiences, fears, worries about the future, etc. with relatives from the same young post-migrant generation. Conversely, this means that official municipal services are hardly ever sought out in the context of (social) psychological counseling and support. This points to two further questions: How must services be designed to meet such needs, and how must municipal child and youth welfare services act to reach those affected instead of writing them off?

5.7 Conclusion

AMR is a social reality and a cross-cutting phenomenon. To understand it, the perspective of those affected is crucial. The insights gained by the UEM from the analysis of the affected people’s perspective are summarized once again below. As a basis for this, the UEM used the evaluation of the current state of research, hearings with experts and multipliers, a commissioned exploratory case study on the consequences of mosque attacks (see Gök Akca et al. 2023), and the commissioned MuPe study (see Zick et al. 2023) as well as the BAMF study entitled “Diskriminierungserfahrungen von Menschen aus muslimisch geprägten Herkunftsländern” (Discrimination Experiences of People from Muslim Countries of Origin) (see Stichs/Pfündel 2023), which is yet to be published.

It becomes clear that Muslims experience a generally high level and wide range of discrimination in society. These experiences differ depending on the social standing of those affected. Younger people tend to report experiences of discrimination more often than older people. Among Muslim immigrants, people from later generations...
Experiences with anti-Muslim racism from the perspective of those affected

also report more frequent and stronger discrimination than people from the first generation of immigrants. Since there are no indications of a serious deterioration in their situation, it can be assumed that Muslims who have grown up or have been socialized in Germany demand greater social participation while also being more sensitive to discrimination.

Education also seems to play a role in experienced discrimination. It is true that AMR affects people across all levels of formal education. That being said, people with a higher level of education tend to report discrimination experiences more often.

The most serious differences are to be found in the religiosity of the respondents. Some studies show that people only need to be phenotypically classified as Muslim to already experience AMR. People who describe themselves as religious, are part of a Muslim organization, or who wear clothing with religious connotations experience AMR particularly often. They also talk of very drastic forms of hostility. Muslims, for whom their religion is visibly important, can thus be identified as the group most affected by AMR.

Most studies indicate that Muslim women, and especially those who wear a headscarf, are particularly prone to discrimination. On the other hand, in the representative study by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, it was more frequently men who reported regular anti-Muslim racist experiences.

All of the surveys show that the persons interviewed see themselves exposed to gender-specific racist labeling. Muslim women describe how they are not perceived as self-determined. This is especially true for women wearing headscarves, who are also openly confronted with racist remarks. Men, on the other hand, tend to be labeled as aggressive and violent.

While gradual differences can be seen in the extent and intensity of the discrimination experienced—depending on social standing—it can be stated for almost all those affected by discrimination that the experiences of devaluation and exclusion are not only singular events, but to varying degrees recurring negative experiences. In this respect, AMR is sometimes a very stressful component in the lives of many Muslims and also for people who are perceived as Muslim. Discrimination is mostly experienced in places of increased social interaction and participation. In addition to the public space, these are in particular the three key areas of education, the world of work, and the housing market. Various types of asymmetrical power relations also regularly occur here where people are sometimes in dependency relationships and thus extremely vulnerable. The relationship between teachers and their students is particularly important in schools, where many students experience painful discrimination. Accordingly, it is essential that authorities acting within the framework of an institutional mandate live up to their responsibility.

According to those affected, AMR is present everywhere in society and is felt everywhere. However, key discursive events regularly occur that once again trigger intensified anti-Muslim racist articulations and lead to increased hostility. Such media catalysts that increase the intensity of anti-Muslim resonance in society are discourse events associated with Muslims. These can be jihadist terrorist attacks, debates on refugee migration, or racist book publications, such as those by Thilo Sarrazin. In times like these, Muslims are once again confronted with a perception that classifies them as potentially dangerous, putting them under pressure to justify themselves.

Different strategies exist for dealing with this. All relevant studies show that it is easier for those affected to deal with racist experiences if they can fall back on strengthening resources, such as social networks, social status, education, knowledge about racism, and positive self-esteem. The
majority of people who experience discrimination look for support in their private sphere. The studies show that many of those affected have no knowledge of counseling and support services. Many do not know who to turn to, so they often feel left alone. The share of those who resort to professional support is minute. In addition, only about one in ten report a justiciable incident, such as physical assault, insults, or harassment, so it can be assumed that the number of anti-Muslim racist crimes is many times higher than the figures reported in police crime statistics.

5.8 Recommendations

The Independent Expert Group on Anti-Muslim Sentiment recommends:

› Recognizing anti-Muslim racism as a social problem. Decisive positioning by politicians and differentiated, objective, and responsible speech about Muslims and Islam-relevant topics on the part of state representatives are urgently needed.

› The commissioning of a government-funded representative study on the coping strategies and impacts on those affected by anti-Muslim sentiment. There is a lack of representative studies on experiences of discrimination, how these are dealt with, and their effects on the people affected. A first study commissioned by the UEM has already shown that systematic findings based on quantitative studies can be used to draw conclusions that are relevant to practice, to identify gaps, and to develop tailor-made measures.

› The initiation and promotion of studies on anti-Muslim racism, the promotion of application-oriented basic and practice-accompanying research on measures against anti-Muslim racism, as well as the promotion of research on intersections, for instance, through corresponding funding guidelines of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

› The expansion and consolidation of the fight against anti-Muslim racism as an independent thematic area of political education and its funding practice, for instance, via the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ), the Federal Agency for Civic Education, and the federal-state centers for political education.

› The establishment and expansion of complaints, reporting, and documentation centers, and of anti-discrimination as well as counseling centers with expertise on anti-Muslim sentiment as well as the corresponding qualification of their employees. The need here is great, especially in schools.

› The establishment of anti-racist further and advanced training for various professional groups and in all state institutions (for instance, schools, day-care centers, security agencies, municipal administrations, media houses, cultural institutions, in the justice (and also in the correctional) system, and in the healthcare system), in order to raise awareness especially of anti-Muslim racism and its institutional forms. This should become a compulsory part of training for future civil servants.
The promotion and sustainable expansion of empowerment measures for those affected by (multiple) discrimination against Muslims through corresponding federal and federal-state programs. The corresponding funding programs should be clearly designated as being directed against anti-Muslim racism and not assigned to the prevention of extremism. The UEM is clearly against the latter, as this contributes to the normalization of anti-Muslim narratives.

The improvement and expansion of anti-discrimination legislation at federal and federal-state level and its implementation, such as adequate (proactive) precautions against discrimination, documentation of the legal consequences of legislation with a view to its discriminatory effect, and the right of associations to class action lawsuits (see also the demands by the civil society alliance “AGG Reform—Jetzt!” (Reform the Equal Treatment Act—Now!).

Recognition of the ban on multidimensional and intersectional discrimination and its transposition into legal practice. Manifestations of multiple discrimination should be clearly identified in legislation. For instance, in cases where job applications by Muslim women are rejected because of the headscarf, religion, (ascribed) ethnic origin, and gender are the main reasons for discrimination.

Protection for public officials, elected representatives, civil society activists, and organizations working against anti-Muslim racism in the event of threats.

Protecting Muslim communities and supporting them in terms of security measures.

The targeted promotion of all the measures mentioned so far in rural areas and in eastern Germany.
6 Education

The growing plurality of society is also evident in the field of education: More than one-third of all children, adolescents, and young adults under 25 in Germany have a migration backdrop. At the same time, this is also where discrimination based on religion and origin is often seen. Examples of this include unequal treatment in the allocation of school or university places, poorer grades, or derogatory remarks (see, for instance, Gomolla/Radtke 2007; Fereidooni 2011; Schneider/Yemane/Weinmann 2014; Bonefeld/Dickhäuser 2017). Anti-Islam and anti-Muslim attitudes also contribute to educational disadvantages, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

Although this has been less researched so far, experiences of discrimination on the basis of origin or religion can already take place in day-care centers. In contrast, there is more abundant evidence of the situation at school, university, and extracurricular venues. Educators, teachers, professors, high school and university students are either affected by anti-Muslim sentiment themselves or contribute to the discrimination experiences of others. Moreover, the causes of educational disadvantages are found in established structures and norms as well as regular and informal rules—a phenomenon described as an institutional form of discrimination in education.

This chapter summarizes the previous findings on anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment in education. In doing so, the UEM looks at each area, i.e., day-care centers, schools, higher education, and extracurricular education—from two perspectives: On the one hand, the focus is on the institutional and structural conditions that favor anti-Muslim sentiment and are thus places where Muslims (can) have corresponding experiences. On the other hand, the educational sectors in turn each offer different formats that are intended to raise awareness of anti-Muslim sentiment and are thus at the same time places where anti-Muslim sentiment is countered with determination. The explanations in the subchapters are structured and fleshed out differently, corresponding to the respective state of knowledge and research.

The comments often refer to studies that examine discrimination against children and young people “with a migration backdrop” because empirical data on concrete manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiment in education is still limited. The controversial term “migration backdrop” often and sometimes even exclusively refers to Muslim religious members anyway.

For an in-depth study of anti-Muslim sentiment in pre-schools and school settings, the UEM has commissioned new research projects and sought research expertise. These include

- a study on anti-Muslim sentiment in German textbooks and curricula entitled “Schulbücher und Muslimfeindlichkeit: Zur Darstellung von Musliminnen und Muslimen in aktuellen deutschen Lehrplänen und Schulbüchern” (Textbooks and anti-Muslim sentiment: The portrayal of Muslims in current German curricula and textbooks) (Leibniz Institute for Educational Media | Georg Eckert Institute (GEI)),

The concept of the “person with a migration backdrop” is a German group construction dating back to the 1990s that was primarily developed in an academic context with the aim of replacing the criticized terms “children of foreign origin” or “emigrant children” (Aussiedlerkinder). In the context of the 2000 PISA study, migration backdrop was statistically defined as the characteristic of a child of whom (at least) one parent was not born in Germany. Especially in the media, this category became synonymous with foreignness and now has stigmatizing potential: “The ‘migration backdrop’ marks a boundary: between those who belong to the ‘we group’ without asking and those who (can be) observed to see whether they ‘really’ belong, can belong, and want to belong” (Stošić 2017: 95).
• a qualitative study on patterns of perception and ideas of Muslim and non-Muslim teachers about Islam and Muslim students entitled “Wahrnehmung über muslimische Schülerinnen und Schüler in der Schule” (Perceptions about Muslim students in school) (University of Duisburg-Essen),
• a hearing with Dr. Seyran Bostanci on “(Anti-Muslim) racism in day-care centers” (German Centre for Integration and Migration Research, DeZIM).

6.1 Pedagogical programs in school and extracurricular education

As a rule, anti-Muslim sentiment is a topic that is seldom addressed in school and extracurricular contexts as a form of discrimination against a marginalized group. This is hardly surprising: The phenomenon itself is almost unknown and seldom recognized as such by society. The dispute alone regarding the “correct” term—anti-Islam sentiment, Islamophobia, anti-Muslim racism (see chapter ↗ 2)—shows that combating this phenomenon is still in its infancy. Established school and extracurricular programs hence rarely refer to or address anti-Muslim sentiment. Quite the opposite: Anti-Muslim sentiment is currently a practice found more in everyday life (outside school). A particular deficit specifically exists when it comes to addressing Muslims who are seen as the cause of the problem rather than as people affected by unequal treatment (see subchapter ↗ 6.3.2.1 Muslim students).

A simultaneous and in this regard contradictory development is the increasing social recognition of diversity—and thus of Muslims too—that is programmatically expressed in education as follows: In the 1990s, the “education of foreigners,” which had been a response to the educational disadvantages of the then so-called “guest worker children” from the late 1970s, was abandoned. When it became clear that they were not guests and that the pluralization of society was also becoming increasingly visible in classrooms, the principle of recognizing difference emerged (see Prengel 1993). Accordingly, the goal of a pedagogy of diversity was to educate in dealing with difference and equality—treating unequal people equally would lead to disadvantages since, depending on their socio-economic and linguistic backdrop, young people come with different prerequisites and experiences. Also known as intercultural pedagogy, this principle still determines the broad school and extracurricular education sector today. However, the appreciative view of differences entails the risk of overemphasizing the aspect of being different. This poses the risk of culturalization and an ethnicization of difference, also with a view to the analysis of social problems (see Diehm/Radtke 1999).

This culturalized view still dominates society’s image of Muslims (see chapter ↗ 7). Their supposed otherness, cultural difference, and foreignness are familiar associations. The stressed recognition and equivalence of a certain “cultural backdrop” is determined by an essentialist understanding of culture, i.e., the idea that cultures are static and unchangeable and can be clearly ascribed to certain regions. This implies that people’s actions and views can be better understood if “their” supposed cultural affiliation is known (see Shooman 2014). Although intercultural pedagogy aims to recognize plurality, its effects can be stigmatizing: The “others” are permanently attached or even reduced to their otherness. If the behavior of Muslim youths is attributed to their religious affiliation—or to a culture ascribed to them—this can reinforce their exclusion as non-members of German society.

The racism-critical approach in education emerged as a critique of intercultural pedagogy and is currently becoming increasingly widespread. A critical racism-perspective understands inequalities due to racism as omnipresent in society—in other words,
there was no place “outside” racism. In education, this means that the (racist) mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion operate in pedagogical learning spaces, such as the apparent incompatibility of “being Muslim” and “being German.” These mechanisms should be recognized as a problem, labeled as such, and dealt with accordingly. The racism-critical approach seems to be suitable for recognizing and dealing with anti-Muslim sentiment in extracurricular educational settings.

### 6.2 Early childhood education and preschool phase: Children and prejudices

Pedagogical measures that explicitly address the phenomenon of anti-Muslim sentiment have so far mainly targeted young people and adults who are considered to be the target group, for instance, because empirical data exist on the relevant attitudes of this group: In research on prejudice and attitudes, it is usually people aged 18 to 97 who are interviewed (see Decker/Brähler 2018; Zick/Küpper/Berghan 2019). Although a special evaluation was carried out of the data for people aged between 18 and 25 (see Möller 2012), no comparable data are available for younger youths and children. The question as to whether and to what extent anti-Muslim prejudices can already be found among children has not yet been empirically researched. There is generally also a gap in research on the reproduction and experience of racism in childhood in Germany. In contrast, findings in the US—with a focus on anti-black racism—have been more abundant for decades, especially from a developmental psychology perspective. For instance, psychologists Clark and Clark (1947) found in their well-known “doll study” that the black children surveyed between the ages of three and five showed a dislike of their own social group and preferred white dolls.

From a psychoanalytical perspective, we know that children perceive differences at an early age. However, they are assumed to be cognitively incapable of understanding inequalities and hierarchies, so that they allegedly neither reproduce nor experience discrimination (see Van Ausdale/Feagin 2001). Unlike the educational mantra of “the earlier, the better,” prejudice structures and discrimination are usually not explicitly addressed in early childhood education practice (see Diehm/Kuhn 2006) where the image of the “innocent” child prevails (see Bühler-Niederberger 2005), which is now being questioned in new social science research on childhood. The focus here is on the children who are understood as active agents: as subjects who acquire knowledge of their world independently and competently. This implies that children may well learn and reproduce prejudices and racist knowledge. In this context, various studies were conducted in the English-speaking world over the last three decades that explored the use of racist knowledge by children, for instance, to assert their play interests (see Aboud 1988; Van Ausdale/Feagin 2001; Katz 2003). German-language educational research shows that discrimination takes place in day-care centers, among other places. Ethnographic studies in kindergartens focus, for instance, on the relevance of certain diversity dimensions, such as gender (for instance, Budde/Scholand/Faulstich-Wieland 2008), language (for instance, Thomauske 2017), and ethnicity (see Machold 2015; Diehm/Kuhn 2006). However, neither racism nor anti-Muslim sentiment—even in the context of religious difference—has been researched up to now from the perspective of children. However, the results of the studies on other diversity dimensions suggest that certain portrayals and constructions about Muslims and “Islam” may well be present in children.
A hearing conducted by the UEM with expert Dr. Seyran Bostancı, who researches, among other things, educational inequality in early childhood, revealed that the topics of “Islam” and “Muslims” become explicit in early and middle childhood institutions, especially in conjunction with concrete religious issues. The aspects included, for instance, food rules for Muslim children and the celebration of Islamic festivals, such as the Eid festival after Ramadan, where the treatment in day-care centers ranges from recognition and implementation to devaluation and rejection.

Isolated findings exist with regard to attitudes, practices, and exclusion mechanisms in child daycare facilities from the perception of adults, specifically of pedagogical professionals and parents. A short study by Nationaler Diskriminierungs und Rassismusmonitor (NaDiRa) on dealing with institutional racism in Berlin day-care centers shows how families experience racism there, for instance, in the form of discriminatory assumptions on the part of staff, playing and learning materials, as well as institutional action patterns (see Bostanci/Biel/Neuhauser 2022). The parents interviewed were also Muslims who reported anti-Muslim stereotypes: For instance, her sons were called “machos” or “pashas.” One mother reported that Muslim mothers in particular were asked to pick up their children earlier due to staff shortages at their child’s day-care center. This is due to the culturalizing assumption that Muslim women are at home because, due to traditional role models, they are not gainfully employed (ibid.: 6). An Austrian study in elementary educational institutions shows how Muslim children are subtly excluded so that, for instance, stronger reflection on the part of educational professionals regarding religious diversity was necessary (see Hover-Reisner et al. 2017). This was also demanded by a study on the situation in day-care centers in Rhineland-Palatinate, in which social exclusion and forms of anti-Muslim racism were identified in interviews with staff and parents (Bundschuh/Müller 2020: 87). The authors criticize that a racism-sensitive approach to (religious) diversity was not simply about offering Muslim children food that complied with religious rules, stating that an overall pedagogical concept for dealing with diversity had to be developed where Muslim children are recognized (ibid.: 95).

One positive aspect is the increasingly visible diversity in children’s books and play materials, also with a view to religious diversity. In many daycare centers, however, procurement of materials depends on the commitment of individual educational professionals. Diverse materials are currently the exception rather than the rule in daycare centers. Books and games depicting a plural society and diverse identities, for instance, Muslim people as main characters with positive connotations, are especially important in childhood (see also the recommendations by Bundschuh/Müller 2020: 98–99). They shape the children’s experience and learning processes (see Nel 2017) and can have a preventive effect on the development of prejudices against minorities. They also help to make children from marginalized groups visible and strengthen their sense of self.

As places of early childhood, daycare centers are also places of first secondary socialization, which is why educational professionals also bear responsibility for children’s personality development. Children develop their identity in living together with others and this is where first images about others emerge. Pedagogical professionals accompany them in this process, so that their appropriate training and further professional qualification is the prerequisite for diversity-aware education. However, further professional qualification offerings for early childhood education to raise awareness and deal with discrimination, anti-human ideologies, as well as religious diversity has so far been limited nationwide. Anti-Muslim sentiment is not a topic that is explicitly addressed. There is a blatant gap in this respect and an urgent need to raise awareness of the phenomenon in early childhood education too.
6.3 Anti-Muslim sentiment in schools

While the “Catholic working-class girl from the countryside” symbolized educational disadvantages back in the 1950s, today it is the “Muslim working-class girl from the Turkish countryside,” as Weber (2003: 268) in her study on heterogeneity in everyday school life transfers the image to today’s school situation. The same applies to the “Muslim boy from the big city” (Fereidooni 2011: 18), who symbolically stands for the main bearer of institutional discrimination, as he is the one most affected by disadvantages of the German school system. Schools can play a role in the transmission of anti-Muslim stereotypes in various ways. As the only obligatory state socialization instance, school education is essential in the development of identity and personality of children and youths. This applies, on the one hand, to curricula and syllabuses and, on the other hand, to the personal experience of students at school.

The following section first presents analyses on the institutional and structural framework conditions of the school system that can promote anti-Muslim sentiment. Few findings exist to date regarding concrete manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiment in the school context. Public-political as well as academic discourse rather tends to discuss discrimination against children and young people “with a migration background.” At second glance, however, it becomes clear that the term often also, and sometimes only, refers to people of Muslim religion (see Spielhaus 2013). Conflicts that are specifically about (the needs of) Muslims will be followed by examples along with previous findings on anti-Muslim sentiment experienced by students and teachers in the school context.

6.3.1 Institutional and structural framework: The anonymous discrimination

The basic idea of school in modern and democratic societies is undisputed: It is about educational justice. As state organizations, schools are embedded in existing social structures. They are hence not a neutral place where social relations of inequality and discrimination cease to operate. Quite the opposite: Numerous studies have shown that schools are permeated by political, cultural, and symbolic power relations and are thus involved in the (re)production of social inequality (see Gomolla/Radtke 2007; Fereidooni 2011; Hormel/Scherr 2013). The close link between educational performance and social backdrop has become evident, at the latest since Germany began participating in international student performance studies, including the OECD’s PISA study in 2000. The results showed that at the time of the study, in no other country does educational achievement decline as strongly with social origin as in Germany (see Hovestadt/Eggers 2007). Students with a so-called “migration backdrop” or from socio-economically less advantaged families are particularly affected by disadvantages. The fact that school not only educates but also discriminates as an institution has been proven, at the latest in 2007 in a broad study entitled “Herstellung ethnischer Differenz in der Schule” (Production of Ethnic Differences in School) by Gomolla and Radtke. They show that inequality in educational participation is not necessarily due to the individual characteristics of children or their initial migration-related disadvantages but is generated in the school organization itself (see also Fereidooni 2011).

67 Social inequality is understood here in a narrow socio-structural sense, i.e., as a question of belonging to social classes and of the educational level of the family of origin.
This form of institutional discrimination can also be called an anonymous form of discrimination because it is primarily routine practices and existing orders that can produce discriminatory effects. It is hence not about malicious and deliberately derogatory behavior by individuals. Instead, the underlying assumption here is that the establishment of (state) institutions has incorporated into their system existing social dividing lines—for instance with regard to gender, origin, and other characteristics of difference. This is how fundamental “imbalances in the education system” (Auernheimer 2013) have arisen, as illustrated, for instance, by the overrepresentation of migrant children and young people at special schools or even by the fact that young people “with a migration backdrop” are much more likely to finish school without a school-leaving certificate compared to young people “without a migration backdrop.” An analysis of so-called special school reports drawn up between 1979 and 1993 proves the emergence of a disproportionate share of children with a migration backdrop in special schools for those with learning disabilities (see Gomolla/Radtke 2007). These were in particular children of Turkish origin or Muslim children whose obstacles to learning, achievement, and integration were explained, among other things, by “Quran school attendance” and “Islamic fundamentalism” (ibid.: 212–214). Instead of being offered help to integrate, they were accused of an unwillingness to integrate—a familiar topos in the public-political discourse on Muslims to this day.

### 6.3.1.1 Everyday conflicts at school: (Islamic) religion as a “disruptive factor”

Any talk of religious conflicts in schools is often related to Islam, be it schoolgirls wearing headscarves, sex education, or fasting at school during Ramadan. In the past, school conflicts over “Islamic-Orthodox positions” have already been decided several times by the courts (see Karakaşoğlu 2010; 2020; Hillgruber 1999).

In August 1993, for instance, the Federal Administrative Court ruled to exempt two Muslim girls from co-educational physical education on religious grounds—it is now considered outdated by a more recent decision of the same court from 2013. In another case in which Muslim parents had objected to pictures of naked people in sex education lessons, the Berlin Administrative Court stated in April 1997 that the teaching material in question was not against the law. And there are also a number of constitutional disputes on the issue of headscarves at school: Although it is legally possible to ban schoolgirls from wearing headscarves, for instance, during lessons, there is broad consensus in the constitutional debate that a general ban is impermissible (see Hecker 2022). The situation is different with regard to headscarves worn by female teachers. This issue continues to be the subject of public debate and a legal dispute to this day, beginning with the case of teacher Fereshta Ludin in 1998 in Baden-Württemberg. In addition, the Berlin Administrative Court ruled in 2009 that schools must allow undisturbed prayer in an area that is not readily accessible to others—a ruling that was overturned one year later by the state school administration in the second instance, but has since been overturned again by the Federal Administrative Court.

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in its ruling of 2011\textsuperscript{73}, thus confirming that school is also not an area free of religious practice.

Regardless of the outcome of the respective conflicts, it becomes clear that dealing with Islam is perceived as a challenge or even as a “disruption of the regular and usual routine in everyday school life” (Karakoşoğlu 2010: 294). It is often not possible to facilitate the specific needs of Muslim students or parents within the school system, and school administrators and teachers see their management capacity exhausted. Time and again, the public-political discourse on such cases of conflict produces the construction of a difference between “Islam” and “the West.” In line with this, constitutional lawyer Hillgruber wrote in his essay with anti-Muslim theses: “If Muslim parents want to see their Islamic educational goals, which differ from Western ideas, realized in their children’s school education, they must send them to private Islamic schools” (1999: 545). However, it is not only the alleged absolute incompatibility of Islamic and Western values that is constantly being propagated. The discussion about how to deal with Islam in school and society is accompanied by the sometimes tacit emphasis on one’s own (religious) values. Hillgruber expressly writes:

“Therefore, even if Muslims in Germany enjoy freedom of religion individually and collectively within the limits of the general laws, it is nevertheless an imperative of the self-preservation of this state to pass on the Christian heritage as an indispensable spiritual possession because of the specific, historical, and factual connection between Christianity and political culture. School in particular is the appropriate place for this.” (1999: 547)

While Muslims are granted their right to freedom of religion, this is, however, linked to conditions which argumentatively follow the desire for so-called established privileges (see Heitmeyer 2002).

Another argument frequently arises in this context: the self-image as a secular state. One common attitude is that religion had no place in school (see Cheema 2021). Although Germany has a positive understanding of neutrality, which provides for equal support of all religious and ideological communities by the state, there is a tendency in schools to give as little space as possible to religious needs (see Karakoşoğlu 2010; 2020). However, it depends on the religion in question: Following a complaint by parents, a court decision in 1995 declared the compulsory display of a crucifix in the classroom in Bavaria’s primary school regulations to be unconstitutional. But to this day, a crucifix can still be seen in many Bavarian classrooms. In public discourse and among politicians, the ruling was criticized, among other things with a reference to “our” culture, i.e., the historical-cultural imprint of Christianity. The discussion about female Muslim teachers wearing headscarves is quite different. Despite the decision by the Federal Constitutional Court in 2015 allowing teaching staff to wear a headscarf, the 2021 Neutrality Act makes this impossible again, at least in Berlin. Schools had to be a neutral space, was the core argument. In fact, this attitude is shared by almost half of the German population: 49 percent think that female teachers should not be allowed to wear a headscarf (see Foroutan et al. 2014: 35; see also in detail \textsuperscript{7} 8.3).

At the same time, the question as to how to deal with religion in principle is ignored, both in schools and in society as a whole. For what is hardly discussed in the cases mentioned is the clash between a steadily secularizing society and increasingly expressed religious needs. This simultaneity is partly expressed in anti-religious and anti-Muslim attitudes. And it also explains, for instance, why anti-Muslim resentment is not only to be found in right-wing extremist or right-wing populist contexts. Even the left-wing political

\textsuperscript{73} Judgment of November 30, 2011, BVerwG 6 C 20.10.
spectrum can endorse an anti-Muslim stance in cases where religions are fundamentally rejected and are said to be regressive and anti-emancipatory. A religious attitude is quickly seen as anti-modern and irrational. A qualitative study with non-Muslim history teachers showed that they perceive the lived religiosity of Muslim students as anti-enlightenment (see Kahle 2021). Differentiation is needed at this point because up to now the question of the (il)legitimate role of Islam has almost always been centrally (co)addressed in the discourse on (freedom of) religion, religious diversity, and secularity (see Amir-Moazami 2016). Such a distorted public debate in turn leads to sweeping judgments, so that the perception of Muslims is negatively influenced in many schools.

6.3.1.2 UEM study: “Zur Darstellung von Musliminnen und Muslimen in aktuellen deutschen Lehrplänen und Schulbüchern” (The portrayal of Muslims in current German curricula and textbooks)

The prevailing image of Muslims can also be clearly seen from school curricula and textbooks. Textbook content is state-approved and reproduces narratives about a society’s images of itself and others. The narratives that young people learn in schools serve as “seismograph[s] for changes in the national self-image,” as historian Grindel notes (2008: 698). School materials thus offer an insight into what the collective memory of a society is like—and how it is communicated.

A 2011 study by the Georg-Eckert-Institut on portrayals of Islam in European textbooks found that Islam is predominantly addressed in the context of conflicts and that Muslim individuals are rarely mentioned by name (see Georg-Eckert-Institut 2011). The UEM commissioned the study entitled “Schulbücher und Muslimfeindlichkeit: Zur Darstellung von Musliminnen und Muslimen in aktuellen deutschen Lehrplänen und Schulbüchern” (Textbooks and anti-Muslim sentiment: The portrayal of Muslims in current German curricula and textbooks) by Jan Düsterhöft, Prof. Dr. Riem Spielhaus, and Radwa Shalaby, which shows that this mostly negative portrayal is still dominant (see Düsterhöft/Spielhaus/Shalaby 2023). The study analyzed the curricula of the 16 federal states valid in 2021/22 for general and vocational schools on the subjects of history, politics/social studies, and geography, along with corresponding textbooks. The curriculum analysis identifies the educational policy intention to address anti-Muslim sentiment and Muslims in school curricula. Building on this, 761 textbooks were examined to determine the extent to which they portray and frame Muslims in texts and visual materials. On the one hand, the content analysis of the study applies an open and at the same time practicable approach to examine the extent to which the term anti-Muslim sentiment is explicitly used in the textbooks and at the same time covers the entire conceptual field around this category (including, for instance, “anti-Islam sentiment,” “discrimination,” “xenophobia,” “diversity”). On the other hand, any thematization of Islam and Muslims is analytically investigated in order to find possible reproductions of anti-Muslim narratives. The authors adopted this descriptive approach not to take a position in the dispute regarding terminology or the like, but to elaborate on the use of concepts, narratives, and their entanglements.

The authors of the study found that the term anti-Muslim sentiment, including related terms such as anti-Islam sentiment, Islamophobia, or anti-Muslim racism, is not explicitly mentioned in any of the 348 curricula examined. The result indicates that anti-Muslim sentiment and its effects on those affected as well as on overall social coexistence is not considered to be a relevant topic in the education policy of the respective ministries of education. Muslims are only mentioned—if at all—in the context of constructions of the enemy, for instance, in connection with the crusade theme or with Islamism. However, the authors of the study identify several places in the
curricula as “potentials” for addressing anti-Muslim sentiment. Examples of thematic focus where the discussion of Muslim life or anti-Muslim sentiment is appropriate include “The Elimination of Discrimination” (curriculum for social studies in Saxony-Anhalt) or “Intercultural Education and Dealing with Diversity” (curriculum for social studies in Berlin/Brandenburg).

Another focus of the study is on current textbooks in the abovementioned subjects. The result of the study shows that only 50 of the 761 textbooks analyzed deal with anti-Muslim and anti-Islam sentiment using different terms, including “anti-Muslim,” “Islamophobic,” and “anti-Islam.” This often appears in the context of the topic of the protection of minorities, whereby the authors of the study criticize the lack of detailed examination of the phenomenon of anti-Muslim sentiment. Aspects that are often missing include, for instance, the concrete and current manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiment as well as everyday—but also legal—strategies for action against it.

The qualitative analysis of the textbooks also revealed that Islam and Muslims are frequently mentioned in the following thematic fields: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the Middle Ages (Crusades), the emergence and spread of Islam, the Ottoman Empire, extremism, and religious fundamentalism as a threat to democracy, and women in Islam. The Crusades are the largest subject area where Muslims appear in current textbooks. The majority of them describe the encounter between Muslims, Christians, and Jews as a conflict-laden cultural contact. Samuel Huntington is often—sometimes explicitly—referred to by quoting the “clash of civilizations.” The thematization of extremism and religious fundamentalism is often linked to the emergence and spread of Islam (for instance, Cornelsen Schulbuch 2009, Sek. 2, cited in Düsterhöft/Spielhaus/Shalaby 2023: 33). Superficial and undifferentiated texts on Islam and Islamism are occasionally found where no delimitation is made and, for instance, “jihad” is simply translated as “holy war” (for instance, Mensch & Politik, Westermann 2019, Sek. 2, cited in Düsterhöft/Spielhaus/Shalaby 2023: 34). It is precisely at such points that a more in-depth discussion of the differences between Islam and Islamist extremism is possible, for instance, by explaining the primary Islamic religious interpretation of “jihad” and showing how the term is being instrumentalized by extremists.

The migration and integration paradigm, in which Muslims are confronted with the narrative of non-belonging and/or being permanent migrants, can be found in almost all textbooks. Examples of tasks for students in a social studies book are as follows: “How many foreign fellow citizens are Muslims? Are there problems with their integration into our society?” (Demokratie heute: Sozialkunde—Sachsen-Anhalt, Schroedel 2010, Sek. 1, p. 106, cited in Düsterhöft/Spielhaus/Shalaby 2023: 36). “Our society” here indirectly implies that Muslims do not belong in German society, which is also reproduced in the same book with chapter titles such as “In Neighborhood with Muslims” and “Strangers Have Come.”

The synonymous use of the terms “migrants” and “Muslims” becomes clear in a different way in the following example taken from a political textbook. It is an op ed about the immigration of Muslims, in which almost all known anti-Islam topoi are mentioned and the non-affiliation of Islam and of Muslims in Germany is claimed in a seemingly empathetic way:

“Initially, they must feel very alien in this cold country in much the same way as they seem alien to us. They also want to live better than at home, yet they insist on their identity. One can empathize with that: i.e., headscarves, mosques, prayers in schools, forced marriages, oppression of women. For quite a few, this is part of their sense of togetherness. The problem is that it collides with our sense of we.” (Westermann 2019,
The reference to gender roles in Islam comes as no surprise: It is about the headscarf, marriages, and the oppression of women. In line with the discourse on Islam here, the narrative of backward and anti-emancipatory Islam is reproduced. The competing portrayals of individual Muslim women, such as Iranian human rights activist Shirin Ebadi and young Pakistani Nobel Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai, remain largely uncommented.

Overall, the authors of the study find that students are exposed to anti-Muslim positions and narratives, as the framing of the curricula and the thematization in textbooks alone show. Furthermore, they also note considerable potential for expansion in the thematization of Muslim life on the one hand and anti-Muslim sentiment on the other.

6.3.1.3 Islamic religious education: Islam belongs in the classroom

Despite some institutional imbalances in education that foster anti-Muslim sentiment, the introduction of Islamic religious education has at the same time led to a positive change for Muslim life in schools. Now offered at public schools in nine federal states, these lessons contribute significantly to the recognition of Muslim students (see Kulaçatan/Behr 2021). Initial evaluations of Islamic religious education show that it is widely accepted by Muslim students and parents (see Uslucan 2011; Uslucan/Yalçın 2018; Holzberger 2014). School headmasters, teachers, and parents’ representatives also assess Islamic religious education as predominantly positive. A study by the Expert Council on Integration and Migration finds, for instance, that about 80 percent of the teachers surveyed share a similar view to that of society as a whole (about 70%) that Islamic religious education should be offered if needed (see SVR 2017). At the same time, the situation for Muslim students seems to be deteriorating in the context of Islamic religious education (see Kulaçatan/Behr 2021: 267). In the public discussion, Islamic religious education is overshadowed by the general integration debate in terms of its concepts and content. One topic, for instance, is the discussion about which Islamic organization would be a suitable partner for Islamic religious education, so that—justifiably and correctly—there would be no reason to fear “foreign interference.” It is not the fear itself that is problematic, but the anti-Muslim stereotypes and reservations in the public debate about it (see Kulaçatan/Behr 2021). Or else, the idea of preventing extremism is often associated with the introduction of Islamic education in state schools. However, this ignores the fact that the introduction of Islamic religious education primarily means the recognition of religious plurality in school and society. It is also ignored that the primary aim of Islamic religious education is to support the development of religious identity and to make students capable of speaking out and dealing with conflict. The instrumentalization of religious education for socio-political purposes (prevention of extremism and radicalization) places Muslim students in a derogatory context: The implicit claim is that they are more at risk of radicalization than their non-Muslim peers.

Although calls for Islamic education date back to the late 1970s, first teaching trials did not occur until the 1990s and early 2000s. Some federal states (for instance, Hesse and Lower Saxony) have included Islamic religious education in their curriculum as a regular subject, whilst other federal states (such as Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland) have launched school trials in Islamic religious education or denominationally neutral Islamic studies (such as in Bavaria and Schleswig-Holstein). With the exception of Islamic religious education in Hesse, which is organized and carried out by just one association (Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat), the teaching content of the lessons is either the joint responsibility of several Muslim organizations or the sole responsibility of the state. In 2020, around 60,000 students in Germany took part in Islamic religious education or Islamic Studies (see Ulfat/Engelhardt/Yavuz 2020). This means that the majority of Muslim students do not attend Islamic religious education classes, but ethics or Christian classes.
6.3.2 Focus on experiences and perceptions by students and teachers

In addition to the institutional framework conditions that can promote anti-Muslim sentiment, attributions also occur at a personal level. The results of first empirical studies on the phenomenon suggest that Muslim students and teachers experience discrimination because of their religious affiliation. Problematic statements and behavior by Muslim students are attributed to Islam or the “Muslim culture.” This homogenizing view also reveals gender-specific attributions and prejudices: Muslim girls, for instance, are often seen as oppressed victims and boys as criminal “pashas” (see Karakosoglu 2010; 2020; Sharathov 2014; Toprak/El-Mafalaani 2017). In other words, it is about “boys ‘causing trouble’ and girls ‘getting married’,” as Scharathow notes in her research on young people’s experiences of racism (2014: 255).

Moreover, schools with a high proportion of Muslims are often labeled as “problem schools” and are forced to defend their reputation. The following section first presents the experience of anti-Muslim sentiment by students followed by the perspective of Muslim and non-Muslim teachers. Finally, the training programs offered for teachers relating to anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Muslim racism will be addressed.

6.3.2.1 Experiences by Muslim students

Muslim students are often subjected to anti-Muslim attributions in their everyday school life, both by classmates and by teaching staff. The experiences of young people are clearly linked to social discourses in which they are considered “foreigners” and (potentially) problematic (see Scharathow 2015). In a quantitative-empirical study, Muslim men are more likely to report having been discriminated against at school than women, who are more likely to report discrimination in public settings, for instance, “on the street” (Talhout 2019).

One of the few studies on the experience of Muslim students was carried out by Berliner Anlaufstelle Diskriminierungsschutz an Schulen (Berlin Contact Point for Protection against Discrimination in Schools (ADAS)) in 2021. It shows that Muslim youths are exposed to an exclusionary school climate regarding their religious identity. The participants stated that 60 percent of discriminatory acts came from teachers and about 30 percent from their classmates. They report being excluded as “non-Germans” due to their names (70%), their visible religious affiliation, especially the headscarf (67%), or certain phenotypical characteristics (46%), such as skin or hair color (see Yegane/Willems/Moir 2021: 5). This experience is in line with findings on the attitudes of the German population regarding the headscarf, for instance: In 2014, about 38 percent of the population stated that “anyone who wears a headscarf cannot be German” (Foroutan et al. 2014: 26).

Bullying and physical attacks such as tearing off the headscarf and demanding that the headscarf be taken off, are also frequent occurrences. This is also accompanied by the threat of lower grades if they fail to comply. Muslim schoolgirls report provocations from their teachers, as evidenced by the following examples:

“I was asked if I was forced, suffering from cancer, or if I was forcibly married, the teachers all talked about me behind my back.”

“Another teacher asked me in front of the whole class if I had not converted to ISIS after all.”

(Yegane/Willems/Moir 2021: 29)

Such provocations can also be found in the third report by the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency, which frequently mentions bullying of Muslim schoolgirls because of their headscarves (see 2017: 148–162). Similar derogatory comments are quoted from teaching staff, such as:
“In sports lessons, the removal of the headscarf is demanded from time to time with reference to safety. Alternatives, such as the sports headscarf developed by FIFA, are not accepted as an alternative by some teachers, not even considered.” (Ibid.: 158)

Furthermore, Muslim students are confronted with blanket judgments due to culturalizing assumptions: For instance, when a student’s decision to take a break after graduating from high school and not to study for a while is attributed to a “Muslim tradition of getting married quickly” (Cheema 2021). Scharathow notes that one “effect of this racially structured interaction of knowledge and power” is, for instance, that “girls (...) angrily report that, among other things, they are repeatedly addressed at school as incapable victims of assumed patriarchal structures who are unable to make their own well-founded decisions” (2015: 167).

Alongside the topos of the “oppressed headscarf girl” is the image of the “pasha,” the “Muslim macho” (Munsch et al. 2007; see also: Karakaşoğlu 2020). The refusal to participate in kitchen duty on school excursions is culturalized and interpreted as “Muslim upbringing” (Cheema 2020). The recourse to culturalist explanations for “deviant behavior by children and young people who are not native speakers, or are of non-German origin, or of non-Christian religion” (Karakaşoğlu 2020: 93) shifts responsibility away from the institution of school and its actors. Strategies for dealing with such conflicts thus do not have to be sought within the institution but are deterministically shifted outside. In fact, the image of the Muslim boy often conveyed by the mass media—in keeping with the motto of the provocative book title “Muslimisch, männlich, desintegriert” (Muslim, Male, Disintegrated) by educationalist Toprak from 2020—is also widespread among teachers.

However, one-dimensional representations of Muslim masculinity are not only found in the media, but also in academia (see subchapter 6.4)—even young students already find it hard to escape the image of the alien, violent, and woman-suppressing man (see also Weber 2003). This is also reflected in the evaluation of their performance: Migrant children are judged more negatively than is commensurate with their ability. A study from 2017 proves this. Teachers were given identical tests for assessment. The tests that were given Turkish-sounding names were half a mark below average in the assessment (see Bonefeld/Dickhäuser 2017). Such individual decisions by teachers, which are made over the entire school career of children, can demonstrably lead to negative school careers (see Gomolla 2015). For instance, young people of Turkish and Arab origin in particular have poorer school-leaving qualifications and grades on average than their peers without a migration background (see Schneider/Yemane/Weinmann 2014).

Furthermore, students—and especially boys—are confronted with the stigma of being violent and potentially radical Islamist Muslims. Prevention projects in the field of Islamist radicalization have the potential to place Muslims under general suspicion (see subchapter 6.6). In recent years, state funding for extracurricular prevention measures against Islamism (or Islamic fundamentalism) has risen sharply. Although there is no question about the need for such preventive measures, the way the target group is addressed—for instance, in the wording of calls for funding—often reproduces the stereotype of the violence-prone young Muslim, when “Muslims” or “young people with a migration backdrop” in particular are to be reached.
6.3.2.2 Experiences by Muslim teachers

There are no figures available on how many teachers working in Germany have a Muslim backdrop. In recent years, they have begun to set up networks, such as “NeLe”—which claims to be the first Germany-wide network for (prospective) Muslim teachers—which was established in 2014 with the help of the RAMSA association (Rat muslimischer Studierender und Akademiker (Council of Muslim Students and Academics)). Another association is the Verband für muslimische Lehrerinnen und Lehrer (Association for Muslim Teachers) that was founded in 2017 and is based in Dortmund. Both networks see themselves as diverse and independent of existing Islamic associations.

Several qualitative surveys show that Muslim teachers are confronted with attributions based on their religious affiliation (see, for instance, Georgi/Ackermann/Karakaş 2011; Bräu et al. 2013; Fereidooni 2016; Karakaşoğlu/Doğmuş 2016).

Teachers report experiences of anti-Muslim racism on the part of their non-Muslim colleagues. This often involved ignorance, but also ignorance of their religious practice (for instance, abstaining from pork), along with stereotypical and negative attributions, such as the alleged misogyny and regressiveness of Islam. Student teachers and trainee teachers are also affected by pejorative attributions, which sometimes leads to insecurity, withdrawal, and doubts about whether the teaching profession is the right choice for them (see Karakaşoğlu/Doğmuş 2016). This occasionally includes hostility and reservations on the part of their colleagues: “The Ayşes are now also coming into the teachers’ room and bringing Islam with them” (Kul 2013: 165), as one teacher is quoted in a study on experiences by trainee teachers. In particular, female teachers wearing headscarves report discrimination and disadvantages in their professional careers (see Georgi/Ackermann/Karakas 2011: 223–224). According to the image conveyed by the media, wearing a headscarf is associated with heteronyony and oppression.

The headscarf thus leads to more experiences of discrimination for women who wear it than for those who do not (see Fereidooni 2016: 160). At the same time, female teachers wearing headscarves are subject to adverse structural conditions: Although the Federal Constitutional Court ruled in 2015 that a general ban on headscarves for a Muslim teacher during lessons is inadmissible, this is not the case in practice where these teachers continue to be confronted with institutional as well as interpersonal discrimination (see Fereidooni 2016: 323). This can manifest itself in the staff room: About half of the non-Muslim teachers surveyed in a study by the Expert Council of German Foundations for Integration and Migration (SVR) are opposed to teachers wearing a headscarf (see SVR 2017).

6.3.2.3 Perception of Islam and Muslims by (non-)Muslim teachers

Overall, the SVR study entitled “Vielfalt im Klassenzimmer. Wie Lehrkräfte gute Leistung fördern können” (Diversity in the Classroom. How Teachers Can Promote Good Performance) found that negative attitudes toward Muslims are lower among non-Muslim teachers than among the general population (see SVR 2017). A discrepancy between different generations of teachers becomes apparent here with younger people expressing fewer reservations than older people. In addition, other well-known topoi of anti-Islam sentiment become apparent, such as the alleged lack of education and propensity for violence among Muslims: More than a third of the teachers consider Muslims to be less education-oriented across the board and another 27 percent said that Muslims were more aggressive than non-Muslims. The authors of the study conclude that these attitudes can have a negative impact on the expectation and evaluation of the performance of Muslim students—a practice that other studies have already documented (see, for instance, Bonefeld/Dickhäuser 2017). Muslim students are often spoken about in a demeaning manner:
For instance, teachers refer to them as “Islamists” and “ideologically confused” whilst Muslim women are called “headscarf girls” instead of by their names (Kahle 2021: 600).

The study conducted by Cem Serkan Yalçın under the direction of Prof. Dr. Hacı-Halil Uslucan (University of Duisburg-Essen) for this report uses interviews with a total of fourteen Muslim and non-Muslim teachers at general education schools to show how they perceive Muslim students. The non-representative survey shows how classic anti-Muslim stereotypes and clichés become entrenched even among those teachers who basically have an open and diversity-affirming attitude—and thus partly coincides with the results of the quantitative SVR survey (2017), which Uslucan also accompanied, as well as with studies on anti-Muslim racism in everyday communication in general (see Schmidt 2022).

Overall, Yalçın’s study (2023) shows that common anti-Muslim stereotypes are reflected in the teachers’ perceptions: traditional gender relations, patriarchal educational methods, and problematic or aggressive behavior. Interestingly, both non-Muslim and Muslim teachers express reservations about the “traditional” role of women in Islam, which is shown, among other things, by the particularly caring behavior of Muslim girls or by the wearing of a headscarf. The frequently constructed incompatibility of faith and openness (or: religiosity and lack of education) when it comes to Islam is also reflected in the following statement by a teacher:

“This one student I’m thinking about right now is a strict believer, but very, very open-minded, totally eager to learn” (Yalçın 2023: 25).

She goes on to express (self-)criticism of the widespread stereotype of Muslim women and notes that the practice of religion (including the wearing of headscarves) is handled very differently among Muslims.

The interviews from the study also show how stereotypes about Muslim boys persist. For example, they would experience more appreciation than girls in their families, and one teacher even describes them as “little princes who don’t have to lift a finger at home” (Yalçın 2023: 22).

According to Yalçın, the notion of special religiosity or attachment to religion is particularly common among Muslims (2023: 20–23). One teacher states:

“I think that in general the role of religion has diminished in our society and Muslim students tend to have even stronger ties to their religion than Christian students.” (Ibid.)

Evidence cited by teachers for the religious commitment of Muslims includes fasting during Ramadan, observing dietary rules, or non-participation of Muslim girls in swimming lessons. This widespread assumption that Muslims feel more attached to their religion than others is rarely questioned. Adherence to dietary rules or festivals (such as Eid-ul-Fitr after Ramadan) are not necessarily indications of a stronger religious commitment than for others. For instance, the celebration of Christmas and Easter by Christian students is not immediately regarded as an indication of a strong religious bond. It becomes clear here that knowledge of the diversity of Muslim life, which is also increasingly diversifying in terms of religious practice, is limited—not only among teachers, but also in society as a whole.

The interviews show how speaking about Muslim students reveals a social order that is often observed in public discourse and rarely criticized: the self-evident distinction between “the Germans” and “the Muslims.” With regard to religious affiliation, one teacher does not distinguish between Muslim and Christian, but:
“That’s why the non-Muslim children, especially the children of German origin, are pure Germans, they are naturally freer in what they do, even their religion plays almost no role.” (Ibid.: 31)

With the reinforcement of “ethnic German” by “pure German,” a classic biologistic-racist construction is voiced here that not only excludes Muslims from being German, but even makes it fundamentally impossible for them. Another teacher’s statement accusing Muslim students of aggressive behavior also reinforces the binary order between “us, the Germans” and “the others, the Muslims:”

“I think German children are a bit calmer. […] So a normal average German child, because they are not necessarily aggressive straight away and insulting each other. So, they are a bit more withdrawn.” (Ibid.: 22)

However, Yalçın emphasizes that the findings are heterogeneous because: Both non-Muslim and Muslim teachers express a clear desire to engage with the (religious) needs of Muslim students and report how they are already doing so—for instance, by being considerate in sports lessons during Ramadan or observing the dietary rules at school festivals (see Yalçın 2023: 27–28). Some criticize the lack of interest and “arrogance” (ibid.: 29) of colleagues toward Muslim students. A large number of the teachers interviewed indicated that many of the Muslim schoolgirls who wear a headscarf do not correspond to the stereotype of the oppressed Muslim woman conveyed by the media. Despite the generalizations in a language that distinguishes between “us” and “you,” the same teachers emphasize the diversity within the Muslim student population.

Not surprisingly, teachers are also influenced by the powerful anti-Muslim images and stereotypes. And at the same time, they see a certain reality in schools, which partly contradicts the common images and requires their differentiated perception. The study is not representative, however, and specifically surveys teachers who are in contact with Muslim students. It would therefore be interesting to examine perception patterns among teachers who know few or hardly any Muslim students.

6.3.2.4 Further training for teachers to raise awareness of anti-Muslim sentiment

Although the examination of diversity and heterogeneity has been firmly anchored in pedagogical contexts for at least two decades, the examination of anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Muslim racism remains—if at all—a topic in the elective area of teacher training. So far, teachers can only register voluntarily for corresponding in-service and further professional qualification courses that are offered nationwide. Only few civil society institutions and educational institutions offer training for teachers and educators explicitly on the topic of anti-Muslim sentiment or anti-Muslim racism on a permanent basis, i.e., as part of their regular programs. These include, for example:

- Bildungsstätte Anne Frank (Education Centre Anne Frank) (Frankfurt a. M.)
- Information and Documentation Centre for Anti-Racism Work e.V. (IDA) (Düsseldorf)
- Ufuq.de (Berlin)
- Association of Binational Families and Couples (Leipzig)
- Zentrum für Europäische und Orientalische Kultur (Leipzig)

In a programmatic sense, scientists have long been calling for “pedagogical skills in the migration society”—which is also the title of a corresponding book (Pädagogisches Können in der Migrationsgesellschaft) (Doğmus/Karakaşoğlu/Mecheril 2016). In this context, it is important to do justice to the specific framework conditions in a society shaped by migration and “at the same time to critically explore and avoid stereotypical and stigmatizing definitions and attributions” (ibid.: 3). This means that sensitivity to difference and
dealing with forms of discrimination should be part of the core competence of educators. The extent of anti-Muslim sentiment shows the need to explicitly address it as a phenomenon in its own right. This includes, among other things, dealing with anti-Muslim stereotypes and prejudices in school material, in social discourses about Islam and Muslims, as well as with the sometimes racist impacts on the Muslims concerned. It is precisely the interaction of the phenomena of Islamist-based violence on the one hand and anti-Muslim sentiment on the other that leads to a distorted perception of Muslim life, which also poses challenges in everyday school life. However, the predominantly negative, deficit-oriented view of Muslim students (and teachers) can be addressed through appropriate training and further education, for instance, in order to develop strategies for action in everyday pedagogical life. In this respect, a first measure could be the introduction of obligatory modules for raising awareness with regard to anti-Muslim sentiment in the (academic) training of teachers and educators. Furthermore, the establishment of independent complaints offices is relevant for students as well as for student teachers, trainee teachers, and teachers.

Dealing with the tensions between religion, secularism, and school should also be part of the professionalism of educators. For instance, the concept of “religious literacy” could be an element of teacher professionalism (see Karakaşoğlu 2020). This does not mean interreligious dialogue or expertise with regard to individual religions, but a fundamental understanding of historical and contemporary conditions and forms of expression of religious thought and action.

6.4 Universities: A lack of strategies to combat anti-Muslim sentiment

Anti-Muslim racism is also evident at German universities and needs to be structurally addressed. The many dimensions of this racism are similar to the spectrum of discrimination found in other educational institutions. Unlike schools, however, universities have rarely been studied as sites of anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment. This is surprising since the anti-Muslim patterns and motives found in the education sector as a whole can also be expected at universities. All that can be said at this point is that there is a clear need for (further) scientific research. The following discussion therefore addresses only very limited areas of what should be the subject of analysis.

The focus here is on the institutional guarantee of protection against discrimination at universities through appropriate contact and complaints offices (see subchapter 3.3.1). However, this touches on only a very limited section of campus life and/or of what happens in teaching. Due to a large lack of data, no comprehensive comments can be made here on other areas where the inclusion of anti-Muslim dimensions analogous to school structures can be expected. These areas should nevertheless be named due to the need to examine, for instance, funding structures for students and academic staff, concepts of university didactics and their implementation in teaching and learning forms, or also the objects of research in research funding.

In addition to the aforementioned structural dimensions, it was also necessary to look at the academic content (see subchapter 6.3.2) in order to identify discriminatory, anti-Muslim, or racist content. The topics to be analyzed here included courses, academic publications and specialist conferences, curricular foci of study programs,
the orientation of research foci and their staffing, as well as university mission statements to which teaching and research are aligned. Studies on teachers’ attitudes toward Islam and Muslims were also worthwhile. The fields just mentioned here show that the institutions considered in more detail below as part of the anti-discrimination practice of higher education institutions only actually represent a segment of what needs to be examined.

6.4.1 Anti-Muslim sentiment on campus: No protection for students under the General Act on Equal Treatment?

Since the introduction of the General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG, Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz) at the latest, universities have also been under a special obligation to protect their staff from discrimination: This includes protection against discrimination based on religion, ethnic origin, or racial attributions. Accordingly, many German universities have since set up corresponding complaints offices or appointed equal treatment officers. However, the General Act on Equal Treatment does not protect students who are affected to a greater extent by anti-Muslim racism due to the given structures.75 Nevertheless, university laws in individual federal states now also regulate the protection of students (see Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes 2020: 8), but there still seems to be a long way to go before this is implemented as a routine measure.

Specific studies on anti-Muslim experiences of discrimination (and protection against it) at universities are currently a research desideratum: Although some (older) studies show the proportion of students “with a migration backdrop” who have experienced discrimination (for instance, Bleicher-Rejditsch et al. 2014; Ebert/Heublein 2017), this does not do justice to the phenomenon under investigation here (see Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes 2020: 25). Furthermore, the campus surveys usually focus on other specifications (such as accessibility, sexualized violence) and only very seldom can concrete experiences of discrimination due to (Islamic) religion or racialized attributions be identified at all (see Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes 2017). The general question as to how the corresponding categories can be better mapped in future studies must therefore be emphasized even more for the higher education sector (see Baumann/Egenberger/Supik 2018: 82–103).

The question as to whether and to what extent complaints offices or other measures of discrimination protection at universities also take on the problem of anti-Muslim racism is addressed in a nationwide survey by the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency (Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes) from 2016, which examines the occurrence, design, and activities of these offices and instances (see 2020: 7). Among other things, three areas of complaint became apparent, i.e.,

- the general lack of separate complaints offices at smaller universities (at best, issues falling within the scope of the General Act on Equal Treatment are co-handled by other institutions, such as equal opportunities or inclusion officers or staff councils, ibid.: 39),
- a lack of transparent, clearly regulated, or binding procedures in complaints cases (ibid.: 41–42),
- a lack of awareness of the existence of the complaints office; this specifically applies if it is also open to students (ibid.: 56).

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75 "Complaints offices according to section 13 of the General Act on Equal Treatment are generally only responsible for university staff. These offices are therefore not generally open to students who experience discrimination at university. This is due to the fact that the General Act on Equal Treatment is a federal law that has no effect in the education sector of the federal states. In the field of education, the law only applies to contracts under private law." (Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes 2020: 8)
Beyond the question of institutionalizing specific complaints offices for all university status groups, other aspects, but also voids, come to light in the university context. Discrimination and racist incidents on campus have a close proximity to the patterns and forms that also exist in the school context. Non-representative individual surveys or social media formats mention both explicit cases of “religion-related” exclusion and assaults—such as discrimination for wearing a headscarf, conflicts over prayer rooms, or the founding of Muslim university groups—as well as implicit patterns. These include, for instance, poorer support or grading by teachers of students perceived as Muslims, a lack of diversity in support structures and university management levels, a lack of “role models” for academic career paths, and anti-Islamic academic positions. In many cases, the question as to which specific strategies exist to strengthen those affected by anti-Muslim discrimination and to sustainably reduce anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim discrimination at universities has yet to be answered.

6.4.2 Research funding and content: Muslims as objects of study?

On the one hand, a general increase in racism-critical research and/or corresponding sensitization in the university context can certainly be noted (see Mecheril/Melter 2009; Becker 2020; Nationaler Diskriminierungs- und Rassismus-monitor 2023). The focus is on the discussion of corresponding racism-critical approaches, some of which are also specified, deepened, and empirically applied in relation to Islam (for instance, Schmidt 2022). This general thematic increase is reflected in a large number of publications, research projects, event series, workshops, etc. In many places, student initiatives, projects, or groups are also making a significant contribution to addressing anti-Muslim racism.

On the other hand, a critical, systematic view of research, teaching, and knowledge production is primarily the subject of relevant academic literature and/or the discourses produced by it (see Said 1979; Abdel Malek 2000; Schäbler 2011; Hallaq 2018; Amir-Moazami 2018) and thus has only very limited effect on mindset and everyday life at universities. Research on these questions is making an important contribution to breaking down fixed attributions and ideas, especially when these have existed for centuries and continue to have an impact on contemporary discourses, ways of acting, and identification processes.

However, the questions that have been raised in academia for a long time need to be taken up more broadly within the subjects and disciplines and then, more importantly, transferred to a changed teaching and research practice in order to break up existing thematic narrowness. If anti-Muslim codifications (for instance, through a selective choice of topics that perpetuates stereotypes) or even persistent imbalances in tendering practices (such as a disproportionate share of research funding in the area of extremism/fundamentalism compared to other Islam-related research) are to be overcome in the future, it is important to critically consider the prerequisites, conditions, methods, and epistemic interests of Islam-related knowledge production. However, the individual questions and implications associated with this cannot be further elaborated within the scope of this report.

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76 See, for instance, a survey by the Islamic Student Community of Goethe University Frankfurt a. M. from 2022, to be found on Instagram at: https://www.instagram.com/ihg_frankfurt/?hl=de (entries from June 21, and July 4, 2022) [Apr. 13, 2023].
6.5 Anti-Muslim sentiment in the context of out-of-school education

In addition to formal school-based education, there are also a number of structurally anchored non-formal learning offerings outside the established learning venue of school. A distinction is made—based on age—between adult and youth education. In contrast to informal education, which takes place in the context of everyday and unplanned processes, non-formal education is offered in an organized setting and often takes place in groups. Its structures and conceptual approaches are very diverse, but usually of a participatory, process-oriented, and holistic nature. Non-formal, out-of-school education mostly takes place in courses, seminars, training courses, study trips, or also international youth encounters.

Hardly any systematic knowledge is available up to now regarding the extent to which anti-Muslim racism is addressed and dealt with by non-formal, extracurricular education providers and what challenges exist, if any. In the following, we will therefore limit ourselves to first identifying the requirements and associated challenges that arise from our understanding of anti-Muslim racism for political education work on this topic. In addition, two areas will be highlighted where Muslims and Muslim association structures encounter barriers: firstly, participation of Muslim youth associations in youth association structures and that of Muslims in the system of child and youth welfare services.

6.5.1 Voids in out-of-school civic education

Together with the Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung), the Federal Government is the main actor in extracurricular civic education. The federal-state centers for political education are additionally active in this field. Furthermore, the so-called independent institutions with their diverse activities and educational offers reflect the wide range of social views in the field of political education. The largest actors here are, first and foremost, the party-affiliated political and company-affiliated and non-profit foundations, trade unions, employers’ associations, welfare institutions, as well as the educational organizations and academies operated by churches. While political education plays a rather subordinate role, for instance, in churches, it has a much more important role or is even the raison d’être of trade unions, educational institutions, political foundations, or centers for political education (see Kalina 2014: 24).

Civic education is largely dependent on state funding. Although the providers have sovereignty over the respective contents, measures, and priorities, the scope and orientation of political education offers are influenced by political priorities and state funding cycles.

In addition to grants from the federal states and municipalities, it is funds under the Third Book of the Social Code (Drittes Buch Sozialgesetzbuch) and the funding guidelines and programs of the individual ministries that serve as the basis for funding extracurricular civic education. The funding programs have for some time also been used as levers to combat racist and anti-Semitic phenomena. Following a high number of such acts of violence, a corresponding action program with federal funds was set up for the first time in 1992. Since then, various federal programs have regularly funded political education measures that specifically address right-wing extremism, anti-Semitism, and racism.

In 2015, the federal program “Demokratie leben!” (Live democracy!) launched by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth separately listed for the first time the phenomenon of “anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment” as a field of action for political education practice. A total of 15 model projects were
funded in the 2015-2019 funding period, creating the basis for building an independent phenomenon-specific specialist pedagogical practice (see Brand et al. 2020: 49). The second funding period began in 2020 with increased funding. In addition, the coalition agreement of the current government addressed for the first time the comprehensive protection and better support of Muslim life in Germany. This agreement also explicitly foresees support for associations of young Muslims in their diversity.

It is only in recent years that the information portal of the Federal Agency for Civic Education has begun to deal with anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Muslim racism. For a long time, anti-Muslim sentiment was seen only as hostility on the part of right-wing extremists. Although this truncated view, which ignores anti-Muslim attitudes in the general population, has been corrected with a five-part series of texts on anti-Muslim racism (see BpB 2019), this series is a section in the field of “preventing Islamist radicalization”—an issue that occurs more frequently. The thematization of anti-Muslim racism merely in relation to the prevention of Islamism implicitly contributes to the perpetuation of the topos of Muslims who are prepared to use violence (see subchapter 6.6.6). Analogous to other topics, an independent and constantly updated dossier on various forms of expression of anti-Muslim racism was also necessary in order to create basic texts for dealing with anti-Muslim sentiment in political education.

The discussion around anti-Muslim sentiment in political education therefore often remains implicit in that it is generally about anti-discrimination or racism. For instance, the largest professional association for political youth and adult education, the Working Group of German Educational Institutions (Arbeitskreis deutscher Bildungsstätten), has provided an online platform since 2020 where methods and backdrop information on topics such as racism and diversity can be found. The platform contains information on different forms of discrimination, but no reference to anti-Muslim sentiment.

### 6.5.1.1 Requirements for out-of-school political education

There are various reasons why developing an independent focus of political education on anti-Muslim racism remains challenging. Perceptions of Muslims as a problem group continue to shape funding programs and educational offerings. In particular, educational offerings understood as so-called prevention of Islamism contribute to othering processes, to the “violent portrayal of certain people as ‘others’” (Wollrad 2010: 150; see subchapter 6.6), even where they focus on the empowerment of young people marked as Muslim in the face of racist conditions. With the increase in educational offerings that explicitly deal with anti-Muslim racism, empowerment offers financed by federal funds are also emerging for the first time that are far from stigmatizing prevention rhetoric (see Sabel 2022; see also subchapter 6.3.2.4).

But also educational programs on anti-Muslim sentiment, which are especially aimed at white people and in this way at countering anti-Muslim racism, feel the potency of anti-Muslim othering. In recent years, political education programs have largely distanced themselves from approaches of intercultural pedagogy in response to the increase in the public thematization of racism. Political educational development is increasingly taking up theories of racism (see subchapter 6.1). An increasingly incipient and central realization is that, even in workshop contexts that follow the desire to understand “the others,” these “others” are first constructed. Educational policy offers on racism are often very clearly differentiated from this, regardless of whether they focus more on the personal or structural level. This form of differentiation cannot be found to the same extent in the breadth of offerings on anti-Muslim racism. Under the given societal circumstances, it
seems to make sense for many organizations and political educators to impart “reassuring” knowledge about Muslims and Islam in their workshops on anti-Muslim sentiment in order to reduce prejudice rather than looking at racist structures and the conditions under which prejudice arises (see Karadeniz/Sabel 2021b). It could be argued that demand proves them right: Workshops on “Islam” or “the Muslims,” which completely exclude anti-Muslim racism altogether, are also still in demand and offered. For instance, in order to be able to deal “better” with Muslim youths, to understand conflicts with Muslim families, etc., offers are designed that are supposed to provide relevant knowledge about Muslims. Further training courses then explain what “Islam” is like, or ask, for instance: “Do Muslim families bring up children differently?” (further training for administrative staff in municipal authorities) or “What role does violence play in Islam?” (further training for multipliers). In this way, professionals are not only confirmed in their assumption that conflict behavior among Muslims is due to “their culture,” it also suggests that the recurring uncertainties in the reality of migration society are not to be met with professionalism but with culturalizing “change” (see Karadeniz 2021).

However, this structure of offerings cannot be explained solely by the vehemence of anti-Muslim discourses. After all, it is precisely the task of political education work to be critical in order to stimulate a critique of societal self-images (see Messerschmidt 2016b). This requires funding that ensures its independence from demand, which is not least shaped by anti-Muslim discourses, and knowledge as well as information about racism, which it cannot obtain from the field of religious extremism prevention work (see Sabel 2022).

Understanding anti-Muslim racism as a societal relationship that operates at all levels of society demands a lot from political education work. What seems necessary then are educational processes that deal with the intra- and inter-personal level as well as with discourses, institutions, and structures that consider historical continuities as well as current local, nation-state, and global contexts. These challenges are shared by organizations working on anti-Muslim sentiment and those working on other racisms. In this respect, approaches can be transferred here, as is already taking place in practice. In this respect, for instance, the racism-critical approach is well established. Leiprecht at al. (2011) understand criticism of racism “as an artful, creative, necessarily reflexive, constantly evolving, and unfinishable, yet resolute practice, borne of the conviction that it makes sense not to be governed “to such an extent” by racist forms of action, experience, and thought” (ibid.: 9).

The racism-critical perspective encourages people to confront their own involvement in discriminatory structures and actions. The aim is not to expose individuals as racists, but to address racism as a societal relationship in its structural dimension.

In the meantime, a large number of scientists and political educators are working to develop this racism-critical practice. However, there is still a lack of concretization where anti-Muslim sentiment is concerned. Even though this is already the subject of academic debates, there is still a lack of corresponding transfer to educational and workshop materials from a racism-critical perspective. One particular question that arises here relates to the significance attributed to religion from a racism-critical perspective (see Cheema 2020). Dealing with the tensions between religion, secularism, and school is in some ways one of the manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiment. “Religious literacy” which Karakaşoğlu demands as a skill for teachers was hence also relevant for political education (see 2020). This does not mean interreligious dialogue or expertise with regard to individual religions, but a fundamental understanding of historical and contemporary conditions and forms of expression of religious thought and action.
There is a need for stronger promotion of political education work on anti-Muslim sentiment and the development of corresponding educational materials, but also for scientific reflection and the development of quality criteria. Clear separation from the field of extremism prevention is also necessary.

Political education organizations also need to master the challenge of examining their own institutional practice in a critical way with regard to racism. The personnel structure, work areas, target groups, and offerings must be consistently reviewed with a view to institutionally and structurally anchored practices of anti-Muslim racism and be given a racism-critical design (see Benbrahim 2021b).

6.5.2 Further training on anti-Muslim sentiment: Raising awareness as a cross-cutting task for society

The rather limited offers nationwide to raise awareness of anti-Muslim sentiment (see subchapter 6.3.2.4) are mostly aimed at teachers and other educational staff or as workshops for youth groups. However, dealing with anti-Muslim sentiment is also relevant at least for all state institutions and acting structures as well as for professional groups and not just school personnel: security authorities (see chapter 8), judiciary (see subchapter 8.3) and the media (see chapter 7). Any cooperation between these professional fields and educational institutions already offering further education and training has only been sporadic up to now. That being said, compulsory outreach, for instance, for future civil servants and journalists was necessary with regard to manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiment (as well as other forms of discrimination).

In addition to relevant professional groups, confrontation with anti-Muslim sentiment and racism, in accordance with the racism-critical approach, can be seen as a cross-sectional task for society as a whole. Self-reflexive confrontation with racism and anti-Muslim sentiment—confrontation with one’s own images, knowledge (gaps) and prejudices—is thus understood as a fundamental task for every member of a (plural) society. Extracurricular venues can provide such spaces, for instance, by establishing adult education centers, libraries, and church education facilities in their programs.

Concepts for further education and training should be developed accordingly for specific target groups, offering different formats, such as workshops, seminars, and lectures, as well as case consultation between peers. The educational offers should consider both Muslim and non-Muslim perspectives in order to reach broad target groups. Standards and quality features of pedagogical measures against anti-Muslim sentiment should include the following components:

- Theoretical and self-reflexive examination of anti-Muslim sentiment
- A variety of pedagogical-didactic methods
- Intersectional perspectives and participants’ experiences of discrimination
- Voluntary participation in qualification offers
- Heterogeneous teams for implementation
- Designing educational and learning spaces in an empowerment-oriented and diversity-aware manner

This requires (target group-specific) educational materials about and against anti-Muslim sentiment that help to raise awareness and reduce anti-Muslim racism.77

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77 The research on educational materials on anti-Muslim racism revealed a large number of materials in the digital diversity media library of the Informations und Dokumentationszentrum für Antirassistearbeit (Information and Documentation Center for Anti-Racism Work). A close look at the 418 materials from funded federal programs reveals that only 61 are labeled as working aids, including five pedagogical materials with pedagogical-didactic methods. Outside of public funding programs, educational materials against anti-Muslim sentiment are even less available.
6.5.3 Barriers for Muslims in child and youth welfare

Germany is home to between 1.6 and 1.8 million Muslim children and youths (see Hamdan/Schmid 2014: 10), resulting in a constantly growing and important target group for child and youth welfare services. Public welfare organizations are responsible for the services for and needs of young people. By promoting and ensuring their individual and societal development, they help to reduce societal disadvantages. Within this framework, child and youth welfare services in municipal structures are also responsible for the interests and concerns of Muslim children and youths. However, it must be noted that up to now only little is known about the different concerns, needs, and interests of young Muslims with regard to child and youth welfare (see Böllert et al. 2020: 8).

In many cities and communities, young Muslims shape and enrich social life in childhood and adolescence. They are young people with different interests and needs, growing up in different social, cultural, and religious situations and with diverse life plans. Although this makes them a heterogeneous group, just like other young people in Germany, young people who feel they belong to a Muslim community or avail themselves of services offered by religiously oriented organizations are often perceived as a relatively homogeneous group (ibid.). At the same time, research on Muslim youth cultures provides insightful descriptions of the diversity of individual biographies and youth cultural styles of young Muslims. Their multi-faceted lifeworlds are diverse and so is their current civic engagement in initiatives, independent associations, or youth groups (see Greschner 2020: 334).

In an online survey conducted by the Working Group for Youth Welfare (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Jugendhilfe) on offers of child and youth work in the “MuTJugend” project, a large number of young people were reached who see themselves as Muslim (80.1%). When asked about their use of the offerings available, it was found that Muslim or Alevi (youth) groups are of immense importance to them and are visited significantly more often compared to other offerings (see Böllert et al. 2020: 9).

The results of existing studies show that young Muslims tend to be rarely reached by certain areas of child and youth welfare services, such as youth association work. This also seems to be due to the fact that only a few of the services offered by recognized child and youth welfare organizations are sensitive to the different concerns of children and youths who feel they belong to the Muslim faith and offer spaces for religiously related topics (see Böllert et al. 2020: 10).

From a research perspective, it can be well described that Muslim actors have so far received little recognition and rarely receive support in the infrastructure of child and youth welfare (see Böllert/Schröer 2022: 5). Even if these organizations meet the legal requirements as providers of child and youth work, this does not automatically lead to funding by the Federal Government, the federal state, or the municipality. This fact is contrasted by an infrastructure of Muslim organizations that has been established for years and that offers a wide range of services and volunteer work in children’s and youth work. In addition to formal preconditions, there are informal preconditions that are characterized by hegemonic and deficit-oriented discourses about Muslims and are fueled by the dynamics of a discourse rooted in suspicion and security (see Greschner 2022: 11).

At local or municipal administrative level, the lack of knowledge and understanding of Muslim actors, services, and provider structures makes it difficult for Muslim providers to gain access to youth work. Municipal or local offices have knowledge of funding structures and expect the familiar structures also from self-organizations (see Böllert/Schröer 2022: 7). In this context, actors and young Muslims who carry out youth work on a voluntary basis and without profes-
sional full-time structures in self-organization are often neither included nor funded. The lack of knowledge on the part of Muslim actors with regard to existing structures of services leads to an imbalance in representation. Knowledge of established youth associations and established self-organization patterns often stems from many years of networking in professional and full-time structures, which newer offers by voluntarily organized self-organizations cannot provide without funding or financial resources.

Other barriers include the fact that there is little knowledge about Muslim diversity and a lack of religious sensitivity. The lack of knowledge about Muslim diversity is also reflected in the gap in the representation of offerings for Muslims based on faith communities. Offerings that address the Muslim faith and religious education are not available at municipal level or are viewed with skepticism. This also becomes clear in a hearing conducted by the UEM 2021 in order to identify the needs and experiences of Muslim organizations (see subchapter ↗ 5.3):

“Self-organized young Muslims often face mistrust. It is not their own statements and actions that are evaluated, but instead a certain mindset is ascribed to them which is usually justified with contacts.” (Hearing on the perspective of affected persons: Lydia Nofal—Aktionsbündnis muslimischer Frauen in Deutschland (Action Alliance of Muslim Women in Germany))

The recognition and representation of the diversity of Muslim life (ranging from secular to practicing their religion) or of faith communities (Ahmadiyya, Sunni, Shiite, Alevi, etc.) are important prerequisites for a targeted structure of offerings in Muslim child and youth welfare.

Corresponding research finds that the reception in municipalities and cities strongly depends on whether individuals can or want to act as a bridge between the infrastructure of child and youth welfare and/or its support and Muslim providers (see Böllert et al. 2022). The task of bridge-builders is important and necessary, but if they leave or can no longer perform this task, there will no longer be any representation and structural anchoring (see Böllert/Schröer 2022: 5). Child and youth services therefore need to proactively approach and cooperate with self-organizations and associations that have been established in municipalities and contribute a lot to youth work. These structural barriers and exclusions from participation opportunities are particularly common among migrant associations. They lead to double discrimination effects for young people “with a migration history” and Muslim religious affiliation since they can prevent their participation opportunities as an interest group:

“On the part of the administration, a lot of information work is still needed in order to enable people to get to know each other better. It is also a matter of reducing reservations, which are often based on the adoption of sweeping assumptions and unsubstantiated suspicions about Muslim organizations.” (Hearing on the perspective of those affected: Kofi Ohene-Dokyi—RAA-Berlin (Regionale Arbeitsstellen für Bildung, Integration und Demokratie e.V.) (Regional Working Centers for Education, Integration and Democracy))

This is not only about adequate information and further training of administrative staff in municipalities with regard to their qualification in the field of racism criticism and migration education, but also about the question of how municipalities can open themselves up in a racism-critical and migration-educational manner and anchor differentiation-sensitive guidelines within their institutions. The exchange with specialized agencies and providers shows that the necessary changes also require continuous and sustainable professional support at institutional and organizational level, which cannot be fully covered by selective further training offers (see Benbrahim 2020).
6.5.4 Challenges for Muslim youth associations

The youth association structure is formally the democratic representation of young people at municipal as well as at federal-state and national level. Youth associations and self-organizations of young people forming joint undertakings is an opportunity for democratic participation since they have voting and decision-making powers as members of federal-state youth councils. The youth association system is an institutionalized democratic system of representation for all young people. However, there is a deficit in representation when it comes to young Muslims. The participation and representation of young Muslims are particularly strong in voluntary structures and in self-organized youth work, whilst access and opportunities for participation in the youth association system remain closed.

As early as 2004, Deutscher Bundesjugendring (German Federal Youth Council) passed a resolution at its general assembly calling for intercultural opening of established youth association structures for associations of young people with a migration backdrop. Here it can be expected that the inclusion of Muslim self-organizations will also contribute to intercultural opening. However, a Muslim youth association (DITIB Jugend) is represented as a full member with voting rights in only six out of 16 federal-state youth councils. On the other hand, no Muslim youth associations are represented on the boards of the federal-state youth councils or among the members of Deutscher Bundesjugendring (see Greschner 2022: 11).

“It would be in the interest of society as a whole if Muslim youth associations that make a positive contribution to society as a whole were to be accepted into Bundesjugendring.” (Hearing on the perspective of those affected: Dennis Kirschbaum—JUMA)

The 16th Children and Youth Report on the Promotion of Democratic Education in Childhood and Adolescence (16. Kinder- und Jugendbericht zur Förderung demokratischer Bildung im Kindes- und Jugendalter) (2020) by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) explicitly addresses the establishment and further development of Muslim youth associations in the sense of a “diversification of the provider landscape,” especially for political youth education, but shortcomings still exist with regard to the structural representation of Muslim and faith community youth association work. More than ten years ago, Islamic umbrella organizations, such as the Turkish-Islamic Union of the Institute for Religion (DITIB) or the Islamic community Milli Görüş, were the prime providers of Muslim youth work. As part of a critical analysis of these associations, the landscape of Muslim organizations underwent an intensive phase of change over the last five to ten years. Self-organized and loose initiatives by Muslims of the second or third generation of immigration led to the establishment of organizations that are based on a Muslim self-image, but operate independently of the umbrella organizations in terms of content and structure. These self-organizations of young Muslims see themselves as a natural part of German civil society and they also organize youth work.

“Conflicts arise when Muslim children’s and youth associations want to participate equally in all areas. It is precisely at this interface that we should especially protect the committed children and young people from attacks—so that they can continue to pursue their journey to participation.” (Hearing on the perspective of those affected: Kofi Ohene-Dokyi—RAA-Berlin (Regionale Arbeitsstellen für Bildung, Integration und Demokratie e.V.) (Regional Working Centers for Education, Integration and Democracy))

Associations of young Muslims, which are oriented toward Islamic values with different emphases depending on their focus and which exist
independent of established adult associations, do not necessarily claim to be places for spirituality or practicing faith. They each understand themselves as Muslim educational, recreational, women’s, or youth organizations. The members of these organizations are often of different ethnic (Albanian, Turkish, Bosnian, Arab, etc.) and confessional (Alevi, Sunni, Shiite, etc.) backdrops. Examples of non-associational Muslim youth organizations in Germany are:

- **Bund muslimischer Pfadfinderinnen und Pfadfinder e.V. (Association of Muslim Scouts)** (Wiesbaden)
- **JUMA (young, Muslim, active) e.V. (Berlin)**
- **Muslimische Jugend in Deutschland e.V. (Muslim Youths in Germany) (Berlin)**
- **Muslimisches Jugendwerk e.V. (Muslim Youth Foundation) (Dortmund)**

A look at the activities of the abovementioned organizations reveals a wide range of political education, environmental and nature protection, anti-discrimination, and prevention work in the field of religiously based radicalization. The organization Muslimisches Jugendwerk wants to create role models for young Muslims and thus contribute to more visibility in society. Among other things, the youth organization deals with the topic of inclusion and develops concepts on how young Muslim women with disabilities can be integrated into youth work. The Bund Moslemischer Pfadfinder und Pfadfinderinnen Deutschlands (Association of Muslim Scouts Germany) (BMPPD) is established in five German states.

Muslim youth associations make a considerable contribution to civil society engagement in Germany. They are organized in different ways—affiliated with mosque associations or as independent youth groups, as local or national initiatives—and represent diverse positions, perspectives, and concerns of young Muslims living in Germany. This diversity also leads to different ideas and positions of religion in youth work within Muslim youth associations. One example of this is the recognized youth association Bund der Alevitischen Jugend (Association of Alevi Youth), which, due to the autonomy of Alevism as a recognized religious community, labels its membership as both Muslim and non-Muslim.

The re-establishment of Bündnis für muslimische Jugendarbeit (Alliance for Muslim Youth Work) in July 2022 marked the success of efforts by established organizations, such as the regional offices for education, integration, and democracy, to take an important first step toward enabling participation of Muslim youth work. The conditions for the success of Muslim youth (association) work can currently only be seen through continuous and solidarity-based cooperation with established associations and organizations that are undergoing a process of sensitivity to racism and opening up their own organizations. The inclusion of Muslim youth association work in the established association system must be regarded as both necessary and essential. Possibilities for structural participation by young Muslims in children’s and youth work must be provided in a sustainable manner in structures such as Deutscher Bundesjugendring and in federal-state youth councils, so that the political interests and concerns of young Muslims can be met.

### 6.6 Anti-Muslim sentiment and racist side effects of radicalization and extremism prevention

In recent years, numerous support and education programs have emerged as measures to prevent radicalization and extremism. This involves combating right-wing extremism, left-wing militancy, as well as Islamism. The educational debate on the prevention of Islamism was expanded especially in conjunction with young German Muslims leaving Germany for the so-called Islamic State.
This led to a greater orientation of security policy toward prevention. Radicalization prevention in the fight against terrorism and Islamism therefore predominantly affects Muslims and Muslim organizations, constructing them as a “security risk” for democracy and society. Yet the threat of Islamist terror affects all of society. In the hearing for the preparation of the UEM report, the following was expressed in this regard:

“While the term ‘Islamism’ is not only terminologically but also discursively linked to Islam and to Muslims and people perceived as Muslims, people of Muslim faith are asking themselves: ‘What does this have to do with me? What does this have to do with my individually and collectively lived practice of Islam?’ After all, security is an indispensable basic need of all people.” (Hearing on the perspective of those affected: Büşra Gök Akca—FAIR international—Federation Against Injustice and Racism)

Educational policy actors and educational institutions are seen as playing a key role in combating Islamist extremism, as stated in the Federal Government’s “Nationales Präventionsprogramm gegen islamistischen Extremismus” (National Prevention Program against Islamist Extremism) (see BMI 2017). Schools should be involved in prevention, for instance, by recognizing radicalization tendencies at an early stage. It is therefore not surprising that, according to a study, around 30 percent of the teachers surveyed state that Muslims are more aggressive than non-Muslims (see SVR 2017). Within the scope of the Federal Government’s program, educational institutions were called upon to meet security policy requirements in addition to their educational and training tasks. However, the security policy mandate requires extraordinary and appropriate skills and knowledge on the part of educators in order to be able to identify so-called “suspicious cases” at all. Since the root causes of Islamist radicalization are diverse, person-specific, and under-researched anyway (see Neumann et al. 2018), learning such skills poses many different challenges. As a result, young Muslims are still considered to be a risk group because of their religion, and any action by Muslims is potentially considered to be a security risk (see Bossong et al. 2022a). However, this deficient view is not only directed at students, as became clear from our hearing:

“The parents of Muslim students are often not perceived as partners to be taken seriously; instead, the suspicion of radicalization sometimes resonates in encounters.” (Hearing from the perspective of those affected: Aliyeh Yegane Arani—Anlaufstelle für Diskriminierungsschutz an Schulen (ADAS) bei LIFE—Bildung, Umwelt, Chancengleichheit (Contact Point for Protection against Discrimination in Schools (ADAS) at LIFE—Education, Environment, Equal Opportunities)

In out-of-school youth work with Muslims too, the linking of political education to security policy requirements has a stigmatizing effect. In addition to schools, the Federal Government’s prevention program also mentions mosque communities as places for prevention. Within the framework of the funding of radicalization prevention by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) through the “Demokratie leben!” (Live democracy!) program, every fourth project against religious radicalization was carried out by a Muslim association in the funding period between 2014 and 2019. Here, the pedagogical work in mosque communities and Muslim youth organizations moves into security policy interests. Another measure concerns the establishment of so-called contact officers in North-Rhine Westphalia since 2008. As members of a security authority, they act as contact persons for Muslim institutions and are responsible, among other things, for networking among mosques. It goes without saying that the official assignment of a state-appointed contact person to the area of security reinforces the perception of Muslims as
a risk and security problem. This also reflects a certain perception of Muslims that can be found in various areas of society: Muslims are seen as the cause of problems and as perpetrators. However, the fact that mosques (and Muslims) have been repeatedly attacked in recent years and that security measures are also necessary to protect them seems to receive less attention from the authorities.

Two current research projects investigate the connection between security policy and anti-Muslim sentiment: At the Technical University of Dortmund, a group of researchers are investigating how anti-Muslim racism and the prevention of Islamism are expressed in the context of schools (see Technische Universität Dortmund 2023) and are analyzing the extent to which counter-intentional effects (such as forms of stigmatization and discrimination) are associated with school-based Islamism prevention programs. The scientists have so far found that even a basic religious practice—such as fasting or wearing a headscarf—often leads to conflict in the school context (Bossong/Dipcin/Marquardt 2022: 138). Young Muslims—especially boys—are confronted with the stigma of being a Muslim ready for violence and at risk of radicalization. Similarly, the Forschungsinstitut Gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt (Research Institute for Social Cohesion) is currently investigating “non-intended racist effects” (see Forschungsinstitut Gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt 2023) in the prosecution of extremist acts of violence. The researchers focus on the discriminatory effects on different minorities who are target groups of different governmental and non-governmental measures, including prevention measures. Both projects are still underway. They aim to give recommendations for “racism-sensitive counter-extremism and radicalization prevention” (ibid.) and to provide for racism-critical and discrimination-sensitive considerations in the “field of pedagogical Islamism prevention” (Bossong et al. 2022b: 11).

This does not rule out that the target groups of preventive measures against Islamist radicalization are also selected according to religion or origin (or “migration backdrop”). Last but not least, the question was left unanswered as to what extent an empirical link exists between, for instance, “migration backdrop” and the potential for radicalization.

Amir-Moazami notes in the anthology “Der inspizierte Muslim” (The Inspected Muslim) edited by her that Muslims are also researched and “inspected” in academia under deficient auspices (2018: 9). She self-critically observes how obviously academic knowledge production and political intervention options are prettified. The scientists involved in the relevant discourse were helping to “exceptionalize” Muslims, for instance, when they made use of the financial incentives of thematically specified state research funding (ibid.: 30).

6.7 Conclusion

Muslim students and teachers in schools and universities experience anti-Muslim sentiment in education in many ways. Their Muslim identity references generally stand disproportionately in the foreground, often forming the largely culturalized interpretative framework for their behavior. In particular, challenging actions and behavior are attributed to “Islam” or “Muslim culture.” This complexity-reducing and culturalized view of Muslims also reveals gender-specific attributions and prejudices: Muslim girls are often seen as oppressed victims and boys as violent and misogynistic. The recurring identification and invocation of Muslims as (problematic) “others” has an exclusionary and disadvantaging effect on them. Being a Muslim is now considered to be a justifiable pattern for discriminating against Muslims, for instance, in performance evaluations or school recommendations. Tests of young people with an Arabic or Turkish name,
for instance, are assessed more negatively rather than in relation to their ability.

In child and youth welfare, Muslim children and youths are often confronted with structural barriers and a lack of opportunities to participate. Child and youth work services reach them much less often. In addition, Muslim youth work has fewer opportunities for political participation (youth policy), for instance, in established structures of youth association work via Deutscher Bundesjugendring and the federal-state youth councils. Muslim youth work should be recognized and promoted as a natural part of denominational oriented youth association work in order to establish sustainable German-Muslim youth work.

Racist ideas about Muslims are also conveyed through educational materials. The analysis of nationwide curricula and textbooks shows that Islam is predominantly addressed in the context of conflict and that students are exposed to anti-Muslim positions and narratives. Furthermore, a security policy perspective on Muslims is becoming increasingly common in school and out-of-school education. Prevention work against extremism and radicalization focuses primarily on Muslims and thus has a stigmatizing effect. Muslims are additionally seen less as victims of Islamist violence, but are identified in a discriminatory way primarily as potential perpetrators.

Anti-Muslim sentiment is only slowly being understood and addressed in education as a problem in societal coexistence. First specific training measures by civic education organizations can be found, as well as the sporadic mention of the topic in tenders for funding programs. Strangely enough, anti-Muslim sentiment is often located in the field of extremism and Islamism prevention instead of declaring it as an ideology of inequality in its own right. At the same time, attempts are increasingly seen in extracurricular educational programs to impart supposedly relevant knowledge about “the Muslims” or “Islam,” which further solidifies the idea of a fundamental and unchanging foreignness and otherness of Muslims. According to such a logic, professionals need knowledge about “Islam” in order to be competent in dealing with a single Muslim individual. Overall, there is an urgent need for higher professional standards and more professional development and training on anti-Muslim sentiment for (prospective) teachers as well as other (educational) professionals.

Last but not least, one urgent question remains untouched, i.e., how to deal with religion and religiously motivated needs in education. Conflicts in schools and other places increasingly revolve around the question of how much religion an increasingly secular society can tolerate. This question is usually discussed in terms of Islam and the needs of Muslims. This is no coincidence, because the public discourse on religion (religious freedom), religious diversity, and secularity always (co)addresses the question of the role of Islam.
6.8 Recommendations

The Independent Expert Group on Anti-Muslim Sentiment recommends:

- That the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs initiate an urgently needed, interdisciplinary revision of curricula and textbooks. Guidelines should be developed within the framework of the Federal Government/federal-state commission, which create binding effect at federal-state level when dealing with anti-Muslim sentiment in the school context.

- That the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs develop guidelines for dealing with the religious needs of Muslim students in cooperation with Muslim actors in order to bring them into an appropriate balance with the objectively justified requirements of everyday school life and the state’s educational mandate.

- That the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) and the Federal Agency for Civic Education (BpB) promote the addressing of anti-Muslim sentiment in school and out-of-school education as an independent (educational) field of action. Schools, child, and youth welfare organizations as well as specialized educational institutions should be explicitly supported with the help of funding programs to develop offers to raise awareness of anti-Muslim sentiment. This also includes the development of theoretical and methodological principles.

- The establishment of independent complaints bodies to deal with cases of discrimination in schools. Federal-state governments should establish independent contact and complaints centers for students and parents to facilitate effective and fear-free complaints. In addition, contact persons need to be appointed for discrimination cases in schools and state authorities. This necessity can be derived not least from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and is thus an obligation to be implemented by Germany.

- That more people with Muslim identity references be promoted as staff in extracurricular education.

- The development of regular offers for further education and training of teachers, pedagogical staff—including day-care center staff—and multipliers. As a compulsory part of their training, teachers and those responsible in educational spaces should be made more aware of various forms of discrimination, including anti-Muslim sentiment. In addition, they should be strengthened in developing appropriate manners in practical everyday life.

- The establishment of qualitative standards in political education, based on anti-racist and intersectional approaches. The target group is society as a whole. In doing so, the link between anti-Muslim sentiment and other forms of discrimination must be included.
A religion-sensitive approach be taken when dealing with anti-Muslim sentiment. Educators need to critically analyze religious plurality and secularity based on the concept of “religious literacy.” This does not mean interreligious dialogue or specific expertise with regard to individual religions, but a fundamental understanding of historical and contemporary conditions and forms of expression of religious thought and action. This can also include conveying a diverse image of Islam. Likewise, the population as a whole must be educated regarding the scope of religious freedom.

The promotion and establishment of anti-racist, religion-sensitive further and advanced training on anti-Muslim sentiment for the general population, regardless of profession and age. Addressing anti-Muslim sentiment and other forms of discrimination should be considered a cross-cutting task for the entire population by providing adult education centers, church centers, and libraries with corresponding offers.

The provision of knowledge and information about anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Muslim racism, for instance, on portals of the Federal Agency for Civic Education. A stand-alone dossier on anti-Muslim sentiment should provide information on origins, manifestations, and effects.

The promotion of anti-racist and religion-sensitive media literacy training as an extracurricular education offer for society as a whole.

That diversity-conscious play materials and books be provided in day-care facilities that also include the religious dimension and show gender-sensitive and non-stereotypical portrayals of Muslims and Muslim lifeworlds.

The avoidance of anti-Muslim side-effects in the prevention of radicalization and extremism. The interlocking of extracurricular education with security policy interests in prevention work against extremism and radicalization leads to the stigmatization of Muslims. The target group in federal and federal-state programs against Islamism should not focus on Muslims or mosque communities as the only groups at risk.

That programs about anti-Muslim sentiment work with (positive) counter-narratives about Islam and Muslims. In order to counteract the image of Islam and Muslims, which is mostly influenced by negative stereotypes, positive counter-images are needed in educational work. These can, for instance, address diversity among Muslims.

That the development of empowerment-oriented educational offers for schools and the extracurricular sector be promoted that deal with manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiment in different areas of society (for instance, school, media, culture).

That various forms of racism and anti-Muslim sentiment be included in the framework plans and curricula of technical colleges and universities. The offers should not only be directed at future teachers, social workers, and educators, but should also be established for students in social sciences and humanities.
The initiation and sustainable institutionalization of research on the topic of anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Muslim racism. To this end, basic research in Germany needs to be sustainably expanded through relevant professorships, funding lines, and degree programs. Interdisciplinary studies with a qualitative and quantitative focus on the perspectives, experiences, perceptions, and expertise of Muslims are needed. This would require corresponding calls for proposals from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). In addition, a regular funding guideline for research on the Muslim lifeworlds of children and young people should be established at the German Youth Institute.

That Muslim youth association work be included in the established youth association system. Structural participation by young Muslims in children’s and youth work must be provided in a sustainable manner in structures such as Deutscher Bundesjugendring and in federal-state youth councils in order to meet the political interests and concerns of young Muslims.

The initiation and promotion of a civil society network for Muslim actors in civic education to enable professional exchange and networking.
7 Media

Anti-Muslim sentiment in the mass media has been the subject of global research since the 1990s. As people often have little or no direct contact with Muslims, they draw much of their knowledge about Islam, Muslims, and the Islamic world from these media, which are seen as the eye of the needle when it comes to combating anti-Muslim sentiment. Numerous research institutions, religious academies, and foundations are not the only ones to emphasize the social significance of the image of Islam portrayed in the media. Former President Johannes Rau also stressed the role of the media; the German Islam Conference declared it to be one of the central issues when it was founded (see Deutsche Islam Konferenz 2010 (German Islam Conference): 282–289). Although there are many indications that the German media are not coining a uniform image of Islam as the enemy, media discourses on Islam, however, have for decades been characterized by a biased negative tendency, which clearly parallels the negative perception of Islam in German public opinion (see subchapter ↗ 3.1). Therefore, it is not possible to dismiss the media’s share in responsibility for anti-Muslim racism.

The following chapter creates a comprehensive overview of the state of research on the mass media (press and broadcasting), social media and Christian media. New research projects have also been initiated in all areas on behalf of the UEM:

- Representative analysis of content: “Analyse der Islam-Berichterstattung in deutschen Medien” (Analysis of Reporting on Islam in the German media) (Freie Universität Berlin)
- UEM hearing with German journalists on the causes of reporting on Islam (UEM)
- Data mining study on anti-Muslim sentiment in social media “Begriffswelten von Islamfeindlichkeit in deutschen sozialen Medien” (Anti-Islamic terminology in German social media) (Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz)
- Qualitative content analyses on Muslim self-representation in social media “Social Media-Selbst(re)präsentation von Muslim*innen in Deutschland” (Self-(re)presentation of Muslims in social media in Germany) (University of Erfurt)
- Qualitative content analysis of the image of Islam in Christian media “Islamfeindlichkeit in christlichen Medien” (Anti-Islam sentiment in Christian media) (University of Bremen)

7.1 Anti-Muslim sentiment in the German mass media

Despite the apparent structural change in the media in recent decades, which is often linked to “social media” in the public debate, the traditional mass media continue to have the greatest reach, at least in Germany (see Hölig/Hasebrink 2016). Their importance for social coexistence and democracy cannot be overestimated. They are the promoters and shapers of the public sphere, although, strictly speaking, a distinction must be made between published and public opinion, since the latter describes attitudes and opinions among citizens, which can essentially be identified through public opinion research. Mass media journalism is therefore by no means identical with the public sphere, but it does represent an essential basis for the production of a social “conversation” or discourse that today integrates nation states as well as multinational spheres (for instance, the EU) and, to some extent, the world as a whole (see K. Hafez/Grüne 2021).

Following introductory theoretical remarks, the state of research on the image of Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment in the German mass media will be presented in the next section. This will be
followed by a summary of a recent representative study on Islam coverage commissioned by the UEM. The results of a journalists’ hearing will then be presented in detail, shedding light on the backdrop processes in major German press and radio editorial offices who are responsible for the emergence of the image of Islam and have hardly been examined up to now.

7.1.1 From stereotypical media discourse to the multicultural public sphere: A theoretical introduction

It is impossible for a short report to address all the theoretical facets of media image research. As in other chapters, it is expedient to start from a dichotomy of theoretical foundations into constructivist and structuralist approaches. Discourse-theoretical approaches are dedicated to determining the content of texts and images. Systems and public sphere theory approaches strive to explain the emergence and effects of media content. Racism-sensitive theoretical genres have now emerged in both fields (for instance, criticism of Orientalism or multi-ethnic public sphere theory), which can help us to further define the ties between German discourses on Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment.

Regarding the constructivist theoretical strand, it can be said that texts and media images, including moving images, are so complex that their interpretation always depends on the chosen theoretical perspective. Socio-psychological image research primarily addresses stereotypes and enemy images of, for instance, ethnic or religious groups, whereby the term “stereotype” primarily describes generalizations of the individuals of these groups. These generalizations are more unbiased than the so-called “enemy image” which only highlights negative and threatening characteristics. Although stereotypes can still be detected in today’s media (see Thiele 2015), modern research has come to the conclusion that the approach is too narrow to describe media texts, which always convey multi-layered arguments, facts, etc. (see K. Hafez 2002a: 45–50).

Media and communication studies therefore increasingly use more complex methods of quantitative and qualitative content, framing, discourse, and image analysis (see Rössler 2017; Darhindnen 2018; Müller/Geise 2015). These methods, which are used to varying degrees in current research on images of Islam (see subchapter 7.1.2), can be used to identify much more precisely the statements of media texts and images as well as their context—the so-called text-image context. In addition, tendency statements can be made regarding rough structures in entire text landscapes—so-called “discourses.” It is impossible to interpret every stereotype or every frame (argument pattern) individually because of the mass of media texts produced. But we can, for instance,

a) identify prevailing structures of topics, actors and sources for entire media genres, even over longer periods of time,
b) carry out random detailed analyses of the language and argumentation processes of significant texts,
c) identify continuities and fluctuations in discourses by combining both methods.

It is precisely by identifying the thematic structure of the media texts that we can obtain information about the attention economy of the media. The latter deals with the question of which topic agenda the media confronts the population with on the topic of Islam. Agenda setting is the predominant theory of media effects today (see Rössler 1997). In essence, it says that while the media in open societies are not able to determine people’s thinking and attitudes, they are very successful in controlling what people think about. The question regarding the positive or negative context in which Islam and Muslims appear is crucial for the topic of anti-Muslim sentiment.
When it comes to manifest anti-Muslim sentiment, it is important to identify stereotypes, such as “Muslims are fanatical;” visual stereotypes can also be identified in this way (see Petersen/Schwender 2009). This also applies to research on social media, which are essentially researched with the same quantitative and qualitative methods as other media texts. For more subtle and indirect forms of anti-Muslim sentiment, on the other hand, the overall thematic structure of media texts in a society is decisive, since discourse-structural racism is characterized not only by classic stereotypes, but by the routine thematization of a group, religion, etc. in traditionally negative contexts (see chapter ↗ 2). The individual text and frame may be a legitimate form of criticism of Islam, as long as it is free of stereotypes or false causal attributions by frames (for instance, being Muslim as the reason for so-called “clan crime”). The media’s fixation on negative topics, however, is due to a lack of diversity and pluralism, which can be characterized as structural anti-Muslim racism, since a religious community like Islam, with more than 1.5 billion Muslims, would simply have to be portrayed in a more differentiated way. What is relevant here is not only the classic criticism of Orientalism (see Said 1979), but also demands from communication scholars for balanced reporting on migrants and their contexts (see Geißler and Pöttker see 2005 and 2006), a correlation is established between the ethnic-religious diversity of an editorial office and the racist character or balance of its reporting. However, these correlations are complex and contradictory because migrants themselves act inconsistently and non-migrant persons can also be sensitive to culture and racism (see Bedorf 2010). Neither of these aspects invalidates the fact that formal or experiential knowledge in dealing with Islam should be an essential aspect of diversity management in modern media newsrooms.

In the concept of intercultural media integration, repeatedly addressed in Germany, for instance, by Geißler and Pöttker (see 2005 and 2006), a correlation is established between the ethnic-religious diversity of an editorial office and the racist character or balance of its reporting. However, these correlations are complex and contradictory because migrants themselves act inconsistently and non-migrant persons can also be sensitive to culture and racism (see Bedorf 2010). Neither of these aspects invalidates the fact that formal or experiential knowledge in dealing with Islam should be an essential aspect of diversity management in modern media newsrooms.

On the theoretical macrolevel, numerous explanatory approaches can be found. A large European comparative study on migration reporting, for instance, found that the—usually very negative—media topics follow political “agenda building” to a considerable extent, i.e., they take up conflict perspectives on migrants launched by politics in the media and shape the media image accordingly (see ter Wal 2002: 37–39). During the so-called “refugee crisis” in 2015, this kind of political influence was clearly visible even though an exemplary reverse direction of action from the media to politics was also evident. The latter can be seen—at least in special times of crisis—as a characteristic of today’s media societies. In the spring/summer of 2015, for example, leading German media made a U-turn toward pro-migration policies earlier.
than the German government, thus putting pressure on politicians (see K. Hafez 2016). This power of the mass media is also evident in the social sphere, where “media panics” regarding allegedly criminal immigrants who burden the social system and are difficult to integrate influence public opinion (see ter Wal 2002: 36–37). People often fall back on their media knowledge when it comes to distant realities, while their own experience dominates at close range (see Kruck 2008). However, since most people do not have long-term interactions with Muslims, media effects are generally considered to be strong (see K. Hafez/Schmidt 2015: 51–59).

The theory of interactions between the media and society is increasingly differentiated today. On the one hand, approaches in the field of racism and multiculturalism theory provide for new normative demands on public spheres where migrants of a “multi-ethnic public sphere” actively participate (see Downing/Husband 2005). However, there is still no empirical evidence that minorities or non-hegemonic groups can exert a structural—i.e., fundamental and sustainable—influence on the image of the mass media (see Abadi 2017). There are exceptions in the case of paradoxical media events (for instance, the early phases of the German Islam Conference or the “Arab Spring”), which indicate a certain variability of German media discourses (see subchapter ➔ 7.1.2).

Today, theory is further differentiated by the question of the role digital media play in media systems. The transformation of the media is leading to new partial public spheres, possibly even to new forms of inter-media agenda setting, according to which social media influence the classical mass media. All in all, the question arises as to whether a structural change in the public sphere can be seen that is changing established media logic (see Seeliger/Sevignani 2021). Regardless of the considerable attention paid to social media, however, there is also still no final proof here that the digital transformation of the media is truly canceling out the importance of the mass media. About 70 percent of people worldwide still use classic mass media as their main source of information (see Hölig/Hasebrink 2016). People who pose a threat to social cohesion by following racist radical right-wing parties use very different media and, contrary to popular belief, are by no means only active on social media (see Bürgel et al. 2019). Nevertheless, the topic of “hate on the internet” is a qualitatively serious phenomenon today, which in many individual cases has quite considerable social impacts that are often collectively referred to in science under the term of incivility (for instance, hate speech)78 (see K. Hafez 2017). The growing importance of the topic is also the reason why the UEM has commissioned two research projects in the field of internet research, both related to anti-Muslim sentiment and Muslim counter-public spheres (see subchapter ➔ 7.2.3 and ➔ 7.2.5).

7.1.2 State of research: Emergence and development of the “image of Islam as the enemy” in the media since the 20th century

Even though it is not possible to speak of a homogeneous “image of Islam as the enemy” in the mass media, because certain nuances are evident in reporting by the German media, discourse on Islam by leading German media, both in the press and on television, does show a clearly negative basic thematic structure despite all the differences that exist. The largest quantitative long-term study to date of the German national press in the period from the 1940s to the 1990s covered more than 12,000 articles. These appeared in the highest-circulation weekly magazines DER SPIEGEL and stern as well as the leading daily newspapers

78 Although incivil statements and hate speech are not always conceptually equated in research (see Obermaier/Hofbauer/Reinemann 2018), they are used synonymously here.
Süddeutsche Zeitung and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. K. Hafez proved that about 60 percent of all articles deal with Islam in the context of negative topics—including violent conflicts, such as terrorism, as well as non-violent conflicts, such as religious fundamentalism (see 2002b: 92–99). The values are the most negative of all topics of Middle East coverage examined—only surpassed by coverage of acute wars. This shows that the Islam factor is particularly negative within the image of the Orient. Differences typical of the genre can be seen in as far as the negative characterization is accentuated even more in the weekly media (approx. 70%) than in daily newspapers (approx. 60%). The former obviously have a greater interest in a controversial narrowing of the Islam discourse (ibid.: 366).

DER SPIEGEL in particular attracted attention in the 2000s and 2010s with a series of lurid Islam titles. To name just a few examples: “Allah’s bloody nation. Islam and the Middle East” (SPIEGEL Spezial 2003); “Allah’s daughters have no rights—Muslim Women in Germany” (2004); “The holy hate—Twelve Muhammad caricatures shock the world” (2006); “The Pope versus Muhammad. The struggle of faith for Islam, reason, and violence” (2006); “The Quran—The most powerful book in the world” (2007); “Mecca Germany—The silent Islamization” (2007); “The Jihad cult. Why young Germans go to Holy War” (2014). All these cover stories were not only visually terrifying, but linguistically purposefully stereotypical, as the religion of Islam was always addressed in its entirety. The cover story of the stern spin-off View “Islam—The sinister religion” (October 2006) was not only linguistically sweeping (why “Islam” and not Islamist extremism?), but also chose a visual language in which extremists, weapons, the headscarf, and the holy sites of Mecca were united in a single stereotypical imagery.

Javadian Namin (2009) confirmed in a study on DER SPIEGEL and BILD that 75 percent of the articles address Islam in a negative context. A quantitative content analysis of the magazine shows broadcast by ARD and ZDF in 2005/6 carried out by K. Hafez and Richter in 2007 also shows that since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the tendency to negatively address Islam has increased to more than 80 percent, even in public broadcasting (see 2007). In addition, the Media Tenor institute concluded in a large-scale study (2014) that the appearance of ISIS has definitively ruined the image of Islam in the media—it is thus worse than all other topics examined. While representative studies show that Islam and Muslims are mainly seen as perpetrators of political or private violence, it must be discussed later whether they are also portrayed as victims of anti-Muslim violence (see subchapter ↗ 7.1.3).

In view of the fact that the abovementioned media set the tone in the German media system as journalistic opinion leaders and are thus the media to which all others look (see Weischenberg/Malik/Scholl 2006: 359), representative studies in the 1990s and 2000s revealed a distinctly negative or enemy image agenda in leading German media. The main problem is not the reporting on (the indeed numerous) problems in the context of political violence, emancipation, lack of democracy, etc. in the Islamic world and among Muslims, but rather the selective choice of topics and their often stereotypical exaggeration, which over the years have become increasingly negative, fading out positive developments. Hafez concluded: “The narrowed image of Islam in the German media lacks context that would relativize the information, enabling recipients to correctly classify the significance of such a phenomenon as religious extremism” (2009: 105). Stereotypes are often no longer formulated directly in the media, but “indirectly control the thematic structure of reporting” (Müller et al. 2017: 141). Islam appears in the media more as a political ideology than as a religion (see K. Hafez 2002b: 47–53, 95–96). Since most Muslims in Germany practice Islam as a religion, this creates a fundamental imbalance and a state of tension in the migration society that
fuels anti-Muslim sentiment. The strong impact of the media on this hostility toward Muslims has been scientifically proven in German society (see subchapter 7.1.4).

Large quantitative and representative studies inevitably only record basic tendencies, but not individual variants, which show, for instance, that some media have themselves recognized the problem of the image of Islam as the enemy (see Die Woche 2001). At the same time, numerous qualitative content analyses show that the problem is not only a narrow thematic focus, but that numerous stereotypes and racist attributions survive in the discourse. As early as 1996, K. Hafez showed that while reports on the politically persecuted author Salman Rushdie contained a legitimate defense of freedom of opinion, a very sweeping comparison of Western (positively assessed) and Islamic culture (negatively assessed) also found its way into the media, which was reminiscent of Samuel Huntington’s culture theories in the “Clash of Civilizations” (see K. Hafez 1996; 1997). In 2002, the author identified massive stereotypes in coverage of the Iranian Revolution, some of which point to an image of humanity according to which Muslims are fundamentally “different” from Westerners (keyword: “othering”), for instance, unable to separate religion from politics (see 2002b: 224–235).

In this context, a current comparison would be interesting in order to ascertain the extent to which such shifts in the world view are in fact permanent. While there is often talk of “Islamist/Islamic extremism,” at least implying that this is a problem with Islam as a whole, in Christian church circles, for example, child abuse is correctly seen as an institutional challenge for the church. Generally speaking, terms like “Christian” or “Catholic child abuse” do not exist. The situation is similar with issues like Christian-motivated terrorism in Northern Ireland, for instance, which is much less often referred to as “Catholic” or “Christian terrorism” in the German-speaking world. Of course, the motivation in these areas is at times different: Unlike assassins, priests do not usually refer to religion in their acts, and the conjunctures of the phenomena can also vary over time, which in turn influences the frequency of reporting in the media. Nevertheless, the question arises as to whether one’s “own” religion is not viewed in a much more differentiated way than other religions in terms of language and content.

Such shifts in perspective stem from techniques of selective perception that favor stereotypical characterizations and pars pro toto thinking. Numerous other studies have looked at how self-images and images of others are constructed through selective perception and how generalizing distinctions are made. In 2005, Schiffer extensively studied the selection mechanisms of highlighting, fading out and repeating discourse on Islam in the media. According to Schiffer, the basic beliefs of Islam are often shortened and inadmissibly generalized, coupled with stereotypical imagery (see 2005). Sielschott found in 2011 that two-thirds of all relevant frames in eastern German regional newspapers blame Muslims for the fatal consequences of terrorism and portray them as cold and immoral (see 2011). In 2014, Shooman described anti-Muslim stereotypes and narratives that, in her view, work toward a “racialization of religious affiliation” (see 2014). In 2015, Hergouth and Omlor found that at the time of the Charlie-Hebdo attack, all leading tabloid newspapers in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland (Kronen Zeitung, BILD and Blick) portrayed Islam and Muslims as a threat (see 2015). In a study from 2019, Wigger described the “racialization and Islamization of sexual violence” using the example of intersectional anti-Muslim sentiment toward Arab-Islamic men, who were often sweepingly
portrayed in the German media as a threat to “German women” following the events of New Year’s Eve 2015/16 (see 2019). In a 2016 study of visual representations of more than a thousand photographs in daily and weekly newspapers, Amr Abu Zeid found that Muslims in particular are often portrayed abroad as a “security risk,” a “cultural challenge” or as “primitive,” with a fascination for exotic luxury added to this, especially in the Gulf states (see 2016: 131). In 2020, Sebastian Lemme came to the conclusion that Muslims are visually marked more often than average, especially through the headscarf (even though many Muslim women do not wear a headscarf at all) (see 2020).

Of course, German media texts also contain countless correct information, meaningful classifications (framing) and culturally sensitive backdrops. German media convey much more than racist stereotypes, and modern discourse research does not aim to deny the complexity of the current discourse on Islam (see Karis 2013). What is striking, however, is that in the case of Islam, anti-Muslim stereotypical statements are still numerous and can be considered speakable, while they are sanctioned much more strongly in other areas. A society that is increasingly successful in banning the N-word from discourse has surprisingly few problems with sweeping public statements and false comparisons, even in cover stories (Islam as a threat, etc.). The present report also tries to describe this tendency in more detail in the examples of media coverage (see chapter 4).

In this systematic subchapter, it should only be noted that the state of research on the contemporary image of Islam in the media should be put in a historical perspective. This image was not always as negative as it is now. Before the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1978/79, the German media paid hardly any attention to Islam. Reporting on the so-called “Islamic world,” especially on the Middle East, was not free of all kinds of exoticizing clichés, but there were also positive stereotypes. Home stories about Shah Reza Pahlevi or the Aga Khan, for instance, were still widespread until the 1960s (see K. Hafez 2002b: 235–240). However, these positive reports and connotations disappeared abruptly with the Six-Day War of 1967 between Israel and the Arab states. They gave way to a strongly politicized image of the Orient, which rediscovered Islam as a subject with the Iranian Revolution. Incidentally, this politicization also applies to other German-speaking countries, such as Switzerland (see Richter 2018). For a long time, the German media thus regarded Islam more as a folkloric sideshow to other political and cultural developments in the Middle East. It was only when a strong Islamic fundamentalist movement was formed that they began to shape an anti-Islamic image of the enemy (see Hippler/Lueg 1993). It is therefore also wrong to regard the attacks of 9/11 as the moment when the image of Islam in the media was revived. These attacks had at best a reinforcing impact, as did a chain of other events from the cartoon debate in 2005/6 to the establishment of the so-called ISIS “caliphate” in 2014.

These fluctuations in discourse show that the image of Islam in the German media unfolded against the backdrop of long-term, historical stereotypes (see Attia 2009). However, it was activated by real international political crises and could also change should the world situation change. Several case studies show how major political events especially influence coverage and thus confirm the abovementioned finding of the strong influence of politics on the media agenda. A research team led by K. Hafez explained in 2013 that in the early phase of the Arab Spring, a certain pragmatic opening toward political Islam became apparent (see 2013a). In a 2015 study, Masoumeh Bayat found a positive initial response to the German Islam Conference (see 2015).
7.1.3 UEM study on the press and television: Anti-Muslim sentiment remains formative

Prof. Dr. Carola Richter and Dr. Sünje Paasch-Colberg from the Institute for Journalism and Communication Studies at Freie Universität Berlin conducted a current and representative study of the image of Islam in the German press and television on behalf of the UEM (see 2022). The quantitative content analysis focuses on the structure of topics and actors in the media and thus examines a central component of the discourse on Islam. This does not analyze the fine structures of the news discourse (frames, stereotypes, visualization, etc.), but the central orientation of the agenda setting toward factual and personal contexts in which Islam and Muslims are addressed, paying particular attention to topic valence (conflict dimension). The study covers the major national newspapers Süddeutsche Zeitung, DIE WELT, BILD and die tageszeitung and thus a political right-left spectrum as well as "serious" and "tabloid" journalism. In addition, local newspapers from regions with both large and small Muslim populations are analyzed (Rheinische Post and Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger from North Rhine-Westphalia as well as Sächsische Zeitung and Freie Presse from Saxony). As representatives of Germany’s dual broadcasting system, RTL is selected as the market leader in the news segment among private broadcasters and ARD/Das Erste for the public service sector. The analysis population covers 2014 and 2019 and, as a further update, October 2021. In the press section, 19,490 articles in total are examined (ibid.: 9). While the newspapers are surveyed on the basis of digital full-text databases, the television samples are selected in cooperation with Göfak Medienforschung, which conducts long-term program research for the Association of State Media Authorities (AG Landesmedienanstalten) and on behalf of ARD/ZDF (339 television reports) (ibid.: 11). The analysis population, samples, codebooks, reliability tests, etc. were formed and carried out according to standard procedures (ibid.: 11–13).

The topic analysis of German media confirms the previous state of research in so far as a long-term continuity of media coverage becomes visible that is strongly oriented toward violent events and other negative conflict topics. This is strong in newspapers and even extremely strong on television, where it dominates everything. Since the conflict perspective in the media is decisive for anti-Muslim sentiment, the following summary of Richter and Paasch-Colberg’s findings focuses on precisely this aspect. The dominance of topics such as violent conflicts and security/law is apparent (on average 52.2% in newspapers and 86.7% on television, see Table 7.1–7.4 below). In a detailed analysis across all topics, the researchers even come to the conclusion that Islam-related conflicts characterize 57 percent of all newspaper and 89 percent of television reports (ibid.: 36–38). A slight increase in reports of violence against Muslims (approx. 2%) can also be identified over the years (ibid.: 28). In an average of 22.6 percent of reports covering topics such as the economy/work, social affairs, education/science, culture, or religion, newspapers at least still contain a certain degree of broad content regarding the image of Islam, which is otherwise highly politicized and marked by conflict. On television, however, this share is reduced to 3.9 percent in the main program of RTL and ARD/Das Erste and thus marginal.

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80 This is the case if one adds conflicts from the areas of “international affairs” and “immigration, integration.”
Table 7.1: Subject areas, subject fields, and selected topics by newspaper (in %, n = 1675, rounded to the first decimal place)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject field:</th>
<th>SZ</th>
<th>Welt</th>
<th>taz</th>
<th>BILD</th>
<th>KSt</th>
<th>RhP</th>
<th>FP</th>
<th>SäZ</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 330</td>
<td>n = 231</td>
<td>n = 276</td>
<td>n = 110</td>
<td>n = 245</td>
<td>n = 136</td>
<td>n = 96</td>
<td>n = 1675</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicts</td>
<td>38.5</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>42.7</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terror, hostilities, (civil) war</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crises, unrest, protest</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International affairs</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>10.4</td>
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<td>14.7</td>
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<td>9.1</td>
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<td>5.9</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forms of state and regimes</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>7.3</td>
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<td>7.4</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>7.7</td>
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<td>Security and law</td>
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<td>16.2</td>
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<td>14.9</td>
<td>18.2</td>
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<td>9.6</td>
<td>12.5</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>General: Crime*</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific: Crime by Muslim or foreign/migrant offenders*</td>
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<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special topic: So-called “honor killings”**</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special topic: So-called “clan criminality”**</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific: Killing sprees, assassinations, attacks*</td>
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<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specific: Crime against Muslim-attributed victims*</td>
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<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special topic: Racism*</td>
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<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law and legal norms</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration, integration</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration, flight, asylum</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration and coexistence</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>15.5</td>
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<td>11.5</td>
<td>8.4</td>
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<td>Economy and work</td>
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<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
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<td>Social</td>
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<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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<td>Education, science and research</td>
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<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<td>6.4</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Culture</td>
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<td>4.4</td>
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<td>5.7</td>
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<td>Religion</td>
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<td>2.5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
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<td>Other topics</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
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<td>8.1</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Richter/Paasch-Colberg 2022: 32.

* These topics were coded as specific expressions of a subject field. They were only coded if this concrete allocation was possible. Otherwise, the primary subject field was coded, so that the added percentages of the topics do not necessarily result in the percentage value of the subject field. Reading aid: The topic of domestic security was addressed in 12 percent of all reports, including 1.9 percent reports on racism.

** Any deviations in the primary rows and the total row are rounding errors.
Table 7.2: Subject areas, subject fields, and selected topics, by broadcaster (in %, n = 339, rounded to the first decimal place)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject field:</th>
<th>ARD/Das Erste</th>
<th>RTL</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n = 259</td>
<td>n = 80</td>
<td>n = 339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicts (n = 275)</td>
<td>79.2</td>
<td>87.5</td>
<td>81.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terrorism, (civil) war</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>86.3</td>
<td>80.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crises, unrest, protest</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International affairs (n = 16)</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International relations</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forms of state and regimes</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security and law (n = 19)</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic security</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime, homicide, violence (general)*</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killing sprees, assassinations, attacks*</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime against Muslim-attributed victims*</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism*</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law and legal norms</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration and integration (n = 16)</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration, flight, asylum</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration and coexistence</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy and work (n = 0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social affairs (n = 5)</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family, women, and gender</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, science (n = 0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture (n = 3)</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion (n = 5)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christianity*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Richter/Paasch-Colberg 2022: 35.

* These topics were coded as specific expressions of a subject field. They were only coded if this concrete allocation was possible. Otherwise, the primary subject field was coded, so that the added percentages of the topics do not necessarily result in the percentage value of the subject field. Reading aid: The topic of domestic security was addressed in 5.3 percent of all reports, including 0.3 percent reports on racism.

** Any deviations in the primary rows and the total row are rounding errors.
Table 7.3: Examples of conflict topics in the press

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus on Germany</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tagesschau (ARD), April 14, 2019: President of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution warns of terrorist attacks in Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guten Morgen Deutschland (RTL), May 23, 2019: Decrease in Islamophobic crimes in Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punkt 12 (RTL), May 10, 2019: Hesse’s justice minister demands up to three years imprisonment for parents who force their children to participate in Ramadan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punkt 12 (RTL), October 11, 2021, Cologne: Launch of a model project on the muezzin call, residents asked for their opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTL Direkt, October 28, 2021: Apartment search of suspected Islamists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guten Morgen Deutschland (RTL), October 16, 2014: German Islamist threatens Chancellor Merkel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTL Nachjournal, October 16, 2014: Hooligans join forces and march against Salafists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARD-Mittagsmagazin, October 18, 2021: Racism/discrimination in German schools and a lack of problem awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagesschau (ARD), October 28, 2021: Police search the apartments of five young men on suspicion of terrorism with links to ISIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menschen bei Maischberger (ARD), April 8, 2014: “Radicalization of Islam or unfounded agitation against Islam?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus on other countries or international events:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tagesschau (ARD), April 14, 2019, Syria: Difficult reconstruction following liberation from ISIS in Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagesschau (ARD), April 27, 2019, Sri Lanka: Security situation remains tense after another explosion with 15 fatalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTL Aktuell, June 18, 2019, New Zealand: Man convicted for distributing video of Christchurch attacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guten Morgen Deutschland (RTL), October 15, 2014, USA/RUS: Countries exchange intelligence data with each other in the fight against ISIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTL Aktuell, October 17, 2014, Nigeria: Government concludes a ceasefire with Boko Haram, 200 abducted schoolgirls to be released</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heute (ARD/ZDF, in Morgenmagazin), October 13, 2014, USA/Turkey/Syria: Turkey provides bases for military use in the fight against ISIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagesthemen (ARD), October 28, 2021, Afghanistan: Zahra Nabi’s reality of life as a journalist under the Taliban</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UEM’s own compilation according to Richter/Paasch-Colberg 2022.

If these results are embedded in the previous state of research, we clearly see the long-term continuity of a violent and negative image of Islam. Representative research over the past 40 years (since the Iranian Revolution of 1978/79) shows the conflict perspective to be the focus of about 60 percent of press reporting and about 80 percent of television reporting (ARD and ZDF) (see subchapter 7.1.2), i.e., values that are almost identical to today’s figures (57% and 89%). We can therefore identify as a contemporary constant in the leading German media a strong narrowing of the image of Muslims and Islam—which is in fact a world religion—to violence and conflict topics. There is a significant lack of unbiased, regular or even positive strands of discourse in the image portrayed by the German media. The long-term stereotypes of Islam (misogynistic, violent, fanatical) have thus been structurally reproduced in the news media for several decades. The study by Richter and Paasch-Colberg also comes to the conclusion that an extremely limited topic agenda prevails and greater attention must be given especially to topics that are not related to conflict.
Table 7.4: Examples of conflict topics on television

**Focus on Germany**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Tagesschau (ARD)</strong>, April 14, 2019: President of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution warns of terrorist attacks in Germany</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guten Morgen Deutschland (RTL)</strong>, May 23, 2019: Decrease in Islamophobic crimes in Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Punkt 12 (RTL)</strong>, May 10, 2019: Hesse’s justice minister demands up to three years imprisonment for parents who force their children to participate in Ramadan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Punkt 12 (RTL)</strong>, October 11, 2021, Cologne: Launch of a model project on the muezzin call, residents asked for their opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RTL Direkt</strong>, October 28, 2021: Apartment search of suspected Islamists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guten Morgen Deutschland (RTL)</strong>, October 16, 2014: German Islamist threatens Chancellor Merkel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RTL Nachtjournal</strong>, October 16, 2014: Hooligans join forces and march against Salafists</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Tagesschau (ARD)</strong>, October 28, 2021: Police search the apartments of five young men on suspicion of terrorism with links to ISIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Menschen bei Maischberger (ARD)</strong>, April 8, 2014: Radicalization of Islam or unfounded agitation against Islam?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus on other countries or international events:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tagesschau (ARD)</strong>, April 14, 2019, Syria: Difficult reconstruction following liberation from ISIS in Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tagesschau (ARD)</strong>, April 27, 2019, Sri Lanka: Security situation remains tense after another explosion with 15 fatalities</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RTL Aktuell</strong>, October 17, 2014, Nigeria: Government concludes a ceasefire with Boko Haram, 200 abducted schoolgirls to be released</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>heute (ARD/ZDF, in: Morgenmagazin)</strong>, October 13, 2014, USA/Turkey/Syria: Turkey provides bases for military use in the fight against ISIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tagesthemen (ARD)</strong>, October 28, 2021, Afghanistan: Zahra Nabi’s reality of life as a journalist under the Taliban</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UEM’s own compilation according to Richter/Paasch-Colberg 2022.

Although the detailed analysis did show some surprising counterexamples, for instance, when BILD reported about Muslims among emergency chaplains, these exceptions do not change the basic structures of a negative image of Islam. The differences between media types and genres are certainly interesting. Both BILD and Chemnitz’s regional newspaper Freie Presse are above average when it comes to conflict reporting. This is not surprising for BILD as a sensationalist tabloid, which reports 26 percent on domestic security and similarly often on terrorism, crime, and anti-semitism among Muslims. For a regional newspaper, however, this is surprising, especially since other local and regional media remain slightly below the average value, both in North Rhine-Westphalia and Saxony. Rheinische Post and Sächsische Zeitung in particular, with their regional focus, are clearly less conflict-oriented. Minor shifts of this kind can also be seen between RTL and ARD, with the public service broadcaster addressing violent topics seven percentage points less than the private broadcaster.
The study also shows that a significant proportion of Islam-related reporting is now somehow related to Germany, i.e., Islam is less and less a topic of foreign reporting and more and more a domestic issue. However, given the strong conflict characterization of this image, it also means that conflicts “with Islam” are coming ever closer and can thus further intensify fears or defensive reactions.

Finally, an analysis of actors in the study points to very problematic relations in the representation of Muslims in the German media. Only 14 percent (newspapers) and 26 percent (television) of actors can be identified as explicitly Muslim.\(^1\) The study concludes “coverage of Islam, at least in the press, is largely devoid of clearly identifiable Muslims” (ibid.: 49). It seems almost more significant that Muslims are less often assigned active speaker roles than non-Muslims. Even when it comes to topics like domestic security(!), there is more talk about Muslims rather than with Muslims (ibid.: 55). Muslims also appear much more often than non-Muslims either as individuals or as undefined groups (“Rohinya refugees,” “strictly Muslim women,” etc.), which, according to the study, carries the risk of homogenization (ibid.: 51). Muslims also appear in the media more often as militias or terrorists and much less often as members of civil society, i.e., associations, institutions, or NGOs (ibid.: 56). Finally, coverage of Islam is predominantly male (70.9%, ibid.: 53).

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\(^1\) It was not possible to code indirect identifiers (for instance, mentioning the wearing a headscarf).
Figure 7.2: Speaker roles of Muslim actors compared to other actors in print and television (in %, n = 1777 actors)

Even though the study by Richter and Paasch-Colberg is not a qualitative content analysis, nor does it include a precise examination of stereotypes, frames, and discourses, it does offer the advantage of a representative trend analysis. The confirmed lack of diversity in the Islam agenda and the very selective perception of negatively charged topics and events suggest a clearly narrowed image of violence and conflict in Islam. We can see here a long-term continuity of structurally anti-Muslim German media attention in response to the strong politicization of the image of Islam since the Iranian Revolution in 1978/79. The analysis of actors can be interpreted in such a way that it is not only the global, but also the human image of Islam and of Muslims that is affected. Muslims too often appear as radicals, as a non-integrated and non-networked part of our society. In both areas—in terms of topics and actors—there is an urgent need for reform toward diversification. Some media, especially some local newspapers, seem to have already started this process. Others, however, especially the major television broadcasters, have been disseminating a largely monolithic, i.e., rigid, image of Islam for decades.

7.1.4 Impact of anti-Muslim sentiment in the mass media: A loss of trust and threat to democracy

Compared to well-researched media content, academia has given only limited attention to media effects up to now. This is due, on the one hand, to the general difficulty of determining media effects, as people are always exposed to very different influences, for instance, in the family, peer groups, and in educational institutions. These influence both how people see others and the way they deal with media discourses. Based on current research, two impact dimensions can be identified:
a) media effects on the minority (Muslims), and

b) media effects on the majority (non-Muslims).

As far as the first dimension of impact on Muslims is concerned, a qualitative interview study by the German government on media use by people of Turkish origin in 2002 showed that they felt discriminated against in part by the explicitly negative bias of the image of the Orient and Islam portrayed in the German media (see K. Hafez 2002c: 71–75). A recent survey by the Expert Council on Integration and Migration (SVR) indicated in 2021 that migrants generally have a high level of trust in the German media, but that respondents of Turkish origin, many of them Muslim, are an exception. Most of them do not trust the German media at all (see Tonassi/Wittlif 2021: 21). The study by Kontos shows that there is a close correlation between the image of Islam in the media and the perception of discrimination, loss of trust, and even social disintegration (even if those affected sometimes develop counterstrategies of communicative self-empowerment, see also subchapter ↗ 7.2.5) (see 2020).

In view of the fact that Islam is also by far the most negatively rated religion in Germany in opinion polls (see K. Hafez/Schmidt 2015: 18), far ahead of Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, it is highly likely that the mass media has a very negative influence on people’s image of Islam. In an impact study, Müller et al. 2017 did in fact prove that the perception of Islam is very strongly influenced by the media. Attitudes toward Muslims are more negative “when the portrayal of Islam (perception of Islam by the media) is perceived negatively” (ibid.: 153). In 2022, Schmidt showed in a qualitative interview study how much Islam-related media knowledge is interwoven into everyday discourse about Muslims, where it fosters—both explicitly and latently—anti-Muslim discourse practices.

In addition to such direct effects, a number of authors have also pointed to indirect media effects, describing in particular the correlation between public anti-Muslim sentiment and disenchantment with democracy. Thus, the threat to democracy does not come primarily from minorities who refuse to integrate, as is often claimed, but rather arises within the majority society. In 2012, even before the emergence of the AfD party, Benz already pointed to the danger of a political ideologization of Islam as the enemy by right-wing radicals. In 2018, Sponholz showed in an elaborate empirical study how the German press put Thilo Sarrazin’s racist views on the media agenda so extensively that they judged them to be legitimate talking points despite some critical coverage. K. Hafez, in turn, emphasized in 2020 that the mass media not only portrayed Islam as an enemy to society but also made Sarrazin, who is now considered by researchers to be an intellectual progenitor of the AfD party, socially acceptable. With their disproportionate focus on the AfD and the Pegida movement, the media continue to help those political movements to gain the attention of society that place anti-Muslim sentiment at the center of their political ideology, and with their clear anti-constitutionalism, shake the very foundations

This means that while anti-Muslim sentiment in the media can negatively influence the political confidence of Muslims, the impact of the image of Islam in the media on the non-Muslim majority can be identified on two levels:

- direct effects on attitudes and opinions toward Islam,
- indirect effects on the democratic process.
of liberal democracy (see 2020). In a special issue entitled “Islam. Gefahr für Europa” (Islam. Threat to Europe) in 2016, the magazine and mouthpiece of the “Neue Rechte” movement, Compact, which according to the German domestic intelligence services is considered to be “assuredly extremist,” the virulent image of Islam as the enemy in the mainstream media was brought to a head by calls for “resistance” and the formation of a “defensive front” against the alleged Islamization of German society. The editor-in-chief even suggests a “religious revival” like in Russia to fight Islam.

We can thus observe the media effects on non-Muslims with considerable social consequences, from the updating of a mainstream enemy image in broad public opinion to the use and radicalization of the image of Islam as the enemy in right-wing populist and extremist circles. It is therefore true to say that those who wish to fight (anti-constitutional) right-wing populism/extremism must fight anti-Muslim sentiment, and those who want to fight anti-Muslim sentiment must significantly diversify the image of Islam in the mass media.

7.1.5 UEM hearing with journalists on root causes and conditions of anti-Muslim sentiment in the mass media

The discourse on Islam in the German media not only has an effect on society, it also arises in a social context (see K. Hafez 2009). The different discourse spaces of politics, economy, and lifeworlds follow a certain logic of their own (see Halm 2008). However, they are not hermetically isolated, but mutually influence each other. The activities of the media are embedded in diverse contexts, which include not only organized ecosystems (politics, economy, NGOs, social movements, etc.) but also heterogeneous system environments (“culture,” including journalistic professional ethics, socialization influences on journalists, etc.) (see Kunczik/Zipfel 2001). All levels converge in the media editorial office, which forms an independent, organized social system. However, the content of the media discourse on Islam is much better researched than the editorial conditions where it is created. So-called communicator studies, which look into the inner life of the media, are generally rare, especially in research related to the image of Islam, and have yet to be carried out comprehensively.

Isolated analyses are based on backdrop discussions with German editors about coverage of Islam, with the result that the professed great willingness for diverse reporting is in conflict with the reality of extraordinarily negative coverage of Islam (see Rohe/Jaraba 2018). Studies on migrant diversity strategies in the German media are more frequent, but they too lead to predominantly sobering findings. In contrast to the Anglo-American world, there is much talk of support for improved representation by editors with a migration history in the upper echelons of the German media, but without any concrete concepts for action and deeds. Although the proportion of migrant journalists is slowly increasing, it is far behind the population average. Especially from predominantly Muslim countries, not a single person has made it into senior management positions to date (see Neue Deutsche Medienmacher*innen 2020). Despite the need for diverse editorial offices, it must be noted that improved representation of Muslims is still no guarantee for a more differentiated image of Islam, because organizational power structures and social discourses can still have hegemonic effects. This aspect urgently needs to be systematically researched in the future.

Due to the poor research situation, in 2021 the UEM held a large hearing with ten representatives of major German mass media who work for leading national newspapers and weekly media as well as for public service radio and television broadcasters. The respondents were both established editors known for their expertise on Islam as well as freelance editors, many of whom have been focusing on Islam as a professional topic for decades. The journalists were interviewed individually in semi-structured in-depth interviews.
These interviews covered all the main theoretical areas of newsroom research, i.e., influence by owners, publishers, and chief editors (so-called conditioning programs), news routines, research techniques, and information flows as well as social processes in newsrooms and aspects of journalistic socialization and training. The result is a fascinating insight into the working methods of the major German media, which, due to consistent anonymization of both personal and institutional names, can be regarded as a condensed expertise of high-profile practitioners.

All in all, some potential and even positive changes can be seen in the German media. However, the structural shortcomings that characterize anti-Muslim sentiment in the media on all theoretical levels are particularly evident. These shortcomings are an indication of an enormous reform backlog, without which the public image of Muslims is unlikely to change in the long term.

7.1.5.1 Influence of media owners and management: The enemy image sells well

When asked about stereotypes of or cultural openness toward Islam, almost all of the editors and journalists interviewed gave their own editors-in-chief a rather poor report card. Individual openness to cultural diversity is therefore no higher than in the population as a whole. From the point of view of the interviewees, those at the helm of German media companies represent a “white” mainstream with limited knowledge of Islam, which is therefore often accompanied by a certain bias and stereotypes. The range of reactions extends from direct intervention, i.e., where articles already approved by the department are not published because an influential editor refuses to do so, to indirect influences. The latter took the form of unsolicited lectures on Islam by superiors who know little about the subject—the low level of education on the subject of Islam in the upper echelons is repeatedly described as “astonishing.” The openness to Islam at executive level is generally rated by the interviewees as too low, although it is certainly present in individual cases. Differences are also noted between the media, with even conservative media, for instance, being said to have an understanding of the religious concerns of Muslims. In the right-wing conservative spectrum, the interviewees recognize an increased resistance to Muslim migration. Stereotypes of Islam are also firmly anchored in the liberal media.

Generally speaking, there is a fear among management at leading German media that the “people’s voice,” i.e., the Islam-skepticism or anti-Muslim sentiment proven in surveys, is not adequately represented. According to most of the interviewees, the editors-in-chief represent a bourgeois anti-Muslim sentiment, which can also be seen in the broader population. Enlightened positions keen to provide citizens with pluralistic information and political and cultural education in order to counter Islamophobia are few and far between. It is only through the Black Lives Matter movement that the realization that more attention needs to be paid to diversity is slowly and increasingly gaining ground—a tendency that is, however, being counteracted by other developments.

The question of whether the rise of right-wing populism—represented by the AfD party, Trump, Orbán, etc.—and the so-called “refugee crisis” from 2015 onward were related to increased populist pressure on editorial offices and a shift in discourse to the right, was answered to a certain degree in the affirmative by most journalists at the hearing. It becomes clear in several of the interviews that German editorial offices were or still are afraid of losing readers because of an excessive left-liberal influence in the media. They fear that they will be accused by the public of abusing their gatekeeper function. “Caught off guard by well-organized populists,” it is now widely accepted for journalists to mark migrant, Muslim men in particular as sexist in a racist way (keyword “Cologne’s New Year’s Eve,” see also the
Right-wing extremists like Björn Höcke, who has published his own writings against Islam, have repeatedly been given a forum in the major German media. Even when criticism is expressed, they still receive considerable attention. According to some interviewees, the idea that “political correctness” is too widespread has spread in publishing houses and media organizations, which has led to a sometimes deliberate course correction, not least in the public service media. Although declared as a “multi-perspective” approach to reporting, it basically means that anti-democratic voices are increasingly represented in the media and thus indirectly legitimized.

According to the interviewees, an organized right-wing controversy had a supporting effect. However, it is also said that such shifts in discourse to the right also depend on wave movements and trends and are at present already partly subsiding. In addition, there are also countertrends, especially through the Black Lives Matter movement (see subchapter 7.1.5.2). What’s even more remarkable than the right-wing pressure is the continuity of stereotypical representations of Muslims, which can be seen especially in images where problematic visiotypes\(^{82}\) have remained almost unchanged for decades. After jihadist attacks, there is a tendency to hold Muslims collectively responsible as a group and to call for criticism of terrorism (political statements that are never demanded of Christians, for instance, in the case of the Catholic Church abuse scandal). On the whole, a right-wing shift in discourse through right-wing populism is therefore certainly perceived, but in reporting cultures that are already marked by a high level of criticism and hostility toward Islam.

In addition, the respondents believed that economic motives play a major role in propagating an “image of Islam as the enemy.” “Clickbaiting” or other related techniques to attract increased attention, such as putting together lurid cover stories and headlines, were significant for journalism. Even though none of the interviewees can recall explicit instructions to portray Islam in a decidedly bad light in order to boost sales with prejudiced German recipients, some interviewees did state that department heads are well aware that negative reports on Islam especially get many clicks, so that a strong polarization of the topic of Islam—not only in a negative, but occasionally also positive sense—was desired. What’s more, aspiring journalists did not need to do any special research because of the low standard of most reports on Islam. In most cases, vague associations by guilt, conjectures and scandalmongering were all that was needed. This was different, for instance, where “right-wing extremist police officers” are concerned, where journalists were required to conduct very well-founded research.

As a rule, recipients should not be “overwhelmed” or deterred. Informative reports were only occasionally possible. The message being implied was that a positive change in discourse would scare consumers. This doctrine explicitly also applied to public service media (not least the talk show and magazine segment) whose thematic structure on Islam was still focused on negative events, such as terrorism.

According to the interviewees, economic motives are not openly expressed, but are present in everyday journalistic life as a latent urge to generate resonance (“ingratiation with the audience”) by polarizing and scandalizing coverage of Islam. An interest in Muslims themselves as media consumers is apparently only slowly becoming noticeable.

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82 According to Lobinger, “visiotypes” or visual stereotypes represent “special media images” in which “not the individual, but the clichéd [...] is brought to the fore” (2009: 119). They appear, for instance, in visual journalism by traditional media.
7.1.5.2 Routine editorial processes/news factors: No alternative Islam agenda

The interviewees largely agree that the main criteria that transform a topic related to Islam into news are still shaped by the classic stereotypes, such as violence, fanaticism, and oppression of women. Therefore, the “headscarf still works,” although it is not so much a matter of conveying what women think and do, but how they position themselves in relation to the patriarchal mainstream (an image of Muslim women without headscarves is still considered difficult). The range of possible news factors was therefore very limited, if there can be any talk at all of deliberate journalistic selection. According to the journalists, most editorial offices do not have an Islam agenda, but still classify the topic as marginal.

The interviewees also said that German editorial offices were generally cautious about “overwhelming” audiences with news. Viewing the “Islamic world” from a non-stereotypical perspective was obviously difficult. Prominent figures as a news factor only appear in the most negative form—for instance, in the person of Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden, etc. Soft news and entertaining reports about Muslims were also unusual. Instead of actively establishing a genuine culture of discussion on Islam, the editorial offices usually reacted in response to events or situations. In doing so, they looked either to the daily preview from the German press agency dpa or increasingly to social media, which in turn intensified the negative polarization of reporting. In the opinion of the journalists, more space should be given to internal Muslim issues: individual, lifeworld practices instead of a “lust for the perverse,” for instance, in the form of excessive coverage of ISIS.

The journalistic trick of creating alternative topics by inverting stereotypes—for instance, “the rising star who made it”—is occasionally effective, but basically served the same racist stereotypes. It was noted in the hearing that what journalism wanted was not the “new” but perpetual variations of the “well-known.” There was certainly room for alternative topics—especially online editorial offices were often more open to this than their print counterparts. However, the interviewees believe this to be rather limited. Beyond the political conflict and established lifeworld topics, such as Ramadan or fasting, it is considered difficult to establish post-migrant topics which, according to the interviewees, show, for instance, the often astonishing civic engagement of Muslims. A key finding of the hearing is that in German mainstream journalism the range of “news values,” i.e., journalistic criteria for selecting topics, is very narrow and that there are no editorial policies on Islam—despite the fact that Muslims are the largest religious minority in Germany. This neither fulfills the freedom of private media nor the diversity tasks of the public service media sector.

The interviewees believe that the racist attacks in Hanau and Christchurch or the Black Lives Matter movement have raised awareness of problems of racism and diversity in German editorial offices—even more than the NSU murders or the Islamophobic acts of the Utøya assassin. As a result of Trump’s presidency or the AfD’s entry into parliament, German editorial offices have come to realize that intellectual arsonists like Sarrazin could pose a threat to democracy. However, the interviewees are of the impression that it is not possible to speak of a straightforward process of enlightenment, because right-wing populism has simultaneously shifted media discourses to the right (keyword “Cologne’s New Year’s Eve,” see above). What’s more, many of the interviewees believe that anti-Muslim sentiment is hardly seen as racism, because prejudices against Islam are deep-seated and often generally perceived as anti-emancipatory. Although the Neue Deutsche Medienmacher*innen (New German Media Makers) network has noted an increased response from interested editors who want to report in a more diverse way, racism still tends to be seen exclusively as a problem.
of black people while other population groups are rarely associated with it.

7.1.5.3 Information flow and research: Insufficient sources

The main finding of this part of the survey was that there seem to be two different types of journalists, the majority of whom do not have access to the Muslim part of German society—their reporting is based on standard journalistic sources, such as news agencies, press conferences, search engines, and a limited arsenal of supposed experts (see below). A minority of the interviewees, on the other hand, have specialized in this field, using (Islamic) academic sources and combining them with personal networks and direct interlocutors in Muslim milieus. For the majority of German journalists, on the other hand, statements are made such as “no one goes to Muslims because they don’t know anyone there;” “they prefer to ask the ethnologist from Frankfurt because Islam is classified as something foreign;” “many editors live in their own bubble;” “the source is sometimes the greengrocer—but that’s it for the big cultural contact.”

According to the interviewees, many topics related to Islam are blown out of proportion, as they were often not that important in the communities. The lack of contact, which is mostly due to shy hesitation or social distancing on the part of many journalists in the major media, thus feeds into the consolidation of stereotypes and the negative thematic focus. The same images were repeatedly reproduced. Journalists with a functioning network were still very rare, in contrast to countries like the UK or the US.

The interviewees observed that hardly any media from the Islamic world were used at all and criticized the German-centered view. Attempts to establish media like Al-Jazeera English as a source alongside CNN, etc. usually failed. The majority of German journalists had no command of non-European languages—this even applies to foreign correspondents. Social media are partly seen as a diversion channel for foreign sources, but this raises the question of reliability and professionalism (keyword “fake news”). According to the results of the hearing, access to sources must be described as completely inadequate. The flow of information and news relating to Islam and the so-called “Islamic world” urgently needs comprehensive reform.

The reasons for the prominent role of so-called experts (for instance, Thilo Sarrazin, Necla Kelek, Alice Schwarzer), who are particularly present in the media but are hardly recognized by established academia because they often make factually untenable and sweeping judgments, have been extensively discussed (see Schneiders 2009; K. Hafez 2013b: 249–262). From the point of view of the journalists interviewed, one of the pragmatic reasons for this is that it is often easier to reach these “ready-made experts.” Their messages are also more accessible and thus meet the tight schedules of media makers. Moreover, the people in question had close ties with German editorial offices, they maintained personal relationships with editors and were readily available, unlike the sometimes media-shy researchers who avoid controversial debate or even talk show appearances. It is also mentioned that the theatricalization of topics related to Islam fits in with the general trend toward tabloidization in the media.

In sociological terms, these supposed experts, who are not part of the intellectual landscape, embodied an anti-authoritarian element. Even if, from an academic perspective, they excessively generalize their findings and experiences, they see themselves unfairly marginalized and are convinced that the academic elite wants to “muzzle” them (which is paradoxical since many of these opinion leaders are themselves part of the elite, for instance, Sarrazin as a former government minister). So, it may be more about a revolt against academia as a norm. This in turn makes them, from the point
of view of the interviewees, heroes of a part of the population that is heavily burdened with stereotypes of Islam and which, through the mouthpiece of experts arguing with stereotypes, virtually elevates itself to expert status, according to the motto: An expert is someone who confirms my racist knowledge ("Finally, the truth is out"). On the other hand, there are cases where intellectuals who are also recognized in academia and who are not Islamophobic establish themselves in the media (as in the case of Navid Kermani). This is explained on the one hand by the special talent these people possess and on the other hand by mechanisms of “tokenism” (warding off accusations of racism) and “native informance” (orchestrating authenticity). From the point of view of communication science, the overall issue is not one of expertise to improve the information situation of journalism, but rather the existence of “opinion cartels” that ignore scientific standards of objectivity and accept the tabloidization of journalism when it comes to the topic of Islam.

The growing influence of social media on everyday editorial work is confirmed by almost all participants in the hearing. According to the interviewees, popular Twitter hashtags in particular guaranteed high reach and potentially expanded the participation of non-established actors in public debates. Some developments in social media were also already being discussed at editorial meetings. Whether this would result in better opportunities for Muslim representation was questionable, since their often more topic-specific discourses do not coincide with the media’s rules of attention. Facebook (and arguably Instagram) in particular—with a few exceptions like the #MeToo movement—rarely made it into the public political sphere. Alternative topics are also difficult to set on Twitter. The interviewees were of the impression that social media were therefore not a real substitute for journalists’ access to Muslim milieus (see also subchapter 7.2.5). The risks of social media as a source for journalism were openly named: disinformation, distortion of topics, defamation, scandalmongering, and open Islamophobia, which are also very common on Twitter.

7.1.5.4 Social processes and negotiations in editorial offices: A lack of professional representation

Social negotiation processes in newsrooms are theoretically significant in order to constantly adapt news routines in a changing environment. Almost all of the participants in the hearing refer to Islam as still being an exotic topic for German editorial offices and open exchange on this topic is very limited. The editors and freelancers concerned usually see themselves as lone warriors. Tacit peer pressure can therefore lead to reports being buried and restrict internal freedom of expression. However, a kind of indifferent tolerance was predominant where many editors were afraid of making false or racist comments. Colleagues therefore had hardly any sparring partners for dialogue, which did, however, also give them thematic freedom.

In times of crisis (especially after terrorist attacks), other colleagues took over the prerogative of interpretation and shaped the journalistic climate of opinion (often then with limited differentiation). In this context, one interviewee states: “Mesut Özil is criticized for his nationalist attitudes, which are easily accepted in the case of Manuel Neuer.” According to some editors, a creeping shift of dis-

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83 Tokenism refers to a practice of attribution whereby people are assigned to a social minority on the basis of a specific characteristic (for instance, “being Muslim”) and are subsequently seen as representatives of this minority (see, for instance, Kanter 1977). The inclusion of these “representatives,” for example, in media debates, can be understood according to Tschöpe as a “symbolic gesture” to “ward off criticism of discriminatory or exclusionary conditions” (2006: 256).

84 Spival (1999) uses the figure of the “native informant” to describe the assignment of a role to someone who is seen to be a supposedly authentic voice and used to maintain hegemonic discourse structures.
course to the right has taken place in recent years in order to avoid the alleged division of society, making Islamophobic positions in editorial offices more socially acceptable.

One of the central questions relating to the influence of social processes in editorial offices on anti-Muslim sentiment lies in the representation of Muslims in the world of work, as their individual backdrops and experiences can contribute to a pluralization of the image of Islam. It is theoretically difficult to establish a correlation between the religious-ethnic representation of Muslim or migrant journalists in editorial offices and media coverage of Islam. Representation in editorial offices is by no means identical with formal knowledge competencies regarding Islam or the Islamic world. In addition, such editors should not be committed to certain contents (pro or contra Islam, etc.). This would mean a reflection of racist mechanisms. Despite these reservations, the journalists at the hearing unanimously stated that Muslims were underrepresented in German journalism and that, if necessary, migration-related quotas must bring about a change.

The key point here is that although the number of Muslims working as journalists was increasing, there was still a long way to go before the “critical mass” required to sustainably change an editorial climate or a journalistic culture was reached. As mentioned, the people in question see themselves as lone warriors who have to repeatedly fight for fundamental changes in perspective on the subject of Islam. Their expert status was often only recognized within the editorial offices as long as they take a critical stance toward Islam. Otherwise, their neutrality would be called into question. Germany was still far behind countries like the US, where the New York Times, for instance, explicitly employs Muslims in order to better represent society. For the few Muslims working in the German media, this leads to subtle but nevertheless strong pressure to adapt to the dominant culture and a representation with only very limited possibilities to shape content, where every contextual report is immediately thwarted by a counterreport.

Isolated reports exist of massive, but more often of subtle experiences of discrimination, not only from Muslim journalists, but also from non-Muslim journalists who write sensitively about Islamic issues. There is talk here of special probationary pressure and of indications following job interviews that the “time is not yet ripe” for them. In editorial conferences, reports are rejected on the grounds that they are about “controversial” persons or viewpoints—which was otherwise virtually an incentive for conflict-oriented journalism to publish more. When it came to the topic of Islam, stereotypical prejudices often prevailed in editorial offices, partly overriding the regular news factors. Quite a few respondents receive death threats from recipients, are called traitors, or are otherwise called obscene names.

7.1.5.5 Professional socialization/training: No culturally sensitive qualification

The prevailing impression at the hearing was that while there was a general increase in academic qualifications in journalism, specific academic expertise on Islam was rare. Therefore, there was hardly any need for proof of expertise in reporting on Islam; a general interest was sufficient, often paired with the attribution of “competence on the grounds of origin” (because one has a certain name, etc.). The following negative aspects of this situation are described as:

- the “expropriation” of scientific terms, such as “political Islam,” which in research is used for political currents, but in media discourse is transferred to all kinds of organizations and social contexts,
- “helicopter journalism,” whereby journalists are then deployed to the Middle East at short notice without any knowledge of the backdrop there, which leads to distortions in reporting.
In vocational training, for example, in journalism schools, the interviewees felt that more attention was paid to a diverse composition of graduates; however, stronger cultural skills training with regard to Islam was not noticeable. Through the Neue Deutsche Medienmacher*innen network, the Medien Dienst Integration (Migration Media Service), etc., demand for specific further education was increasing, but more in the general context of migration and immigration rather than with a direct reference to Islam.

In the hearing with journalists, the view prevailed across the media that the space for ethical self-reflection in everyday professional life was rather small. Although the basic rules of journalism were observed, these classical virtues of liberal media ethics (fact-checking, objectivity, etc.) were hardly sufficient to understand the ethical dimension of Islamophobia. The idea of neutrality in journalism, for instance, easily leads to a passive attitude toward populists, who are thus ennobled as an equal voice in the public sphere. Rarely, on the other hand, was culturally sensitive, cosmopolitan journalism considered, as laid down in section 10 of the German Press Code which prohibits the sweeping vituperation of world views (including religions) (see case study on Islamic caricatures, chapter ↗ 4). An improvement in ethical practices can be best seen in the field of ethno-religious marking and discrimination of criminal perpetrators (German Press Code, section 12, see Press Council 2023).

7.2 Anti-Muslim sentiment on the German-language internet

The following subchapter is dedicated to the subject of anti-Muslim sentiment on the German-language internet, concentrating on social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, which are provided by commercial operators. Instant messenger services, such as WhatsApp or Telegram, are only marginally examined because they are difficult to access for research. Other parts of the digital world, such as radical right-wing online publications (Politically Incorrect, etc.), cannot be additionally examined by the UEM for reasons of research economics, although they contain diverse forms of anti-Muslim sentiment.

Racism in social media is a major research topic today because the former utopia of improving access to communication for large parts of the population, who are not always adequately represented in the mass media, has now partly turned into the opposite, i.e., the dystopia of a society that has been radicalized and polarized also with the help of social media. Nevertheless, the following report not only aims to highlight the negative aspects of social media, but also to bring them to the fore as a platform for self-expression by Muslims. They enter these platforms to exchange information among themselves as well as with other parts of society and in this way to participate in the public sphere.

After a brief theoretical introduction and an overview of the state of research to date, two studies commissioned by the UEM will be presented and evaluated. A large-scale data mining study by the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz investigated anti-Muslim sentiment across the board in German-language social media. A supplementary qualitative content analysis by the University of Erfurt examines the digital counter-public sphere of Muslims.

7.2.1 Anti-Muslim hatred on the internet: A theoretical introduction

Ethnic and religious minorities, women, people from the LGBTQIA+ movement, and other social groups are nowadays affected by massive attacks on the internet. This development, also known as the “cheap talk” effect, is the other side of the coin of significantly reduced communication costs due
to the digital internet (see Chadwick 2006: 121). Variants of so-called “incivility” on the internet range from unfriendliness and stereotyping to open hatred and calls for violence, which fall into the realm of incitement. Literature today cites “religious hate speech” as one of the major phenomena of incivility and identifies Islam as the religion most affected by it worldwide (see Castaño-Pulgarín et al. 2021).

From a theoretical point of view, content and structure theories can once again be distinguished from each other. Unlike mass media, social media have only very limited primary text structures. Social media, unlike newspapers, rarely feature sections, such as “politics,” “economy,” etc., and clearly marked article groups and cited sources are seldom found. Social networks are rather characterized by what can be called “intermediate texts,” whereby existing texts from other parts of the net (also and especially from the “press on the net”) are shared and commented on. What’s more, independent comments are interactively linked as “threads” (i.e., digital conversation threads). Internet experts like Lanier have repeatedly pointed to the loss of quality of these often quickly compiled sensationalist texts (see 2010). Nevertheless, it is also possible to analyze social media texts by surveying the terminology, channels, and networks and the value of statements using trained algorithms and automated content analyses. In communication research today, traditional forms of content analysis are being increasingly combined with automated forms (see Scharkow 2011). The latter are no substitute for in-depth qualitative content analysis but can be seen as a counterpart to the large quantitative research projects of the mass media (see subchapters 7.1.2 and 7.1.3). Automated content analyses thus serve as a representative record of fundamental tendencies in discourse, in this case with a view to the Islamophobic character of social media.

In terms of the structural theoretical foundation, there are few works that discuss this with regard to issues of hate speech on the internet. However, a rough distinction can be made between three explanatory approaches: one from political science, one from sociology and one from communication science (see K. Hafez 2017). From a political science perspective, right-wing populist and extremist actors in particular try to network via social media and form protest and subversive movements for racist ideologies. From a sociological point of view, people look for new communities on the internet, which often promotes ethnic, nationalistic, or religious re-tribalization and demarcation (see James 2006). This can also be seen as a causal factor in the reinforcement of inter-group hostility. From the perspective of communication science, the quality of content and the ability to engage in dialogue in online communication has been criticized time and again, since digital “swarm intelligence” lacks the certainty of facts and theory, no meaningful editing takes place, and, what’s more, anonymization leads to dangerous disinhibition. Especially with regard to the last aspect, the net is today a virtually lawless space, incitement and other violations of the law often go unpunished, even if the German government is trying to counteract this with new laws and measures and co-regulation of the net (with the participation of civil society) also being important (see K. Hafez 2017: 327–331).

Since discourses on the internet and in social media remain complex even with what can be hegemonic conditions and an overhang of racist discourses, the topic of the counter-public sphere does in theory have a significant role to play. Representatives of a feminist political theory describe it as a social discourse space where the traditional separation of private and public issues can be overcome (see Fraser 1994). Marginalized voices, whose issues were previously considered socially irrelevant and thus remained invisible in the public debate, have the opportunity to participate and network, especially in virtual counter-public and partial public spheres. Their positive consequences are described mainly under the keywords
of empowerment and the negotiation of identity and belonging (see Klaus/Lünenborg 2012). At the same time, there is a danger that virtual discourse spaces will be used for radicalization, social division, and a general shift away from the overall social conversation—the openly anti-Muslim hate speech on far-right platforms, such as 4chan, is just one example (see subchapter 7.2.2 and 7.2.3). All in all, when it comes to virtual discourses, we must assume the parallel existence of different partial and counter-public spheres (see Drüeke 2012: 232). Instead of a singular debate space, the demand for multi-ethnic—and multi-perspective—public spheres (see Husband 2000) is met here—be it for better or for worse.

7.2.2 State of research: Anti-Muslim sentiment on the internet: The charged discourse

It can be said that there is a relative lack of research on anti-Muslim sentiment in German-language social media. Most of the work that has addressed this topic on the internet is based on anecdotal and, at best, empirical evidence that can be described as exploratory. In many cases, the focus was not on social media in the sense of social networks like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram, but primarily on analyzing blogs such as Politically Incorrect (PI) (see Gerhold 2009; Schiffer 2009; Müller 2008).

One of the first standard studies was from Engelmann et al. and deals with Muslim weblogs, whereby the authors recognize a division of the net into a larger Islamophobic and a smaller, very heterogeneous Islamophilic blogosphere (see 2010). In a study by the Amadeu Antonio Foundation from 2017, essential narratives in radical right-wing blogs (such as PI) and social media of organized actors (Pegida, AfD, Identitäre Bewegung, etc.) were examined on a systematic qualitative basis with the expected result that Islam is a central enemy here. Right-wing radicals warn massively of an Islamization of German society, blaming Muslims for numerous problems (flight, social imbalances, etc.) (see Baldauf et al. 2017).

What all analyses and studies have in common is the realization that anti-Muslim sentiment on the internet is more drastic than in the mass media, i.e., manifest images of the enemy and explicit, sweeping racism that is contemptuous of humanity are widespread, often coupled with aggressive tones and even calls for action and violence. Thus, while manifest verbal stereotypes are generally used less in the mass media (press, television, and radio) and these institutions seem to act in a politically correct manner (while, as seen, their thematic structure, etc. does in fact continue to serve stereotypes), an aggressive enemy logic has widely shifted to the net and has become socially radicalized and all too often legally “deregulated.”

In recent years, international research has examined the rapidly developing social networks for anti-Muslim sentiment in the US, the UK or Scandinavia, among others (see, for instance, Evolvi 2017; 2018; Giglietto/Lee 2017; Hirvonen 2013; Horsti 2017; Yusha’u 2015; Zempi/Awan 2016). According to this research, extremist channels and platforms in particular develop into anti-Muslim echo chambers. Large audience channels have also been investigated and generally show a clear tendency toward hate speech against Muslims. According to international research, social media contribute to group polarization and sometimes deliberately denigrate Muslim politicians. Virtually shared visual worlds are also used to demarcate between “in” and “out” groups. Twitter in particular is seen as a mirror of a predominantly anti-Muslim society, while YouTube and Instagram obviously also show some positive tendencies.

Miller, Smith and Dale identified conjunctures of Islamophobic discourses on Twitter (see 2016). They find there is always a particularly strong increase in anti-Muslim Twitter posts a short time after coverage on jihadist attacks. Sometimes, however, acts of violence without any recogniz-
able connection to Islam are enough to reinforce anti-Muslim hate speech by simply claiming corresponding connections. Although the study only takes into account English-language tweets, Germany—along with the UK, the Netherlands, and France—proved to be one of Europe’s hot spots for incitement against Muslims on the net.

Quite soon, international consideration was given to larger data mining studies on anti-Muslim sentiment that also cover latent anti-Muslim sentiment. Methodologically, however, these studies are still so demanding that even today they still remain a vision of the future (see Vidgen/Yasseri 2020). Given the research situation, it is also no wonder that systematic studies on the German-speaking world have been inclined to come from outside, as the relevant information science organizations in Germany have shown no interest in this topic up to now. In particular, German researchers at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) in London have made a name for themselves here albeit not by placing anti-Muslim sentiment at the center of their interest, but by researching it in studies on digital right-wing extremism.

The ISD’s probably best-known study of German-language discourse, in which modern methods of automated data mining were also used for the first time, includes anti-Muslim sentiment as a central theme (see Guhl/Ebner/Rau 2020). Of the Islam-related posts examined, more than half “used anti-Muslim stereotypes, portrayed Islam as a threat to European culture, justified discriminatory behavior toward Muslims and described Islam as a monolithic, static, alien and inferior religion” (ibid.: 33).

The study also recognized a certain potential for right-wing extremist influencers to gain targeted followers in large audience networks and therefore recommended that policy-makers—despite a fundamental call for the preservation of freedom of expression on the internet—examine “risk-based regulatory approaches” (for instance, a duty of care for platform operators) (ibid.: 13). This means that access by right-wing extremist political actors to the general public can be considerably restricted, if necessary, by blocking accounts.

Some studies have also looked at Muslim self-representation on the internet, including the larger study by Engelmann et al. on the “Muslim blogosphere” (2010) and Eckert and Chada’s 2013 paper on the same topic. Nevertheless, research on the Muslim presence in German-language social media must be described as deficient.

Summing up, the state of research, despite all its limitations, does reveal significant problems of anti-Muslim sentiment as the central enemy in radical right-wing or right-wing extremist online discourses. Up to now, however, anti-Muslim sentiment has been all too seldom the focus of automated research (data mining) especially when it comes to making representative and differentiated statements. In Germany, research on socio-psychological prejudice in particular has addressed anti-Muslim sentiment in social media; however, this research naturally does not have the appropriate methodological access to the huge and constantly growing amounts of data. This kind of research makes interesting observations but is only of limited use as an instrument of scientific evidence. This shortcoming is aimed to be remedied with a new research project.

7.2.3 UEM data mining study: “Toxic discourse spaces”

The UEM commissioned a study on large-scale research into anti-Muslim sentiment in German social media by Prof. Dr. Pascal Jürgens, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Department of Computational Communication Science (see 2022). The starting point was to identify a research gap. Anti-Muslim sentiment is accordingly identified in German-speaking countries primarily in the study by Guhl, Ebner and Rau 2020 at the Institute
for Strategic Dialogue (ISD). In some respects, however, it is not satisfactory, because

1. it concentrates on right-wing extremist actors and does not cover the breadth of social media use,
2. it primarily examines services, such as Gab, 4Chan, Discord and the Russian Vkontakte network, which are widespread in radical circles, but not among average users,
3. it contains only very small samples, and
4. it does not cover the entire spectrum of media use. It examines extremism, such as racism in general, but not anti-Muslim sentiment in particular (ibid.: 7).

Another study attempt by the ISD together with the Institute for Democracy and Civil Society (IDZ) in Jena also falls short here (see Fielitz et al. 2018). The structural similarity and interactions of the enemy images used by radical Islamists and right-wing radicals are correctly elaborated here (see subchapter 7.2.4). However, the notion of mutually reinforcing radicalism of political groups is too limited to understand anti-Muslim sentiment on the internet, as well as the fact that it is a society-wide phenomenon. The emergence of anti-Muslim sentiment is by no means primarily to be found on the radical fringes. It is a problem at the center of society in Germany, which has reacted to Islamism since the Iranian Revolution with a broad and often generally defensive attitude toward Islam and Muslims. This is confirmed by studies on public opinion and the mass media image (see among others K. Hafez/Schmidt 2015 as well as subchapter 7.1).

The study commissioned by the UEM has a much broader data basis. It covers all major social networks that are not limited by access restrictions, collecting samples there in 2021 (see Jürgens 2022: 10–15). The study attempts to produce a comprehensive picture of the various forms of anti-Muslim sentiment on the net that is not focused exclusively on radical sentiments.

The sample is distributed differently across the mainstream platforms, primarily because of the frequent access restrictions in place with Twitter being the only platform that is generally accessible. Facebook, for instance, can only be explored where corresponding groups—for instance, political parties—make their debates public. The study identified a total of 585,040 posts, tweets, and comments with reference to Islam in German-language social networks. In relation to the entire German social network (with a raw data set of 112,421,736 posts), approximately one percent of the communications thus refer to Islam or its variants (Muslims, etc.) (ibid.: 16). The chosen method consequently allows for a “comprehensive picture of all German-language content related to Islam” (ibid.: 11).

The contributions across the channels examined are distributed as follows:

Table 7.5: Sample in platforms*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>265,757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook comments</td>
<td>129,383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>128,774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telegram</td>
<td>42,784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook posts</td>
<td>13,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>4,251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook advertising</td>
<td>496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4Chan</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Jürgens 2022: 15.

* The following data were collected: Facebook (posts, comments, ads), Twitter (tweets), 4Chan (posts and comments), YouTube (comments), Telegram (messages), and Instagram (posts).
The content of the contributions is evaluated on the basis of ten thematic strands and a general analysis of value, i.e., the allocation of the texts to more positive or more negative evaluation tendencies. The topics are clustered by means of a deep-learning procedure called BerTopic (ibid.: 19). Identified topic strands and final sample sizes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(No core topic identified)</td>
<td>506,132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Islam in Germany</td>
<td>13,149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Palestine</td>
<td>12,234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Withdrawal from Afghanistan</td>
<td>8,411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Antisemitism</td>
<td>8,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Religious festivals</td>
<td>7,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Women and headscarves</td>
<td>7,659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Foreign policy</td>
<td>6,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Islamist attacks</td>
<td>5,440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Turkey</td>
<td>5,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Islamization in Germany</td>
<td>4,457</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Jürgens 2022: 20.

Positive and negative evaluation tendencies of a topic strand were created using a trained neural network based on a German-language transformer model called Distilbert Base German Cased. The relevant algorithm operated over four epochs with a validation of 500 samples (ibid.: 17). This method of automated content analysis achieves the reliability of human coders, i.e., that of the study by Richter and Paasch-Colberg on topic structures in mass media (see subchapter 7.1.3). As will be shown in subchapter 7.2.5, qualitative content analyses can only examine small amounts of text. An automated computer-assisted analysis of the entire German network that considers, for instance, the distinction between explicit and implicit stereotypes (Muslims are evil vs. Muslims are different, etc.) is currently only feasible for radical websites and development is still needed (see Vidgen/Yasseri 2020).

The present study therefore also measures only explicit forms of anti-Muslim sentiment.

The result shows that the assessment of Islam in German-language social media is predominantly negative (see values below 0 in Fig. 7.3). Despite this general trend, certain platform-typical and topic-typical differences in valence attribution are evident. Facebook, 4Chan, Telegram, and Twitter spread predominantly negative views of Islam and Muslims, with the exception of the topic of “religious festivals,” which has a positive connotation everywhere except on the radical right-wing network 4Chan. However, Muslims are not protected from verbal attacks in other networks either, as stereotypes and “aggressive insinuations” (Jürgens 2022: 82) can also be seen here. Instagram shows a positive tendency for all topics; YouTube comments are positive at least for the topics “religious festivals” and “Islam in Germany,” where the evaluation of the headscarf, for instance, is relevant. As will be shown (see subchapter 7.2.5), the positive evaluations on Instagram are primarily based on the self-portrayal of Muslims there. However, as already discussed in the theoretical elaborations, this often does reach into the broader society, but remains in the virtual Muslim communities.
Figure 7.3: Valence of topics within platforms. Downward columns indicate a negative rating.

Source: Jürgens 2022: 24.
The analysis over time (see Fig. 7.4) shows an astonishing persistence and massive presence of negative evaluations for most Islam-related topics, which—with the exception of Instagram and to some extent YouTube—only rarely show positive spikes.

Figure 7.4: Valence of topics over time

Source: Jürgens 2022: 22.
The study concludes that the negative image of Islam in most social networks in German-speaking countries is empirically closely related to an aggressive attitude toward politics and the media:

“As shown in the analysis of ten core topics, Islam is mentioned in social media largely in negative narratives. Over long stretches, the stereotypes documented in literature are explicitly or implicitly present. There are numerous cases, for instance, in which Islam and Muslims are sweepingly described as violent, terrorist, intolerant, misogynist, and antisemitic. Fears of cultural alienation, population exchange and economic disadvantages for non-Muslims not only lead to direct rejection, but are also translated in domestic discourse into anger toward political figures and the media.” (Ibid.: 82)

Jürgens also concludes that the image of Islam in social media is strongly influenced by international events, i.e., by conflicts that “are neither triggered nor can be solved by German Muslims” (ibid.: 83). The strong connection between international events and national minorities is described as “fatal” because it creates an image of Muslims that is shaped by events outside of Germany (ibid.). Domestic issues, such as the role of women, the headscarf, antisemitic attitudes among Muslims, or attitudes toward terrorism, are also considered to be “particularly affected by stereotyping” (ibid.: 84).

The integrative effect of the internet is generally questioned in the overall view of the results:

“ Toxic discourse spaces presumably not only lead to direct effects for the participating users, but also discourage future participation. Such self-reinforcing self-selection could firstly explain the emergence of the largely homogeneous Islamophobic communication environments identified. Should internet users actually turn away from discussions in social media due to negative reactions, this tendency would weaken the integrative potential of the internet in the long term.” (Ibid.: 85)

7.2.4 Impact of anti-Muslim sentiment on the net: Incendiaries of violence?

In the case of the mass media, this report assumes two impact dimensions: experience of discrimination and loss of social belonging with regard to the Muslim minority as well as threats to democracy and right-wing radicalization of the non-Muslim majority. In the case of social media, another level is added so that we can talk about at least three dimensions of impact:

a) the effect of social media on the minority (Muslims),
b) the effect of social media on the majority (non-Muslims), and
c) social network interactions between radical groups.

If we start with the first point, it is true for social media, as it was for mass media, that the pronounced negative image of Islam and Muslims in large parts of the German-language mainstream networks is capable of weakening social affiliation and trust indirectly via an increased perception of discrimination, reinforcing social polarization and promoting the segregation of Muslims from the rest of society. This is suggested by Jürgens’ UEM study, which proposes further impact studies in addition to this one (see 2022: 5). There is also the possibility that anti-Muslim sentiment on the net reinforces the counter-radicalization of Muslim youths. A handout by the organization Jugendschutz.net assumes that anti-Muslim hate comments in turn motivate Islamist online propaganda (see 2021: 4–5). However, handouts like these do not reach the level of empirical impact studies, so that Jürgens’ reference to shortcomings in research should be taken seriously.
The second impact dimension is initially also similar to that of the mass media and suggests a strengthening of both anti-Muslim and radical right-wing attitudes. With regard to the possible reinforcement of anti-Muslim attitudes in the broad population, it must first be noted that for decades now these have largely moved in parallel with the image of Islam in the mass media—the development of social media has neither caused nor statistically reinforced anti-Muslim attitudes. Anti-Muslim sentiment is not a product of modern “hate media” but a phenomenon of society that shows considerable historical continuity despite all possible fluctuations and variations.

That being said, however, this does not mean that social media are ineffective at an attitudinal level, because it is much easier for the images and texts of radical groups to spread among the population than through the mass media. In social media, this actually creates a novel—and explosive—mix of publicizing actors who further embellish and exacerbate the largely persistent images of Islam as misogynistic, violent, etc. Filter bubbles or echo chambers can also be found on the internet, where members of certain chat groups selectively supply themselves exclusively with negative news about Islam and Muslims. In order to join these groups, a certain initial anti-Muslim motivation is required, which leads to the fact that it is often mainly those who tend to be anti-Muslim anyway who exchange views here. This in turn explains why statistics on anti-Muslim sentiment in public opinion are relatively constant (high) and have not suddenly increased due to the existence of social media content that “portrays entire segments of the population as a threat” and thus creates a “sense of urgent need for action.”

“As we have seen in the manifestos of recent far-right assassins in Pittsburgh, Christchurch, Poway, El Paso, and Halle, theories such as that of the ‘great exchange’ [...] can lead to violent extremism and terrorism even without actively calling for violence.” (2020: 10, see also 47)

It should be added that the attacker in the Utøya massacre in Norway also borrowed numerous ideological ideas from the anti-Muslim portal Politically Incorrect and felt inspired by this portal to commit mass murder (see Haimerl 2011; Häusler 2014). In this situation, then, it must be considered truly alarming when discourse on the alleged “Islamization” of German society and other threat scenarios evidenced by Jürgens is everywhere and hugely present on mainstream platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook. By no means does all extreme communication lead to violent acts—but it can be assumed that today’s assassins all use social media. The ISD study pointed out very clearly that consideration must be given to removing precisely the right-wing extremist core of such communications from mainstream platforms (see Guhl/Ebner/Rau 2020: 40).
Other gaps can also be found in the current state of research on the impact of social media. On behalf of the Amadeu Antonio Foundation, Fielitz et al. showed that the number of right-wing extremist hate postings rises rapidly after every Islamist attack (see 2018: 47–49). However, some criticism must be expressed regarding this study. First of all, terrorist events are chosen very one-sidedly as the starting point of the impact study. Although it is true that the modern fundamentalism of the 1978/79 Iranian Revolution in particular triggered anti-Muslim sentiment in German-language media, the topos of Islam has been established for more than 40 years, and it can be seen that even the simplest events and actions can trigger “digital infernos” driven by right-wing groups. A video conference by CDU member of parliament Norbert Röttgen with Muslim scholarship holders in 2021, for instance, led to a huge right-wing controversy. Röttgen said: “It is unbelievable the amount of hatred that young people are exposed to because of their faith” (Hille 2021). Any number of examples of this kind could be listed. The Council of Europe’s Special Representative on Antisemitic and Anti-Muslim Hatred, Daniel Höltgen, appointed in 2020, has also already warned of threatening attacks against Islamic associations (see Strack 2021). Shooman provided evidence of this in 2014 in the form of letters from readers to Islamic associations. Right-wing extremist verbal violence on the internet in response to Islam-related events of all kinds is now the rule rather than the exception.

What’s more, the study only identifies “content-related” effects (see Strack 2021). Strangely, the “event-related” connection between social media and racist violence—from mosque desecration to beatings and murder (see subchapter ↗ 3.2)—has never been systematically researched. This means that the last link in the impact studies is missing. Even if today’s statements by extreme perpetrators clearly show that social media are promoting their acts, the impact of these media on other forms of anti-Muslim everyday violence has not yet been conclusively researched. Are social media really the decisive drivers of the growing everyday violence against Muslims? Or would this be prevalent today even without modern communication technology, which in turn would have to lead to the question of whether other, possibly more important impact factors exist (organized right-wing extremist peer groups, direct interpersonal group communication, etc.)? It is certainly plausible that many factors play a role, among them also social media, which probably even more than the mass media guide those small circles that are ready to use violence to commit anti-Muslim acts. At the same time, however, anti-Muslim violence has been at a certain base level since 9/11 at the latest and is not rising explosively or parallel with social media, which have become firmly established world-wide since around 2005. Taking current data, it can therefore be said that Islamophobia on the internet definitely fuels violent acts by extreme perpetrators in individual cases, but that the connection with low-threshold acts does not yet seem to be sufficiently clarified.

One particular feature of the internet and social media must also be taken into account, which we will describe as the third impact dimension. Social media unfold a more interactive momentum than mass media. It is true that the former distinction between the mass media as so-called push media, which offer products ready for consumption, and the internet as a pull medium, where users have to search for information themselves and can communicate with others, is becoming increasingly irrelevant. The offerings of the mass media can also be individually compiled in terms of time and content via digital platforms and media libraries. That being said, however, there is one central difference between social media and mass media in as far as the former are much more interactive, i.e., citizens can produce content themselves and use content from others at the same time in the mixed form as prod users. This distinction, in turn, promotes the fragmentation of social media into small and tiny public spheres—not to mention
the semi-public spaces that are not even accessible to research.

The communicative complexity also increases the complexity of the media effects, sometimes producing absurd results. Anti-Muslim commentators, for instance, today intervene directly in Islamist group chats. Conversely, however, there is no evidence of Islamist actors in right-wing chats (see Fielitz et al. 2018: 42). Right-wing actors are therefore predominant on the German-language internet—a tendency toward a fight by extreme ideologies that can also be seen on a global scale (see Bob 2012). Radical groups interact with each other and use social networks to recruit new members for their cause. This branch of internet research is one of the oldest of all, emerging long before the invention of social media (see among others Weimann 2007).

In a brochure in 2021, Jugendschutz.net emphasized the dangers of content posted by extremist organizations on regular platforms, such as Instagram, YouTube, or Telegram. Seemingly harmless topics are used here to direct young people to extremist sites, often without them realizing what is happening. However, how exactly anti-Muslim content on social media is used to recruit young people for right-wing extremist organizations and concrete acts of violence has not yet been sufficiently investigated. They are probably lured into publicly accessible chats and if later found to be “suitable,” are then included in closed virtual communities which can eventually lead to real meetings to arrange criminal acts. Mechanisms like these are used for Islamist recruitment and they are also certain to exist in the extreme right-wing scene.

Countermeasures to the destructive social impact of social media in the area of verbal and real violence often operate in a legal gray area, but undoubtedly need to be systematically reconsidered. Simone Rafael distinguishes between two different possible levels of action and four forms of action (see 2017):

**Criminal level of action:**

a) Reporting suspected hate speech to independent reporting centers, such as www.internet-beschwerdestelle.de or www.jugendschutz.net/hotline.

b) Reporting hate postings to the platform operators themselves, who are required by the Network Enforcement Act (Netzwerkdurchsetzungsgesetz) to review reported postings within 24 hours.

**Non-criminal level of action:**

a) Exclusion of forms of hate speech that are not yet punishable, however, platform operators are often reluctant here lest they violate the right to freedom of expression.

b) Counterspeech techniques—asking questions, requesting sources, rebuttal.

There is no doubt that all levels must continue to be monitored in order to combat in the future not only Islamophobia in social media, but to prevent the worst real consequences. Better recognition of anti-Muslim crimes on the part of authorities and police (see subchapter ↗ 8.1.3.4) and society as a whole is important here in order to effectively combat crimes committed using the internet. It is not sufficient for the government to merely refer at this point to the actions of individuals who are supposed to report crimes without taking systematic action itself.

A study by Patz, Quent, and Salheiser from the Institute for Democracy and Civil Society in Jena clearly showed that the measures laid down in the Network Enforcement Act are rarely consistently enforced in practice. One point of criticism is that although the German government has created a new central office at the Federal Criminal Police Office, the reporting channels for complaints
remain complicated. The study also criticizes the fact that much responsibility is shifted to platform operators, but that the federal states act very differently. Bavaria, Saxony, and Saxony-Anhalt, for instance, are the only federal states where civil society actors are co-financed. In Thuringia and Brandenburg, on the other hand, there are no educational programs in this field (see Patz/Quent/Salheiser 2021: 71–72). According to the study, the topic is on the school curriculum of almost all federal states, but only a few provided specific further training courses for the police. In some federal states, it is still not possible to file charges online (ibid.: 74). Legal processing also varies; some federal states have commissioners in place, while others do not (ibid.: 76). It should be added that many small radical communities that are not active on the big platforms seem to remain unchallenged.

7.2.5 UEM study on Instagram: Counter public spheres to anti-Muslim sentiment

As clearly stated in the study by Jürgens, social media show different dynamics with regard to Islamophobia. While Facebook, Twitter, and Telegram, for instance, mostly present a very negative agenda of Islam and Muslims as the enemy, this is much less the case on Instagram (and to some extent also on YouTube). When it comes to a media public that is often fixated on negative events and topics related to Islam and Muslims, Instagram in particular with its focus on photo and video sharing, seems to be the exception to the rule.

Given the large number of Instagram posts, it is almost impossible to analyze all the actors active there in detail. However, it is striking that Muslims themselves are very active in this social network and that the positive assessment of the medium therefore corresponds less to an extraordinary external assessment than to a more positive self-assessment. The extent to which the frequently used term “Muslim community” is justified here remains to be seen, since the accounts and posts must initially be understood as statements by individuals, and the existence of a virtual community of Muslims who are networked and exchange ideas with each other can by no means be assumed. However, it seems legitimate to call this area a Muslim counter public sphere. While Muslim representations in the mainstream media are still underdeveloped, as shown in the recent study by Richter and Paasch-Colberg (see subchapter ↗ 7.1.3), new communication spaces for members of marginalized groups are emerging on the internet and especially on social media.

It is extremely difficult to examine the extent to which the increased representation then also represents genuine participation in public debate, as the resonance and reach of this partial public sphere does not necessarily have to extend beyond a narrow circle of users. According to Abadi (2017), there is at least no evidence to date of a sustained influence on the mass media (press, television, and radio) by a virtually active Muslim minority. At the same time, however, the interviews with leading journalists in Germany have made it clear that social media represent a new source for them (see subchapter ↗ 7.1.5.3). However, it has also become clear that Twitter in particular is more central to journalistic work than Facebook and Instagram. Once again, the existence of a Muslim counter public sphere on Instagram should not automatically be interpreted as a greater power of opinion among the general public. It is appropriate to start by describing the Muslim presence on Instagram as a “virtual lounge” that holds potential for the future. It is therefore probably still too early to talk about a link between Instagram, where Muslims are loudly speaking out for themselves, and the large media public for the purpose of correcting the mass media image of Islam as the enemy—in the sense of “intermedia agenda-setting” (Vonbun/Kleine-von Königslöw/Schönbach 2016).
Nevertheless, the UEM commissioned Tessa von Richthofen, Antonia Hafner, and Kirsten Wünsche from the Department of Media and Communication Studies at the University of Erfurt (see 2022) with a follow-up study on Muslim activities on Instagram. The aim of the study is not to examine the effects on the media public, but to explore the quality and potential of the Muslim public. The focus is not on arbitrary aspects, but on the concrete question of how the actors, who may themselves be affected, address Islamophobia and how they relate to it. Instagram is chosen as a platform because a high number of self-representations and positive twists on the image of Islam can be expected here. Since social media and Instagram in particular are mainly used by younger people—the strongest user group is aged between 25 and 34, followed by 18 to 24-year-olds (see Statista 2022)—this part of the population is also overrepresented as expected. According to von Richthofen, Hafner, and Wünsche, Instagram has also been prominent in the Black Lives Matter movement and other political protests in recent years, making it possible to examine here an activist section of the target group interested in political participation (see 2022: 6). The guiding questions of the study include: Who are the actors of Muslim counter public spheres? What topics do they cover? Which frames against Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism are used? And how do the actors perceive the possibilities and risks of Instagram? (ibid.: 7).

In terms of methodology, the qualitative content analysis is based on several sub-steps: an actor, topic, and framing analysis, followed by a limited number of interviews with people active on Instagram who self-identify as Muslim. In the context of the framing analysis, images are processed in reduced form (for instance, personified, representational, abstract). Through ethnographic sample generation over a period of eight months, 41 key actors are identified in a snowball approach. The topic analysis is based on a systematic evaluation of the ten most popular posts of each of these people (n = 410). This is followed by a detailed analysis of the frames of those posts that deal with Islamophobia, so that overall, in addition to a broad overview of topics, an in-depth case analysis on the topic of Islamophobia is then possible. Four interviews lasting 30 to 60 minutes each complete the mix of methods.

According to von Richthofen, Hafner, and Wünsche, the results of the actor analysis show that people working or trained in journalism, the arts, and humanities or social sciences are more strongly represented in the sample than, say, people from natural science contexts. While the study is not representative in a statistical sense (ibid.: 6), the authors do legitimately question whether “some groups of people have a greater affinity for public positioning on social media than others” (ibid.: 13.) Since the 41 actors studied were selected according to the criteria of their importance and reach, it can be assumed that this social education bias, which may at the same time be a middle-class bias, promotes the tendency to speak out on Islamophobia and other socially relevant issues and to be heard with these statements. Of course, not all Muslim actors on Instagram may demonstrate this bias.

The thematic network analysis of the selected posts shows very clearly that neither topics of religion/theology nor an affinity to political Islam characterize the Muslim counter public sphere on Instagram (this applies to this section of Muslim Instagram actors and does not include all Muslims active on this platform). The focus is rather on general political opinions and actions with regard to German society, which, however, can certainly have religious connotations. The five most common themes of the Instagram users studied are activism, Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism, racism in general, religiously connoted clothing, and professional life (ibid.: 15.) What is significant, according to the study, is that these themes can occur both separately and interlinked, with, for instance, a strong link being made between religious
dress and Islamophobia, activism, and racism, similar to the thematic link between religious dress and professional life (see Fig. 7.5). Anti-Muslim racism is thus addressed in this Instagram public sphere in professional contexts, for instance, with the headscarf or other forms of religious dress playing a key role.

Figure 7.5: Thematic network analysis

If these data are interpreted against the backdrop of the study by Richter and Paasch-Colberg, who found that Muslims are clearly underrepresented as active voices in the German mass media (see subchapter 7.1.3), Instagram clearly presents a group of Muslims with an affinity for publicity who specifically express themselves on political topics. The argument often voiced in public debates and in journalism that Muslims do not offer themselves enough to the public as inter-locutors and are therefore underrepresented can therefore be considered refuted, since they are at least active and accessible on social media. The idea of Muslims as an introverted community or even an isolated “parallel society” with primarily religious concerns thus proves to be very one-sided.

According to the study by von Richthofen, Hafner, and Wünsche, Muslims specifically draw attention to experiences of discrimination. With regard to
the period investigated, special attention is paid to the so-called Neutrality Act (Neutralitätsgesetz),\(^\text{85}\) which was passed in May 2021. In this context, fears were raised about restrictions on wearing headscarves in the workplace. The tenor on Instagram is that the oppression of women wearing headscarves is not caused by Muslim men, but by German society restricting them from wearing headscarves (see von Richthofen/Hafner/Wünsche 2022: 16.) Another important topic was the racially motivated attack in Hanau on February 19, 2020, in which the perpetrator killed ten people and himself and which led to both calls on Instagram for political consequences as well as criticism of media coverage (ibid.).

These two examples show that the discourse of the Muslim counter public sphere often uses specific events (neutrality law, Hanau, etc.) as an opportunity to discuss long-standing structural issues (professional life, integration, Islamophobia, etc.). These thematic public spheres are thus definitely more focused than certain instances of event-oriented media coverage, where, for instance, racism as a cross-cutting issue was hardly considered even in events like the NSU murders (see Beierle et al. 2020: for instance, 141–143).

The framing analysis of the Instagram study, which focuses on the interpretations of users, results in seven different main frames each with sub-frames (von Richthofen/Hafner/Wünsche 2020): 20–23):

1. **Double standard frame**: In various factual contexts, complaints are made that much more is expected of Muslim people or that Muslim people are valued unequally, which in turn can lead to discrimination.

2. **Activism/solidarization frame**: Members of the majority society are called upon to engage against Islamophobia.

3. **Self-efficacy/empowerment frame**: This frame is about strategies and measures to increase the autonomy and self-determination of Muslims, but unlike the activism/solidarization frame, it is not directed toward the majority society, but toward Muslims themselves.

4. **Discrimination/marginalization frame**: Statements and experiences were grouped in this frame, for instance, regarding the threat to, impairment or invisibility, and exclusion of Muslim life in Germany, including the multiple forms of discrimination against Muslim women in particular on the basis of faith, ethnicity, gender, and clothing/appearance.

5. **Education/sensitization frame**: In contrast to the activism/solidarization frame, this is not a diffuse call for more activities, instead concrete aspects and experiences of educational work against Islamophobia are discussed.

6. **Counterstatement frame**: Counterarguments and refutations relating to Islamophobia are bundled here.

7. **System/structure dimension frame**: This area collects discussions about fundamental problems of discrimination that occur not only through racist attitudes, but equally through structural routines in the media, authorities, educational institutions, politics, society, and the view of history.

The different frames can be assigned to behavioral dimensions which the authors of the study refer to as “making visible,” “enlightenment,” and “activation”:

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It is clear that Muslim articulations in social media are not only advancing, but that a growing self-awareness is discernible. Based on the study results, it is also very clear that Muslim representation is not only about virtual self-representations, but about social participation offers. These are directed both at the virtual community of Muslims active on the internet and at the majority society, as they not only express criticism but also call for change. In the sense of Husband’s public sphere theory, it is not only a “right to communicate” that is claimed here, but increasingly also a “right to be understood” (1996). Muslims on Instagram, at least when it comes to Islamophobia and in the context of the sample, strive for social resonance and want to actively shape public debate, as they often perceive it to be biased and closed. The integration of these voices and their greater consideration, which was also frequently called for by the editors at the UEM hearing, but which can hardly be realized in the current structures of the media (see subchapter ↗ 7.1.5.3 Information flow and research), is strongly advised.

7.3 Christian media

With regard to the specific segment of the Christian media, the UEM aims to explore the extent to which these media also participate in the generally persistent, biased negative tendency of the media and public discourses on Islam. On the one hand, it seems reasonable to assume that the dialogue pursued by the Christian churches (see subchapter ↗ 9.4.1.1) would lead to less stereotypical thematic agendas, fewer negative frames, and to media portrayals that are generally more sensitive to religion and diversity. On the other hand, it is necessary to examine the extent to which the broad spectrum of what is referred to as the “Christian media” also includes particularly delimiting and pejorative images and discourses of Islam and how these are to be classified in terms of their forms and functions. In order to assess this, an exploratory, qualitative study on the topic of “anti-Islam sentiment in the Christian media” was commissioned, which, in view of the lack of research in this field, is to provide some first assessments. The study investigated negative portrayals only. Prof. Dr. Gritt Klinkhammer (University of Bremen) was commissioned to conduct the pilot study on the basis of selected online media together with Jacob Chilinski and Rosa Lütge.

7.3.1 UEM study about Christian online media

The Klinkhammer/Chilinski/Lütge 2023 study defines anti-Muslim racism (AMR) as forms of implicit and explicit anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment according to relevant definitions (for instance, by Attia 2009; Shooman 2014). A total of 1,156 articles from 21 selected media from April 2015 to May 2022 were examined for the study sample (see Klinkhammer/Chilinski/Lütge 2023: 12, 80–86; Table 1 in the appendix). The media were selected to reflect a broad spectrum of opinion within the denominations; pure print media were excluded as were social media. Protes-
Certain texts were subjected to a fine analysis. The question was whether the anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim forms in these media differ from other anti-Muslim patterns of interpretation, which images of Islam result from religious demarcations, and to what extent they contain devaluations. Positions and ideas about Islam and Muslims in the Christian media, including their construction method and (institutional as well as denominational) contexts, were investigated in order to examine whether and to what extent the Christian media produce specific anti-Muslim images. The qualitative approach included the search for connections between social, societal, or political conditions and contexts and the construction of negative images of Islam in the selected media (ibid.: 1–4).

By way of classification, the study summarizes, among other things, the state of research on so-called “right-wing” Christianity, which does not show church members to be any more susceptible to extreme right-wing or anti-Muslim attitudes than the average population, but it does show “that the Christian spectrum as a whole is characterized by ambivalence and insecurity toward Islam and Muslims;” also, anti-Islam sentiment may become theologically charged within “Christian, anti-Islamic networks,” which then serves as a hinge and mediator toward to the social center” (ibid.: 9).

Although positive or differentiated portrayals of Islam or Muslims in the Christian media were not the subject of the study, the study does reference this in a brief digression (ibid.: 68–71). Balanced reports, that have a normalizing impact, are definitely also found at times in the very media that also published biased or derogatory articles: According to the study, this juxtaposition characterizes to varying degrees the mainstream media in particular, such as evangelisch.de, katholisch.de or DOMRADIO (ibid.: 71), whereby portrayals of everyday Muslim lifeworlds are rare (ibid.: 78).

7.3.2 The results of the UEM study

The fact that the Christian media also participate in, and in some cases even contribute to, biased media discourses on Islam to very different degrees has in principle been proven by the study presented here. Undoubtedly, AMR is certainly found in Christian online media, both thematically and structurally, for instance, due to the lack of Muslim voices or their selection. Anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment as they occur within the Christian media analyzed are not fundamentally different from existing anti-Muslim patterns. One aspect, for instance, that is particularly emphasized is the superiority of a “Christian guiding culture” that is difficult to reconcile with an “Islamic culture.” In contrast, Islam is associated with terror, oppression, and hostility to democracy.

Although the selected media address Islam and Muslim believers in very different ways and differ both in terms of their thematic focus and variance as well as in the intensity of their statements, the study also clearly shows that the mainstream media can connect to anti-Islamic or right-wing patterns of interpretation:

“With regard to a probably intended production of anti-Islamic, racist, and even conspiracy theory articles, those from Der Fels, Die Neue Ordnung, and Die Tagespost should be mentioned [...]. It also became apparent that other Christian online media also have articles with clearly anti-Islamic narratives in their many different articles, but without being able to define them unilaterally or typify the medium as anti-Islamic in its entirety (for instance, katholisch.de, IDEA, PRO,
DOMRADIO. This confirms the proposition that AMR is not only a phenomenon on the “right-wing fringe” but also works in mainstream discourses, or that anti-Muslim patterns of interpretation are carried on or produced here—albeit usually more subtly.” (ibid.: 75–76)

The study further emphasizes that the Christian media are often very self-referential, lacking both a critically reflective perspective on their own privileges or involvement in conflicts as well as (broad) inclusion of Muslim perspectives and voices (ibid.: 77). With a view to Muslim perspectives and spokespersons, it was noticeable that Muslims with no special public role were never heard, whereas either well-known representatives of associations, Islamic theologians, or so-called “liberal Muslims” were quoted. When it comes to critical views on “conservative Islam,” Muslims from Initiative Säkularer Islam are preferably cited. Media such as IDEA, Die Neue Ordnung, or Tag des Herrn, on the other hand, did not allow Muslims to have their say at all, but instead cited non-Muslims (for instance, politicians, Christian religious representatives, or so-called “Islam experts;” ibid.: 17–18). This means that it is also necessary in the Christian media to include to a far greater extent the diversity of Muslim positions and everyday lifeworlds. The recommendation by the study, i.e., that this portrayal be normalized “through less problem-fixated, more solution-oriented reporting and journalistic engagement with Islam as a religion and Muslims as actors” (ibid.: 79), should be endorsed. However, in order to outline denominational differences within the Christian media or to record individual thematic discourses carefully and in more depth, further analyses are undoubtedly necessary that allow a broader selection of media as well as a comprehensive presentation of their detailed typification. Moreover, there is no representative overall picture that provides information about “the” perception of Islam and the portrayal of Muslims within the broad spectrum of the Christian media and which could give greater consideration to the classifications in the respective (church) political spectrum or map the denominational breadth and internal differences more comprehensively. After all, beyond the two so-called “mainstream churches,” the many different publication outlets of other churches, milieus, and groups in Germany (such as Orthodox churches, migration congregations, transnational missionary movements, right though to Christian religious formations outside the ecclesia) could offer further insights. The area of church-Christian social media forums and digital communities has also yet to be systematically researched with a view to AMR.

The Christian media selected by Klinkhammer, Chilinski, and Lütge, display an “anti-Islamic imbalance” (ibid.: 18) as evident in the media as a whole with regard to the topic of Islam and Muslims. Thus, these are also addressed here in the context of extremism, terrorism, as well as migration and (dis)integration. In addition, however, religious topics (image of God, interreligious dialogue, religious freedom, Islamic religious events, or Christian elements in Islam) were also addressed (ibid.: 19). Overall, the assessments vary significantly: “Thus, the representations of a Muslim image of God range from an explicit devaluation to a motif of fraternity between Islam and Christianity” (ibid.: 18). It should also be noted that some of the Christian online media examined fail almost entirely to take up Islam-related topics (ibid.: 18). The study additionally demonstrates at several points that anti-Muslim criticism is also transported through indirect speech and mentions the uncommented reproduction of anti-Muslim statements, the substantiation of the speaker’s own arguments with reference to third-party studies, or suggestive questions in interviews (ibid.: 19). The study examines contributions on themes that are explicitly anti-Muslim (ibid.: chapter 2.2 Anti-Islamic topics) initially under the heading “Danger of Islamization” (ibid.: chapter 2.2.1). This showed:
“that of the media studied, it is especially Die Neue Ordnung, Der Fels, and Die Tagespost that very openly present the image that European societies are being Islamized. Their reporting is characterized by a perception that Islam is largely a threat to the "West" and to Christianity." (Ibid.: 21)

With regard to the other topics mentioned, the study also shows that the three media mentioned in the quote use racist patterns, whereby Die Neue Ordnung in particular also very clearly disseminates conspiracy narratives (ibid.: 23). A recurring motif within the supposed threat situation here is the “loss of our own European-Christian identity” (ibid.: 25) and therefore the need to defend Europe against Islam; an attempt is made here to identify their own role as conservative and thus to distinguish themselves from the right-wing camp. Allegations about supposed “speech bans,” such as the topos that “Islamism” is hardly addressed and the dangers it poses to society are trivialized, are again found in very explicit form in Die Neue Ordnung and Der Fels. These topics are in line with the well-known insinuation of a “controlled press” and/or the construct of a tabooing of topics by a left-green sovereignty of interpretation. Again, it is evident that religiously based extremism among Muslims and “political Islam” are a dominant theme in reporting on Muslims and Islam (ibid.).

This topos is also taken up indirectly in reports by other media (IDEA, DOMRADIO) (ibid.: 29). In addition, the magazines Der Fels, Die Tagespost, and Die Neue Ordnung criticize representatives of the people’s churches who advocate interreligious dialogue or refugee aid. “These were not Christian acts of charity but are driven by political ideology and promote the alleged threat of Islamization of the Occident” (ibid.: 30).

Overall, a certain section of (right-wing) conservative Christian media (Die Neue Ordnung, Die Tagespost, Der Fels) very openly warns of Islamization, especially in the context of migration, radical conspiracy theories are spread, such as that of the so-called Great Exchange, while following opposing binary codes (Christian, Western, European versus Islamic, Arab, and Muslim):

“In the predicted ‘degeneration’ of society through ‘mixing,’ mechanisms of culturalist racism are revealed. In part, these topics are also dealt with in other media in a more implicit form and are thus in line with narratives that make Islam out to be a threat to Western societies or even as Islamization.” (Ibid.: 31)

Processes of othering also play a role in the Christian media, as shown in the study in the section titled “Islam as the regressive other,” which in turn compiles explicitly anti-Muslim themes (ibid.: chapter 2.2.2). Here, the respective media’s own religious tradition usually functions as a positive counter-image. Once again, different degrees are evident within the media studied:

“While Der Fels and Die Neue Ordnung express devaluations very explicitly and have entire articles based on anti-Islamic narratives, other outlets are often more subtle. The media studied differ greatly in terms of the frequency and dominance with which this image appears. In most protestant media, there is a tendency to portray ‘liberal’ Muslims/‘liberal’ Islam as positive and then implicitly or explicitly portray ‘other’ Muslims as oppressive, unfree, or contrary to human rights.” (Ibid.: 35)

Accordingly, the analysis shows that Islam is repeatedly portrayed as backward or undemocratic, as can be seen, for instance, in the thematization of the “oppression and legal situation of women.” Generalized images of a uniform religion are prevalent, diversity in Islam, on the other hand, is ignored, “as is the possibility that identity categories could also play a role outside of religion” (ibid.: 49). In addition, Islam is often seen as an obstacle to integration, whereas a “German,” “reasonable,” “liberal,” or even “secular” Islam could be integrated (ibid.).
With regard to the anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim statements expressed, special attention should be paid to the double hinge function of the Christian media that use right-wing populist arguments. These media are not only networked into right-wing milieus, they also influence the mainstream milieu, as the study shows. This is achieved by taking over, summarizing, or quoting without comment or criticism from other media that write in a biased, anti-Islamic manner, or indirectly by intensifying their topics (ibid.: 19). Taking a closer look at the cross-links here, but also identifying specific groups of people or respective forums, as was initially carried out on a scientific basis in the context of the right-wing conservative Forum of German Catholics (Forum deutscher Katholiken), for instance, could provide further insight into the constructions and functions of corresponding negative images. A comprehensive media analysis relating to specific networks could help to scientifically show the blurred boundaries of right-wing populist sentiments between specific Christian and political groups in a much more valid manner than up to now. This is not ensured by focusing on individual persons or journalistic works (see Wirsching 2019; Bednarz 2018); nor is it ensured by individual essays on the question of how conservative, religious themes and Christian activists were able to connect with a right-wing populist discourse (see Althoff 2018), or publications with a theological perspective (see above all Strube 2015; BAGKR: 2022). Nevertheless, these works do provide very important foundations for media analyses in this regard.

What is also interesting is the ambivalence that the study reveals here with regard to the question of religious freedom: On the one hand, it is emphasized that this should be respected and religious symbols should be visible in public, whereas the headscarf, for instance, “is often seen by IDEA and PRO as part of ‘political Islam’ and of oppression” (Klinkhammer/Chilinski/Lütge 2023: 38). This leads to a situation where sometimes the same medium (for instance, DOMRADIO) publishes contributions side by side that speak out for and against headscarf bans. The study also shows that the media examined are guided by a Christian perspective, which often has a one-sided effect and produces factual imbalances. The respective media’s own Christian privileges remain unquestioned (ibid: 50): For instance, the contribution to peace by the Christian faith is emphasized more strongly here, the persecution of Christians is sometimes strongly instrumented, or there is a blindness to the fact that the Christian faith is also caught up in structural racism. The question raised in the study regarding the extent to which a Christian-religious view reinforces anti-Islamic marginalization and exclusion should also be examined in greater depth. Conversely, with regard to the anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim statements by right-wing groups, it is truly paradoxical that the aspect of religion is named as a criterion of difference and exclusion in a society that sees itself as largely secular and indifferent to religious issues (see Kampling 2012: 163; Althoff 2018; Bitzl/Kurze 2021).

7.4 Conclusion

A representative study by the UEM showed that Islam and Muslims still appear in primarily negative contexts in the major German media (local and national press and television outlets). Despite deviations by some media, the negative image of Islam and Muslims is generally strong in newspapers and even extremely strong on television. While the media strongly focus on violence perpetrated by Muslims and debates about “integration” narrowed to religious factors, violence directed against Muslims and usually right-wing extremist violence are only marginal topics. The long-standing stereotypes of Islam (misogynistic, violent, fanatical) continue to be thematically reproduced in today’s news media. The range of topics lacks diversification which would incorporate more constructive aspects of the reality of life. Muslims still rarely appear as
spokespersons in the mass media—unlike in social media (see below)—and are objectified to a high degree. Although the UEM was unable to update the analysis of textual and visual representations, the state of research here does point to serious problems due to a biased mode of representation.

The reasons for these distortions in the media image were identified during an anonymous hearing with leading German editors. All in all, there is certainly some potential and also positive changes taking place in the German media, but there is especially a large reform backlog. The problems include:

- Limited awareness of anti-Muslim sentiment among chief editors
- Strong influence of commercial motives
- Increased populist pressure on editorial offices
- Limited access to Muslim sources both at home and abroad
- Strong position of controversial “Islam experts” as authors
- Still limited Muslim diversity in German newsrooms
- Shortcomings in journalistic ethics and training

Christian media also participate in one-sided media discourses on Islam to very different degrees. Accordingly, anti-Muslim racism can certainly be found here both in terms of topics and structures. Anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment as they occur within these media are not fundamentally different from existing anti-Muslim patterns. Balanced reports are sometimes found in the same media outlets as those that also publish biased or derogatory articles. Overall, however, there are no representations of the everyday lives of Muslims. Whether and to what extent a Christian-religious view could compound anti-Muslim marginalization and exclusion would have to be examined in greater depth. A comprehensive media analysis relating to specific networks could help to scientifically show the blurred boundaries of right-wing populist sentiments between specific Christian and political groups.

Despite certain gaps in research on media effects, the state of research to date indicates that the widespread negative image of the media consolidates or even reinforces anti-Muslim attitudes in the population. The biased negative image of Islam can lead to a loss of confidence among Muslims and promote right-wing extremist violence.

Anti-Muslim sentiment is even more drastic on the internet in terms of language and content than in the mass media. The UEM initiated the largest data mining study to date on anti-Muslim sentiment in the German-language internet. This study warns of a strong tendency by large platforms, such as Twitter, 4Chan, Telegram, and Facebook, to characterize the religion of Islam and Muslims as generally violent, terrorist, intolerant, misogynist, and anti-Semitic, and to spread conspiracy ideas (for instance, about an impending population exchange). According to the report, German social media outlets form a “toxic discourse space” with racist speech acts that can promote pogrom-like violence, as happened in Hanau. The connection to low-threshold violence (against mosques, in everyday life) needs to be better investigated.

On the positive side, Instagram and YouTube comments in particular create a certain space for a Muslim counter-public, especially for young people. The focus here is not on religious issues, but on experiences with anti-Muslim sentiment and everyday issues. A growing reservoir of interlocutors for journalism is emerging that has yet to be fully utilized.
7.5 Recommendations

The Independent Expert Group on Anti-Muslim Sentiment recommends:

› Diversification of the range of topics in political news as well as a strengthening of lifeworld topics in order to overcome biased, conflict-oriented reporting on Islam and to sustainably improve the visibility of Muslim actors.

› Expanding media framing and a stronger inclusion of Muslims (including representatives of the LGBTQIA+ community) as spokespersons in the media discourse in order to avoid culturalist interpretations and to achieve a diverse representation of Muslim life.

› A complete redefinition of photojournalism to overcome visual stereotypes.

› Improved media literacy training by educational institutions to increase interest in the diversity of Islam among non-Muslim audiences and to strengthen the trust of Muslim readers in the German media.

› Greater attention in research to the relationship between anti-Muslim media content and far-right (and in some cases Islamist) radicalization.

› Fundamental reform of the production structures in journalism, at media management level, and in professional self-regulation (including media trade unions and associations) in order to sustainably raise awareness among media professionals and organizations.

› Improved ethical anchoring of the issue of racism in the press code of the German Press Council (mention of anti-Muslim sentiment in section 12) and the strengthening of Islam-related skills in the education and training of journalists.

› Greater consideration of foreign language sources from Muslim countries in order to better understand social developments there.

› Greater awareness of social media as potential sources of authentic and fact-checked Muslim issues and perspectives.

› Increasing representation of persons with Muslim identity references or racism-sensitive competences at middle and higher journalistic levels (considering quota regulations).

› Realization of the constitutionally prescribed diversity of the broadcasting bodies (according to the Federal Constitutional Court of March 25, 2014, and the 17th Amendment to the Interstate Broadcasting Treaty (17. Rundfunkänderungsvertrag) of June 18, 2015) for Muslim self-representation in the broadcasting councils of public service broadcasters, if possible, with religious representatives of associations and the wider Muslim civil society.
› Legal awareness-raising and media literacy training for public authorities with a view to anti-Muslim crimes on the net (Network Enforcement Act), if necessary, also blocking of accounts of right-wing extremist actors as well as the expansion of official structures for criminal prosecution.

› Better identification of anti-Muslim content by platform operators also through stronger participation of those affected (co-regulation) and independent deletion of anti-Muslim content relevant under criminal law (such as incitement of the people, calls for violence).

› Outside the legal plane, expansion of media literacy education by the state in order to prevent racism in the education sector, also through the federal-state media centers working hand in hand with special mediators, fact-checking organizations, and platforms, etc.

› Raising awareness among platform operators of non-criminal anti-Muslim content in order to make it visible through labeling—possibly by developing a label for anti-Muslim content on the net.

› Sustainable financial support by the federal and federal-state governments for civil society actors in media literacy training for the police, public authorities, and citizens.
8 Politics

The political system holds a key position in society. The state powers of the legislature, executive, and judiciary not only intervene in all other areas of life through legislation, political control, and jurisdiction; at the level of symbolic politics, statements made by politicians very much set the tone of a society. Political problems, theses, and semantics have a considerable impact on the agenda of other subsystems, such as the media and the education system. Anti-Muslim attitudes among politicians and structural racism in political institutions therefore have consequences that reach far beyond the political system.

The following chapter attempts to provide an overview of existing research on anti-Muslim sentiment in political leadership, ministries and agencies, political parties, the Bundestag, political movements, as well as in the legal system. In addition, we commissioned our own studies and expert reports, and hearings have been held in order to close research gaps:

- Hearing with German researchers on the topic of anti-Muslim sentiment in the executive
- Hearing with Prof. Dr. Werner Schiffauer (formerly University of Frankfurt (Oder) and long-time chairman of Rat für Migration e.V.)
- Hearing with legal experts
- Expert opinion: “Islam und deutsche Familien-gerichtsbarkeit” (Islam and German family courts) (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)
- Expert opinion: “Rechtliche Aspekte des Umgangs mit religiös konnotierter Kleidung, insbesondere dem Kopftuch” (Legal Aspects of Dealing with Clothing with Religious Connotations, especially the Headscarf) (European University Flensburg)

8.1 Anti-Muslim sentiment in the executive branch

The German state has developed positively in recent decades in terms of establishing effective neutrality toward Muslims: The introduction of Islamic education in schools and as a theological subject at universities, the establishment of dialogue formats, such as the German Islam Conference (DIK), and even various counseling centers for anti-Muslim racism, as well as the political commitment by various governmental bodies to Islam as a “part of Germany,” are important steps in this direction. At the same time, however, there is a contradiction in the statements and actions of the political leadership as well as in the security, police, and other government authorities (see K. Hafez 2013b: 58–72). Various studies by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) as well as the Institute for Democracy and Civil Society (IDZ) in Jena show that Muslims have a quite high subjective feeling of attachment to Germany and that discrimination experienced by people in Germany is less frequent in the field of government authorities than in the fields of media, services, and leisure. Nevertheless, there are also differences in experiences with the executive where Muslims have greater trust in federal state governments and courts, for instance, than in the police (see Pfündel/Stichs/Tanis 2021).
Up to now, government institutions in Germany have been insufficiently investigated with a view to anti-Muslim sentiment. Due to its limited financial resources, the UEM, which was already set up in 2020 and later integrated into the catalog of measures by the cabinet committee of the Federal Government to combat right-wing extremism and racism, did not see itself in a position to carry out its own research projects on possible institutional racism in the state executive, but has been in close contact with other researchers in this field through hearings and in other ways, and has also independently reviewed the state of research. The following chapter aims to provide an overview, which must, however, remain incomplete, as the state of research on anti-Muslim sentiment does not cover all institutions. For this reason, the Bundeswehr, for instance, is not the subject of this analysis, as no relevant studies are currently available.

8.1.1 Secularism and institutional racism: A theoretical introduction about anti-Muslim sentiment in a liberal democratic state

The political system of the Federal Republic of Germany is based on the principles of liberal democracy. The immutable and indivisible human rights enshrined in the German Basic Law form the basis of the liberal constitutional state, which grants its citizens equal rights (see also subchapter ↗ 8.3 and chapter ↗ 9). Freedom from discrimination against members of different religious communities and a clear stance against anti-Muslim sentiment, as defined by the UEM in chapter ↗ 2 Terminology, thus form the central basis of the political system. The second important principle is that of democratic sovereignty and the associated separation of powers. Both principles—liberal rule of law and majoritarian democracy—belong together but are by no means free of conflict. The liberal idea of the rule of law lays down the fundamental structure of justice in European democracy, which must also be respected by majority democracy, in order to prohibit a “tyranny of the majority” in the sense of a fundamentalist orientation of the state system toward ideological, ethnic, or religious privilege (see K. Hafez 2013b: 19–54).

The neutrality and non-discrimination of the state toward members of different religious communities are anchored in the political philosophy of secularism, which, however, is structured differently in the different European states as well as worldwide. The core principle of secularism in Germany is not, as is often assumed, the strict “separation of state and religion,” but the religious neutrality of the state and equal treatment of religions (see Bielefeldt 2003), which also allows, for instance, cooperative relationships between the state and religious communities, as long as all religious communities are included and individual religious freedom is respected. In recent decades, however, doubts have arisen regarding the practical achievement of the ideal of “color-blindness” in European states, whose political leaders, ministries, and government authorities have been accused of discriminatory actions against Muslims through exclusionary statements by politicians or activities by security agencies, the police or other government authorities (see K. Hafez 2013b: 54–72; Nielsen 2004).

In racism research, such inequalities are often addressed under the headings of structural racism or institutional racism (see Gomolla/Radtke 2007). While structural racism refers to norms and regulations and institutional racism to the practices and routines of institutions and organizations, it is assumed in both cases that people are not only discriminated against through individual racism, but that they can also be excluded, disadvantaged, and dehumanized through unreflected or even unconscious social structures, practices, and routines that in many cases are historically handed down. The homogeneous nation imagined by society plays a central role here, as ideas of (non) belonging can influence attitudes and actions beyond the constitutional framework of equal rights.
Remnants of the historical, racially segregating state are therefore still often found in the modern nation state (see Hund 2014).

One year before the NSU murders in Germany became public knowledge, which led to numerous investigation committees to examine failures by government authorities, the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations had already warned that Germany, notwithstanding the introduction of a General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG, Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz), should not equate racism with right-wing extremism and must also fight it in institutions (see Muigai 2010). In this context, it is important that section 3 (1) of the General Act on Equal Treatment introduces the concept of “indirect discrimination” through seemingly neutral processes which have a de facto discriminatory effect. However, this provision fails to elaborate on this fact and it is therefore hardly possible to take legal steps against this shortcoming. In 2017, the United Nations complained that institutional racism exists in Germany and that the German police engage in racial profiling, i.e., prejudice-driven control behavior (see Bowtromiuk 2017). One year earlier, Amnesty International had expressed similar criticism of the German security agencies (see Bosch 2020). In 2021, the Cabinet Committee adopted measures to combat racism. At the same time, the United Nations renewed criticism of the states of the world whose institutions, in the view of the world organization, denied the existence of institutional racism in government authorities (see OHCHR 2021). These demands are also supported by the German Institute for Human Rights (see Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte 2021).

On the day of remembrance for the victims of the attacks in Hanau, Seda Başay-Yıldız, the well-known lawyer of the NSU victims, stated that racist structures were still being investigated in Germany (see 2022). A few days later, the integration commissioner of the new German government announced that she wanted to take a tougher approach to structural racism in the public service (see Alabali-Radovan 2022).

Institutional racism can be expressed in different ways in the public sector:

1. through racist attitudes and practices on the part of the actors operating in the institutions (intentional),
2. through the preservation and introduction of discriminatory practices of action (mostly non-intentional), and
3. through inaction, i.e., failure to eliminate existing racist attitudes, actions, or practices (see McKenzie 2017).

Institutional racism can also manifest itself on different levels that interact with each other:

1. in the political leadership of elected political officials and members of the upper ministerial bureaucracy (political steering problem),
2. in the actions, guiding principles, conditions of access, and relations of representation of the autonomous institutions themselves (hierarchy problem), and
3. in the informal space of speech and action practices, routines, and bodies of knowledge in the institutions themselves, for instance, the so-called “canteen culture,” “cop culture” (institutional culture problem) (see Holroyd 2015).

The first two levels reflect formal leadership problems, but are not sufficient for the analysis of institutional racism, as so-called bridging discourses between conservative and radical right-wing attitudes (for instance, “Islam does not belong to the German nation,” “Muslims are alien and a threat”) can be prevalent in institutions. In this way, informal discourses can become dominant, negatively influencing the professional socialization of members of the government authorities and thus also the practices of action toward Muslims—even without explicit racism or a targeted infiltration of institutions by radical right-wing actors (see Naumann 2021; Thompsen 2020).
It is also important to note that official action and societal attitudes can interact, which means that internal institutional practices not only affect the everyday lives of the Muslims directly concerned, but also reach the media and wider society through various channels and through the public appearance of these institutions. The state appears here in its role as a “primary definer,” i.e., as the instance that shapes anti-Muslim sentiment and racism adopted by the public (see Sabel/Karadeniz 2022). Structural and institutional racism are therefore key factors when it comes to understanding anti-Muslim sentiment in Germany.

8.1.2 Leading political offices

8.1.2.1 Federal presidents, chancellors, and ministers: Does Islam belong to Germany?

While opinion polls and studies on anti-Muslim sentiment have been very negative for decades, leading German politicians have repeatedly issued positive and inclusive statements regarding Islam. However, the picture is by no means uniform. Attitudes oriented toward dialogue and recognition alternate with sweeping rejections and statements that mark Islam as alien and not belonging. Transnational organizations, such as the European Commission in Brussels or the OSCE, have repeatedly pointed to the lack of participation and to structural racism with regard to Muslims in the member states (see Silvestri 2007). However, the Federal Republic of Germany still lacks a stable, cross-party inclusive consensus of political culture.

The speeches on Islam by several German presidents and chancellors show that German governments are increasingly willing to take on a kind of watchdog function against social discrimination against Muslims. For a long time, the dictum of former German chancellors Helmut Kohl and Helmut Schmidt remained valid, i.e., that the Islamic world was decidedly not part of Europe (see Sarısalıkolu 2019). However, since the mid-1990s, when Federal President Roman Herzog stood by orientalist Annemarie Schimmel, who was accused of being an opponent of the author Salman Rushdie, who was persecuted by Iran (see Herzog 1997), a tradition of Islam-friendly or even Islam-inclusive speeches began to emerge. Herzog’s successor Johannes Rau also cultivated dialogue with Islam (see Rau 2003). While Gerhard Schröder, as a child of his time, still subscribed to the formula of “dialogue with Islam” in 2004, Federal President Christian Wulff in 2010 moved the emphasis toward full recognition of Islam with the statement “Islam belongs to Germany” and as a reaction to the Sarrazin controversy. Angela Merkel echoed this statement, originally coined by Wolfgang Schäuble at the German Islam Conference in 2006 and made prominent by Wulff—but not without adding that the multicultural society had failed (see Schrader 2010).

This already indicates that there is no unanimity among political leaders when it comes to a gatekeeper stance against Islam. Federal President Horst Köhler weakened Schäuble’s avowal by speaking of “Muslim life as part of everyday German life” (see Köhler 2006). Wulff’s successor Joachim Gauck even distanced himself from Wulff’s speech and subsequently referred to Muslims as part of the German state (see Detjen 2016)—once again implicitly demarcating the German concept of culture and nation from Islam. Frank Walter Steinmeier returned in principle to Wulff, but then qualified this by asking which part of Islam belonged to Germany (see Steinmeier 2019).

At ministerial level, the picture becomes blurred, with both conservative and social democratic interior ministers (except for Schäuble) remaining rather distant from Islam to the present day and in many cases explicitly not describing it as part of Germany. Cross-party uncertainty can also be observed in other European countries, for instance, in the UK (see Allen 2019). An exclusively “Christian-Jewish” concept of nationhood, which can be described as difference-oriented and thus latently racist, is thus still acceptable in Germany’s political leadership despite all the progress made toward recognition. It is precisely at the top of state institutions that a form of exclusion is practiced which, in theoretical terms, must be characterized as partial failure on the part of political control, since it is at the level of symbolic politics that a political (discourse) culture is kept alive and not tabooed, which can rub off on the attitudes of public agency employees and promote discriminatory practices there. A definitive commitment by the state, oriented toward Wulff, would provide clarity here.

8.1.2.2 Security agencies: Muslims as a security risk

There are only a few studies that empirically research institutional racism in Germany, not to mention anti-Muslim sentiment. Nevertheless, seasoned academics have criticized the exaggerated, non-transparent, stigmatizing, and at times discriminatory suspicion policy of the German state in thick descriptions of their impressions in dealings with the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Office for the Protection of the Constitution.

Following the attacks of 9/11, Kai Hafez pointed out at events organized by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution in Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia that there was a need to distinguish more strongly between legal political Islamic organizations and terrorism. Especially after raids in Muslim communities, which mostly remain inconclusive, this should be clearly communicated to the public in order to avoid a general government suspicion against Islam in Germany, which fuels anti-Islam sentiment (see K. Hafez 2003: 27; 2015). With a view to the police and other government authorities, recent studies have also called for more sensitive public communication in the context of raids in order to avoid unnecessary damage to the reputation of Muslim communities (see, for instance, Klevesath et al. 2022: 4). Attia, Keskinkılıç, and Okcu (2021) used (non-representative) group interviews with Muslims to sharpen the stakeholder perspective on government security policy: The interviewees report being attacked on the street as alleged terrorists and being discriminated against in educational institutions, at work, in the housing market, and in the health system. The state is blamed for this because of its focus on Islam as a security risk and the lack of transparency in government action. Muslims are at best accepted as security partners, their loyalty as citizens is constantly questioned, and their social commitment ignored, as is their own interest in protection in the face of widespread anti-Muslim sentiment (ibid.: 173).

The most comprehensive analysis of the Federal Ministry of the Interior’s Islam policy was prepared by Prof. Dr. Werner Schiffauer, long-time chairman of the Council for Migration (Rat für Migration), who examined four of the ministry’s divisions: Security (especially the Office for the Protection of the Constitution), Migration, the German Islam Conference (DIK), and the research unit of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (the UEM is not yet part of his analysis).87 The central observation of his report is that a battle of interpretation is underway at the Federal Ministry of the Interior between a dominant policy of security and suspicion and, since the founding

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87 Hearing with Prof. Dr. Werner Schiffauer (formerly University of Frankfurt (Oder) and long-time chairman of Rat für Migration e.V.) on March 10, 2021.
of the German Islam Conference (DIK) in 2006, a rather subordinate policy of dialogue. He specifically criticizes the fact that approximately 30,000 members of Islamist organizations repeatedly appear in the reports of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution. These organizations are under observation because they are considered anti-constitutional, although they officially acknowledge the German constitution (especially Millî Görüş, IGMG, IGD, DMG). While the author admits that the organizations simultaneously refer to Islamic Sharia law, he points out that they are nevertheless legal and does not consider the attitude of their members to be identical to the aims of the association. Accordingly, the associations even have an integrative effect, as they partly serve as a catchment basin for former members of jihadist groups, so that a general suspicion is not legitimate.

Schiffauer’s analysis also criticizes the so-called “guilt by association,” according to which the security agencies themselves classify people who come into contact with Islamist organizations, for instance, in the context of events, as Islamist or to have an affinity to Islamism. In many cases, Muslims prematurely classified as security risks based on rumors and little evidence were refused employment (in the civil service), while funding was cancelled for civil society. Schiffauer describes the treatment of the Muslim youth organization Muslimische Jugend Deutschland (MJD), for instance, as contradictory, since it is considered an extension of the Muslim Brotherhood, but has cooperated with Jewish organizations, something that runs counter to the accusation of general anti-Semitism. The author sees the founding of the German Islam Conference by Schäuble as a remarkable change of perspective from the Federal Ministry of the Interior’s approach to Muslims, which was previously dominated by an integration and security mindset, to a mindset of dialogue and cohesion. However, according to the author, the German Islam Conference (DIK) was in practice strongly influenced by the security discourse and its agenda was also often shaped by the ministry in a biased manner.

With a view to Islam, a focus solely on security should be viewed just as critically as a general liberalization and normalization approach. The problem is not that the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the security agencies, in addition to their task of integrating and recognizing Muslims, are also responsible for observing and averting threats from extremist forces. Security is indeed part of a defensive liberal democracy (see K. Hafez 2013b: 54–72). With a view to protecting democracy, it is legitimate for the Office for the Protection of the Constitution to observe Islamist organizations if they are legal and formally acknowledge the constitution, but nevertheless give reason to believe that an agenda is being pursued in the informal sphere that deviates from the official aims of the association and could become a security risk. Parallels exist here with the justified and reasonable observation of the AfD party. Even if religious minority organizations and political parties cannot be directly compared with each other, democracy must remain defensible. From this perspective, any blanket normalization of legal political Islam is out of the question. However, there is a need for legally impeccable clarification and evaluation of the facts, not least in the demarcation from traditional attitudes without a claim to political or social domination (see Rohe 2022c: 5–7).

Schiffauer’s normalizing credo regarding the integration role of Islamism is worth considering, but the role of these movements cannot be limited to their integration function. The authoritarian undercurrents that have grown in recent years, for instance, of the Muslim Brotherhood (see Ranko 2014) or of Turkish organizations close to the AKP in Germany, should not be disregarded, and Salafism in Germany also often displays an intolerant character (see Rohe/Jaraba 2018: 75–79). Schiffauer’s normalization approach in relation to legal Islamist organizations must also be re-
adjusted against the backdrop of the pending results of the expert group on political Islamism and possibly to a certain degree parallel to the future assessment of the equally radical AfD (see subchapter \(\Rightarrow\) 8.2.2.1).

However, the critics mentioned above agree that the current practice of dealing with organized Islam urgently needs to be reconsidered and wisely liberalized. A blanket culture of suspicion and condemnation is out of the question, as is a general normalization of such organizations. With the creation of a dedicated organizational unit for the German Islam Conference, formally separated from the offices for the protection of the constitution, the recognition-theoretical side of political action (German Islam Conference) remains predominantly symbolic. The security system, on the other hand, is far more relevant to the everyday lives of Muslims, it shapes their biographies and often torpedoes the integration opportunities of people who are willing to integrate. Although it is true that anti-Muslim attitudes among security agency employees have not yet been researched, the cases known to the UEM in which Muslims were not hired in the public service are not always based on proven criminal offenses, but on criteria applied by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution or the corresponding federal state offices. How these different offices define such criteria, their validity, and the evidence basis applied must be discussed in a transparent manner in order to avoid the risk of unintentional, institutional discrimination through inappropriate vetting processes designed to ward off threats. However, the merits of the German Islam Conference, for instance in the area of Islamic theology training and in state treaties, should not be denied.

Similar to Attia, Keskinikiliç, and Okcu (2021), Schiffauer assumes that the current practice of the offices for the protection of the constitution in dealing with Muslims is often not oriented toward the constitutional principles of equality, but toward unexplained security motives,\(^88\) which tend to reflect an institutionally racist program. In contrast, representatives of the Directorate-General ÖS (Public Security at the Federal Ministry of the Interior) stated in a conversation with the UEM that mere membership in a “legalistic Islamic organization” in no way disqualifies Muslims for public financial benefits or even employment in the public service. Rather, the offices for the protection of the constitution are concerned with individual examinations, in which not membership but the rank as a leader or the “statements” made by a person are evaluated.\(^89\) The situation is made more difficult by the fact that many of the Islamist organizations under surveillance do not keep membership lists, so that it is often only possible to assess a person’s certain “closeness” to such organizations.

A change in the guiding principle of both the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the offices for the protection of the constitution is urgently needed here as well as a stronger distinction between a possibly necessary observation of Islamist organizations and their individual members. Not only must the assessment criteria for individual members be specified and made publicly transparent, the organizations too are often pools of very different personalities. In order to ensure the monitoring of extremist aspirations in the sense of a “defensible democracy,” i.e., one that recognizes the complexity of the organizations and preserves the right of the individual to the constitutional protection of the rights of freedom and development, extensive reflection, including public reflection, is required on the above-mentioned profiling practices with regard to individuals.

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\(^{88}\) UEM hearing with Prof. Dr Werner Schiffauer on March 10, 2021.
World views of different hues are the hallmark of liberal democracy and covered by the Basic Law, including missionary or even racist views, as long as they are not linked to a concrete political agenda of subversion, political infiltration, acts of violence, or incitement of the people. Organizations may be observed by the offices for the protection of the constitution in this context, but individual Muslims, even as members of such organizations, may not be subject to occupational bans or other state exclusion measures based on unclear or not clearly evidence-based criteria, as the state has an obligation to remain neutral (other rules may apply here for social ideological establishments, such as religious communities or political parties). Here, too, a parallel can be seen to the AfD party, which is partly under observation by the offices for the protection of the constitution and where many members are still active as civil servants, etc., for whom a case-by-case examination seems to make sense. In the case of the AfD, the German Institute for Human Rights proposes a phased approach to the question of whether members of this legal party, which is suspected of being anti-constitutional, may become or remain civil servants. Accordingly, this would be possible neither in the case of a) active appearance of a party member (party offices, offensive advertising, etc.) nor in the case of b) passive membership, but c) can be tolerated in cases where a member openly speaks out against the anti-constitutional and anti-human rights aspects of the party. A corresponding security reservation against Muslim members of legal Islamist organizations should be made analogous to this proposal. Specific forms of acknowledgement or agreements are conceivable and necessary if we are to avoid being guilty of structurally racist practices.

With regard to the accusation of so-called “guilt by association,” it is important to note that mere contact with members of Islamist organizations, for instance, at third-party events—especially if this contact is unintentional—cannot be classified as a risk. Representatives of the Directorate-General ÖS (Public Security at the Federal Ministry of the Interior) told the UEM that this is not the intention of the responsible directorate and that such scandalization in the media is not in its interest, as this would endanger the Federal Government’s deradicalization programs. Talking with the UEM, it was proposed that the Federal Ministry of the Interior’s communication policy, for instance, in the context of the annual presentation of the report on the protection of the constitution, would have to be reconsidered. The distinctions between a) violent and non-violent Islamist organizations and b) anti-constitutional aims of organizations and individuals in these organizations should be pointed out more clearly in public. In addition, hostility toward Muslims as a central enemy in right-wing radicalism/extremism, which has hardly been mentioned in the report on the protection of the constitution, should be taken into account much more and also communicated publicly.

Through such measures, the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Office for the Protection of the Constitution would become stronger institutions for everyone living in Germany. The urgent appeals by international organizations to eliminate institutional racism must be heard. Any stronger alienation of the state from German Muslims and from organized (political) Islam, in which the latter is defined exclusively as a security risk without recognizing its integration achievements, must be avoided.

It is to be welcomed that at the opening event of the German Islam Conference, Federal Minister of the Interior and Home Affairs, Nancy Faeser, placed a new emphasis on the problems of anti-Muslim sentiment. Among people affected by
racism in Germany, this often applied doubly to Muslims, “as members of the Islamic religion and often also as people with an immigration history.” She highlighted the Federal Government’s goals of resolutely combating anti-Muslim sentiment, improving the participation of Muslims and Muslim communities, and making progress in imam training. The core statement was particularly significant, i.e., that “The Islam Conference is not a security conference” (ibid.) and that Muslims should not be placed under general suspicion. The important questions of prevention and combating Islamism would be deliberately shifted to a separate security dialogue.

8.1.2.3 Federal Foreign Office: An anti-stereotypical learning process?

Institutional racism in the Federal Foreign Office has not yet been investigated within the scope of empirical social science studies. However, there are isolated socio-psychological as well as historical works that cover at least the period from 1970 to 2000. More recent events cannot be investigated because decades-long disclosure restrictions on diplomatic files do not allow otherwise.

Basically, the impression is that the perception processes in the Federal Foreign Office are of a different nature than in the Ministry for the Interior, since “the Muslim” subject does not confront German foreign policy as it does domestic policy, especially in the context of migration and security policy, but international relations are based on the principle of equal communication partnership between the representatives of sovereign states. This has led to diplomatic contacts sometimes being seen by academics as a corrective to the anti-Muslim sentiment that exists in Germany (see Hippler 2000). In the Foreign Service, employees may well harbor personal prejudices, but the institutional routines of diplomatic exchange are designed for direct interaction with Muslim representatives of the respective countries.

However, the work of the Federal Foreign Office has not always been free of anti-Muslim tendencies and questionable dialogue practices, which at times show certain parallels to domestic politics, demonstrating that foreign and domestic politics interact today—so-called “linkage politics” (see Rosenau 1967). As an example, three problem areas should be mentioned here, which will be further elaborated in the following:

- the genesis of anti-Muslim attitudes in the diplomatic service,
- the practice of a “dialogue of cultures” in the Federal Foreign Office, and
- the visa and security policy of the Federal Foreign Office.

In recent decades, the Federal Foreign Office has gone through a learning process in dealing with political Islam. An analysis of diplomatic files from 1970 to 2000 clearly showed that especially during the course of re-Islamization following the Iranian Revolution of 1978/79, German ambassadors and the executive level of the Federal Foreign Office were in part overwhelmed and that prejudices, resentment, and ignorance about Islam found their way into internal analyses (Islamism as identical with the Middle Ages, pre-modernity, Sharia as a general practice of hand amputation, stoning, etc.), although certain differences between actors did become evident (see Konrad 2022). The Federal Foreign Office also responded quickly by providing financial support for the expansion of German contemporary oriental studies, for instance, at the former German Orient Institute in Hamburg, now part of the German Institute for Global and Area Studies.

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(GIGA Institute), or at Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP) in Berlin; in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), comparable developments took place in East Berlin and Leipzig (see K. Hafez 1995). In terms of thematic breadth and professionalization, this targeted investment in think tanks specializing in the Orient and Islam went and still goes well beyond the Federal Ministry of the Interior’s research on Islam at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees and can, under certain circumstances, also be considered a model for domestic policy.

While the Federal Foreign Office made a deliberate attempt to create a scientific basis for Islam policy, structural processes similar to those at the Federal Ministry of the Interior can be observed. The foreign policy “dialogue with the Islamic world” in the field of foreign cultural policy, for instance, has been gaining momentum since the revolution in Iran—and thus decades before the dialogue statements made by German federal presidents (see subchapter ↗ 8.1.2.1 etc.). However, this field can only be seen to a limited extent as a genuine dialogue between Germany and other states, because the responsible departments often lead a life of their own and their competences are rarely networked with other departments (e.g., planning staff, ministers), so that it is often more a matter of political marketing than a genuine dialogue between Germany and other states. Because of the responsible departments often lead a life of their own and their competences are rarely networked with other departments, it is often more a matter of political marketing than a genuine dialogue with the Islamic world. For instance, the foreign policy “dialogue with the Islamic world” in the field of foreign cultural policy has been gaining momentum since the revolution in Iran—and thus decades before the dialogue statements made by German federal presidents (see subchapter ↗ 8.1.2.1 etc.). However, this field can only be seen to a limited extent as a genuine dialogue between Germany and other states, because the responsible departments often lead a life of their own and their competences are rarely networked with other departments (e.g., planning staff, ministers), so that it is often more a matter of political marketing than a genuine dialogue with the Islamic world (see K. Hafez/Grüne 2021: 144–146). In addition, a homoge-neous concept of culture is still often used in the Federal Foreign Office, which tends to reduce “Islam” and “Muslims” to so-called highly religious practices instead of recognizing the diversity of religious and cultural phenomena and hybrid interactions with other cultural spaces (see Ernst 2015). This cultural difference mindset is partly identical to anti-Muslim sentiment because stereotypes, even when used in a value-neutral way, are a form of “othering”. Finally, in 2020, an attempt made by the Federal Foreign Office to integrate a Muslim religious representative—the Secretary General of Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland (Central Council of Muslims in Germany)—as a representative of Islam in a “Religion and Foreign Policy Team” was put on ice again following public criticism (which attitude did she have to anti-Semitism and Islamism?, etc.) (see Tagesspiegel 2020). This showed not only the vulnerability of the Federal Foreign Office’s traditional image of Islam—with the Central Council of Muslims in Germany, a conservative-tradition-alist representative of German Islam was chosen—but also, the Federal Foreign Office’s susceptibility to discriminatory practices and public scandalization in the context of a completely unclear concept of Islamism.

This finally becomes evident in the visa policy at German embassies, which is a classic interface between foreign and domestic policy. With the introduction of the Anti-Terrorism Act at the end of 2001 and its subsequent extension and permanence, the culture of suspicion in the offices for the protection of the constitution with regard to Islamists has potentially expanded into a discriminatory practice for Muslims willing to enter the country, as particularly high screening hurdles seem to exist here (for an introduction, see Molthagen 2015: 46).

At this point in time, it is not possible to make any conclusive statement regarding current manifestations of both the learning processes and discriminatory practices of the Federal Foreign Office in relation to Islam and Muslims, as it has not yet been possible to gain an insight into the diplomatic files of the period following the jihadist attacks of September 2001, nor into the Federal Foreign Office’s internal communication processes or migration regime. The urgency of intensifying this research should be stressed at this point.
8.1.3 Police

8.1.3.1 State of research: Really deficient?

The police are the field of the executive branch where a relatively high number of empirical studies is already available today. It is true that the public is not entirely unjustified in believing institutional racism in the police has not been sufficiently researched (see also Kopke 2021). However, an internal police debate has now erupted between teaching and research institutions, police unions, and other leading stakeholders about the need for and nature of conducting research on racism in the police, with critical circles within the police itself calling for a broad approach involving the institution as a whole. Specific studies on anti-Muslim sentiment in the police are rare. For instance, two major studies already underway on violence in everyday life of police officers (Motivation, Einstellung und Gewalt im Alltag von Polizeivollzugsbeamten—MEGAVO (Motivation, attitude and violence in the everyday life of police officers)) (see Schiemann 2021) by the German Police University and commissioned by the Federal Ministry of the Interior, and by Ruhr Universität Bochum (Körperverletzung im Amt durch Polizeibeamt*innen—KViAPol (Bodily injury in office by police officers)) do contain rather limited modules on anti-Muslim sentiment. However, researchers have gained access to the police on several occasions in the last decade, so the overall empirical situation is generally better than its reputation.

In studies on the perception of discrimination, such as the long-term project on bodily injury in office by police officers, 62 percent of the BPoC respondents state that they have felt discriminated against in situations of violence. In qualitative interviews, some devastating racist attitudes ("[N-word] clapping", "chasing Turks") were revealed, whereby the authors emphasize that these are not individual cases, but a product of the internal organizational culture and socialization of the police apparatus (see Abdul-Rahman et al. 2020). Other studies published in police science journals also confirm that migrants from Turkey, West Asian or African countries in particular are affected by racial profiling and state that the corresponding rates of this practice, which is permitted by police law but fosters institutional racism, are among the highest in Europe (see Dieckmann 2019: 25). Even scientists at Akademie der Polizei (Academy of the Police) in Hamburg admit that discriminatory aspects are “regularly” seen in police work and not just in individual cases (Behr 2018: 60).

8.1.3.2 Attitudes: Culturalist precincts

Reminder: Studies on institutional racism distinguish between several levels in racism research. First of all, manifest racist attitudes must be separated from latent (implicit) racist attitudes, which in turn can—but do not necessarily have to—be part of consolidated right-wing extremist ideologies. In turn, such attitudes as a whole must be distinguished from racist practices that can emerge in institutions based on experiential knowledge there, without necessarily being based on racist attitudes of individual members of the organization. In other words, racism does not always (though often) lead to discrimination and discrimination is not always (though often) the result of racist attitudes.

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92 UEM networking meeting and backdrop discussion with police researchers and staff of police universities.

93 The UEM received a written statement from the Research and Advisory Centre for Police Crime Statistics (PCS), Dark Field Research Federal Criminal Police Office, that anti-Muslim sentiment is not part of the victimization survey.

94 PoC is the abbreviation for People of Color (singular: Person of Color) and a name chosen by people who are exposed to multiple forms of racism due to the attribution of others. The term describes a horizon of experience shared by people and not (primarily) their skin colour. BPoC (Black and People of Color) is an extension to explicitly include Black people.
Focusing firstly on the level of attitudes, a recent qualitative interview study on institutional racism in the police shows that categories such as “Islam,” “Lebanese,” etc. belong to the classification criteria of police work, which supposedly establish certainty in expectation and action, but in doing so basically reproduce racist “knowledge” (see Graevskaia/Menke/Rumpel 2022). Police work, especially with a view to people who are perceived as Arab, Turkish, or migrants, can be overlaid with prejudices and assumptions that are fed by and condensed from experiences during police work or from narratives in the context of the professional experience of others. The idea of ‘cultural groups’ that are completely exclusive in their values and imported “macho cultures” is very widespread in this context (right-wing radicals or other criminals, on the other hand, are not factored into the own-group image; unlike the foreign group, they are viewed in a differentiated and not subtly racist way) (see Schroth/Fereidooni 2021).

Even if this is difficult to quantify, research today no longer assumes that stereotypical or racist world views in the police are limited to isolated cases (see Hunold/Wegner 2020). According to a Hessian police study, 27.6 percent of the police officers surveyed with otherwise high approval rates for questions of tolerance see a “danger of Germany becoming an Islamic country” (see Hessisches Ministerium des Innern und für Sport 2020). This is a very broad anti-Muslim enemy image that assigns expansive power to the Muslim other, which is at the same time perceived as a threat and thus as something negative to be defended against. The problem becomes even bigger if we add the 35.8 percent who “rather disagree” but are somewhat uncertain.

The possible note that these numbers are not higher than in the rest of the German population is no reason to sound the all-clear, because the study shows the significant susceptibility of the police to anti-Muslim motives. The constitutional mandate of the police, which is geared toward neutrality, calls for a high degree of impartiality. Institutional reforms and training are urgently needed (see below).

A large study on anti-Islam sentiment in the German police in 2008 already showed that about one third of the respondents often felt “foreign in their own country” in view of the many Muslims and demanded that “Muslim immigration to Germany be stopped” (see Mescher 2008: 149)—both views, and especially the last one, which is illegal in its substance, are clear bridging discourses between conservative and right-wing extremist ways of thinking. Although the authors claim that a large proportion (two-thirds) of police officers cannot be classified as right-wing extremists and that the distribution is in line with the average of the German population (see Krott/Krott/Zeitner 2018: 180), they do also concede that this is an optimistic estimate and that the number of unreported cases of anti-Muslim attitudes could be higher if the results are adjusted with a view to the response bias caused by surveys. A rather negative interpretation is corroborated by the second step in the survey, with two-thirds of respondents stating that they neither wanted to live in Muslim neighborhoods nor shop in Muslim shops, which the study interprets as worrying distancing behavior on the part of a large section of the police (see Mescher 2008: 149).

The study results give cause for concern, as they testify to deep-seated, widespread, and sometimes majority prejudice structures in the German police. Although the police force does not see itself to be racist, the data available provide clear evidence of culturalist demarcation and rejection in personal attitudes as well as corresponding professional classification categories in precinct

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95 727 questionnaires were evaluated in Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and North Rhine-Westphalia with the support of the state ministries of the interior.
work. Culturalism and anti-Muslim sentiment are thus highly present as attitudes in the German police, which motivated the author of the study at the time, Heidi Mescher, to call for reform of further training as early as 2008, more than ten years before the murder of George Floyd in the US and anti-Islamic acts, such as Hanau (see below).

### 8.1.3.3 Practices: Resigned skepticism of Islam

Bosch describes institutional racism as “the blind spot of German police research” (see Bosch 2020; 2016). Police brochures on “Arab clans” are sometimes circulated internally without criticism. Although family and national ties are a sign of many mafia structures in the world, when it comes to Arabs, culturalist and patriarchal clichés are lightly used to mark the professional field. Such phenomena prove that it is not only a matter of individual attitudes, but that there is a fundamental problem in the upper echelons of the police organization (see Bosch 2020).

Anti-Muslim attitudes also seem to be related to the frequency of professional contact (see Kemme/Essien/Stelter 2020). The study by Mescher (2008) had already shown that frequency of contact and also satisfaction with the police profession correlate inversely with anti-Muslim sentiment and can be expressed negatively in xenophobic attitudes: “[T]he Muslim community are vulnerable to becoming recipients of [sceptical, cynical, dismissive, and negative] sentiments” (ibid.: 153).

A more recent longitudinal study by Krott, Krott, and Zeitner, which essentially examines the example of anti-Muslim sentiment for racist attitudes among young police trainees and practicing police officers, shows how the contact hypothesis of social psychology is led ad absurdum in the police force: While many people in everyday life or in other professions tend to have a differentiated image of Islam through regular contact with Muslims (see K. Hafez/Schmidt 2015: 51–59), this is not the case with police officers, because obviously the large number of suspicious or criminal cases promotes exactly the opposite effect of accelerated cynicism and an anti-Muslim “cop culture” (see Krott/Krott/Zeitner 2018: 180). Negative contact practices and suspicion routines, maybe additionally fueled by the proven anti-Muslim attitudes of some colleagues, condense into a “resigned skepticism of Islam” in the police apparatus.

A number of authors now question whether regular intercultural training (on Islam, Muslim life, etc.) can change these imbalances, and instead suggest strengthening contact between the police and Muslims “outside usual police routines” (see Mescher 2008: 153; Atali-Timmer 2021; see also the explanations in chapter 7.6). Another means is certainly to increase diversity by having more Muslims in the police force itself in order to improve the contact balance—but this is sometimes viewed with just as much skepticism as regular knowledge-oriented training (see Mescher 2008: 153).

According to Mediendienst Integration (Migration Media Service), the share of young female police officers with a migration backdrop is slowly increasing due to targeted recruitment efforts; nevertheless, at around 3.4 percent, the share in the Federal Police is far below the population average (see Medientdienst Integration 2021). The picture is similar for the federal state police, with Berlin and Saxony-Anhalt being exceptions. Diversity is not a panacea, since even a migration backdrop does not necessarily protect police officers from prejudice. This was shown, for instance, by the SPIEGEL bestseller “Deutschland im Blaulicht” (Germany in flashing lights) by Kambouri (2015), which spreads a very negative and sweeping image of Islam, one in which all Muslims are strictly religious and ritualized, Muslim women are generally oppressed, Muslim men are disrespectful, and

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96 Based on the expression of “resigned skepticism of foreigners” by Andrea Groß, Akademie der Polizei Hamburg, UEM Hearing, September 30, 2021.
Germany is more tolerant than Islamic countries in its treatment of religious minorities.

Behr therefore suggests that the police should "engage more intensively with the lifeworlds of police clientele," for instance, in the form of "internships lasting several months in non-police (social) institutions" (Behr 2018: 63). Leenen, Groß, and Grosch (2002) suggest developing interaction and diversity concepts at the same time in order to increase culturally sensitive and racism-critical competences (ibid.: 105).

8.1.3.4 Anti-Muslim crimes: Improving cooperation

Resigned and derogatory attitudes and practices on the part of the police can influence how anti-Muslim crimes are reappraised. The number of registered anti-Muslim crimes in Germany is currently around 1,000 per year, half as many as the number of anti-Semitic crimes, but nevertheless worrying, especially since these crimes often involve physical injury, mainly due to right-wing extremist violence (BMI/BKA 2021:7). The U.S. State Department’s 2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices highlights an increase in anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim crimes in Germany (see U.S. Department of State 2021).

According to a study by the OSCE/ODIHR, Germany is one of approximately 16 OSCE countries that have any statistics at all on acts of violence against Muslims (see OSCE/ODIHR 2021: 64). This is certainly good news. However, it can be assumed that the number of unreported cases is significantly higher. The ODIHR therefore also calls on member states, such as Germany, to “sensitize police authorities” to better record the anti-Muslim prejudice motive in criminal offenses (ibid.: X), especially when anti-Muslim remarks are made that may indicate the motive for the crime (ibid.: 15). The report cites the reasons why the police have often struggled with this so far: “poor resources, inadequate definitions of hate crimes, lack of specialist units, racial bias, and limited racial/ethnic diversity within the criminal justice system.” (Ibid.: 48)

The ODIHR opposes passivity and inaction as forms of discrimination (ibid.: 3). In fact, failure to record crimes can be seen as a form of institutional racism, since, as theorized, this also includes an institution’s systematic refusal to act against racist practices.

The organization also proposes improved prevention work in cooperation with the police, including better cooperation with Muslim communities, awareness-raising measures for anti-Muslim hate crimes, improved information exchange, and greater police presence where Muslims gather, especially on holidays (ibid.: IX, 53, 66–67). The report also mentions that one in three Muslims in Europe talks of discrimination by the police, for instance, in the form of police checks, especially when religious symbols, such as the headscarf, are seen (ibid.: 10). A study by the European Network Against Racism (2019) also points out that police awareness of anti-Muslim crimes and the intersectionality of crimes (for instance, against Muslim women) is only slowly developing in Europe. Such proposals by international organizations should be vigorously supported.

8.1.4 Other government authorities

There are hardly any current studies on institutional racism in general or on anti-Muslim racism in particular for other administrative parts of the executive.

Existing studies on institutional racism at public offices and government authorities address the situation of migrants and refugees and primarily examine the areas of employment services, alien authorities and welfare state institutions, such as the health system (see, for instance, Beigang et al. 2017; Bröse 2017; Brussig/Frings/Kirsch 2019; Hemker/Rink 2017; Huke 2020; Kaas/Manger
2012; Knuth 2010; Salikutluk/Giesecke/Kroh 2020; in a pilot study by the University of Duisburg-Essen, Graevskaia/Menke/Rumpel 2022 also summarize current research findings on institutional racism in the areas of healthcare, labor administration, and the police. There is no systematic research on the extent to which anti-Muslim racism manifests itself in official actions. The data situation is thus very poor, and it is hardly possible to make statements about this area based on empirical data.

In general, government authorities with sovereign powers perform public administration tasks. As public institutions serving the general interest, their task is to ensure social security for citizens and to provide them with reliable services. However, existing, supposedly neutral legal regulations as well as institutional responsibilities, organizational procedures, and also internal practices and discourses can cause social inclusion and exclusion and have a structurally discriminatory effect (see Hall 2001b; Rommelspacher 2009; Terkessidis 2004). Such “risks of discrimination that are inherent in institutions and organizations have a subtle effect” (Brussig/Frings/Kirsch 2019: 278) and are difficult to perceive from within the system because they represent normality as a cultivated “institutional habitus” and have a claim to validity (see Jäger/Kauffmann 2002). Critical reflection on (one’s own) institutional responsibilities, procedures, and discourses is therefore challenging, especially when they are legally justified or institutionally suggested, so that the modalities of their operation can be persistent (see Hall 2001b: 165).

However, there is no question that every effort must be made to decisively counter discrimination that takes place in the name of the state. The state has a duty to legitimize its own actions in terms of fairness and justice. If discriminatory effects are identified, they must be investigated, even if initially the specific discriminatory mechanisms are not apparent or directly comprehensible. Such claim must be inherent in government action. The gap in research on anti-Muslim racism is obvious. However, it cannot be ruled out that some of the institutional discrimination mechanisms identified so far in this study are transferable. However, one of the challenges here involves identifying where different forms of discrimination (for instance, derogatory attitude patterns toward the unemployed) overlap with racisms (for instance, prejudice against people with a refugee backdrop).

(Anti-Muslim) racist attitudes and statements are widespread and basically occur everywhere, including in government authorities (see Beigang et al. 2017: 257). As a structural feature at staff level, Graevskaia, Menke, and Rumpel (2022) state that government authorities are often uncertain and fail to act as required when dealing with refugees and migrants (ibid.: 6). In order to overcome such uncertainties, existing racist bodies of knowledge (see Terkessidis 1998) of the dominance society (see Rommelspacher 1995) are sometimes adopted. For example, people from Arab countries of origin are attributed a homogeneous culture that is then used in an attempt to decipher them, or refugee families are perceived as an “extended Arab family,” where we have yet to learn how to deal with them (see Graevskaia/Menke/Rumpel 2022: 11). Sexist, racializing attributions are used in the case of “Arab women,” situating them as uneducated and stuck in “backward-oriental” gender roles and denying them competences and abilities (ibid.: 9). Under such auspices, official measures do not aim at participation but at coping with a “traditional female everyday life” in which women are at best granted precarious positions (ibid.: 12). Beigang et al. (see 2017: 258) also show that an alleged migration backdrop can be a decisive factor for procedural barriers and lead to disadvantages. For instance, discretionary powers are used to a disadvantage or additional evidence is demanded due to mistrust (ibid.: 264).

Socially established racist “bodies of knowledge” are at the same time supported by discriminatory
practice. Individual experiences in dealing with migrants or people perceived as such are passed on verbally in simplified and generalized form as a pseudo well-founded interpretation. As presumed experiential knowledge, they then serve an alleged objectification of culturizing practices and the legitimization of discriminatory official action (see Bukow/Cudak 2017: 390; Graevskaia/Menke/Rumpel. 2022: 10–11). A system based on this not only suggests a cultural interpretation of the experience, but also forms the basis for the identification of alleged gaps in knowledge and needs in dealing with the counterpart, who is ostensibly to be deciphered through their culture. All too often, this in return results in specific further training on the supposed cultural backdrops of the people identified as belonging to a problem group (see Graevskaia/Menke/Rumpel 2022: 11).

The idea that access to the counterpart is primarily through specific cultural knowledge (see also subchapter ↗ 6.5.1.1) also leads to the fact that employees with their own or family migration biographies are regarded as supposed experts for entire groups, such as refugees, and are specifically deployed as such. The attribution of such special knowledge to individual employees who are perceived as migrants reduces the importance of subject-specific departmental knowledge, also granting disproportionate decision-making power to individual (sometimes non-expert) staff members. At the same time, this can also be accompanied by excessive demands, and those affected are pushed into a migration and cultural niche regardless of their professional preferences. This also relieves the institution as a whole from the responsibility of developing and adequately orienting itself to the diverse German society (see Graevskaia/Menke/Rumpel 2022: 13).

The present findings, as formulated at the beginning, do not refer specifically to anti-Muslim racism. Existing studies show, however, that public authority employees are uncertain when dealing with migrants and persons perceived as such and encounter them in a culturalizing manner. Since this uncertainty occurs primarily when groups of people are phenotypically perceived as different or particularly cliché images and prejudices exist about them, it can be assumed that the situation is similar with regard to Muslims or people perceived as such. The construction of Muslims as a group, an alleged homogeneous culture, a behavior derived from this, and the social demarcation and hierarchical polarization between a “natio-ethno-culturally” (Mecheril 2003) coded “we” and Muslims as “others” has been described many times (see also Attia 2009). Since we can assume that social relations are also articulated in institutions (see Karakayali/Tsianos 2004), we can also assume anti-Muslim racist institutional activity in government authorities. Individual cases and investigations at least give reason to believe that this could be a structurally widespread phenomenon. Relevant studies should investigate this in order to make well-founded assessments, especially since government authorities have an outstanding representative and also powerful position vis-à-vis citizens.

8.2 Anti-Muslim sentiment in the legislature

Anti-Muslim sentiment can also appear in the legislature of the political system. The legislature is the central controlling power of liberal democracy. Its actors, legitimized through elections, represent the democratic will of the people. However, the relationship between electoral democracy and racism or discrimination against minorities is often unclear, as MPs and political parties do not always hold flawless constitutional views. Political statements, programs, and parliamentary debates are therefore also characterized by a certain openness that guarantees the freedom of political discourse but can also lead to anti-Muslim statements. A culture of ideas and debate upheld by a nation’s representatives is extremely important for a country’s political culture and climate of opinion.
The following chapter addresses the question of whether anti-Muslim sentiment appears in party programs (federal and federal-state level), in the Bundestag (debates) and in far-right political movements. The UEM's evaluation of this issue is based on the current state of research, its own commissioned research (University of Erfurt), and its own further analyses.

8.2.1 Racism, hostility to the constitution and defensive party democracy: A theoretical introduction

From a theoretical point of view, this field is also primarily concerned with questions of structural and institutional racism or discrimination. The UEM therefore not only examines anti-Muslim attitudes, statements, and programs in the political sphere, but also assesses whether the actors take concrete measures to enable the participation of Muslims in German electoral democracy. It must be taken into account that the German Bundestag and the political parties represented there have different functions in liberal democracy. According to the United Nations, political participation is a human right and closely linked to the promotion of minority rights (see Wisser 2021: 31–33; Kymlicka 1995). Unlike other minority interests, political positions concerning the protection of ethnic and religious minorities are part of the core of human rights policy as so-called “unchosen consequences” (see Dworkin 2011). From this point of view, the German Bundestag would be under an obligation not only to label racist positions as unconstitutional, but also to ensure a) the concerns and b) the personal representation of members of ethnic and religious minorities.

It is not easy to say whether a right to participation exists at the level of political parties in the same way as in parliaments. Political parties are not identical with their elected representatives; they can in large parts be attributed to civil society. For them, an extended scope of positions applies, since they may not automatically be attributed to the state and its institutions, but represent plurality, which only needs to orient itself to the limits of what is legal. This means that they can also pursue non-constitutional goals as long as they do so within a non-violent and legal framework. A liberal constitution would become obsolete if it no longer gave space to its critics.

Despite their character as ideological establishments and religious communities, political parties are subject to a party law that characterizes them as special organizations because they take on tasks close to the state as organizations upstream of parliaments. The members of the federal and federal-state parliaments as well as the political officials of the ministries are recruited from among the parties. Political parties also enjoy a prominent position in political opinion-forming and policy formulation (interest aggregation), which in turn leads to the state co-financing the parties represented in parliaments (political foundations, tax benefits, etc.). This function close to the state gives rise to a conflict in the sense that, on the one hand, anti-constitutional positions must be tolerated in the party space, but at the same time other parties must distance themselves from these positions within the framework of so-called “defensible” or “disputatious” liberal democracy. This is because the political system based on Germany’s Basic Law would be shaken if a majority of the parties rejected the (anti-racist, etc.) foundations of the constitution. Defensible democracy enjoys constitutional status (see also Beck 2021).

In this sense, institutional racism is more difficult to define in political parties and parliaments than in the executive branch because of the constitutionally greater scope of discretion—but in the sense of defensible democracy, the definition is by no means arbitrary—and an anti-racist and diversity-oriented policy is the responsibility of the legislative subsystem. The distinction between anti-racism and diversity policy is significant because it goes hand in hand with the distinction
between manifest and structural/institutional racism. As already noted in the chapter on the executive branch, institutional racism is not only about the articulation of racist positions, but also about unintentional discrimination practices or political inaction, for instance, failure to act in the face of blocked access to participation for ethnic or religious minorities. Racism and anti-racism are thus not separate facets of life, but are closely related to questions of assimilation, integration, diversity, or recognition policies in the political sphere.

An anti-racist assimilation policy may recognize Muslims as equal individuals before German law, but it gives little space to their group-related interests. The same can be said for narrow definitions of integration as the adaptation to a “Leitkultur” or the like. In liberal democracy, integration is only mandatory in a few areas, such as the basic political values of loyalty to the constitution or the rule of law (see Meyer 2003: 162) or in economic solidarity, such as paying taxes (see Young 2000: 221–228). All other demands on Muslims are politically possible but limit the space of development of ethnic and religious minorities and go beyond the secular framework of liberal democracy through quasi-fundamentalist concepts of nation. Leading theorists, such as Young, assume that the representation of minority groups in the traditional institutional structure of democracy—dominated by the majority principle—leads to systematic discrimination (ibid.: 141–148). Institutional discrimination would thus be an often-unintended byproduct of a representative democracy, unless it pursues active anti-racist and at the same time diversity-oriented policies.

For the representation of Muslim interests in German parliaments and political parties, the situation looks fundamentally unfavorable. Accounting for around 6.5 percent of the population, Muslims are clearly a minority. Of course, it must be taken into account—and this will also have to be discussed—that many Muslims do not want to articulate their interests as Muslims in politics. Nevertheless, the basic problem remains, i.e., while fundamental and human rights grant Muslims certain freedoms that are in principle enforceable through the courts, they are unable to independently assert political positions due to non-Muslim hegemony but are dependent on the support of the established parties (see K. Hafez 2013b: 72–93). One does not have to go so far as to demand separate representation rights for such minorities (see Kymlicka 1995), but political commitment to ethnic and religious minorities as well as their active representation and participation must become the rule in a representative democracy if institutional discrimination is to be combated.

This leads to two central guiding questions for the following chapter:

- Are anti-Muslim positions represented in political communication in the Bundestag or in the programs of the political parties represented there—or, on the contrary, is anti-Muslim sentiment recognized as a political and social problem and combated through consistent measures?
- Are Muslim political concerns taken into account within the framework of a diversity policy and are Muslims sufficiently represented in the Bundestag and in the political parties—or do integration policy models and discourses prevent this and is there evidence of institutional discrimination in the legislature?

8.2.2 Political parties

8.2.2.1 State of research: Anti-populist consensus or a shift in discourse to the right?

In an analysis of political programs, Mirbach noted in 2008 growing attention to Muslims, with the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen and Die Linke parties standing out more than the CDU and CSU parties, which focused more on “demanding” than on “promoting”, i.e., aiming at adaptation to a German
“Leitkultur” (see 2008: 240–241). While Mirbach considers the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen party to be a role model in anti-discrimination policy because they had already placed a focus on combating right-wing extremism, anti-Semitism and racism in the 2005 Bundestag election campaign—long before the rise of AfD, Pegida, etc. (ibid.: 121), he believes that the CDU and CSU are already making it more difficult for migrants to participate at the level of civic framework legislation, for instance, on issues such as dual citizenship or naturalization.

F. Hafez still described the CDU and CSU parties as largely anti-Islamic in a 2012 publication that analyzed party programs as well as parliamentary discourse: Islam is only associated with negative topics, such as terrorism, the understanding of Islam is stereotypical, and the German Islam Conference is also characterized by an “asymmetrical discourse relationship” (2012: 73). The author sees the FDP party as a junior partner of anti-Islamic politics, whereas the SPD party, from its position in the opposition, primarily emphasized the problem of anti-Muslim sentiment, and the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen party even includes Islam in a common (multicultural) “we” (ibid.: 73–74).

K. Hafez emphasized one year later that Wolfgang Schäuble, Christian Wulff, and Angela Merkel had shifted the emphasis of the CDU toward the “liberal center” and a multicultural consensus, which had nevertheless not yet been fully understood and implemented in the political-cultural structure of the conservative political camp, where ideas of a Christian-Jewish-Occidental “Leitkultur” predominated (see 2013: 132–134). Thus, unlike F. Hafez, the author views the CDU’s relationship with Islam as contradictory rather than consistently anti-Muslim. In his view, only the slow shift of German conservatism toward multiculturalism under Merkel/Schäuble can also explain the increasing vacuum in the right-wing political spectrum across Europe, which was subsequently filled by neo-populist parties.

Dreß (2018) came to similar findings as K. Hafez with different formulations, albeit on the basis of a more limited integration theory approach, which did not primarily ask about participation (Mirbach) or recognition and anti-discrimination (K. Hafez), but rather focused on the aspect of the social integration of Muslims (ibid.: 508–511). Looking at the bourgeois parties, the author distinguishes between the dynamic-skeptical approach by the CDU/CSU and a dynamic-optimistic one pursued by the SPD, FDP and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen parties. The CDU and CSU are also classified here as parties that erect high assimilationist hurdles and strive for extensive cultural homogeneity. Dreß’s analysis of certain dynamics in the Islam policies of German political parties leads to the conclusion that the programs of Germany’s political parties move between the poles of anti-Muslim sentiment and multiculturalism (ibid.: 512).

8.2.2 A recent UEM study: Anti-Muslim sentiment in party programs and in the Bundestag

Since the above-mentioned studies were all conducted before the AfD was founded and established, the UEM commissioned the University of Erfurt to conduct an up-to-date study of the image of Islam among Germany’s political parties and in the Bundestag. This study was conducted by political scientist Dr. Imad Mustafa, University of Erfurt (2022). The methodology employed involved evaluating and analyzing the discourses of a total of 36 out of 150 federal and federal-state programs of the political parties represented in the Bundestag as well as 45 significant Bundestag debates in the period from 2015 to 2021. Above all, the inclusion of all federal programs allows for a decided trend analysis. The following account relies heavily on empirical and analytical findings from this UEM-commissioned study but embeds them in the broader state of research. In addition, it independently supplements and evaluates the empirical situation, drawing on the state of research, the at times also divergent
interpretation of the study results based on the UEM’s definition of anti-Muslim sentiment, and taking into account additional sources and facts. In terms of content, the core question is whether the right-wing populism of the AfD is creating an anti-populist counter-consensus or—on the contrary—anti-Islamic bridging discourses between the bourgeois parties and the AfD and thus a shift in discourse “to the right.”

8.2.2.2.1 Alternative für Deutschland (AfD): Manifest anti-Muslim sentiment

Mustafa examined, among other things, the discourse of belonging, for instance, “Islam belongs (does not belong) to Germany,” etc., in seven AfD federal and federal-state party programs from 2015 to 2021 (Mustafa 2022: 38–54, 203–208). In a total of 17 references, Islam is described in various ways as not belonging to Germany, which in its concrete form can be interpreted as a sign of latent (“does not belong to”) as well as manifest (“does not belong because it is generally negative”) anti-Muslim sentiment and reveals a program of action for the planned restriction of Muslim religious freedom, as shown by the examples in the following list:

- Islam was not part of our “identity,” “history,” “self-image” (Saxony-Anhalt 2016).
- “Orthodox Islam” was not compatible with the secular constitutional state (Bavaria 2018).
- Islam was in “conflict with the free democratic basic order,” limits were to be set for the religious freedom of Muslims (unlimited criticism of satire, bans on the building of mosques by anti-constitutional associations, foreign financing of mosques, Islamic teaching in schools, oriental building styles, the call of the muezzin, halal food in canteens, the oppression of women [Federal 2017, Thuringia 2019, Saxony-Anhalt 2021]), the “mutilation of newborns” (Saxony-Anhalt 2021).
- The constantly growing number of Muslims in Germany was a “great danger” (Federal 2017, Saarland 2017).
- The spread of Islam was a “threat to internal peace” and “our cultural identity” (Bavaria 2018, similarly Hesse 2018).
- Muslims were not ready for integration, come from “regions foreign to our culture” and their values are “incompatible with our European values” (Thuringia 2019).
- Islamic countries lacked tolerance toward “other world views” (Brandenburg 2019).

All in all, the AfD’s party programs create the image of a fully developed anti-Muslim ideology that permeates all federal and federal-state programs and, despite a few rare differentiations, sweepingly dissociate, disparage, and demonize Islam. Mustafa’s analysis convincingly shows how the AfD’s Islam program in its entirety violates the secular principle of equality of the Basic Law, that anti-Muslim narratives run “like a red thread through all AfD programs,” and are underpinned with ideological terms such as “ethnicity inversion” (Umvolkung) (ibid.: 44–50). All dimensions of anti-Muslim sentiment are fulfilled, such as general degradation of a religion or religious group, the construction of a general threat and the accompanying categorical cultural exclusion, which violates the principles of secular democracy.

After all, Muslims are not assumed to be genetically inferior in the strict sense, since individual Muslims are considered capable of assimilation if they give up their own religious-cultural orientation, which was not the case in the anti-
Semitism of National Socialism. In this respect, it is questionable whether the ethnic-nationalist orientation defined by Mustafa (ibid.: 38, 45, 54) does in fact fully apply to the AfD party in its entirety. Mustafa, however, rightly speaks of a linguistic proximity to the fascist jargon of past times, which can be recognized not least in central German federal-state programs (for instance, “population policy of reallocation,” “culturally alien,” Thuringia 2019) (see Kailitz 2021: 12–13).

In Thuringia, influenced by Björn Höcke, party programs also allude to the racist purity ideology of “ethnopluralism” (see K. Hafez 2019), which is widespread in clearly right-wing extremist circles (see also subchapter ➔ 8.2.5). For the purpose of the UEM, the question of ethnic orientation must remain unresolved for the time being, but it is obvious from the party’s current programs that the AfD’s anti-Muslim sentiment is with certainty fully developed culturalist “racism without races.” Moreover, the function of religion and anti-Muslim sentiment as an esoteric bond and discourse offer by the AfD to the center of society, as identified by Schneider, Pickel, and Öztürk (2021), can be clearly recognized.

In its report on the question of the AfD’s hostility to the constitution in 2019, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution states that the party’s program “does not yet contain sufficiently condensed factual indications, but certainly suspicious fragments of information that could point to an orientation against the free democratic basic order […]” (Meister/Biselli/Reuter 2019). In a separate passage on anti-Islamic sentiment, however, the report then states much more clearly that the suspicion had been substantiated “that the political Islam agenda of the AfD’s organizational units ultimately amounts to an impairment of the right to freedom of religion or undermines this right and thus constitutes an indication of an anti-constitutional endeavor” (ibid.).

In light of the report by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution and of the UEM’s own analysis above, the UEM cannot but recognize the clearly intended, significant, and serious efforts to restrict Muslim religious freedom in the AfD’s Islam policy. Anti-Muslim sentiment can be found not only in individual statements by party members and elected representatives, but also in central parts of federal and federal-state programs. Both aspects together—manifest anti-Muslim sentiment and an anti-freedom program—substantiate the fact and not only the suspicion that the AfD’s Islam policy is indeed anti-constitutional and has a clearly articulated program of serious restrictions of fundamental rights for Muslims, which is directed against human dignity. It is unclear why, despite the visible evidence, the Office for the Protection of the Constitution shies away from the final step of declaring the AfD to be anti-constitutional. Anti-Muslim sentiment and programs are not only evident in the so-called “wing” of the party, which has been classified by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution as “proven right-wing extremist,” but in the breadth of the party’s current federal and federal-state programs, which stand for its fundamental orientation and are openly aligned against the basic values of the constitution (see also A.-K. Müller 2021).

8.2.2.2 Christlich Demokratische Union (CDU)/Christlich Soziale Union (CSU): Ambivalent attitude

The Islam policy of the CDU and CSU parties has been slowly moving toward the recognition of cultural membership since the Angela Merkel era at the latest, but at the same time it has long held on to the assimilationist idea of adapting to an ostensibly Christian-Jewish imprint and “Leitkultur” (see Mirbach 2008: pp. 84, 109). The parties emphasize the right to religious freedom like no

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98 The CDU and CSU submitted joint programs for the 2017 and 2021 federal elections, which have been analysed by Mustafa; only the larger sister party, the CDU, was considered for the state programs.
other party but seem to interpret this freedom primarily as individual rights of privacy. In the social sphere, participation by Muslims is made much more difficult. To name just two examples: The recognition of religious communities is to be carried out according to strict legal standards shaped by the Christian Church, even if these are difficult to transfer to Islam; conservatively governed federal states often have some catching up to do when it comes to integrating Islam into school curricula (see K. Hafez 2013b: 263–283).

How far have the conservative parties come on their path toward recognizing Islam?

Unlike the AfD, the CDU and CSU have no language in their 2017 and 2021 federal programs or in other federal-state programs that explicitly excludes Islam from the cultural context (“does not belong to...”) (see Mustafa 2022: 54–72, 208–211). On the contrary, terror and violence are labeled as an abuse of Islam. It is said that Muslims living in Germany contribute to Germany’s success with their ideas and their work. Anti-Islam sentiment was not tolerated: “Anyone who lives in Germany is part of our society” (Federal 2021).

However, two things become apparent here that are relevant to the question of anti-Muslim sentiment:

- The recognition of Islam as part of Germany is diluted linguistically and conceptually in variants, which may indicate a subliminal tendency toward non-inclusion and latent (differentialist) anti-Muslim sentiment (“is different from...”). Unlike the AfD programs, the programs of the conservative parties do not explicitly exclude Islam and Muslims at any point (if at all, only individual voices in the parties). However, it is noticeable that the expression coined publicly by Schäuble, Merkel, and Wulff that “Islam belongs to Germany” has not found its way into the party programs either. Instead, linguistic toning down can be found here (“Dialogue with Muslims living here,” Federal 2017; “Whoever lives in Germany is part of our society,” Federal 2021).

- The programs also contain numerous security policy bridging discourses to right-wing populism with a huge emphasis on negative tendencies of Islam, for instance, when Islamism, jihadism, clan criminality and organized crime are mentioned in the same breath. The 2016 program of Baden-Württemberg, for instance, formulates an openness to impulses from other cultures in addition to a commitment to Christian occidental values, but at the same time offers exclusively negative contextualization for Islam (ISIS terrorism, jihadism, burqa ban) (see Mustafa 2022: 69). In the 2017 CDU program of North Rhine-Westphalia, a “comprehensive image of fear” (Mustafa) is drawn by mentioning New Year’s Eve in Cologne, Berlin’s Breitscheidplatz, no-go areas, etc. (ibid.: 60). The fact that crimes are also committed in the name of religion in other religious-cultural spaces (Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, etc.) is not considered; positive aspects of Muslim life in Germany are hardly mentioned at all. Islam is thus treated much more negatively than other religions.

Against the backdrop of the state of research, the empirical situation can be interpreted to the effect that the CDU and CSU are in a state of limbo where the recognition of Islam that began in the party during the Merkel era (German Islam Conference etc., subchapters 8.1.2.1 and 8.1.2.2) has, just like the case of the AfD party, led to the avoidance of a clear racist demarcation and even to anti-Islam sentiment being named as a social problem. That being said, however, the cultural participation of Islam is not yet anchored in the party programs, but latent culturalist demarcations do take place (Germany is Christian-Jewish, but not explicitly Islamic, etc.), which fulfill the definition of latent anti-Muslim sentiment or non-inclusion (institutional racism) at various levels.
8.2.2.3 Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP): Wavering attitude

According to Mustafa’s study, cultural-religious affiliation does not have much significance in the FDP party—in contrast to conservative and right-wing populist parties (ibid.: 72–81, 211). Only three of the six party programs examined address Islam—only the federal-state programs and not at federal level. According to the programs, Islam had become a “socially relevant faith” and the party advocated for comprehensive Islamic instruction in schools in German and under German school supervision (Lower Saxony 2017, North Rhine-Westphalia 2017). In Schleswig-Holstein, Islam is presented as a “very relevant religion” alongside Christianity and Judaism (SH 2017).

The 2017 federal program does not formulate an affiliation credo for Islam, but this is basically understandable because of the party’s generally strict secular stance. At least anti-Islam sentiment is mentioned as a social problem (in the same breath as anti-Semitism) (Federal 2017) (see Mustafa 2022: 80)—a reference which, however, disappears again four years later (while the one on anti-Semitism remains!) (Federal 2021). In both federal and federal-state programs, the threat scenario of Islam is embellished, albeit much less than with the AfD or even with the CDU, but the threat of Islamism and terror is repeatedly mentioned, forced veiling is rejected, and prevention in schools is urged (Federal 2017). In Lower Saxony, for instance, the party opposes “misunderstood tolerance” by the security agencies and advocates for consistent action against extremism; the burqa and niqab are rejected in schools (2017), as are refusals to integrate and parallel justice (Rhineland-Palatinate 2016). The FDP also mentions positive aspects of Islam, for instance, it aims to strengthen progressive and liberal Muslims who are less organized in Muslim associations. However, the party combines this with the comment that faith communities should be less controlled from abroad.

On the whole, the FDP’s Islam program can be seen to be moving more toward the political center compared to the conservative parties. Disregarding the (probably ideologically conditioned) lack of a positive cultural recognition credo (“Islam belongs to Germany”), neither manifest (AfD) nor latent (CDU) anti-Muslim sentiment can be discerned in the party. The liberal self-image is based primarily on the constitutional foundations and the liberal model does not contain a culturally shaped concept of nation. However, the rather one-sided emphasis on potential dangers creates a discourse structured around hostility. It is also surprising that references to anti-Islam sentiment from the 2017 federal program are no longer to be found in the 2021 program. This is all the more astonishing considering that attacks like those in Hanau or Christchurch took place during this time, and that Muslims increasingly suffered persecution in Western societies, which should lead to an attitude of solidarity in a liberal party based on the rule of law. The strong emphasis on the dangers of Islam with simultaneous failure to act against anti-Islam sentiment creates an imbalance that can certainly be described as an element of institutional racism. Even though the FDP introduced a question in the Bundestag in 2019 on the prevention of anti-Muslim sentiment in schools, the party programs, at least, show a rather wavering attitude instead of real commitment against racism.

For many years, the SPD has been edging toward explicit recognition of Islam as part of Germany (see Mustafa 2022: 81–94, 211–213). According to the party’s Hamburg program from 2015, Muslim and Alevi communities deserve “respect and recognition like other religious communities.” The SPD in Baden-Württemberg recognizes in 2016: “People of Muslim faith are part of our society.” Finally, the 2017 Bundestag election program states: “Muslims and Islam are part of our country.” In North Rhine-Westphalia, the SPD recognizes in 2017: The “Islamic faith (...) belongs to North Rhine-Westphalia” (similarly: Hesse 2018).

In the years that follow, the clarity of this recognition is again restricted. In 2021, the SPD in Rhineland-Palatinate only speaks of “recognition and participation of Muslims” instead of Islam, even if the problem of anti-Islam sentiment is at least named (similarly: Hesse 2018). The 2021 Bundestag election program does mention “recognition and participation of Muslims” and, for the first time at federal level, anti-Islam sentiment as a social problem; however, unlike in 2017, Islam is no longer described as “belonging.”

The SPD’s federal-state programs note a commitment to Islamic religious education in schools (Baden-Württemberg 2016, Hesse 2018, Rhineland-Palatinate 2021) and to the equality of Islam before the constitutional law on religion (Federal 2017). Occasionally, although not as frequently as with the CDU and CSU and certainly not comparable with the AfD, negative facets of Muslim reality such as “parallel structures” (Baden-Württemberg 2016), prevention of Islamism in schools (Rhineland-Palatinate 2016) and the fight against Salafism are mentioned (North Rhine-Westphalia 2017).

The right-left spectrum is obviously decisive for the parties’ attitude toward Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment. The further left we move in the spectrum, the clearer the commitment to Islam/Muslims and against anti-Muslim sentiment seems to become. With the statement expressed in the 2017 federal program, “Islam and Muslims belong to Germany,” the SPD is again one step ahead of the FPD when it comes to cultural recognition.

However, with the few references to equality and religious education, it is not yet possible to speak of a differentiated anti-discrimination program in the SPD. In addition, similar to the FDP, a comparison of the 2017 and 2021 federal programs shows that there is still no consolidated program but some steps backwards in the recognition of Islam. Whether this change in language in the SPD (Islam/Muslims) or also the omission of the problem of anti-Muslim sentiment by the FDP marks a shift in discourse to the right—possibly even motivated by an increasingly populist view after the so-called “refugee crisis” and the AfD’s entry into the Bundestag in 2017—cannot be determined without more in-depth interviews. However, the programs themselves show that the recognition of Islam is neither theoretically nor practically consolidated and that there is still no clear commitment to the fight against anti-Muslim sentiment. Some federal state branches of the SPD are in fact confusing when it comes to the fight against anti-Muslim sentiment: In Brandenburg 2019, instead of anti-Islam or anti-Muslim sentiment, “anti-Islamism” is mentioned in the same breath as anti-Semitism and anti-Romani sentiment (see Mustafa 2022: 86). The basic recognition of Islam and anti-Islam sentiment thus remains altogether fraught with question marks.
8.2.2.2.5 Bündnis 90/Die Grünen: Declining solidarity

The desire for a clear commitment to Islam as a part of Germany, coupled with a clear program for combating anti-Muslim sentiment and for establishing the equality of Islam (while clearly distinguishing itself from certain forms of political Islam), is initially fulfilled by the program put forward by Bündnis 90/Die Grünen for the Bundestag elections of 2017—before the 2021 program again raised critical questions (see Mustafa 2022: 94–11, 213–216). In 2017—similar to the FDP and SPD, i.e., the current coalition partners of the “traffic light coalition”—the program states that Islam, like all other religions and world views, belongs to Germany. There is no longer any sign of the culturalist (CDU/CSU) or clearly anti-Muslim (AfD) positions of the conservative or right-wing populist parties. The secular constitution is the guiding meta-value. Muslim communities are described as a welcome part of the open society. Corporate status and recognition as religious communities are promised, although not for organizations such as DITIB, the Islamic Council, or the Central Council of Muslims, which are not theologically distinguishable, as required by German law, but are assigned to national-ethnic tendencies and appear to be open to influence from the outside.

Anti-Muslim racism is clearly named by Bündnis 90/Die Grünen in 2017, and the party also explicitly opposes structural discrimination. Preventive measures are to be taken to counter Islamism, Salafism, and right-wing extremism, but there are significantly fewer negative associations here than, for instance, by right-wing populist and conservative parties. In 2017, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen are dominated by a credo of recognizing Islam and fighting structural racism—perhaps the most exemplary program in the entire survey set. The party’s 2017 program in North Rhine-Westphalia corresponds to this tenor and also announces Muslim chaplaincy in hospitals.

Other federal-state programs, on the other hand, remain largely unspecific in their orientation (for instance, Bavaria 2018). The 2021 federal election program even contains signs of a regression, i.e., it is no longer Islam that belongs to Germany, but “Muslim life,” which is problematic in as far as this language variant was invented in the conservative camp and once again calls into question the equal cultural recognition of Islam. The program addresses the threat to Muslim institutions, as well as the continued planned equality of Islamic religious communities, but also emphasizes that above all progressive, liberal Muslim representations should be promoted, and demonstrates solidarity with critics of “fundamentalist political forces.” Admittedly, the reference to progressive Islam, similar to the FDP, can certainly be seen as a positive association. Instead of open equality within the framework of German laws, however, an ideological reservation is suddenly introduced here, which can easily be interpreted against orthodox-conservative Islam, especially since the concept of fundamentalism remains unclear.

What’s even more serious is the fact that anti-Muslim racism or anti-Muslim sentiment are no longer even mentioned, which is surprising since it was between 2017 and 2021 that attacks like the one in Hanau took place and one could expect a clear stance from Bündnis 90/Die Grünen with their long history of multiculturalism—which, however, is missing. While the SPD finally acknowledges anti-Islam sentiment as a problem, the FDP and Die Grünen remove it from their federal programs, which must be seen as a sign of declining solidarity in the fight against racism.

With a view to today’s governing coalition parties, despite all the ambiguities and lack of differentiation in their programs, a history of positioning themselves in favor of the recognition of Islam and against anti-Islam sentiment can be discerned that differs in principle from conservative and right-wing populist parties. At the same time, their party programs in recent years have
shown a partial decline in solidarity and a shift in discourse despite increasing threats to Muslims, which have now even been explicitly named in reports by the U.S. State Department (see subchapter 8.1.3.4). Instead of the anti-Muslim sentiment recognized for many years solely by the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen party, all that remains is a vague declaration of a fight against right-wing extremism, which is problematic in as far as a) the concrete form of racism directed against Muslims is concealed (which would be unthinkable in the case of anti-Semitism) and b) racism is not only a problem of extremism, but emerges in the middle of German society. Anti-Muslim sentiment is not mentioned again until the coalition agreement between the SPD, FDP and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen at the end of 2021 (see the coalition agreement of SPD/Die Grünen/FDP 2021: 95)—however, how this will be anchored in these parties’ programs must be monitored.

8.2.2.2.6 Die Linke: Pragmatic anti-racism

With a view to anti-Muslim sentiment, Die Linke party has a profile that differs from all other parties (see Mustafa 2022: 115–128). It can probably best be characterized as a looser form of anti-racist secularism and is clearly reflected in the 2017 and 2021 federal election programs. Even if a separation of state and churches/religious communities is not a guiding theme of left-wing programs, it is noticeable that the party—unlike the CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen—does not deliver a declaration of belonging, neither toward Islam nor Muslims. At the same time, the federal and federal-state programs examined for the UEM testify to a strong anti-racist credo that systematically includes structural and institutional racism, opposes, for instance, racial profiling, and at the present point in time—this was not always the case—also specifically names “anti-Islam sentiment” and “anti-Muslim racism” (with changing terminology) alongside other forms of racism (such as anti-Semitism and anti-Romani sentiment).

Muslims are therefore strongly and very consistently perceived in their role as potential victims of racism. On the other hand, their positive recognition as part of German culture is omitted, so that a diversity policy, which is strongly emphasized by Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, for instance, fails to emerge here and the social analysis is largely limited to universal socio-economic, pacifist, and similar criteria. The anti-racist approach, however, is consistently considered throughout: Islam, unlike in other political programs, is hardly ever addressed in negative contexts (terrorism, Islamism, etc.); on the contrary, emphasis is placed on the shared responsibility of Western countries for the terror of ISIS (Federal 2017). Criticism of Islam is seen as a common strategy of anti-Muslim sentiment, the freedom of Muslims to dress is emphasized, attacks on mosques are condemned, and even “state-supported holidays” are suggested for Jews and Muslims (Federal 2017)—which at this point goes beyond anti-racism and is a practical form of cultural-religious recognition.

The possible objection that Die Linke is imposing left-wing fundamentalism through radical secular views, which An-Na’im characterizes as the Western counterpart to Islamist fundamentalism (see 2009), would certainly be wrong here. Without doubt, one can criticize a certain failure to positively recognize Muslim affiliation. Culture (“cultural citizenship”) is not elevated to a central characteristic. However, it is clear that the party is pursuing a pragmatic form of post-nationalist politics that not only aims to avoid excluding anyone and opposes “racism” in the abstract sense, but specifically addresses anti-Islam sentiment and, unlike all other parties in fact, does not introduce anti-Muslim sentiment through the back door by over-emphasizing negative discourse structures. In this context, the federal programs are certainly more developed than most of the federal-state programs, which, however, have a similar tenor (for instance, Berlin 2016, Saarland 2017, Thuringia 2019, Baden-Württemberg 2021). The disadvantage of the secular approach, how-
ever, remains that the ideas for policy on religion (for instance, recognition of Muslim religious communities or organizations) remain underdeveloped compared to some other parties.

8.2.2.2.7 Credo: Polarization between anti-Muslim sentiment and recognition

As can be seen in the UEM analysis below, the AfD is the only party in the Bundestag with a manifestly anti-Muslim program. In the CDU/CSU, latent anti-Muslim sentiment can be seen in the inconsistent recognition of Islam as part of the German nation or culture. All other parties dispense with such constructs but fail to consistently combat institutional racism on the level of discursively locating Islam as an enemy image (terrorism, etc.) as well as passive and often unstructured attitudes—in recent years, moreover, strangely with diminishing solidarity. Die Linke is the only exception here, although certain weaknesses in religious equality are evident here. However, the shift in discourse to the right cannot be put down to the entry of the AfD into parliament, at least not in the party programs, but is rather a matter of slowly advancing recognition. When it comes to combating anti-Muslim sentiment and recognizing Islam, a broad anti-AfD consensus is in fact discernible. In the overall picture with the AfD, however, there has been a stronger polarization between anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-racism or recognition since the party entered the Bundestag.

8.2.3 The German Bundestag

8.2.3.1 State of research since 9/11: “New objectivity,” old demarcations

Numerous academic studies are available on the reception of Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment in the German Bundestag. They roughly cover the period from 1994 until shortly before the so-called “refugee crisis” in 2014. In a comparison of debates in the Bundestag in 2000/2001 and 2003/2004, Halm noted a shift in discourse toward an increasing perception of a threat emanating from Islam (terrorism) at the expense of an emphasis on dialogue and equality (see Stiftung Zentrum für Türkeistudien und Integrationsforschung 2006: 18). In 2010, Klug confirmed the finding of a shift toward a perception of a crisis in conjunction with Islam (see 2010: 86), but at the same time conceded a respectful approach to Islam that was strikingly different from media discourses (ibid.: 155). Thus, in the first decade of the 21st century, the Bundestag obviously unfolded its own discourse logic, which was largely devoid of manifestly negative anti-Muslim sentiment. However, latent anti-Muslim sentiment was already evident in the CDU/CSU at that time, for instance, through the “culturalist coupling of origin and religious conviction,” which, according to the author, was likely to further encourage existing resentment in the population (ibid.: 162–163).

Fritzsche came to rather inconsistent findings six years later in a study of the debates on the Bundestag’s reports on the state of the nation in the period from 1994 to 2014—i.e., until immediately before the so-called “refugee crisis” of 2015 (see 2016). The study confirmed that the Bundestag continued to be behind other, openly anti-Muslim sections of the public in the intensity of its debates. Fritzsche recorded a similar picture in the increasingly occurring “Islam belongs to Germany” debates as was also evident in the party programs analyzed above: certain reservations on the part of the CDU/CSU, but a “clear yes” on the part of the rest of the party landscape represented in the Bundestag (ibid.: 69). Even in the course of the Sarrazin debate, the Bundestag predominantly criticized the defamatory, exclusionary, and biologically arguments put forward by the book’s author (ibid.: 72). Immediately before the formation of the AfD, the author even thought she could perceive a “new objectivity” in how Islam was addressed in the German parliament (ibid.: 72–74). In contrast to this, however, the study found that the concept of integration was becoming increasingly culturally charged and focused on values, which Fritzsche
considers to constitute an “exclusionary potential” and a constant expansion of “what is acceptable to say with regard to anti-Muslim statements” (ibid.: 75), since values beyond adherence to the law are very diffuse in a free society and are hardly suitable as a credible criterion. While representatives of all parties often “vehemently oppose generalizations” (ibid.: 79), exaggerated “we” constructions and latent demarcations against Muslims were thus certainly present in some political spectrums.

The previous analysis of anti-Muslim sentiment in the Bundestag since 2015 is incomplete. The AfD parliamentary group, which has been in the Bundestag since 2017, has become a catchment basin for right-wing extremist citizens, which has led to an impairment of everyday parliamentary work through harassment and intimidation (see Botsch 2021). It also seems clear that with the AfD, aggressive anti-Muslim sentiment has arrived, whose central myth of the threat and conspiracy of alleged Islamization through the totalitarian ideology of Islam is repeatedly put forward by members of parliament, and in some speeches the already radical party programs have even been further sharpened (see Schiebel 2019: 121–137, 127–129, 133–134.). The AfD’s hostility to the constitution is more than clear from the example of anti-Muslim sentiment in parliament as well.

Moreover, there has been insufficient scientific research so far on how the other parties reacted to these provocations. Is there anti-racist resistance to the AfD or, on the contrary, a right-wing populist contagion effect on German democracy—resulting in a shift in discourse to the right? The UEM again commissioned the University of Erfurt to conduct a corresponding discourse analysis of the Bundestag’s communications (Mustafa 2022). The central empirical results of the study are summarized below and were independently evaluated by the UEM.

8.2.3.2 General analysis: Security focus of the Islam debate

Forty-five Islam-relevant debates in the German Bundestag in the period from 2015 to 2021 were first assessed quantitatively in the form of a topic frequency analysis, whereby only those debates that focused on Islam were included in the sample (ibid.: 142–145). Twenty-one debates focused on the aspect of external terrorism, especially ISIS, ten others on domestic extremism, six on “Leitkultur” and integration, four addressed the question of belonging, and only one dealt with anti-Islam sentiment or anti-Muslim racism. The author of the study, Imad Mustafa, agrees that the focus on security is generally strong (ibid.: 143) and that the Bundestag’s “Islam discourse is problem-centered” (ibid.: 145).

Based on this analysis, it can be said that despite the progress made by the Bundestag in discussing the immanent concerns of Muslims in Germany, i.e., anti-Muslim sentiment, belonging, etc., the security narrative clearly predominates as the primary concern of the majority society. It remains to be seen whether this can be referred to as a representation gap. In addition, debates in the Bundestag on Islam are often primarily held in response to certain occasions, so that in addition to every security event (terror in the Middle East, etc.) seeming to override the socio-structural concerns of Muslims (racism, etc.), the discursive occasions (Sarrazin, Seehofer, etc.) also often appear to set the pace. The Bundestag thus shows very clearly that it orients its Islam agenda less to the state of scientific research or to its own political concerns and more to popular opinion. Here, too, discussion is needed regarding the extent to which this is a necessary openness toward the public or a populist reflex that would have to be counteracted by stronger self-control on the part of politics. In any case, the selectivity of the discourse is important for the issue of anti-Muslim sentiment, because an excessive focus on terrorism and integration problems forces a correspondingly negative image
of Islam through selective topic setting, even without making sweeping judgments about Islam (so-called agenda setting, see also chapter 7).

8.2.3.3 Exemplary debate 2015/Charlie Hebdo: Hesitant “we” inclusion

While the Bundestag seems to follow general moods instead of setting independent topics when it comes to choosing its Islam-related themes, it proves to be surprisingly autonomous and resilient when it comes to forming opinions itself—at least before the AfD entered in 2017. Mustafa notes in his analysis of the debate on the Islamist attack on the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo (January 8, 2015)\(^\text{100}\) that even in this politically charged situation, the German parliament strongly condemned terrorism, but at the same time emphasized that it was mainly Muslims themselves who were the victims of such attacks worldwide (see 2022: 147). Not least leading politicians of the CDU party (Merkel, Lammert) opposed a blanket condemnation of Islam. Conservative politicians demonstrated in this situation that although they think in an assimilationist sense, this is not manifestly racist. As Mustafa emphasizes, Merkel placed herself “almost protectively” in front of Muslims and stressed that Germany would not let itself be divided by terrorism (ibid.: 148). This position was similarly expressed by the SPD (Oppermann) and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Hofreiter)—the defense of Muslims against the general accusation of violence proved to be strong and clear (ibid.: 152–157).

The debate is of high political importance because it shows that the CDU/CSU parliamentary group in the Bundestag was prepared to include Muslims in a common “we”—in this case in a cohesive community against terror—and that the new political culture of the German Islam Conference could also prove stable in the event of a crisis. Mustafa’s comment that the CDU was not free of culturalist threat scenarios in this debate either (ibid.: 150), for instance, when the party questioned the shared responsibility of the Islamic clergy, must be taken quite seriously. However, criticism of the real theological discourse of Islam should by no means be automatically interpreted as anti-Muslim sentiment, because such demands are also rightly made in other religions—for instance, in cases of child abuse in the Catholic Church. The more political and sociologically based criticism expressed by Die Linke (Gysi) (ibid.: 150–152) regarding the West’s visible shared responsibility for terror through the illegal war in Iraq in 2003 must be seen as an important addition to the CDU/CSU’s culture-based criticism. This showed a realpolitik analysis of terrorism, which Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Hofreiter) supplemented with the essential remark that the immigration society also needed to recognize its failures and responsibility with regard to the radicalization of young people. Racism and exaggerated exclusion justified by security policy concerns following September 11 were clearly named here—which in turn was a criticism of the CDU/CSU, which in the same debate (CSU, Hasselfeldt) demanded stricter security measures, thus understanding Muslims almost exclusively as dangerous people.

This security policy reflex without any sensitivity for the racist and geopolitical contexts of the cause of terror is an indication that in 2015, even before the AfD arrived, delimiting security interests weighed more heavily than concrete anti-racist action in the German Bundestag, despite all the clarity of the anti-racist positioning, at least in the ranks of the government parties, which is an indication of institutional or structural racism (through inaction).

8.2.3.4 Exemplary debates in 2018 and 2021/dispute with the AfD: Breaking racist taboos

Mustafa (2022) examined several debates held in the German Bundestag from 2018 and 2021 at the request of the AfD that exemplify changes in discourse due to the entry of the right-wing populist party. In 2018, shortly after the racist events in Chemnitz, the AfD provoked a heated debate about Islam, also in terms of tone and treatment, with a debate titled “Incompatibility of Islam, Sharia, and the rule of law.”\(^{101}\) The AfD (Curio) described Islam and the Quran as an ideology that is not a religion and therefore does not belong to Germany (“Merkel no longer belongs to Germany;” ibid.: 178). This manifest anti-Muslim sentiment was a racist breach of taboo with no evidence whatsoever of any ability to discern, and which thus even then was in line with the AfD’s radical 2021 election campaign program. The accusations of violence, backwardness, lawlessness, and anti-Semitism obviously had several functions here: They served to relieve the nation’s own guilt over the Holocaust as well as to construct a new racist-ideological bridging discourse of alleged “Islamization” and “overwhelming foreign infiltration” to the center of society, where, according to the AfD, Islam was widely rejected. Taking an isolated look at the AfD, the 2017 election opened the Bundestag’s doors to a decidedly racist political program that violates the basic values of Germany’s Basic Law, unseen in such clarity in any other party represented there since 1945.

In general, however, it can be said that—with a few exceptions—the other parties did not cross the bridge of racism, on the contrary, new acceptable expressions emerged also in the sense of clear ethical anti-racism, which is why it is possible to talk of a polarization of the discourse with a clear preponderance of an anti-racist consensus. Instead of a shift in discourse to the right, most MPs erected bulwarks against the AfD. Numerous MPs, including MPs from the CDU/CSU (de Vries, Sensburg, Hoffmann), FDP (Martens, Teuteberg), SPD (Brunner, Castellucci), Die Grünen (Polat), Die Linke (Straetmanns, Buchholz), criticized not only the anti-constitutional nature of the AfD’s image of Islam, but also the racist basis of such views, sometimes very emotionally, but in any case, with due clarity (ibid.: 179–182).

That being said, however, it also became clear that CDU/CSU parliamentarians spoke who, despite their counter-speech to the AfD, also entered bridging discourses, some of them (de Vries) describing themselves as “not being at all distant from you [Baumann, AfD]” (ibid.: 122): This was clearly a different generation speaking compared to Lammert and Merkel in 2015. The ambivalence of such a view in the CDU/CSU, however, was contrasted by a defensive clarity in the other parties, where again anti-Muslim sentiment threatened to be perceived as a problem of the right-wing fringe, but there was hardly any sustained criticism of the political center and its anti-Muslim attitudes.

In another debate in 2021,\(^{102}\) the AfD (Baumann) again bluntly constructed a fundamental opposition between Islam and Western values and accused the “old parties” of paying homage to a multicultural ideology of forced marriages, genital mutilation, child marriages, and clan criminality (ibid.: 158–161). The CDU/CSU’s statements (de Vries, Wendt) again showed the unclear demarcation from the AfD, because although, possible threats from Islamic extremism were emphasized with a certain degree of justification, regular struc-
tutes of Islam and the strict religious behavior of orthodox-conservative Muslims were seamlessly included in the argumentation (ibid.: 161–165). Other parties, such as the FDP (Kuhle, Teuteberg), also expressed their support for an immigrant society in 2021 or, like the SPD, positioned themselves clearly and sometimes very forcefully against racism and for the equal recognition of Muslims (Lindh, Castellucci) (ibid.: 165–171).

This underlines that, in response to the arrival of the AfD, the focus on anti-racism in parliament has been sharpened among most other parties. Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Mihalic) even turned the tables, referring to the AfD as anti-integration enemies of the constitution (ibid.: 172–173). An extended speakability in a progressive direction was also shown by Die Linke (Jelpke), who even stated more clearly than in its party program: “Islam belongs to Germany” (ibid.: 173).

8.2.3.5 Credo: Verbal anti-racism, inaction and institutional racism in the German Bundestag

At present, there is no discernible reason to speak of a “shift in discourse to the right” since the arrival of the AfD in the German Bundestag. Rather, a stronger polarization of what is acceptable to say in relation to both racism (AfD) and anti-racism (all others) is also evident in the Bundestag debates, similar to the party programs. Anti-Muslim sentiment in Germany is now condemned more clearly than ever in the German Bundestag, despite and perhaps precisely because of the AfD’s racist plenary appearances. In this respect, the question arises as to whether the AfD has not in fact helped to strengthen liberal democracy by encouraging ethical consensus of the other parties. However, dangerous bridging discourses can also be found in the ranks of the CDU/CSU. Most of the other parties are rhetorically and symbolically more clearly anti-racist, but in parts they still remain too passive when it comes to the concrete elimination of institutional and social discrimination.

The different approaches pursued by the parties can be exemplified by the only debate up to now in the German Bundestag which in January 2021—following a motion for a resolution by Die Linke titled “Anti-Muslim Racism and Discrimination against Muslims in Germany” specifically addressed the subject of anti-Muslim sentiment. Die Linke clearly states in its motion that violence against Muslims and their institutions is now a daily occurrence in Germany and that the number of such incidents has been at an “alarmingly high level” for years. Following the attacks in Hanau and Halle, the party therefore called for numerous measures to improve the situation, including the abolition of racial profiling and police controls without suspicion: “The word Islamism appears 137 times in the report of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution. The word anti-Islam sentiment only once in the preface.” Discrimination, especially against Muslim women wearing headscarves, was also commonplace in everyday life. The Bundestag therefore needed to end discrimination “by state bodies” and create “instruments” to end discrimination in other areas of society. Demands included a federal anti-discrimination law, a police complaints office, a ban on random controls, mandatory documentation of police controls, liberalization of religious dress codes, reform of the General Act on Equal Treatment, increased prevention under the federal


\[104\] Deutscher Bundestag (2021): Stenographischer Bericht: 204. Sitzung. p. 25722. Available online: https://dserver.bundestag.de/btp/19/19204.pdf#P.25722 [April 24, 2023]. In Mustafa’s study, this debate is left out for formal reasons, as the author bases his case selection on the categories of security discourse, integration and belonging/not belonging.


\[106\] Ibid.: 2.
program “Demokratie leben!” (Live Democracy!), police protection for Muslim institutions, and equal status for Muslim chaplaincy.

The motion for a resolution was finally rejected when the AfD, CDU/CSU, SPD, and FDP voted against it and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen abstained. The arguments put forward by the parties make it clear why, despite all opposition to the AfD, there can be no talk of a complete consensus against racism and anti-Muslim sentiment in the German Bundestag. The CDU/CSU (de Vries) opposed anti-Muslim sentiment, but in return (like the AfD) rejected the term “anti-Muslim racism” as an allegedly contrived term. A collection of data on anti-Muslim violence was sufficient, the urgently needed reforms in the area of institutional racism, especially in security agencies, were rejected. In a strong emotional appeal, the SPD (Lindh) stressed the need to “depart from a culture of insinuation and suspicion” and to improve the representation of Muslims—but then voted against the motion. The FDP (Strasser) certainly wanted to strengthen prevention offers in an effort to raise awareness among the police and the civil service but did not want to support alleged prejudices against the security and police authorities. Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Polat) largely confined themselves to calling for a reform of the General Act on Equal Treatment—other initiatives to eliminate institutional racism and anti-Muslim sentiment in everyday life, however, were not on their agenda.

All in all, despite all the rhetorical progress, there is at best an ethical and symbolic political consensus (beyond the AfD) for the recognition of Islam and the problems of anti-Muslim sentiment in Germany, but not for an anti-discrimination policy that consistently eliminates institutional racism in government authorities. Demands to improve policing, for instance, as formulated by the ODIHR (see subchapter 8.1.3.4), are not even discussed in the Bundestag. Through this failure to act and help, the German political system still shows traits of institutional racism that needed to be urgently eliminated in an anti-racist political culture.

### 8.2.4 Muslim representation in German political parties and the Bundestag

Institutional racism also includes preventing minorities from accessing or participating in the political system and other organizations. Anti-Muslim sentiment is therefore not limited to negative attitudes toward Islam or even to active discriminatory acts. The “freedom of” and the “freedom to” are in this case two sides of the same coin of freedom rights. Enabling active representation and participation up to quota regulations is therefore an important part of the debate on the self-determination rights of minorities. When it comes to implementing the principles of participation, however, there are theoretical differences in opinion as to whether, for instance,

a) ethno-religious categories, rather than anti-racist ones, do not in fact reinforce racism (Bedorf 2010: “misjudged recognition”), and

b) a majority is obliged to grant special minority rights, or whether, for the sake of legal equality, participation should be achieved naturally, so to speak, even under conditions of hegemony (see K. Hafez 2013b: 25–35).

In practice, the participation of Muslims in Western political systems is slowly progressing, however, the European multi-party landscape and the system of proportional representation that exists in many countries have a more positive effect here than the majority voting system in the US (ibid.: 79–93). That being said, problems also exist in Germany and also in parties like Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, who not entirely without reason see themselves as pioneers in the fields of anti-racism and diversity policy. At the 2019 party conference

107 See debate transcript at: [https://dserver.bundestag.de/btp/19/19204.pdf#P.25722](https://dserver.bundestag.de/btp/19/19204.pdf#P.25722) (footnote 104).
of Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, the then publicist and now Anti-Discrimination Commissioner Ferda Ataman criticized its basic program as that of a “white party that likes foreigners” (Riese 2019). The party’s diversity statute, adopted in 2020, does not mention anti-Muslim sentiment at all. However, the declaration of intent to ensure diversity in the executive committees, for instance, cannot be clearly understood without mentioning ethno-religious or other social categories and thus could—at least in the absence of any further justification—be accused of being an alibi that is far removed from a real quota policy.108

In the German Bundestag, too, 8.2 percent of MPs are currently from immigrant families, compared to a population share of 26 percent, with Die Linke accounting for the highest proportion of migrants at 28.2 percent and the CDU/CSU party the lowest at 4.1 percent (Spitz et al. 2021). The parties’ attitudes toward Islam therefore not only reveal a relatively clearly graded ideological spectrum in the right-left scheme—the further to the right in the political spectrum, the more pronounced the direct or indirect forms of anti-Muslim sentiment—but that other dimensions of institutional racism, such as enabling or preventing political participation, also fit just as clearly into this classical scheme. The general demand for improved representation in all German parties remains.

8.2.5 Anti-Muslim sentiment in right-wing extremist political movements (Pegida, etc.)

While the report by the Unabhängiger Expertenkreis Antisemitismus (UEA) of the Federal Ministry of the Interior devotes relatively little attention to the established parties and a great deal of attention to radical right-wing and extremist movements, this report does the exact opposite: It focuses on the main parties of the Bundestag and the federal state parliaments while the extreme right and the modernized right-wing populist wing play a subordinate role. This is primarily due to the fact that although anti-Semitism is still detectable in individual cases in the established parties and repeatedly comes to light among individual actors, it has been largely removed from political programs, while the question of belonging and the cultural and political compatibility of Islam and democracy appears to be highly controversial and therefore requires special attention. In the extreme right, in turn, anti-Muslim sentiment is a central motif. The anti-Muslim character of such far-right movements as Pegida is even official today: The Saxon State Office for the Protection of the Constitution states that, in addition to other aspects, the movement’s anti-Muslim sentiment is the main reason for its classification as “extremist.”

However, the UEM has decided against further exploring this area through independent research projects due to the relative clarity of the right-wing extremism/anti-Muslim sentiment nexus and the limited time and financial capacities available to it.

Rather than focusing on the content of the Islam images of right-wing extremist movements, research today is more interested in the social resonance of anti-Muslim movements like Pegida. It has rightly found that current anti-Muslim sentiment in Germany does not in fact arise at the extremist fringes, but that it is constantly reproduced in the very center of society—in the media, politics, etc. (see Schenke et al. 2018: 278–279). Middle-class anti-Muslim sentiment has older roots than modern right-wing extremism. Representative demoscopic studies in Germany date back at least to the mid-1990s and point to a


historically anchored tradition of a widespread, sweepingly negative image of Islam in Germany (see K. Hafez 2013b: 106–162).

As far as the image of Islam among radical right-wing or right-wing extremist movements is concerned, Röther (2017) has produced what is probably the most comprehensive study to date. He sees movements such as Pegida, the “pro” movements (Pro Köln, Pro NRW, Pro Deutschland, etc.), the Identitarian movement, Hooligans gegen Salafisten (HoGeSa), Pax Europa, or the civil rights party for more freedom and democracy, Die Freiheit (until 2016), to be part of the anti-Islamic scene. The website Politically Incorrect (PI), with its massively anti-Islamic presence, acts as the link between most of the movements (see subchapter 7.2). All these movements not only harbor a sweepingly negative image of Islam, but also advocate prohibitionist positions similar to those of the AfD (banning mosque buildings, etc.). Anti-Muslim mass murderers like the Norwegian Anders Breivik were closely connected to these circles, at least in terms of ideology, whereby Breivik closely followed PI strongly, quoted it in his pamphlet, and, due to these interactions with German extremism, can only be classified to a limited extent as a “lone perpetrator.”

Partly linked to these German extremist networks are right-wing extremists for whom Islam embodies the hostile alien and who oppose the immigration of Muslims, but who also sympathize with the identitarian struggles of radical Islamists. According to Salzborn (2017), with regard to Islam, the far-right scene in Germany is split into one wing, which, like the NPD, sometimes even cooperates with radical Islamist groups and is characterized by “ardent anti-Semitism,” and another wing, which essentially consists of movements (those studied by Röther, Pegida and others), and harbors clear and “clumsy anti-Islamic prejudices” (ibid.: 87–88). Manfred Kleine-Hartlage or Ellen Kositza are named as intellectual figures in the field of this “secession” (ibid.: 90–91). Weiß (2017) also includes the historian Ernst Nolte in a similar interpretation (ibid.: 221–227). However, this fascination with Islam plays a very subordinate role in the large proportion of German anti-Muslim right-wing extremists and should rather be regarded as an intellectual phenomenon of internationally networked right-wing extremism. In view of the massive, sweeping, racist image of Islam in this scene, the current of “Islamist admirers” is marginal and more of a footnote in Germany’s neo-right movements.

8.3 Anti-Muslim sentiment in the judiciary

This subchapter addresses the concrete requirements for equal, non-discriminatory application of the law in the everyday life of the Muslim population. This is the only way to create the necessary trust in the rule of law. First, the basics of trust-building and the existing deficits are described (subchapter 8.3.1). This is followed by the results of two UEM studies on experiences of discrimination in the judiciary and on specific problem situations in the hitherto unresearched area of family law (subchapter 8.3.2). In the last section (subchapter 8.3.3), the example of so-called “parallel justice” is used to explain how anti-Muslim sentiment can also be found in the treatment of real existing problems.

8.3.1 Trust as base of the constitutional state

A state based on human rights not only needs convincing legal content, but above all credibility and experienceability in everyday life (see Venice Commission 2011: 3, 9–13; 2016: 11–27; Tamanaha 2004: 21). Trust in a common foundation of equal legal treatment is crucial for social cohesion (see Zick/Küpper 2021: 48; Council of Europe 2004: sections 9–16). Trust in systems is based not only on cognitive but also on affective elements (see Lewis/Weigert 1985: 974). In this respect, it is quite alarming that according to representative
data within the EU (FRA 2017: 12, 25–26) Muslims of the second immigration generation have less trust in the rule of law than those of the first generation.

System trust is decisively brought about by institutions organized under the rule of law. The core of the constitutional state includes the binding of jurisdiction to law and justice (Article 20 (3) of the Basic Law (GG, Grundgesetz)) and the guarantee of effective legal protection (Article 19 of the Basic Law). The greatest possible objectivity and neutrality as well as equal treatment are core elements of the application of the law (see also subchapter ↗ 9.1). Effective equal treatment respects diversity as a central element of social participation (see Foblets/Alidadi 2013: 9). Upholding these principles of the rule of law also corresponds to the professional ethos and self-image of the members of the judiciary. In practice, it is particularly important to flesh out broad legal concepts that are largely open to interpretation and to weigh conflicting rights in accordance with these principles.

This is where the “human factor” comes into play at the latest. What needs to be observed in order to enforce the claims of the constitutional state also for population groups whose religion is widely under suspicion and who are distrusted by broad sections of the population (see chapter ↗ 3 and ↗ 7). In this respect, equal participation of Muslims in the judiciary is also a litmus test for the rule of law in general. Such participation is prevented not only in the very rare cases of blatant anti-Muslim sentiment/racist rejection of migrants in the justice system,110 in areas where misunderstandings or latent pre-understandings exist due to a lack of information111 about the living conditions or religion of those involved, trust in equal participation within the framework of the constitutional state can also be lost. Therefore, aspects that cannot be interpreted as anti-Muslim sentiment, but which can nevertheless produce the effects mentioned, must also be taken into account. Incidentally, this is also a genuine concern of the judiciary, which is evident in relevant training events.

However, such events, as well as individual relevant elements in legal education, reach only a small proportion of (future) members of the judiciary outside the core content area. On the other hand, combating anti-Muslim sentiment, as well as other forms of group-based hostility, such as anti-Semitism and anti-Romani sentiment, is a cross-cutting issue that affects all areas of law. Therefore, extending the basic course of studies (dealing with National Socialist injustice and the injustice of the SED dictatorship) mentioned in section 5a (3) third sentence of the German Judiciary Act (DRiG, Deutsches Richtergesetz) to include anti-Muslim sentiment and other forms of group-related hostility toward human beings is necessary and would provide a logical addition to these contents.

It was not possible to cover all areas of law within the scope of the UEM’s work. Therefore, two areas that are of particular importance for the everyday life of Muslims were highlighted: the as-yet unexplored religion-specific application of family law as well as how to deal with visible religiosity, especially with regard to the headscarf worn by many Muslim women. As part of the UEM’s activities, two relevant studies were produced as a follow-up to a hearing, the findings of which are included here. The debate on so-called “parallel justice” in criminal law, which almost exclusively refers to Muslims, as also addressed. For the other part, reference is made to the existing wealth of rele-


111 The reference to Wikipedia entries, which often do not even begin to meet scientific requirements, seems truly helpless (see Samour/ Gulyesil 2021: 3–4; Dutta/Aiwanger 2023: para. 88).
vant literature, for instance, on the very complex questions of institutional self-organization and cooperation between the state and religious communities (see Muckel/Tillmanns 2008: 234–272; Coumont 2008: 440–581; de Wall 2014: 189–223; Muckel et al. 2018; Rohe 2018: 216–223; N. Müller 2021). To elaborate further on this would have gone beyond the scope of what this report aims to achieve (on relevant questions of principle, see subchapter ↗9.1).

### 8.3.2 Challenges of legal practice to prevent anti-Muslim sentiment

#### 8.3.2.1 Aspiration and reality

According to its self-image, the judiciary cultivates a high professional ethos of neutrality and objectivity as inseparable elements of law. Deliberate violations of this ethos are very rare. Below this threshold, two possible problem areas can be identified. On the one hand, the applicable law is indeed secular, and legislation is also bound to the constitutional order in accordance with Article 20 (3) of the Basic Law. This creates a clear legal framework for equal participation. However, some areas of law are in fact still influenced by Christian cultural concepts, including family law and constitutional law on religion (see Dilcher/Staff 1984). Equal participation by no means requires a fundamental break with legal cultural tradition, but it does require an interpretation of existing norms in terms of such participation. German constitutional law on religion does not recognize a Christian cultural prerogative, and fundamental rights protect members of majorities and minorities equally. But how does this work in legal practice?

There is a strong will in the judiciary to apply the law fairly in everyday life, even under often difficult working conditions, such as understaffing, lack of efficient access to relevant information, and outdated equipment.\(^\text{112}\) One potential problem lies above all in “unconscious biases” (see Esser 1970). Social and religious-ideological diversity is still strongly underdeveloped, especially in the legal field (see Grünberger et al. 2021). One striking example of possible consequences is the treatment of a representative of the public prosecutor’s office with family roots in an Islamic Asian country, who was not yet wearing his robe when he entered the courtroom. As he walked toward the prosecutor’s bench, he was ordered by the judge to go to the dock. It is in such contexts that intersectional problems arising from a mixture of ethnic, religious, and social attributions and perceptions (see chapter ↗5) become apparent, which demonstrate the necessity for a self-reflexive approach to the application of law. This also includes raising awareness in the communication culture (see Yalçın 2011). However, examples of “good practice” should also be highlighted. In a decision on religious slaughter, for instance, the Federal Constitutional Court\(^\text{113}\) implicitly made it clear that the Muslim population in Germany must be considered part of the society of this country, which defines its beliefs itself and is not subject to the dictates of foreign authorities (see in more detail Rohe 2002; critically with a view to other aspects: Payandeh 2021: 3–4). All in all, there has, in recent decades, been a clear tendency in German jurisprudence to perceive Islam and Muslim life as a domestic phenomenon—in line with demographic developments. However, uncertainties are still clearly evident.

#### 8.3.2.2 Family law: Religiously neutral?

In the field of justice, people’s affiliation to the religion of Islam or their citizenship of a state in which Islamic law applies comes into play at

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\(^{112}\) This impression is based on many years of experience in further training for judges and public prosecutors.

different legal levels (see Rohe 2014: 272–292; 2022b: 345–390). On the one hand, Muslims are entitled to the freedom of religion guaranteed in the Basic Law, both in relation to state institutions and to a considerable extent in private legal relationships (especially in labor law) (see subchapter ↗ 9.1). Furthermore, according to the rules of private international law (PIL) applicable in Germany, foreign law may or must be applied in cases of cross-border private law relationships, for instance, in the case of marriage between parties of foreign nationality. This reflects the fact that in such cases foreign law may be more relevant than domestic substantive law (see Kegel/Schurig 2004: 131–148). However, the so-called “ordre public” draws a line, i.e., if the result of the actually applicable foreign law was not compatible with fundamental domestic legal concepts in the individual case (for details with regard to norms influenced by Islam, see Rohe 2022a: 355–372; 2022b: 46–50; Dutta/Aiwanger 2023: paras. 54–55). Even with the increasing number of domestic private law relationships (see Rohe 2022a: 373–379; 2022b: 50–54), religious legal or ethical ideas can be included within the framework of the freedom of organization broadly defined by the law, for instance, in the drafting of marriage contracts. Furthermore, the religious affiliation of the parties involved can be significant in family law decisions, for instance, in questions of the religious upbringing of children, which is generally the responsibility of the legal guardians until the age of religious majority, and more generally in the exercise of custody rights. In this context, there have been no studies in Germany so far that focus on the implementation of these principles in everyday judicial life. However, findings on this are of considerable importance because also and especially with regard to a population group whose religion is often described sweepingly as backward and not fitting to the country (regarding widespread anti-Muslim attitudes, see Friedrichs/Storz 2022: 9–30 as well as chapter ↗ 3 and ↗ 7), application of the law in a manner that is as neutral and objective as possible can maintain the necessary trust in the constitutional state. This is in line with the genuine claim by the judiciary in the constitutional state, which is always massively attacked in the case of lawful decisions in favor of Muslim parties.

In 2021, the UEM conducted a written survey and an oral hearing with legal experts. Following that, in 2022, the UEM commissioned a first exploratory study on the topic of “Islam and German Family Courts” (Dutta/Aiwanger 2023). The study asks at what level of decision-making does the actual or presumed affiliation of parties to proceedings play a role, and to what extent are there indications that German family courts adopt a skeptical or negative attitude toward Muslim parties or certain beliefs of Islam, thus leading to the issue of discrimination on the grounds of religious affiliation. The study is based on a qualitative analysis of relevant case law (515 decisions) as well as on open, guideline-based expert interviews with twelve lawyers (Dutta/Aiwanger 2023: paras. 21–53).

With regard to the application of Islamic-influenced legal norms in the field of PIL, the embedding of case law in the general political circumstances of the time becomes clear (see Yassari 2021: 1). Generally, it should be noted that in the few practical cases such norms are usually

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114 This term, which originates from French and defines the limits of applicability of foreign law, is also used in German law (e.g., in Article 6 of the Introductory Act to the Civil Code (EGBGB, Einführungsgesetz zum Bürgerlichen Gesetzbuch).

115 For the names and expertise of those involved, see ↗ External expertises.

It was neither possible nor necessary to collect representative data within the scope of the UEM’s work. After all, the most comprehensive specific studies to date of topic-specific court decisions are available here. The main topics that emerged reveal potential problem areas and approaches to solutions (examples of good practice).

116 Based merely on an analysis of the reasons for the decisions, which are generally drafted lege artis, the identification of a position that is skeptical or hostile to Islam would be extremely restricted. For this reason, the language and logic of the reasons for decisions are also examined by way of discourse analysis (Dutta/Aiwanger 2023: paras. 21–25; 37–38).
applied in a careful manner and clearly without prejudice (Heiderhoff 2021: 1; Rohe 2022a: 370; Rohe 2022b: 51, 54; Dutta/Aiwanger 2023: paras. 274–284). However, there are findings from a large number of educational events with members of the judiciary at national and European level, according to which information deficits exist with regard to the contents of Islamic-influenced state norms that must be applied on the basis of PIL provisions applicable in Germany (see also Collo 2021a; Dutta/Aiwanger 2023: paras. 79–92). When courts refer to “Islamic law” instead of the state norms to be specifically applied in each case, this ignores the extraordinarily pronounced internal diversity of Islamic legal concepts (see Rohe 2022a: 167–206, 355–372; Yassari 2021: 5).

What’s more, it is not always possible to successfully “translate” legal concepts influenced by Islamic law, such as the “bridal dowry” in conjunction with Muslim marriages, into categories of applicable German law (see Dutta/Aiwanger 2023: paras. 93–121). This also applies to those cases in which contracts based on Islamic law abroad lose or change their meaning. This is the case if the legal framework changes fundamentally due to the relocation of the center of life to Germany, for instance, in the case of contracts on post-marital maintenance (see Rohe 2016: 82). Ultimately, this may result in the foreign being applied incorrectly. Occasionally, moreover, the content of legally relevant religion-based processes or norms is only superficially clarified (see Dutta/Aiwanger 2023: paras. 88–91; 287). All this may not be simply judged as anti-Muslim, but should firstly be seen as inadequate case handling which can also occur in judicial practice.

Furthermore, uncertainties exist when it comes to clarifying family circumstances (Dutta/Aiwanger 2023: paras. 288–291), or text modules are offered for general use in the judiciary, which in some cases may only make sense for Christian participants, for instance, if Christian holidays are considered when determining contact times with children (Dutta/Aiwanger 2023: para. 286). Further research is needed with regard to the finding (Dutta/Aiwanger 2023: paras. 58–61) that in some decisions the Islamic religious affiliation of parties to the proceedings is explicitly named without this being included in any way in the detailed legal assessment. In such cases, negative prior understandings may have influenced the decision, even if this is not reflected in the decision text. This can also lead to a structural disadvantage of Muslim parties to proceedings.

There is also a very clear need to provide the judiciary with efficient access to information on legal aspects and institutions of Islamic law and religion, for instance, by establishing corresponding databases and through further training (see also Dutta/Aiwanger 2023: paras. 88–92; 294).

Furthermore, judicial decisions also formulate general reservations against “Islam” or generalized, stereotypical statements on the “typical Islamic marriage,” on the “position of women in the Islamic family,” on the origin of a party “from the Islamic cultural sphere,” on “Muslim moral concepts,” or on educational concepts without taking into account the specific individuals and their motives for action, which cannot be simply derived from their religious affiliation (see Collo 2021b: 1; Yassari 2021: 2, 4–5; Dutta/Aiwanger 2023: paras. 122–151; 209–211; 286). This reveals a discrepancy between the branding of practices rooted in Islam and comparable domestic problems or problems occurring among other population groups. This aspect is also criticized by the Federal Supreme Court in a decision on the bridal dowry under Islamic law117 (see Rohe 2022b: 53). In this way, certain ideas and fears may be generally projected onto “Islam” (see Yassari 2021: 2).
In the individual cases documented in Dutta/Aiwanger (2023: paras. 282–284),\(^{118}\) this can lead, for instance, to a lawyer with a Turkish-sounding name being automatically expected to share the values of a Muslim party to the proceedings and to be able to convey these to the court, that—according to the assessment of one lawyer—special attention being paid to errors in the legal arguments of female lawyers who wear a headscarf, or courts and youth welfare offices generally assuming that Muslim male parties to proceedings have dominant behavior or an increased propensity to violence without openly communicating this.

However, court decisions that generally reject legal arrangements involving gender inequality in marriage contracts, without taking into account that these legal arrangements can considerably improve the legal position of the wife in a legal system shaped by traditional Islamic legal ideas, even if equality is not achieved, are problematic (Dutta/Aiwanger 2023: paras. 229–230). The basic problem with such decisions is that justified abstract concepts, such as gender equality, are handled in concrete cases in such a way that the woman concerned is disadvantaged as a result (see Rohe 2022b: 49).

Individual decisions go even further, formulating a blanket rejection of contracts based on Islam, for instance, on the occasion of marriages, without linking them to the applicable legal provisions. A Senate of the Higher Regional Court of Frankfurt a. M.,\(^{119}\) for instance, had to deal with a dowry contract (financing of a pilgrimage to Mecca by the husband) on the occasion of a religious marriage. In a legally justifiable manner (see Dutta/Aiwanger 2023: para. 27), the Senate assumed that such an agreement, by analogy with comparable agreements governed by the German Civil Code, required notarial authentication, which had not taken place here. The Senate then, however, added general statements that were no longer relevant to the decision, regarding the lack of “modernity” of such a dowry contract.\(^{120}\) Deviating from the assessment of another Senate of the same court (see Dutta/Aiwanger 2023: para. 102), the Senate same to the conclusion that a bridal dowry agreement was foreign to the system of German law and therefore could not be legally enforced (a mere so-called “obligation in kind,” such as debts from legal gambling or betting). However, “modernity” is not a legally relevant category for the question of whether private individuals can voluntarily and legally commit to certain services. If the principles of this decision were generalized, all private law contracts with a religious motivation would lose their legal enforceability. However, this understanding of secularity is not reflected in current constitutional law.

The Federal Court of Justice\(^{121}\) corrected this decision, clearly pointing out that in this country, too, the division of gainful employment and family work often continues to follow gender-specific patterns and that the resulting economic imbalance between spouses is predominantly to the detriment of women. For this reason, too, additional financial security for the wife after the end of the marriage (this is the primary purpose of the dowry in this form) is not incompatible with a modern understanding of marriage. This refer-

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\(^{118}\) The explorative study by Dutta/Aiwanger (2023) does not claim to be representative. The assessment as an “individual case” is due to the fact that there is no broad basis of knowledge. It therefore does not contain any statement on whether and to what extent blind spots exist. After all, the authors of the study conclude that the family court system, as a part of society, is not free of more widespread prejudices either, which suggests that there is a need for information and awareness-raising in this area too.


\(^{120}\) Ibid.: “The separation of state and religion justifies in cases like these with no formative foreign connection that the state’s obligation to enforce a contract is not available for such arrangements because the morning gift as a legal concept is not consistent with the basic understanding of marriage in modern society.”

\(^{121}\) Federal Supreme Court order of March 18, 2020 (XII ZB 380/19), NJW 2020, 2024, 2028.
ence is particularly significant as it counteracts a widespread tendency to project gender equality issues exclusively and sweepingly onto “the others” (othering) in unfounded self-aggrandizement (see also chapter \( \Rightarrow 2 \)).

Even more important in practice are those proceedings where the contents of key legal terms, which are very much in need of interpretation (such as the “best interest of the child”), must be defined in detail. The case law of the supreme courts and a considerable part of the decisions by the courts of first instance do not, in principle, attach any importance to religious affiliation for ascertaining the best interests of the child; something else rightly applies if, in a concrete case, specific religious attitudes of the parties involved endanger the best interests of the child. However, there are also decisions with divergent approaches. One example of the latter is a court decision in which the Islamic religious affiliation of one parent was judged to be disadvantageous for the integration of the child in comparison to the Christian religious affiliation of the other parent (see Yassari 2021: 3). An adept practitioner states the following in this regard:

“\[\text{The significance of ‘integration’ in upbringing, which in the author’s opinion [...] should not be ignored, but also not overrated, is largely unresolved in this context. Mastering the balancing act between necessary social integration and the concession of religious freedom and parental rights calls for a certain empathy on the part of the lawyer for acculturation mechanisms that usually do not affect them. The standard to be applied is usually recognized and implemented by the courts, although the requirements for integration aspects in upbringing are occasionally overstretched.}\]” (Collo 2021b: 1–2)

The picture that then emerges is that, for the most part, the legal ethos of unprejudiced, careful, and equal application of the law is reflected in the decisions to be made. However, there are obvious information deficits and uncertainties with regard to legally relevant aspects of Muslim life and Islamic norms. Furthermore, according to the findings of the study authors Dutta and Aiwanger (see 2023: paras. 281–284), we sometimes find generalizations and prejudices, as they also appear in society as a whole.

At this point, the perspective of those affected becomes extremely important: Confidence in the rule of law is already endangered when, due to actual incidents, the impression solidifies among those involved in proceedings and within minority milieus that they do not generally experience unprejudiced equal treatment in everyday judicial life. Dutta/Aiwanger state in this regard: “The fact that their Islamic way of life is not accepted before German authorities or courts and grouped together with fundamentalist ideas seems to be a widespread fear among Muslims.” (Ibid.: para. 264) As a result of their interviews, they noted: “However, parties with an Islamic backdrop, against whom a court decides, see prejudice as an explanation for their defeat.” (Ibid: para. 284) This leads the authors to the following conclusion:

“There are worrying indications that parties to proceedings with an Islamic religious affiliation have the subjective impression that they are exposed to prejudice on the part of the family courts; in this respect, there are indications that parties to proceedings anticipate a skepticism toward Islam or even anti-Islam sentiment on the part of the court and therefore conceal or distort their Islamic backdrop which could perhaps influence the decision by the court. Such distorting effects could be countered through information, which should effectively come from the family court itself, whereby even small gestures in personal interaction can contribute to cultural coexistence.” (Ibid.: para. 294).

This assessment is confirmed by findings from practitioner training courses, according to which some Muslim parties to proceedings deliberately
retain non-Muslim lawyers in order to counteract suspected worse treatment. However, Muslim representatives from the legal profession have repeatedly clearly countered this assumption and have attributed it to negative propaganda in many Turkish-language media, especially with regard to parties of Turkish origin (ibid.: para. 266).

All this can lead to a loss of trust in the judiciary and thus make it more difficult to access the important state support institutions in the case of family conflicts. In this context, out-of-court conflict resolution may also be possible within the framework of the applicable law. In any case, however, access to state justice must be maintained and strengthened as a low-threshold option, also in order to avoid pushing parties into conflict management mechanisms that are partly problematic from a rule of law perspective (see Rohe 2020).

All in all, it remains to be said that in view of the generalizations and disparagements that have become apparent, as well as the existing uncertainties regarding content, there is a need to make all legal practitioners fundamentally aware of the concerns and problems discussed here, which can be seen in all areas of law. This is also frequently demanded at relevant training events. To implement this efficiently, it needs to start in basic legal studies and be taken into account across all subjects. This is another reason why the above-mentioned amendment to the German Judiciary Act is recommended.

8.3.2.3 Religious freedom and visible religiosity

Court decisions on restrictions of religious freedom are comparatively rare. Since the beginning of the 2000s, a significant proportion of such decisions have been related to Islamic religious practices, especially wearing a headscarf. Of course, this only concerns wearing a headscarf by choice. Any coercion must be judged as anti-Muslim and fought with all constitutional means to protect those affected by it and also through appropriate clarification of the matter. However, the two must not be mixed (see Mangold 2022: 4).

In the public debate, the headscarf is often broadly branded as a “flag of Islamism” or a sign of the oppression of women (see Rohe 2018: 207–216, 295–297). Muslim women wearing headscarves are one of the most discriminated groups of the population (see subchapter 5.6.2.7; studies by Weichselbaumer 2016). In this respect, neutral, objective decisions are of particular importance when weighing religious freedom against conflicting rights and state interests. Compared to France’s secular law that is skeptical of religion, Germany’s constitutional law on religion that is open to religion significantly reduces the potential for conflict. In many spheres of everyday life, restrictions are inadmissible under German law, for instance, with pupils wearing headscarves (see Campenhausen/de Wall 2022: 87; Rohe 2018: 209–210). The transnational provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights and EU law hence offer only minimum standards, while more extensive national legal traditions may be upheld (see Mangold 2022: 7).

Existing conflicts are mainly related to wearing headscarves in the civil service (teachers, members of the judiciary, etc.) and at work in private companies. In this context, the Federal Constitutional Court and the Federal Labor Court have attached great importance to the religious freedom of Muslims. Certain restrictions in labor law may now result from the more secularly oriented case law of the ECJ (Heinig 2022: 6, 19–20; Mangold 2022: 9–10, 23–25; critically also Walter/Tremml 2022: 366–376). It is noteworthy that a significant part of the relevant case law (and also legislation) in Germany refers to well-educated women who aspire to prestigious professional positions in the civil service. In this respect, it is also about fundamental questions of enabling or preventing participation (see Mangold 2022: 1–2) and the danger of intersectional discrimination. It is also noticeable that, in contrast, visible religious ref-
erences are hardly ever addressed in the case of men—so that women are prevented from acting on an equal footing with men (see Mangold 2022: 5). The Federal Constitutional Court clearly points to the aspect of inadmissible practical gender inequality in seemingly gender-neutral language of the law (see Federal Constitutional Court 138, 296 (353) para. 143).

The developments in the legislature and judiciary since the attacks of 9/11 have adopted a symbolic (see Mangold 2022: 13) debate in which, as mentioned above, the wearing of headscarves has often been interpreted as a sign of the oppression of women that is incompatible with the rule of law, without considering the motivation of the wearers and the very complex debate within the Muslim community. Institutions of a secular constitutional state, however, must refrain from positioning themselves in religious debates (see Mangold 2022: 6). In a decision from 2015, the Federal Constitutional Court, contrary to such generalizations (see Federal Constitutional Court 138, 296 (348–349) para. 129), created a fact-oriented basis for applying the law in important areas of the civil service and thus also partially corrected its less clear guiding decision of 2003 (see Federal Constitutional Court 108, 282). It clarifies that a merely “abstract” danger to school peace does not legitimize restricting the wearing of a headscarf worn for religious reasons (see Federal Constitutional Court 138, 296 (341–342) para. 129). The court summed up:

“If it is occasionally asserted in literature that the wearing of an Islamic headscarf is, from the objective horizon of the observer, to be seen as a sign of support for an also comprehensive unequal treatment of men and women before the law and that it therefore also calls into question the suitability of the wearer for pedagogical professions […], such a generalizing conclusion is prohibited” (Federal Constitutional Court 138, 296 (341–342) para. 114).

Therefore, the court continued, lawful restrictions required a sufficiently concrete disruption of or threat to school peace in the specific case.

With a view to members of the judiciary, this is where the argument regarding the outwardly recognizable neutrality of public officials as state representatives comes into play (see Campenhausen/de Wall 2022: 88). In this context, the Federal Constitutional Court emphasizes the “optimization” (Federal Constitutional Court 153, 1, 4th principle) of society’s trust in the judiciary as a whole. Accordingly, a legal ban on headscarves for trainee lawyers can be ordered in as far as they are “perceived or can be perceived as representatives of the state” (Federal Constitutional Court 153, 1, 1st principle). In weighing the freedom of religion, which also applies to state employees, against the goal of optimizing general trust, the court grants the legislature a prerogative of assessment with regard to the actual circumstances and developments that are decisive for restricting freedom of religion (see Federal Constitutional Court 153, 1, 7th principle; critically: Mangold 2022: 16–17 and Payandeh 2021: 5–6). This is where the indirect effects of the generalizing debate about the Muslim headscarf become apparent, which, for instance, in the courts of the United Kingdom does not seem to affect the neutrality required there too (see BBC News 2020; regarding the problem: Mangold 2022: 19–22). As a result, professionally trained Muslim women who wear a headscarf out of religious conviction are excluded from important professional fields which, on the other hand, are open to all Muslim men, including those who follow a traditional religious practice. All in all, it becomes clear that a civil society and institutional debate oriented toward facts and individual attitudes are of outstanding importance for the justice system too.

One special feature of private labor law is that fundamental rights can only have a limited effect (“indirect effect,” Heinig 2022: 12; see Mangold 2022: 10 –11, 22). Unlike the state, employers also have fundamental rights and can assert their
protected interests on this basis (see in detail Hoevels 2003). In this specific case, internal “neutrality rules” are often controversial. It is not uncommon for an employer to claim that it had “no problem” with staff wearing headscarves, but that clients were assumed or feared to have a problem with it (see Liebscher 2021: 7–8; Mangold 2022: 25). Such arguments can be countered with the special provisions of anti-discrimination law (General Act on Equal Treatment). It should be noted that prejudices and hostility toward diversity that may exist in parts of the population should not be made a problem for those affected by it (see Mangold 2022: 25). In an expert opinion obtained on this matter (see Liebscher 2021), the lion’s share of all the decisions found (19 out of 26) on Islam and the General Act on Equal Treatment are again related to the wearing of the headscarf (see chapter ↗ 4). Overall, the expert comes to the convincing conclusion that “the vast majority of the decisions analyzed are characterized by an extremely respectful and differentiated presentation of the Islamic religious confession and the practices associated with it” (Liebscher 2021: 9). This makes it all the more important to ensure efficient access and support for those affected in justiciable cases, as well as efficient sensitization of decision-makers in everyday practice. It is equally important that the expertise of those affected also be considered.

Connections between anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Semitism are also evident in a poorly reflected assessment of the greeting handshake as an apparently essential element of integration (“integration into German living conditions,” section 10 (1) of the German Law on Nationality and Citizenship (StAG, Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz); see Payandeh 2021: 1; Samour/Gülyesil 2021: 2–3). All over the world, greeting gestures other than the handshake are very common. Both in orthodox Judaism and in some Muslim milieus, the handshake is interpreted as a gesture of improper rapprochement between the genders. Assessing this refusal as misogynistic is already incorrect because even women who share this conviction do not shake hands with men. The people concerned explain their behavior as a sign of respect rather than rejection. Although the backdrop to this view may be the subject of controversial discussion, refusing naturalization of Jewish or Muslim persons for this very reason does appear both factually incorrect and disproportionate. In the future, a generally negative assessment of a refusal to shake hands would be downright absurd if it had to be determined whether this was carried out for hygienic or religious reasons.

In the course of the public debate on so-called “clan criminality” (see chapter ↗ 4.7), the very vaguely described phenomenon of allegedly Islam-based “parallel justice” with negative connotations was also introduced (see Wagner 2011). In terms of the facts, this assignment to the religion of the participants (see Ghadban 2020: 124) is, however, largely misguided with regard to offenses outside family-related conflicts (see Rohe 2019: 17–19; Rohe 2020: 45–46, 64–67; Elliesie/Rigoni

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122 As decided by Baden-Württemberg Higher Administrative Court NJW 2021, 487. The plaintiff had credibly argued that his refusal only meant that he was complying with his wife’s request, to whom the court attributed Salafist tendencies. The demand that the plaintiff should have ignored his wife’s request in this case is difficult to understand.
Crimes in a family context, for instance, in response to “honor violations” or as a result of rejected relationships within the family, are also typically the result of patriarchal family structures characterized by a culture of shame with strong internal expectations of loyalty regardless of religious affiliation (see Rohe 2020: 64–67; Collo 2021a). From a rule-of-law-oriented, problem-based perspective, there are indeed conflict management phenomena outside of state institutions that are contrary to the rule of law. However, there are examples of legally neutral or even desirable extrajudicial conflict management, as long as this is carried out in a voluntary, neutral, and professional manner, and within the limits of the applicable law. Negatively connotated “parallel justice” is characterized by the fact that it does not fulfil precisely these requirements. This can also be found in Muslim milieus (see Rohe/Jaraba 2015; Elliesie/Rigoni 2022). In the context of marriage matters, Muslim religious affiliation then also plays a significant role in many cases (see Jaraba 2019: 1; 2020: 26–47). Problems that actually exist must therefore be addressed in a clear and goal-oriented manner, and the constitutional mandate to protect calls for guaranteed efficient access to its institutions, especially for vulnerable members of repressive milieus (see Shachar 2001: 45). However, it must be considered anti-Muslim when extrajudicial conflict resolution among Muslims carried out under religious auspices is generally viewed with suspicion, while comparable mechanisms of other religious communities are (rightly) not viewed with suspicion, or when Islam is slandered as incompatible with the rule of law. The Bavarian State Office for the Protection of the Constitution has introduced the category of constitutionally relevant anti-Islam sentiment for this purpose (Bayerisches Staatsministerium des Innern, für Sport und Integration 2021: 264–269).

The same applies to the debate on so-called “parallel societies,” which is even less precise and often conducted on the basis of few facts. This also partly covers real socio-economic or socio-cultural problems, which indeed indicate a need for further action. However, it must be seen as anti-Muslim if existing problems are attributed to the religious affiliation of those affected without a solid factual basis, or if individual persons or groups of persons, who for good reason become persons of interest, are denounced in a disproportionate or purely sensationalist manner. In this context, socio-economic and socio-psychological structural problems also appear when a problematic level of social fragmentation is located solely in certain ethnically or religiously/culturally identified (post)migrant milieus and comparable problem situations in other groups are ignored. Last but not least, the comparatively narrow public debate on the consequences of the gentrification of cities and the establishment of “gated communities” for the particularly wealthy should also be addressed here.

What is anti-Muslim is not the naming of specific problem situations, but a generalized attribution of behavior contrary to the rule of law to the religion of those involved, without considering the main causes, which are often different. The same applies to double standards when, rather than adopting a problem-oriented approach, only Muslim milieus are singled out and stigmatized with no regard for the fact that similar problems also exist in other similarly situated milieus of other religious affiliations or world views.

The headscarf debate and its effects should once again be pointed out in this context. In addition, it should not be overlooked that legally problematic restrictions on religious freedom in

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123 In contrast to the widespread “blame culture” in Germany, intra-family conflicts and their resolution are seen as a “purely private matter,” which, when made public, lead to a “loss of face” for the entire family (see Rohe 2020: 64–67, 77–81).

124 It should be noted here that, for historical reasons, the Muslim population is on average socio-economically below the average of the population as a whole (Ptündel et al. 2021, pp. 135–153), and that, according to socio-psychological findings, the culture of underprivileged population groups is often generally disparaged.
many cases do not lead to judicial clarification because those affected do not have the strength or resources to do so. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the individual understandings and attitudes of those wearing headscarves. The claim to seemingly superior knowledge (the headscarf is “objectively the banner of radical Islam,” even if the women wearing it do not see it that way; according to Schröder 2021: 95) is not compatible with constitutional requirements and civil society debate culture, not even on the basis of an apparently emancipatory, “progressive” motivation (see the corresponding reference to an exemplary court decision in Liebscher 2021: 6). A prejudiced approach to everyday life precludes fair participation in accordance with the rule of law. When, for instance, colleagues of a teacher wearing a headscarf provide her with basic information about teaching in an apparently well-meaning manner without having been asked for such information (see Rohe 2017: 76) or when someone talking to a teacher “compliments” her explaining that after talking to her for some time they no longer noticed the headscarf at all, these teachers can become discouraged. Experiences of this nature may deter others from studying to become a teacher. The complete exclusion of Muslim women wearing headscarves from the judiciary has an even stronger effect in this direction (see also subchapter ↗9.1.2).

8.4 Conclusion

The German political system is based on the principles of liberal democracy, which demands the neutrality of the state and freedom from discrimination in the state sphere. In recent decades, the practice of the executive branch, however, has demonstrated a certain inconsistency in statements and actions by the political leadership as well as by the security, police, and other authorities with regard to Muslims. At the level of leading German political offices (Federal presidents, etc.), in addition to inclusive remarks, sweeping exclusionary remarks are also evident that explicitly do not classify Islam as “part of Germany,” but which must be discussed in the context of latent anti-Muslim sentiment.

With the creation of the German Islam Conference, the German state has taken an important step toward the recognition of Islam and Muslims. However, this is countered by an excessive focus on Muslims as suspect cases and security risks rather than as victims of racism. The problems include a lack of attention to right-wing extremist anti-Muslim sentiment in reports on the protection of the constitution and a lack of transparency in rules concerning the rejection of Muslims in the civil service. Contrary to the public impression, robust studies on anti-Muslim sentiment in the police force are already available, indicating a high degree of susceptibility to anti-Muslim motives among the police. Furthermore, the identification, recording, and combating of anti-Muslim crimes are still sub-optimal. As far as other German authorities are concerned, there has been little to no research on anti-Muslim sentiment.

For the legislature, it is true that political parties are legally entitled to a broader scope of opinion, but democracy as a whole must be defensively anti-racist. Following a comprehensive update of the state of research, the UEM concludes that the AfD is the only party in the German Bundestag with a manifestly anti-Muslim program. In the CDU/CSU and occasionally also in other parties, latent forms can be recognized through reduced recognition and a conflict image of Islam. However, all parties except the AfD now recognize the problem of anti-Muslim sentiment, although unclear formulations, program changes, and a lack of differentiation in the agenda are apparent. There is no clear commitment to improving the

125 Insights from many years of experience by the UEM in conversation with affected Muslims.
representation of Muslims, the largest minority in Germany, in political parties and offices.

In the Bundestag, even after the AfD’s entry, there has been no shift of discourse to the right and also—apart from a few exceptions—no contagion effect, but a clear anti-racist demarcation of the other parties vis-à-vis the AfD. Its presence, however, has led to a new polarization and a new speakability in parliament, where anti-Muslim positions are voiced by the AfD at the center of German democracy. Moreover, the strong focus on security in the Islam debate can be seen in other parties, while urgently needed reforms to counter structural racism (for instance, reforms of public authorities) are neither discussed nor decided.

According to its self-image, the judiciary cultivates a high professional ethos of neutrality and objectivity as inseparable elements of law. Deliberate violations of this ethos are very rare; as a rule, the applicable law is applied carefully and impartially. The potential for problems is primarily to be found in unconscious biases, negative generalizations, misattributions of non-religious problems, and misinformation or uncertainties with regard to Muslim issues. Social and religious-ideological diversity is still strongly underdeveloped, especially in the legal field. The far-reaching exclusion of women wearing headscarves based on insufficient factual determination is particularly harmful. Overall, legal training needs to be fundamentally supplemented and relevant professional development measures are needed to inform and raise awareness.

### 8.5 Recommendations

The Independent Expert Group on Anti-Muslim Sentiment recommends:

- The formulation of clear and transparent legal and administrative rules for consistent, equal legal treatment of Muslims and Muslim organizations, which individual decision-makers can rely on and refer to in their everyday practice.

- The establishment of anti-racist further and advanced training, sensitive to both diversity and religion, for staff at state institutions, such as public authorities, administrative offices, the police and security agencies, fire services, and the justice (correctional) system, in order to raise awareness especially of anti-Muslim sentiment and institutional forms of racism. It is also important to learn strategies for dealing proactively with anti-Muslim sentiment, for instance, in the case of anti-Muslim activities in connection with mosque buildings. This includes supervision offers for staff to reflect on “negative experiential knowledge” and to reduce anti-Muslim stereotypes.

- A Federal Government strategy for the sustainable development of equal participation and representation of persons with Muslim identity references in all government institutions and action structures (public authorities, political parties, political institutions, the justice system). The state should assume a role model function and live up to this with binding targets, PR work, targeted campaigns, and career promotion measures, such as the implementation of mentoring measures.
› Putting an end to the stigmatization and discrimination of Muslim women wearing headscarves in public spaces. Women wearing headscarves should in principle have the right to hold all public offices in the judiciary and administration.

› The introduction or expansion of rules for efficient legal protection and greater transparency in questions of employment in the public service (for instance, in suspected cases of extremism) in order to avoid professional discrimination.

› That anti-Muslim sentiment relevant to the protection of the constitution be included as a separate category in reports on the protection of the constitution by both the Federal Government and the federal states.

› That all democratic parties refrain from anti-Muslim and racist attributions and stereotypes in political debates (when discussing political issues and social problems). Politics should live up to its role model function by addressing Muslims in a differentiated, objective, and responsible way (symbolic politics).

› That all democratic parties maintain a policy of demarcation against the anti-Muslim AfD party.

› The legally secure prevention of the financing of party-related institutions of parties that propagate anti-Muslim sentiment or other forms of group-focused enmity.

› That the Berlin Neutrality Act (Berliner Neutralitätsgesetz) be adapted to the principles of the constitution on religion laid down in the Basic Law (rulings by the Federal Labor Court, dismissal of Berlin’s complaint by the Federal Constitutional Court on January 17, 2023).

› A supplementary new version of section 5a (3) of the German Judiciary Act (Deutsches Richtergesetz) in the training of judges: “The teaching of compulsory subjects also includes a critical analysis of the injustices of the National Socialist regime and of the Communist dictatorship in Germany as well as of anti-Semitism, anti-Romani sentiment, anti-Muslim sentiment, and other forms of group-focused enmity.” We also recommend the establishment of anti-racist further and advanced training, sensitive to both diversity and religion, for various professional groups in the judiciary and the correctional system (for instance, through the Judicial Academies in Trier and Wustrau).

› The creation of a database or similar efficiently accessible information tools on legally relevant Muslim concerns (for instance, marriage contracts, religious commandments) and their consideration for the judiciary as required by the rule of law. Such a database at federal level, linked to the Federal Ministry of Justice, could possibly be coordinated with databases on discrimination issues (and eventually extended to EU level).

› The documentation of the legal consequences of laws (for instance, on the “appearance of civil servants”) and the evaluation of laws with a view to their discriminatory effect with regard to all diversity dimensions to be conducted by independent experts.

› Promoting the introduction of federal-state anti-discrimination laws and the nationwide rights of associations to class action lawsuits.
9 Policy on religion

The provisions of constitutional law on religion in Germany today essentially date back to the Constitution of the Weimar Republic promulgated in 1919 when the religious landscape in Germany was fundamentally different from today. After the Federal Republic of Germany was founded in 1949, these state-church provisions were incorporated into the Basic Law (Grundgesetz) without any significant changes, at a time when almost every citizen was still a member of one of the two Christian churches. In recent years, there have been many calls for the development of legislation on individual and collective religious freedom for all and of a coherent and systematic policy on religion in Germany appropriate to today’s conditions—but to no avail. In some cases, reliable interpretation in the sense of equal participation for all is sufficient, in others, however, the legislator needs to act.

Today, the situation has changed, not least due to growing secularization which can be seen in the decline in membership of the Catholic and Protestant churches. We can also see greater pluralization with the religious landscape becoming fragmented and other religious communities, especially Islam, becoming much more visible. Although political bodies, especially the German Bundestag, frequently hold debates on the topic of Islam, there is still no systematic formulation of constitutional law on religion that would do justice to social reality and the participation rights of all citizens.

In order to illustrate the shortcomings of this factual situation, an overview of the genesis of today’s constitutional law on religion is first provided below. The following overview of the positions on issues of Islam policy of the parties represented in the Bundestag illustrates the purely occasion-based discussion of questions related to the policy on religion in the ups and downs of daily political events and debates. The interviews with the political parties’ religio-political spokespersons further illustrate how insufficiently questions of Islam are addressed. While the discussions by the parties CDU/CSU, FDP, SPD, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen and Die Linke on the topic of Islam remain within the democratic spectrum, this basic consensus was broken with the entry of the AfD party into the Bundestag and its many sweeping, denigrating statements against Islam and Muslims. Finally, this chapter then addresses the importance and practical organization of interreligious dialogue between Christians, Jews, and Muslims as an additional aspect while taking social reality into account.

9.1 The German constitutional law on religion: A guarantor of minority rights also in practice?

9.1.1 Legal framework for Muslim life in Germany

Freedom of religion, like other fundamental rights, is a core element of the German legal system. At the same time, it has overarchingly, internationally applicable human rights foundations (see, for instance, Bielefeldt/Wiener 2020: 17–21). Equality of religions and world views as well as state neutrality toward religions are core elements of the secular constitutional state. Failure to observe these rights with regard to Muslim persons (individual religious freedom) or organizations (collective religious freedom) leads to conscious or structural anti-Muslim sentiment. Moreover, failure to uphold applicable law can have a negative impact on trust in the rule of law in general and thus on social cohesion as a whole. In this context, it should be seen as a warning sign that, according to a representative survey
conducted in the EU in 2017, second-generation Muslim immigrants on average show less trust in the rule of law than those of the first generation (see FRA 2017: 12, 25–26).

German constitutional law on religion follows a model of secularity that is open to religions, as laid down, for instance, in articles 4, 7 (3) and 140 of the Basic Law (in detail: Heinig 2022). It equally protects individual and collective religious freedom, and it applies to all people in the country, not just German nationals. Religion is permitted to become visible in the public sphere, to be advertised there and to interfere in political debate. The sentence that religion was purely a private matter is true in the sense that only people can have a religious conviction. However, it does not correspond to the legal situation in Europe and especially in Germany, which grants freedom of religion also in the public sphere (see also sub-chapter ➔ 8.3.2.3).

In Germany, religious freedom tends not to be perceived as a possible threat to the state’s claim to power, as is the case in strictly secular systems, but as a potentially positive resource for living together and creating charitable meaning. It therefore extends further than the protection granted by Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which grants the member states broad scope for action depending on their basic orientation (see Heining 2022: 7). Therefore, decisions concerning secular France, for instance, cannot be easily transferred to the legal situation in Germany. Openness to religion is reflected in a cooperative openness of the state toward religions and world views (ibid.: 4). Religion is an important component of academic research and teaching, as well as the original subject of confession-oriented religious education at public schools in most western German federal states. All this creates fundamentally favorable framework conditions for equal participation—also for those to whom an established religious infrastructure is not yet available. However, differences do exist within Germany with regard to competence for policies on religion in the federal states, with Bremen and the eastern German federal states establishing a comparatively stronger separation. Overall, however, it is important that the principles of constitutional law on religion are also implemented in everyday practice.

Core elements of constitutional law on religion are state neutrality (for instance, prohibition of a state church) and equal treatment of all religions and world views. The imperative of neutrality becomes understandable especially against the backdrop of centuries of confessionally motivated persecution and wars in Europe. It enables equal rights that go beyond mere tolerance and thus guarantees real religious freedom. In concrete terms, this means that the state and its institutions must not interfere in intra-religious debates about the “right” stance or interpretation. This applies to the Christian understanding of office as well as to Jewish or Muslim religious rituals. The assertion of legal claims by religious people or organizations thus does not mean solidarization in terms of content. Repeated claims that the state “courts” conservative organizations or favors their attitudes demonstrate a lack of knowledge of the applicable law.

Constitutional law on religion also does not recognize a “Christian cultural prerogative” nor a related special status of Christian organizations (see Droegge 2022: 94–95; Walter/Tremml 2022: 383–384). However, German constitutional law on religion and its concretizations have grown over time, reflecting the country’s Christian tradition, especially in the formation of institutions and cooperation with the state based on institutions (see Heinig 2022: 2, 16–22), but also in the determination of public holidays or in the traditional understanding of marriage and family. In this respect, the current law is not “neutral in its effect” (Heining 2022: 5; see also Bielefeldt/Wiener 2020: 87; Rubin 2022), for instance, in the requirements for institutionalization, which do not correspond to the tradition of all religions.
That being said, the continued importance of Christianity as the religion that predominantly shapes culture in Germany is neither contradictory to the neutrality requirement nor is it anti-Muslim. In this function, it should also be given special attention in school lessons, for example. The ongoing treaties and concordats under state-church law are also not a violation of the principle of neutrality and equal treatment. Corresponding contracts with Jewish and Muslim partners have already been concluded and should be extended if the legal requirements are met. The concerns of minority religions must be adequately acknowledged, for instance, by establishing protected holidays in education and work (see in more detail: Muckel 2008; de Wall 2014: 194–223; Walter 2014: 224–236). In the field of self-organization, no “ecclesiasticalization” may be demanded beyond the minimum factual requirements necessary for cooperation (de Wall 2014: 190–193).

In this respect, it is necessary to review which requirements for recognition as a religious community are still objectively justifiable and which have arisen solely from the circumstances of the established Christian organizational cultures and are not absolutely necessary. This gives rise to very complex individual, yet rarely answered, questions regarding the largely federal implementation of constitutional law on religion. To address these questions, however, would clearly exceed the scope of this report. That being said, the principle must be observed that freedoms, which include freedom of religion, may only be restricted on the basis of criteria that correspond to the requirements of lived equal treatment and participation, and in individual cases only on the basis of sufficiently provable facts. For instance, the examination of the legal preconditions required for cooperation between Muslim organizations and state authorities in religious education in public schools in accordance with Article 7 (3) of the Basic Law may not be replaced by generalized assertions and assumptions that are not sufficiently factual.

A vast number of important areas have been poorly or inconsistently clarified with regard to Muslim issues (see Heinig 2022: 22). This concerns, for instance, the areas of religious self-development within the framework of school education, the establishment of Muslim chaplaincy in state institutions, possibilities and limits of equal participation in public bodies and in government subsidies, as well as other financially relevant areas, up to the powers of security agencies in the context of organized religion (see the list and references in Heinig 2022: 2–24). In this context, particular attention must also be paid to equal treatment with other religious communities as soon as the legal requirements to be created by the organizations themselves are met. It should be noted in this context too that the lack of neutrality of the existing law with regard to religions that have only recently become organized prohibits state inaction in as far as it leads to an avoidable consolidation of unequal conditions.

In light of the foregoing, it seems that legal policy initiatives in structured form, such as those developed on the basis of the German Islam Conference, are generally helpful. In this context, it is crucial to exchange information that does justice to the legal concerns of state authorities as well as the right of self-determination of religious communities and their equal participation. More specific recommendations cannot be formulated in view of the diversity of the relevant legal regulations. On the one hand, accelerating the implementation of important Muslim issues by way of legally permissible model experiments and “interim solutions,” for instance, with a view to religious education in public schools, could thus promote Muslim issues. On the other hand, such “provisional” legal arrangements are also viewed with skepticism because they may entail the risk of perpetuation.

126 Or religious society—the terms are used synonymously in legislation.
below the threshold of the “standard model” provided for by the constitution. In any case, greater attention should be paid to religio-political issues at the responsible levels of government, and it is here that clear differences between the individual federal states become apparent.

Overall, the legal-political and media debate on such issues shows an increasing tendency to ban religious life more strongly from the public sphere, contrary to the prevailing legal situation (on the relevant Berlin Neutrality Act (Neutralitätsgesetz), see subchapter ↗ 8.3). Some voices use the widespread skepticism toward “Islam” (see chapter ↗ 3) as a lever for more far-reaching demands for a fundamental system change toward secularism. Although such debates are of course legitimate, it should always be made clear that such a system change would first have to be decided by the competent legislative bodies. This also leads to an information and education mandate for society as a whole, as well as the necessity to formulate laws in accordance with these constitutional principles. Section 2 of the Berlin Neutrality Act violates this in as far as it imposes a blanket ban on the wearing of clothing with religious connotations without regard to a concrete threat to school peace. Clarity under the rule of law and trust call for a constitutional reformulation here; the mere restriction by way of an interpretation in conformity with the constitution would not do sufficient justice to this.

9.1.2 Scope and limits of religious freedom

The fundamental right of freedom of religion has several dimensions. It protects against inadmissible state intervention (right of freedom), imposes duties of protection on the state, and also radiates to the entire legal system, for instance, in labor law (see Heinig 2022: 12; regarding discrimination against Muslims in the labor market, see chapter ↗ 5). If, therefore, a certain action or position is to be qualified as religious, it initially falls under the protection of freedom of religion, which is very broadly defined in Germany. Minority positions within religions are also protected, provided they are of a religious nature; this also applies if they appear offensive to some parts of society as a whole (see Heinig 2022: 14). Freedom of religion serves precisely to protect minorities and, like other fundamental rights, is itself a human right. It must prove its worth especially with regard to population groups that are widely stigmatized in public perception, such as Muslims (see subchapter ↗ 9.1.3, chapters ↗ 3, ↗ 5, and ↗ 7).

It is agreed, however, that religious freedom must be reconciled with conflicting fundamental rights (practical concordance) or, in the case of collective religious freedom, observe legally formulated limits. Conflicting interests must then be weighed against each other in the sense of proportionality in each individual case (regarding the plethora of individual questions and their legal assessment, see, with numerous references, Rohe 2018: 194–243).

However, the concretization of legal requirements in individual cases is precisely where it becomes clear just how much even state institutions are guided by preconceptions, for instance, in several decisions on the permissibility of restrictions on religiously connoted clothing of Muslim women in the workplace (see Heinig 2022: 8; for more details see subchapter ↗ 8.3.2.3). In this context, there are considerable fears with regard to how the very abstractly formulated new provisions in sections 61 of the Federal Civil Service Act (Bundesbeamtengesetz) and 34 of the Civil Service Status Act (Beamtenstatusgesetz) (see Gärditz/Abdulsalam 2021; Wiese 2021) are interpreted which could include extraneous considerations.

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127 See the decision of the Federal Labor Court of August 27, 2020 (8 AZR 62/19) with an interpretation of the law in conformity with the constitution and the award of damages for discrimination within the meaning of the General Equal Treatment Act, as well as the rejection of the constitutional complaint against it by the Federal Constitutional Court on January 17, 2023 (1 BVR 1661/21).
and preconceptions. This makes internal measures to raise awareness with regard to unconscious pre-decisions all the more important. Both religious rights legislation and the judiciary are therefore equally called upon to defend the fundamentals of religious freedom in an exclusively fact-oriented and legally compliant manner, also against widespread prejudices, as already carried out in an entire series of fundamental decisions (see also subchapter ↗ 8.3.2).

At the same time, the religion-friendly neutrality of the constitution must always be respected in legislation. As mentioned above, the Federal Labor Court and the Federal Constitutional Court have made it clear that factually unjustifiable restrictions on religious freedom based on exaggerated, secularist-oriented ideas of neutrality are not compatible with modern constitutional law. In this context, it also seems urgently necessary to end the blanket exclusion of Muslim women wearing headscarves from public office (for instance, in the judiciary), which ignores the multi-layered meanings of the headscarf. This unnecessary exclusion stigmatizes those affected and at the same time exposes them to intersectional disadvantages (as Muslims and women) (see Mangold 2022: 12–22). In as far as the law provides room for legislative discretion, this should be used in the sense of a gender and diversity-responsive policy for the benefit of committed citizens.

9.1.3 Endangering religious freedom for Muslims through social reservations

A plethora of court decisions in favor of Muslim parties to proceedings show that the institutions of the constitutional state take their concerns seriously. This is particularly urgent in times when presidents of courts and other lawyers report that they often receive derogatory and insulting letters in such cases, sometimes even with real names. The fundamentals of the secular constitutional state do not seem to have fully entered the general consciousness of the population (see extensive evidence in chapter ↗ 3). As an example, an older representative survey in Germany from 2010 (see Decker et al. 2010: 134; chapter 3) shows that 58.4 percent of the entire German population (75.7% in eastern Germany) thought that the religious rights of Muslims should be noticeably restricted. A new representative study shows that a considerable proportion of the population (approx. 44%) still generally supports restricting “the Islamic faith in Germany and demands government observation of Islamic communities in Germany” (Fridrichs/Storz 2022: 12–13), thus unconsciously or consciously positioning themselves as anti-Muslim.

This corresponds to unreflected misinterpretations in a study by Alice Schwarzer Stiftung (see Köcher 2021) which concluded that for the vast majority of respondents (65%) religious freedom was not up for debate. In fact, this abstract affirmation of religious freedom contradicts the content of concrete answers that do not respect the religious freedom of Muslims (for instance, in the case of religiously connoted clothing or with regard to a general ban on the employment of imams from abroad; regarding the headscarf debate, see Mangold 2022: 12–22; most recently Hecker 2022 as well as chapter ↗ 5 and subchapter ↗ 4.1). To credit this as a “differentiated view of Muslims” and “sharp rejection of political Islam” (Köcher 2021) turns the results upside down.

Against this backdrop, some clarifications are needed, using the example of particularly controversial issues. On the one hand, there are repeated conflicts about mosque buildings (see Schmitt 2003; Beinhauer-Köhler/Leggewie: 117–180; regarding the call to prayer, see chapter ↗ 4.5) that go beyond the activities of explicitly anti-Islam and anti-constitutional groups.128 The relevant

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128 See Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior, for Sport and Integration 2022: 264–269.
Statutory building and immission control regulations must be interpreted in light of religious freedom. Mosques, like church buildings, enjoy special protection under building law as religious institutions. Minarets, like church towers, have a recognition factor that must be recognized accordingly in law (see Rohe 2018: 198–199 with numerous references). Contrary to popular belief, the majority population does not have any right to religious-cultural milieu protection, even if parts of the non-Muslim population perceive a minaret, for instance, as “alien.” Calls to make the erection of mosques dependent on local votes clearly contradict the German constitutional order and the European Convention on Human Rights. Even democratic majorities are not entitled to deprive minorities of their constitutional rights, especially not because of vague “fears of alien infiltration” or fears that a mosque could reduce the value of their own nearby property. If, in an individual case, an extremist organization uses a mosque for illegal activities, this can and must result in bans and confiscations under association law. The argument of reciprocity often used against mosque buildings, along the lines of “a church in Mecca versus a mosque in Germany,” is also legally irrelevant. On the one hand, this would make Muslims living in this country collectively liable for the deplorable state of religious freedom in many Islamic countries. On the other hand, this would also entirely disregard Germany’s principles as a constitutional state.

Furthermore, the debate about the traditional religious circumcision of boys, which is carried out according to the rules of medical practice (see subchapter 4.2), was also conducted at times with no consideration of the foundations of constitutional law on religion (see Beulke/Dießner 2012; Bielefeldt 2012a and b as well as the references in Heinig 2022: 23). One argumentation that puts the welfare of the child in apparent opposition to religious freedom, generally devaluing the latter, is both anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic. From a legal point of view, the issue is not in fact a conflict between religious freedom and the best interests of the child, but rather a question of who is authorized to define the best interests of the child in terms of content. The Basic Law assigns this power primarily to the parents (Article 6 (2) first sentence). Socialization in a religious community based on a relevant assessment by the parents, can also serve the best interests of the child.

Admittedly, there are limits to parental prerogative: It does not cover serious interventions, and this is where the state’s guardianship mandate under the Basic Law (Article 6 (2) second sentence) is being updated. This is why the different forms of genital mutilation of girls and women, which are particularly widespread in parts of Africa among Christians, Muslims, and members of other religions, are always punishable. However, such serious interventions are not at issue here. It was therefore logical that the Bundestag clarified the legal situation at the end of 2012 with a new provision in section 1631d of the German Civil Code (BGB, Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch), largely eliminating the uncertainty that had arisen (see Schulze 2017).

Overall, German legislation offers favorable conditions for religious life and equal participation for all religious members and organizations. Far-reaching freedoms and forms of cooperation in a secular system that is open to religion (in contrast to anti-liberal, culturalist concepts of secularism rooted in state ideology, see Bielefeldt 2003: 15–58) refute the understanding of secularism as “anti-religion sentiment” that can be found among some Muslims and is promoted by extremists (see Bielefeldt 2003: 59–65). However, any realization is hampered by misinformation regarding the scope of religious freedom, also for minorities, as well as widespread generalized prejudices, and this is where anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Semitism can be seen to overlap. It is the task of state institutions and society as a whole to counter this.
9.2 UEM study: “The Islam policy of the parties represented in the German Bundestag: Developments, positions, and lines of conflict”

Issues relating to Islam policy are regularly the subject of debate in the Bundestag among the parties represented there. On the one hand, current socio-political events are discussed and commented on, and on the other hand, speeches or written contributions are made to address the establishment of general guidelines for (party) policy.\(^\text{129}\)

All parties represented in the Bundestag deal with religio-political issues related to Islam, which is reflected in Bundestag debates, but also in the corresponding party programs.\(^\text{130}\) Parliamentary debates are characterized by decision-making on current issues, but they mostly also address questions of principle. Some statements, such as Thilo Sarrazin’s sweeping disparagement of Muslims, or former German President Christian Wulff’s statement on the Day of German Unity in 2010 that Islam belongs to Germany, have led to long-lasting debates, as have major events, such as the attacks on Cologne’s Cathedral Square on New Year’s Eve 2015/2016 or the wave of immigration by refugees from Islamic countries in 2015 and 2016.

The analysis of contributions to debates in the Bundestag and the programs of the parties represented there clearly shows that topics discussed on an ad hoc basis (such as in the course of planning a larger mosque building) subside again after a certain time, fading into the backdrop, sometimes without any conclusive answer to a specific factual question, such as the fundamental position of a party on mosque building.

Some topics have been a recurring theme in debates in the Bundestag for years, such as the question of cooperation with Islamic associations, the comprehensive introduction of Islamic religious education, or head coverings for civil servants. It is not uncommon for the same issue to come up again at a later date in the wake of new events such as a court case brought about by affected persons; other aspects then come to the fore in the mirror of international politics or national security policy, and the way the issue is perceived by society also changes. Therefore, when evaluating individual statements on the Islam policy of the parties in the Bundestag, it is always important to consider when and in what context a particular statement was made. Individual statements and their diversity even within one and the same party are quite often reactions to political events and are later reassessed in hindsight. All in all, party political debates and positioning can be seen to change in line with changes in society.

Awareness of anti-Muslim statements and of attitudes on religio-political issues has increased in the recent past, in line with corresponding debates in society, also among the parties represented in the Bundestag—with the exception of the AfD. Social diversity and thus also the di-

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\(^{129}\) This presentation follows the 2022 study commissioned by the UEM and conducted by Malte Dreß titled “Die Islampolitik der im Deutschen Bundestag vertretenen Parteien: Entwicklungen, Positionen und Konfliktlinien” (The Islam Policy of the Parties Represented in the German Bundestag. Developments, Positions, and Lines of Conflict). The study is based on his doctoral thesis titled “Die politischen Parteien in der deutschen Islamdebatte” (see 2018), which refers to the period from 1961 onward when the first Turkish workers were recruited. The fact that only the final part of the doctoral thesis addresses in detail the statements by the AfD on the topic of Islam (policy) is because the AfD was not yet represented in the Bundestag in 2018, so that its stance on issues of Islam was only included at the end of the academic work.

\(^{130}\) This subchapter complements subchapter 9.2. It does not deal with the question of the relationship between politics and religion or the attitude of politics to integration issues per se, but with some specific questions related to the practice of religion and, due to developments over the past 60 years, maps a certain change in the debate situation of the political parties represented in the Bundestag.
versity of different public expressions of culture, world view, and religion are taken far more for granted today than in past decades. Attempts to do justice to this diversity, also politically and in terms of policies on religion, have long since become part of Bundestag debates and party statements. That being said, political parties do not pay that much attention to policies on religion, a fact that fails to do justice to the importance of this. Numerous religio-political issues relating to the equal treatment of all religious communities have not been sufficiently addressed up to now (see subchapter ↗ 9.1.1).

9.2.1 Comparing democratic political party attitudes

Taking the political party statements of the past 20 years, it was possible to compare the positions of the parties represented in the Bundestag on issues of Islam on the basis of a few specific topics: the debate on a headscarf ban for Muslim teachers in the civil service, the establishment of prayer rooms for ritual prayer, the introduction of Islamic religious education, the establishment of faculties for Islamic theology at universities, and the building of mosques and minarets.

In contrast to these issues, the debate on the application of Sharia norms\footnote{The Sharia system of norms includes not only public, criminal, and civil law, but also dietary, clothing, and ritual rules that govern the practice of religion. Sharia law is not a codified body of law, but a collection of rules, prohibitions, values, and norms, as well as the sources and methods of norm interpretation, which are still interpreted differently by legal scholars today and applied differently from country to country—in the area of legislation today as state law.} in Germany was initiated as a purely sham debate with no factual basis. In an anti-Muslim manner, it is insinuated here that the Muslim population wished to introduce such norms in opposition to German law. In a paper mutually drawn up with Muslim stakeholders, the German Islam Conference did in fact correctly state (see BMI 2015: 18–20, in Dreß 2022: 17–18) that the application of Sharia norms can only be considered within the framework of applicable German law. It goes without saying that further-reaching efforts that run counter to this must be rejected and are the subject of scrutiny by the security agencies.

According to this, religious rules fundamentally fall within the scope of the constitutional freedom of religion (see Rohe 2022a: 343–354). Foreign legal norms can only be applied in the area of international \textit{private} law relations; it is German law itself that provides for the application of such rules when they are more relevant, and only in as far as the result of their application does not contradict fundamental German legal concepts (\textit{ordre public}). In addition, Sharia norms can find their way into private law in the so-called dispositive substantive law (above all contract law including marriage contracts as well as inheritance law), within the general limits of the law and good morals (sections 134, 138 of the German Civil Code) (see Rohe 2022a: 373–379). Therefore, when people argue in the religio-political debate that in defending German law, they do not want any Sharia norms to be introduced, they are in effect rejecting demands that not even Muslims have made, with the exception of certain extremists. Such undifferentiated sham debates must be classified as anti-Muslim in as far as they construct a threat scenario that lacks a factual basis. It is imperative not to instrumentalize such issues in a populist manner, but to conduct discussions only on the basis of accurate facts.

It becomes clear that the CDU/CSU parliamentary group oscillates between a skeptical attitude toward Islam policy and support for the issues mentioned, i.e., by taking a skeptical stance on the issue of head coverings for Muslim teachers, the establishment of public spaces for ritual prayer in schools, and the introduction of Islamic religious education. However, the latter is supported in principle; the discussion rather revolves around the question of who is entitled to teach religion.
Skepticism prevails especially regarding the affiliation of teachers authorized to teach religion to certain Islamic organizations. In principle, the CDU/CSU parliamentary group supports the establishment of faculties for Islamic theology at universities. However, this attitude is more motivated by integration policy and stems less from the advocacy of equal rights for religions. When it comes to building mosques, the CDU/CSU parliamentary group, while supporting the right to build mosques in principle, at the same time demands consideration for the concerns of local residents and transparency in the financing of individual projects but acknowledges cultural change as a reality in this rather skeptical approach.

The SPD parliamentary group does not appear to have a uniform line in its positioning of Islam policy, demonstrating considerable differences when it comes to the stance on issues of Islam. Some issues are hardly discussed in terms of party politics. Where the question of the headscarf for teachers in the civil service is concerned, an optimistic and thus open attitude prevails as an affirmation of the free choice of cultural and religious confession; one exception here is the SPD in Berlin, which strictly rejects permission for teachers in the civil service to wear headscarves. On the question of setting up prayer rooms, a skeptical attitude prevails. With a view to the introduction of Islamic religious education, which is mainly advocated for reasons of religio-political equality, the openly supportive orientation is just as prevalent as it is with regard to the establishment of chairs for Islamic theology and to mosque building projects.

Within the FDP too, positions on Islam policy issues vary considerably. This is why it was not possible to clearly identify the attitude toward Muslim teachers in the civil service wearing headscarves. On the question of setting up prayer rooms, establishing faculties for Islamic theology, and building mosques, the FDP takes an optimistic and open stance, not without warning at the same time of Islamist networks in mosques. With regard to Islamic religious education, positions within the party differ with a tendency toward skepticism.

The Bündnis 90/Die Grünen party shows an openly optimistic attitude toward the issue of head coverings for teachers in the civil service and the building of mosques, emphasizing the right to free expression of cultural identity. The party is also in favor of establishing faculties for Islamic theology and Islamic religious education, but is skeptical about the involvement of the Islamic associations and DITIB in both issues.

The Die Linke party is in principle skeptical about the headscarf ban and Islamic religious education; at best, it prefers to support religious education under the aspect of equal rights for religions. It takes an openly optimistic stance with regard to prayer rooms, the building of mosques, and the establishment of Islamic theological faculties.

The majority of party-political statements in debates and in the political party programs can be regarded as openly optimistic, even if several legal questions remain unanswered and gaps exist in the political implementation of religion policy, such as the institutionalization of Muslim life within the framework of collective freedom, for instance, the introduction of religious education or the neutral application of the law in conjunction with mosque buildings. A fundamentally affirmative attitude toward diversity and the desire for equal treatment of all religions is both evident and predominant today. Debates are repeatedly held on issues of integration policy. Nevertheless,
debates in the Bundestag about Islam and Muslims in Germany as a whole cannot be subsumed under this heading. Likewise, Islam as such is not identified as an obstacle to integration.

That being said, the CDU/CSU parliamentary group does show a more skeptical attitude in that it views Islam more strongly than the other parties in terms of social and political integration and, assumes more than other parties the importance and scope of cultural components in the coexistence of people of different backdrops. The question regarding the free development of different cultures is also increasingly addressed here under the heading of a “Christian-Jewish-Occidental Leitkultur.” The parliamentary group often calls for critical-constructive debate on issues of Islam, but it does not call for separation or express anti-Islam sentiment. It is noteworthy that in the 1980s the SPD also addressed the issue of necessary integration efforts, although it demanded them from immigrants as well as from the host society and warned against “multi-culti bliss” (Schily 2004: 2).

9.2.2 Tendency toward open attitudes

From today’s perspective, some of the statements issued by the political parties on issues of Islam policy seem to be lacking knowledge, unnecessarily cautionary, or delimiting. However, the state of the discussion at that time must be taken into account, which is reflected in the individual contributions to the discussion. In addition, there are also decidedly open statements such as the SPD’s resolution in its 2021 party program to fight “anti-Islam sentiment.” As early as 1980, the FDP demanded for the first time in its election manifesto that “aliens […] be recognized on an equal footing in terms of their cultural identity” and that “appropriate measures for the preservation of cultural identity be supported.”

Following Wulff’s statement in 2010 that Islam belonged to Germany, the FDP also underpinned that Islam was also formative for Germany’s cultural identity (see Lindner 2010). In 2013, the FDP stated in its integration policy position paper that Islam had become a “religious tradition” that “supports our freedom.”

In 2004, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen also demanded equal membership for Muslims and recognition of Islam as an equal religion and a “policy of recognition.” The party called for an “emancipative integration policy” of participation and equal opportunities in the sense of a “multicultural democracy.” Today, it declares that it is focused on combating “anti-Islam sentiment,” “anti-Muslim racism,” “anti-Muslim sentiment.” The party addresses the fact that Muslims and Islamic institutions are particularly affected by “structural discrimination and violent attacks.” Die Grünen sees Islam as belonging to Germany. For this party, legal equality, which is to be secured through state treaties with Islamic religious communities, is
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absolutely essential. In this context, Islamic religious communities are to become contractual partners “which are not structurally dependent on a state, a party, or political movement and their respective government policies, and which determine themselves religiously.”

Die Linke is expressly in favor of promoting cultural and religious minorities and their right to freely develop their own cultural identities. This party basically regards cultural pluralism as an enrichment and highlights—especially the PDS at the time—frequent discrimination against Muslims in politics, on the labor market, in the education sector, and in dealings with authorities; it wants to actively represent the concerns of Muslims. For Die Linke, relegating Muslims (who the party believes are often generally suspected of terrorism) because of their religious convictions poses a “serious threat to peaceful and democratic coexistence,” therefore, political equality is essential.

One of the party’s central demands is related to the fight against “anti-Muslim racism” and anti-Islam sentiment, which Die Linke sees as a form of “misanthropy.” Commitment against this is part of “lived anti-fascism.”

9.2.3 Tendency toward demarcation and anti-Muslim sentiment

Overall, there is broad agreement on a dynamic basic attitude toward issues of Islam. With a view to all of topics mentioned above and the political parties addressed, a certain degree of skepticism can be discerned combined with an at times restricted degree of openness. A clear willingness to recognize changing social conditions is also evident among all the parties—in part by naming certain conditions—as is the constructive search for solutions to contentious issues and sensible arrangements for cultural and religious diversity.

With its far-reaching refusal to grant equal rights to Islam and Muslims and its failure to take any kind of differentiated stance toward issues of Islam policy, the AfD denounces this consensus. Markedly borderline racist, denigrating, generalizing anti-Islam and anti-Muslim positions can be found in the AfD parliamentary group. The AfD’s position on the question of head coverings for civil servants, the establishment of rooms for ritual prayer, Islamic religious education, the establishment of chairs of Islamic theology at universities, and the building of mosques is not only decidedly negative, but also—in contrast to the often-differentiated pros and cons discussed by the other parties—fails to show any consideration or understanding for justified concerns regarding equal treatment. In part, the debate is dominated by insinuations and false statements, such as the reference to the “200 suras glorifying violence in the Quran” or the assertion of a fundamental orientation of Islam and Muslims toward political dominance and the takeover of the state. No statements of an openly appreciative nature can be found here; from the AfD’s point of view, a tolerant, moderate, or apolitical Islam does not exist, it was an illusion. Islam as such endangered social peace, undermining Europe’s legal order and values.

Europe was therefore in the midst of a culture war.

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146 Ibid. p. 7.
148 Ibid. p. 7.
The party is not only opposed to equal treatment for Muslims, it considers them fundamentally unable to integrate and live peacefully with other religious communities. In the opinion of the party, Islam and Europe are direct opposites. The “Flügel” (wing) \(^{151}\) openly professes its support for the “plan of a gradual expulsion of Muslims from Europe:” “We say ‘Yes!’ to the peaceful de-Islamization of Europe” (BMI 2021: 95–96).

The repeatedly aggressively voiced anti-Muslim sentiment reached a certain peak with the leader of the Bundestag parliamentary group, Alice Weidel, when she expressed it in the Bundestag in 2018: “Burkas, girls with headscarves, funded knifemen, and other good-for-nothings will not secure our prosperity, economic growth, and above all the welfare state.”\(^{152}\) Prejudices and undifferentiated criticism of the religion of Islam and Muslims are mixed here with ideologically defined blanket disparagement, denigration, and open hostility toward Islam and Muslims.

9.3 UEM hearing with the religious affairs representatives of the parties represented in the Bundestag\(^{153}\)

Within the framework of a digitally organized hearing, the religious affairs representatives of the parties represented in the Bundestag that were in office in spring 2021, i.e., Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, CDU/CSU, Die Linke, FDP, and AfD,\(^{154}\) were presented with ten identical questions on their party’s policy on Islam. The interviews each led to an open round of talks.

The aim of the interviews was to gain an impression of the internal party discussion on the topic of Islam and Muslims in Germany and to find out to what extent the different parties address the issue of anti-Muslim sentiment. The following questions were put to all of the party religio-political spokespersons:

1. Please outline your party’s policy on Islam, especially with regard to participation and religious equality of Muslims with other religious communities. In your view, does anti-Muslim sentiment play a role in the discussion about participation and equality of Muslims with other religious communities?
2. What importance does your party attach to the phenomenon of anti-Muslim sentiment and does your party gear its policies to this phenomenon?
3. In your view, what are the causes of anti-Muslim sentiment and in which political spectrum do you see anti-Muslim sentiment?
4. Is anti-Muslim sentiment addressed as a separate phenomenon in the context of your party’s activities (for instance, in the party program, in the educational program of a party-affiliated foundation or similar) or is it combined with other areas (racism, right-wing extremism, anti-Semitism)?
5. Can you provide examples of anti-Muslim incidents that have been discussed within your party? What was the reaction to this?
6. Are boundaries between legitimate criticism and anti-Muslim prejudice discussed in your party? If so, where is the line drawn?
7. Does your party have networks or cooperations with other parties, educational institutions, or scientific institutes related to the issue of anti-Muslim sentiment?

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151 This was the name given at the time to the ethnic-nationalist, far-right wing of the AfD party.
153 The hearings were held on May 31 and June 1, 2021, via Zoom.
154 Unfortunately, it was not possible to arrange a digital conversation with the religious affairs representative of the SPD parliamentary group, but a written statement was made.
8. Do you have contacts with party initiatives in other European countries that deal with the issue of anti-Muslim sentiment ("Islamophobia")? Are debates in the European Parliament on the topic received?

9. Are subtle forms of anti-Muslim sentiment discussed in your party, i.e., subliminal attributions beyond criminal acts?

10. What measures are being taken in your party to prevent anti-Muslim sentiment? How would you personally recommend that your party sustainably combat anti-Muslim sentiment?

9.3.1 Bündnis 90/Die Grünen

Filiz Polat, spokesperson for migration and integration policy of the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen parliamentary group, emphasizes in the interview that representatives of all religions are entitled to equal rights and equal treatment. This was not only a political but also a constitutional demand. Die Grünen were engaged in a constant and at times controversial dialogue with religious communities about different topics. Her party, more than any other, was looking for ways to put Islam on an equal footing with other religious communities, for instance, with regard to theological faculties, welfare, religious education, or government financial support.

The party was also increasingly dealing with the phenomenon of anti-Muslim sentiment. In order to curb anti-Muslim racism, a reform of the General Equal Treatment Act was essential, as well as low-threshold access to qualified, independent counseling services, and a well-staffed and funded federal anti-discrimination office. It should be emphasized that the party was the first in Germany to adopt a statute on diversity and to appoint a spokesperson on diversity policy to the party’s federal executive committee. However, the party also had to admit that its leadership did not reflect the diversity of society.

The party took a clear stance when blanket statements are made about Muslims or certain characteristics are attributed to them. Anti-Muslim sentiment had grown historically in this country. It was transported through ignorance as well as through attributions by others and was also to be found in the center of society. Populist forces and right-wing radicals in particular were exploiting this for their own purposes. In the party, anti-Muslim sentiment was treated as a phenomenon in its own right and the line between serious criticism and anti-Muslim prejudice was discussed at different party levels. There was a sensitive exchange with Islamic umbrella organizations and mosque communities; especially the “Secular Greens” were conducting a critical dialogue on this. Of course, subtle forms of anti-Muslim sentiment were also discussed and the issue was also addressed at different European levels.

In the subsequent discussion, Filiz Polat expressed the wish for the party to treat the issue of racism in future on an equal footing with the issue of climate protection, since racism poses a similarly serious threat as the climate catastrophe. She welcomed the fact that the topic of Islam had recently been increasingly decoupled from the topic of migration, which was also visible in the reorganization of the party’s individual departments and responsibilities.

9.3.2 CDU/CSU

According to Hermann Gröhe, representative for church and religious communities of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group (the “Union”), awareness of anti-Muslim sentiment in the CDU had

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developed in lockstep with the increasing media coverage about anti-Muslim statements and crimes. Previously, the party had been primarily concerned with “integration policy.” However, due to its own religious roots, the Union was perceived by Muslims as an understanding contact. The Union’s appreciation for the concerns of religious communities and their role in public life was reflected in its commitment against anti-Semitism and for the special protection of Jewish life in Germany, but in recent years also increasingly for the protection of Muslim life.

Blatant anti-Muslim sentiment emanated primarily from the “extreme right;” however, hostility against religion as a whole also existed among the “extreme left.” The causes for this were complex and could be found, for instance, in a combination of “xenophobia and racism,” in terrorist acts that were committed due to fundamentalist belief, as well as in the conflicts surrounding the reception of refugees. The justifiably increasingly self-confident public appearance of Muslims came up against resistance by intolerant forces.

The Union counters anti-Muslim incidents by showing solidarity with the attacked and by integrating Muslims more visibly into various offices. In addition, investments were being made in education and in maintaining networks that go beyond Germany in order to anchor the topic at European level, for example.

The line between legitimate criticism and anti-Muslim prejudice had been discussed especially on the occasion of the recent Union position paper against “political Islamism” where the term “political Islam” had no longer been used to avoid any general suspicion. Despite this careful choice of wording, it had to be possible—similar to the phenomenon of right-wing extremism—to precisely observe and name hardened and radical positions, even before such intolerant behavior leads to acts of violence. It is clear that religions were political, as they helped shape the reality of people’s lives. Religions should examine themselves self-critically when they were misused for violence and terror. For instance, it had to be said that Christian anti-Judaism was the root of German anti-Semitism. Similarly, Muslims had to accept the question of why a terrorist minority can make a claim to Islam.

In the subsequent discussion, Hermann Gröhe emphasized that hostility toward religion was unacceptable, even if it was generally strong in secular Western countries. Those with a positive attitude toward religion and toward interreligious dialogue and multi-religious coexistence should work together against this.

9.3.3 Die Linke

At the beginning of the discussion, Christine Buchholz, religio-political spokesperson for the parliamentary group Die Linke, emphasized her strong personal commitment to equal rights for all religious communities, including the demand to lift the ban on headscarves for female civil servants. The discussion about Muslims, Islam, and its equality with other religious communities was highly permeated by anti-Muslim racism and hostility toward Muslims and Islam. Anti-Muslim stereotypes were used in political speeches—also in the Bundestag. However, she was positively surprised by the discussions on the major interpellation submitted by Die Linke on “Anti-Muslim racism and discrimination against Muslims in Germany” because most of the speakers had taken a clear stand against anti-Muslim sentiment.


157 Major interpellation by the Die Linke parliamentary group titled “Anti-Muslim racism and discrimination against Muslims in Germany.” Available online: https://www.bundestag.de/dokumente/textarchiv/2021/kw02-de-antimuslischer-rassismus-814234 [Nov. 30, 2022].
Racism had changed since the 1990s. Before that, she said, it had been directed against origin and then increasingly against Islam. Arguments from the center of society, stating that it was permissible to express criticism of religion, often failed to recognize that under the pretext of criticism of religion racist resentment had been conveyed. The line between legitimate criticism and anti-Muslim prejudice can be found at the point where generalized, negative statements were made about Islam or Muslims. Although religion could be criticized in general and in concrete terms, it must not be used to withhold rights from individual religious communities. Muslims should be able to practice their religion with all its contradictions and problems (like all other religious communities) in the center of society.

Anti-Muslim racism was not just a problem of the far right, but of the entire spectrum of parties and society. The issue of anti-Muslim racism had been treated as a separate phenomenon within the party for more than ten years and was explicitly mentioned in the party program alongside other forms of racism. Anti-Muslim incidents (attacks, unequal treatment of Muslim communities) were responded to with expressions of solidarity and occasionally also with solidarity visits as well as with the upholding of a “culture of remembrance.”

In the subsequent conversation, it is added that the Die Linke party considered it important to expand research on anti-Muslim racism and anti-racist historical research nationwide, not least because the systematic teaching of knowledge critical of racism was vital. The Die Linke party also demanded that the Bundestag outlaw anti-Muslim racism—just as it outlawed antisemitism and antiziganism—end all forms of state discrimination and religious unequal treatment, and that it comprehensively improve protection against discrimination.

9.3.4 Freie Demokratische Partei (FDP)

According to Benjamin Strasser, religio-political spokesperson for the FDP parliamentary group, freedom of religion reflects the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms, which may, however, be in conflict with other fundamental rights. The state had a guarantee obligation here: Muslims must be supported in practicing their religion. However, the further development of the constitutional law on religion as well as the integration of the Muslim communities into it failed not least due to the lack of organization among the Muslim community.

Anti-Muslim sentiment had a smaller role to play in German society and politics than anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, the issue of everyday racism and discrimination based on religious affiliation, but also on other characteristics, was definitely an issue in the party.

The FDP was generally reluctant to call for new laws or bans. In the opinion of the FDP, it was much more important to raise social awareness of anti-Muslim sentiment. This required establishing and expanding sustainable structures together with organized contact persons from the Muslim community.

Anti-Muslim sentiment was to be found primarily in the right-wing populist to right-wing extremist spectrum with its ethnic world view. In order to shed more light on the causes of anti-Muslim sentiment, blind spots needed to be researched. However, previous studies showed that racism and “xenophobia” arise wherever people do not come into contact with each other. The lack of reference to Muslims, reinforced, for instance, by terrorist attacks, led to subliminal anti-Muslim sentiment even in the center of society. As a result, Muslims were placed under general suspicion.
The prime question for the FDP was what the state could do to guarantee an open, pluralistic society. Even if the state had to guarantee the protection of Muslims on the one hand, criticism of religion was important and correct on the other, as long as this did not contain a racist component. Protection against criticism could also be false loyalty: After all, the strongest criticism of grievances within the religious community were voiced by Muslims themselves.

The party would like to see well-organized Muslim contact persons who have deep ties in the Muslim community, so that politics could work together with these contact persons, for instance, in deradicalization measures or debates about Muslim religious education.

In the subsequent discussion, it became clear that the FDP does not yet have an explicit agenda against anti-Muslim sentiment. However, the party took a skeptical stance toward legislative regulation and therefore relied instead on the phenomenon of anti-Muslim sentiment being addressed in society, Strasser finally added.

9.3.5 Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD)

Prof. Dr. Lars Castellucci, Commissioner for Church and Religious Communities of the SPD parliamentary group, answered the UEM’s questions in writing. The statement emphasizes that Muslim religious communities should be included in constitutional law on religion. Unfortunately, the political responsiveness of Muslims is not as well organized as that of other religious communities, thus making negotiations more difficult.

The SPD parliamentary group resolutely opposes anti-Islam sentiment because Islam belonged to Germany. In order to enter into dialogue with Muslim citizens, the first Islam Conference of the SPD parliamentary group was launched in 2017, and in 2020, continuing on from the second Islam Conference, Muslim citizens were invited to the German Bundestag. Racism and misanthropy were phenomena that were becoming entrenched in the center of society and were unfortunately spreading across all classes. To reduce this phenomenon, group-specific prevention offers were needed.

The Democracy Promotion Act (Demokratiefördergesetz) needed to be introduced as soon as possible because experience showed that cooperation with civil society had to be consolidated and deepened at all levels in order to successfully combat anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Semitism.

It was also important to provide long-term funding for projects and educational measures. Public awareness was needed in order to effectively protect against discrimination. Therefore, the SPD was looking to appoint an independent Federal Government Commissioner for Anti-Racism. Finally, the General Equal Treatment Act needed to be reformed in order to close protection gaps.

9.3.6 Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)

Volker Münz, the AfD’s parliamentary group spokesman on church policy, recognizes Germany’s religious character as an essential foundation of its culture. The terms “anti-Muslim sentiment” or “Islamophobia” were unsuitable because they merely make any legitimate criticism of Islam taboo. Criticism of religion, however, was a foundation of Western civilization, which Islamic countries had yet to experience. However, the AfD had laid down internal party guidelines on permissible criticism of Islam and its limits. Party members were not to make sweeping criticism of Islam or defame Muslims.

Immigration policy had to be drastically tightened, he said, because Muslim refugees did not share “our values” and this created considerable conflicts, even chaotic conditions. It was also clear that Islam should not be permitted to claim the
same position in Germany as Christianity. At best, there could be equal rights for law-abiding Muslims who are legally entitled to live in Germany.

Within the AfD party, the phenomenon of anti-Muslim sentiment was not addressed; the term anti-Muslim racism was rejected. The causes of anti-Muslim sentiment were to be found in Muslims themselves, for instance, in the martial behavior of young Muslim men or in terrorist attacks. The AfD therefore supported Muslim critics of Islam who are far too rarely heard and who warn against naive multiculturalism.

Attacks on (Muslim) refugees or mosques were less of a concern than attacks on fellow Jews who no longer dared to wear kippahs in public in Germany.

In the subsequent conversation, doubts were expressed as to whether different currents existed within Islam. The AfD parliamentary group did have employees with a migration backdrop, but no one of Muslim faith.

9.3.7 Summary and evaluation

All the parties represented in the Bundestag, with the exception of the AfD, deal with various forms of anti-Muslim sentiment, its causes, as well as measures for its suppression, and would like to see constitutional law on religion applied in relation to the Muslim faith community. This concern is represented to varying degrees within the different parties. Demands were expressed for equality between the Muslim community and the Christian churches as were critical opinions regarding the work of political Islamist forces and problematic developments in connection with unmanaged immigration. Only the AfD breaks away from this consensus by failing to address the issue of anti-Muslim sentiment for fundamental reasons.

9.4 The importance of inter-religious understanding

Interreligious dialogues aim to foster understanding between religious communities and can help to reduce misunderstandings, prejudices, and mutual contempt. Germany has particularly well-established dialogue formats between Jewish, Christian, and Muslim institutions or believers. Over the past decades, it was primarily the Christian churches that initiated a widely differentiated field of Jewish-Christian encounters and, since the 2000s, have increasingly dedicated themselves to Christian-Muslim encounters. In more recent times, however, religious forums independent of the churches have also been increasingly emerging. The interreligious specifics are not only reflected in the concerns, contents, and forms of action of the respective stakeholders, but also in their framework conditions. This is why the topic of anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiment is also explicated in very different ways. It is here that the question of how “Islam” and “Muslims” are specifically perceived in Germany in interreligious contexts is of paramount importance, especially on the part of the Christian denominations (see subchapter 9.4.1.1). New momentum can be seen in the area of Jewish-Muslim relations (see subchapter 9.4.1.2), which is worth taking a closer look at.

9.4.1 Islam and Muslims in interreligious and social encounter formats

Muslim individuals, groups, and institutions have long been visible, active, and established as actors in interreligious encounters in a variety of contexts. For many decades, numerous local groups, but also supra-regional associations, dialogue initiatives, and alliances have become established and are socio-politically visible. Digital forums are also becoming increasingly important here. What’s more, Muslim and other individuals from society, academia, and politics carry out important mediation work to promote the overall social
and public perception and inclusion of Islam in Germany. Some of the nationwide interreligious platforms and Christian-Muslim dialogue formats that are committed to contributing to socio-political issues are listed below. It is not possible here to trace their respective genesis nor can the list of examples claim to be exhaustive. What we would like to highlight is the extent to which the broad field of (inter)religious formats interacts with socio-political issues and their framework conditions.

9.4.1.1 Christian-Muslim dialogue

Dialogue between Christians and Muslims in its many dimensions is very well established in Germany. Especially over the past two decades, this dialogue has intensified, developed positively, and become differentiated. Beyond dedicated Christian-Muslim initiatives and institutionalized academic discourses, it encompasses a variety of encounter formats, local alliances, and levels of exchange. In addition to religious, theological, and spiritual questions of mutual perception, it is also dedicated to (common) social issues, seeking to serve good coexistence.

The establishment of this dialogue on the part of the churches is clearly demonstrated, for instance, by the employment of representatives for Islamic issues in almost all regional churches and dioceses. In addition, dialogue institutions have existed for many decades, such as the Centre for Christian-Muslim Encounter and Documentation (CIBEDO) on the Catholic side as a department of the German Bishops’ Conference or the Church and Islam Conference by EKD (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland) on the Protestant side. The correspondingly extensive interreligious subject area in the Catholic and Protestant academies, which are central places of Christian-Muslim exchange through their specialist conferences and publications, also shows the firm anchoring of institutionalized church-Muslim dialogues. Although the churches have often taken the initiative here and, due to their constitution, can guarantee the corresponding structures within which Muslim partners participate very actively, Muslims too have established numerous dialogue initiatives, such as the dialogue officers of individual associations, respective event formats, and institutionalization efforts. In addition, there are Christian-Muslim dialogue associations, of which the Christian-Islamic Society, which has been active throughout Germany since 1982, deserves special mention.

In recent times, Christian-Muslim dialogue as a whole has been confronted with new social enquiries, political challenges, and intensified questioning. A similarly perceptible skepticism about dialogue is influencing the contents and forms that have evolved up to now. Even within the Christian-Muslim dialogue fields, those narrowing perspectives can be found within which “Islam topics” are subsumed as part of the debate on integration and migration or which generally participate in biased negative tendencies of public discourses on Islam (see also chapter \( \uparrow 7 \)).

This was clearly demonstrated by the enormous increase in interest in Islam and Christian-Muslim relations due to the events of September 11, 2001, which also represented a caesura for the orientation of interreligious work in terms of both content and form, as Muslim dialogue partners have since been increasingly facing critical enquiries, new pressures to justify themselves, and growing hostility or suspicion. This development also overlapped discussions about the content of religious dialogue, it strongly modified the spectrum of interreligious learning through encounters, and in many places marked a departure—also in interreligious contexts—from the former ideal of a multi-culti society. The controversy surrounding the dictum “Islam belongs to Germany” (Islamiq 2020) can be seen as exemplary for the change in social debate that framed Christian-Muslim dialogue from this point onward. Different emphases in the direction of demar-
cation or understanding are also evident in the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD). The EKD document titled “Klarheit und gute Nachbarschaft” (Clarity and Good Neighborliness) (2006) contains extensive passages on government policy with a clear tendency toward demarcation and comparatively little content on theological and interreligious issues (critically: Kuschel 2007: 45–64). Statements such as “Christians, however, will find it difficult to attach their hearts to a God as described in the Quran and as worshipped by Muslims” were perceived by some as alienating and hurtful (see Micksch 2007). In later documents, however, which were more oriented toward understanding, it was emphasized that the Muslim population in this country should not be judged “according to the manifestations of Islam in non-European countries” (Rat der EKD 2015: 67) according to the EKD document titled “Christlicher Glaube und religiöse Vielfalt in evangelischer Perspektive” (Christian Faith and Religious Diversity from a Protestant Perspective) from 2015, which in a basically positive and theologically precise manner addresses religious diversity in Germany. This document affirms the pluralism of religions and world views by underpinning that people of other faiths are “co-inhabitants of a common space, fellow citizens of a common polis, and co-addressees of God’s word” (ibid: 19). In the same year, the EKD, together with Coordinating Council of Muslims (Koordinationsrat der Muslime (KRM)), adopted a “Dialogue Guide to Promote Encounters between Christians and Muslims in Germany” (Dialogratgeber zur Förderung der Begegnung zwischen Christen und Muslimen in Deutschland) based on a realistic understanding. The changes in the debate that have taken place since 2015 as a result of the reception of many Syrians in Germany due to the war have also had a strong impact on Christian-Muslim relations, beyond the factual changes within Islam here (Middelbeck-Varwick 2018: 178). A perspective on Muslims and people perceived as Muslims that is narrowed to migration and integration also led to corresponding shifts in social issues, which in turn also influenced areas of religious dialogue. Churches too developed positions in response to the increase in anti-Islam and anti-Muslim attitudes. In 2019, for instance, the German Bishops’ Conference published the working aid titled “Resisting Populism” (Dem Populismus wiederstehen) on the church’s dealing with right-wing populist tendencies, in which the topic of Islam and anti-Islam sentiment are specifically considered. In 2020, the Christian and Muslim discussion group at the Central Committee of German Catholics (Zentralkomitee der deutschen Katholiken (ZdK)) issued a declaration titled “No to hate and incitement. Christians and Muslims together against anti-Islam sentiment.”

In the past, Muslim groups and associations often found themselves expected to present their religious self-understanding to a Christian majority society or a secular public. “Open Mosque Day,” which has been established since 1997, can nevertheless by no means be merely seen as a reaction to this, but rather as an independent Muslim dialogue initiative. Every year, on the anniversary of German reunification, mosque communities in many cities invite people to come together. The offers for discussion and information are varied, as was shown, for instance, again in 2019 under the heading “Menschen machen Heimat/en” (People make a home). The public response to these events is always great, proof that society as a whole still has a keen interest in Islam and is motivated in many ways, while Muslim associations, groups, and actors often react very actively to this (see Middelbeck-Varwick 2020: 16). Open Mosque Day initially came into being as an initiative of Central Council of Muslims in Germany (Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland) and has been under the leadership of the Coordinating Council of Muslims since 2007.
Basically, however, it can be observed that former asymmetries within Christian-Muslim fields of dialogue have clearly diminished in recent years (see Middelbeck-Varwick 2019: 280). While in the past church actors in particular assumed—sometimes quite paternalistically—a kind of “advocacy” for Muslims, i.e., campaigning for prayer rooms, mosque buildings, or Islamic religious education, for instance, it is now generally assumed that an equal partnership exists. This can be seen by the assumption of numerous joint social tasks. The areas identified and worked on here as a common field of responsibility range from a telephone helpline, emergency, hospital, prison or military pastoral care to climate protection, from charitable work to ethical questions concerning borderline cases of human life (beginning of life, end of life, serious illness). In this respect, dialogue on theological questions has grown far beyond a mutual acquaintance with basic religious assumptions of the respective other traditions in two respects, on the one hand with regard to its ethical-social and political dimension, and on the other hand with regard to its academic development, which also reflects these processes (see chapter 6; Orth 2014; Middelbeck-Varwick 2020: 17–18). In addition, mutual religious orientation remains a necessary, elementary building block of Christian-Muslim dialogue practice and must be guaranteed. In order to ascertain the social significance of Christian-Muslim dialogue more precisely, further up-to-date studies are needed that examine in more detail the question of what interreligious dialogue can achieve (most recently Klinkhammer 2011). In relation to the question of anti-Muslim racism, it is necessary to analyze the extent to which these dialogues also indirectly contribute to one-sided perceptions or reproduce stereotypes and dichotomous attributions, for instance, through certain agendas or unequal representation. Finally, another example of the generally positive developments in the field should be added, i.e., the ever-stronger establishment of an “Iftar tradition” during the fasting month of Ramadan. While breaking the fast every evening used to be an exclusively Muslim tradition, this is increasingly changing. It is no longer only Muslim believers who invite people to join them in their private or institutional contexts, numerous public or church institutions have also established an interreligious practice here that is new for Germany.

### 9.4.1.2 Jewish-Muslim dialogue

In recent years, Jewish-Muslim dialogue has increasingly been at the center of public interest. New projects and initiatives have emerged that are geared to building bridges and alliances between Jews and Muslims. One reason for this is tension in connection with the Middle East conflict, which is also echoing more and more clearly in the respective communities in this country.

First of all, the framework conditions of Jewish-Muslim dialogue need to be examined. Both religious communities belong to religious minorities in Germany—however, Muslims are the largest and Jews one of the smallest minority groups. There are an estimated 225,000 Jews and 5.3 million Muslims living in Germany. When it comes to implementing project ideas, the search for institutional dialogue partners is more difficult for the Jewish community than for Muslims simply due to their numbers—put into relation to each other, there are about 23 Muslims for every Jew living in Germany. Another difference is to be found in the way the two religious communities are organized. Around half of the Jews living here are members of Jewish communities. In total, there are about 130 communities, the vast majority (105) of them are organized under the umbrella of the Central Council of Jews (Zentralrat der Juden (ZdJ)), another 25 communities and

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159 Figures about Jews: [https://mediendienst-integration.de/gruppen/judentum.html](https://mediendienst-integration.de/gruppen/judentum.html); figures about Muslims: [https://mediendienst-integration.de/gruppen/islam-und-muslime.html](https://mediendienst-integration.de/gruppen/islam-und-muslime.html) [both March 2, 2023].
groups belong to the liberal Union of Progressive Jews in Germany (Union progressiver Juden in Deutschland (UpJ)) (many of whom are in turn also members of the Central Council of Jews). In contrast, there are 2,350 mosque congregations with the vast majority of the more than five million Muslims here not being members of one of these congregations; moreover, almost 40 percent do not even know the local Islamic associations (see Pfündel/Stichs/Tanis 2021: 105). This highlights the central challenge in implementing institutional Jewish-Muslim dialogue projects, i.e., how to reach the target group. Jewish citizens, therefore, are often uncertain about which Muslim association should be considered as a dialogue partner. The two Jewish associations face a multitude of very differently organized and structured associations on the Muslim side—in addition to individuals and Muslim organizations that do not operate as an association or official representative body.

Jewish-Muslim dialogue in Germany is still in its infancy and is much younger than Christian-Islamic and Christian-Jewish dialogue. It is difficult to pinpoint when it began. First evidence comes mainly from stories of specific individuals, who are often the subject of dialogue talks. One such story is that of Egyptian physician Muhammad Helmy, who came to Berlin in the 1920s to study medicine and became a senior physician in 1933. He is known among other things for helping several Jews to hide from the National Socialists (see Avidan 2017). The editor-in-chief of the first German-language Muslim newspaper Moslemische Revue (1924–1940) was the German-Jewish writer Hugo Hamid Marcus, who converted to Islam in the early 1920s while remaining a member of the Jewish community. He was chairman of the “German-Muslim Community” founded in 1930, which emerged at the time when the oldest mosque (which still exists today) was opened in Berlin-Wilmersdorf (see Baer 2020: 4). At that time, Muslims from Egypt, Persia, and India lived together with Russian and German Jews especially in the then migrant district of Wilmersdorf where they organized themselves in different ways (see Jonker 2020: 37–51): Muslim and Jewish women, for instance, met in the “Red Club” to discuss gender relations (see Leister 2020).

Both Jews and Muslims are largely unaware of these encounters. After the Holocaust, Muslims and Jews in the Federal Republic of Germany initially came together as targets of right-wing extremist violence. This was formulated in 1997 by Ignatz Bubis, then chairman of the Central Council of Jews, when he said that what Jews and Muslims had in common was their “alienness in German society” (1999)—and appealed for more dialogue among them. Inspired by his appeal, in January 1999 the German Orient Institute in Hamburg invited, among others, the Central Council of Jews and Central Council of Muslims in Germany to take part in the conference titled “Jews and Muslims in Germany—Strangers Togetherness?” At this conference, one of the first institutionalized encounters, the main focus was on what unites rather than what divides them, as had often been emphasized in politics, especially with reference to the Middle East conflict (see K. Hafez/Steinbach 1999).

And yet, since the beginning of the Second Intifada in autumn 2000, Jewish-Muslim relations have been shaped primarily by the Middle East conflict. Solidarity with the Palestinians is widespread within the migrant Muslim milieu. In the past, however, unreflective solidarity led to anti-Semitic incidents, such as the anti-Semitic demonstrations in May 2021 in the wake of a renewed escalation of the Middle East conflict. Anti-Semitic protests were held in front of German synagogues in Gelsenkirchen, Bonn, and Berlin, among other places (see Mendel 2021). At the same time, the representative bodies of both religious communities presented themselves in a biased manner, following gross simplifications of their classifications of the conflict: The Coordination Council of Muslims spontaneously declared the Israelis to be the culprits behind the escala-
tion, while the Central Council of Jews announced the same day that the responsibility “clearly” lay in the hands of Hamas.\textsuperscript{160}

One example of successful Jewish-Muslim cooperation in a common cause is the circumcision debate in 2012 (see in detail subchapter \textsuperscript{\(\dagger\) 4.2}). When Jews and Muslims feared a legal ban on circumcision, they both felt socially marginalized, as shown in an Oxford study. Both minority groups felt that their “own traditions were devalued as alien and primitive by the majority society” (Öktem 2013: IX). However, the initial solidarity quickly failed in the face of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In recent years, several dialogue and cooperation formats have emerged, some of which are mentioned here as examples. In 2013, the Salaam-Shalom Initiative in Berlin’s Neukölln district began with various actions and projects for Muslim-Jewish dialogue independent of mosques, associations, and central communities. The initiative regularly organized open discussion rounds as well as panel discussions with Muslims and Jews. In the following year, 2014, the “Jewish-Muslim Discussion Group” of the W. Michael Blumenthal Academy of the Jewish Museum Berlin was founded, in which Jews and Muslims from academia, culture, and politics meet regularly to strengthen networking. Early in 2019, two organizations for the promotion of gifted students—the Jewish Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich Studienwerk and the Muslim Avicenna-Studienwerk—founded the Jewish-Muslim think tank Karov-Qareeb, in which young Jews and Muslims work together, explore the realities of their lives, and enable joint empowerment. These two examples of institutionalized formats are particularly sustainable because of their regular meetings. Another project is the “Shalom-Aleikum” project initiated in 2019 by the Federal Government Commissioner for Integration. The declared claim of this project to create Jewish-Muslim dialogue at eye level is in contradiction to the structure of the project where planning and implementation is solely in the hands of the Central Council of Jews without any participation by a Muslim partner.

Other formats that have generated considerable resonance, especially in the press, are also leaving their mark. Take, for instance, the 2014 visit to a mosque by the former president of the Central Council of Jews, Dieter Graumann, in support of the day of action titled “Muslims stand up against hate and injustice,” which the Coordinating Council of Muslims organized nationwide with vigils and rallies as a sign against terrorism. Graumann emphasized the solidarity of Jews with Muslims and assured them that they would “raise their voices when Muslim people are discriminated against here” (Graumann 2014). Events for the joint remembrance of the Holocaust are also among the formats that aim to strengthen dialogue—for instance, in 2018, as part of a joint visit by Jews and Muslims to the former Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp where the chairman of the Council of Muslims in Germany, Aiman Mazyek, confirmed that German Muslims also feel responsible for ensuring that a catastrophe like the Holocaust did not happen again.

Not only the circumcision debate in 2012, but above all the past right-wing extremist attacks in Halle 2019 and Hanau 2020 clearly show that both minorities have common interests and face similar threats. Bubis already declared that “neo-Nazism today forces solidarity” (1999). The current president of the Central Council of Jews, Josef Schuster, also frequently refers to the common threat both from right-wing extremist groups and the AfD. Shortly after the AfD’s entry into the Bundestag, he warned that the party was currently mainly agitating against the Muslim

minority. “If the topic of Muslims were to become no longer interesting and if it were politically and socially opportune, then this could very well affect other minorities, including Jews” (2017b).

The number of anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim incidents is increasing, which is why, despite the many challenges for Jews and Muslims alike, it seems necessary to make their common interests visible and to join forces in the fight against racism and anti-Semitism (on the relationship between anti-Muslim sentiment and anti-Semitism, see chapter 2). Sustainable dialogue and encounter formats on a level playing field could make a considerable difference.

9.4.1.3 Nationwide interreligious alliances and local actions

At the initiative of the Christian churches, the nationwide “Interkulturelle Woche” (Intercultural Week) has been taking place since 1975. This event is dedicated to current topics such as diversity in practice, racism and discrimination, hate speech, right-wing populism and extremism, and repeatedly presents good practices. Each year, the action week is supported by churches, municipalities, welfare associations, trade unions, integration advisory boards and commissioners, associations, educational institutions, migrant organizations, religious communities, and initiative groups in about 600 cities and municipalities.

Religions for Peace is a non-governmental organization founded in 1970 that works in interreligious cooperation for peace worldwide. The German unit also strives to achieve this goal when, for instance, it seeks to make interreligious and intra-religious diversity visible, to mediate between different faith traditions, and to take up issues of justice and climate protection.

The Councils of Religions in Germany (Räte der Religionen in Deutschland) met in 2018 for their first federal conference, which was attended by representatives of 30 interreligious dialogue bodies from just as many municipalities or districts. More important than the congress, however, is the concrete work carried out locally by the respective councils of religions, which have existed for a long time in numerous, mostly larger, cities such as Frankfurt am Main, Cologne, or Berlin. Their aim there is to promote dialogue between the religious communities and urban society and also to take a stand on social and political issues from a religious perspective.

“Weißt du, wer ich bin?” (Do you know who I am?) is an interreligious project for peaceful coexistence in Germany in which various Jewish, Christian, and Muslim associations and unions are involved as sponsors and which has been funded by the Federal Ministry of the Interior in several project phases since 2004. This project provides funding in the form of grants for local interreligious and multi-religious cooperation on a decentralized basis in order to support the constructive contribution that religions can make to integration and peaceful coexistence.

As an independent body of the religious communities in Germany, the nationwide Round Table of Religions (Runder Tisch der Religionen) was founded in 1998 to show the responsibility for social coexistence shared by religions. Since then, migration and climate policy as well as human rights issues have been addressed; one focus of the Round Table’s work is on organizing the “Day of Religions.”

This short list of more or less institutionalized interreligious initiatives does not overlook the fact that there are countless other local initiatives, nor that nationwide interreligious (action) alliances usually come together for protests, prayers, or other events in response to specific occasions. In many cases, the networks and structures established using the above-mentioned formats also prove to be helpful. It is also not possible to explore in greater detail here the social significance
of multi-religious houses of prayer and dedicated spaces, some of which have been established in public institutions (including airports, hospitals, universities, and the Bundestag), sometimes at the initiative of interreligious associations (House of One, House of Religions in Hanover) (see also Nagel 2021; Schröder 2016; Reinbold 2011).

9.5 Conclusion

The provisions of constitutional law on religion in Germany today essentially date back to the Constitution of the Weimar Republic promulgated in 1919, in which the religious landscape in Germany, which was largely dominated at that time by the two major Christian churches, was fundamentally different from today. After the Federal Republic of Germany was founded in 1949, these state-church provisions were incorporated into the Basic Law without any significant changes.

Today, the situation has changed not only due to growing secularization, which can be seen in the decline in membership both in the Catholic and Protestant church. The picture is also characterized by greater pluralization, with fragmentation of the religious landscape and greater visibility, as well as an increase in other religious communities, especially Islam.

German constitutional law on religion is open to religion and basically offers a good basis for equal participation. This is also reflected in a plethora of court decisions in favor of Muslim citizens. However, its implementation in important areas such as education, pastoral care, or financial support for social activities does not reflect the changed circumstances. In addition, preconceptions, especially with regard to dealing with religiously connoted clothing (headscarves), are felt in some areas that lead to restrictions on participation in public office that cannot be sufficiently justified on factual grounds. Furthermore, there is an evident need for outreach in large parts of the population regarding the importance of religious freedom as a fundamental right, also for minorities. Both the failure to develop legislation on individual and collective religious freedom for all citizens that is appropriate to today’s conditions and the lack of a coherent and systematic policy on religion in Germany that reflects social reality and the participation rights of all continue to be a shortcoming.

Partly due to this shortcoming, the topic of Islam is discussed in the Bundestag more in response to events than as a fundamental issue. The overview of the positions on issues of the Islam policy of the parties represented in the Bundestag illustrates the ad hoc nature of debates on fundamental questions related to the policy on religion in the ups and downs of daily political events. The interviews conducted with the political parties’ religio-political spokespersons further illustrate how incompletely questions of Islam are addressed. With a view to all the individual questions concerning the topic of Islam in Germany and all democratic parties, a certain degree of skepticism comes to light combined with a—sometimes restricted—openness toward the concerns of Muslims. A clear willingness to recognize changing social conditions is also evident among all the parties—in part by naming certain conditions—as is the constructive search for solutions to contentious issues and sensible arrangements for cultural and religious diversity. Markedly borderline racist, denigrating, and generalizing anti-Islam and anti-Muslim positions are solely to be found in the AfD parliamentary group.

The chapter concludes with a description of the different platforms and the significance and practical organization of interreligious dialogue between Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Interreligious dialogue in its many dimensions is very well established in Germany. Especially over the past two decades, this dialogue has been intensified, developed further, and has become differentiated. In addition to interreligious initiatives and
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specialized academic institutions, it encompasses a variety of formats and levels of encounter and exchange. Religious policy on Islam should therefore not be limited to integration policy or well-intentioned support programs to reproduce one-sided perceptions of Muslim believers. It is important to continue developing programs through which religious plurality can be recognized, religious diversity represented and Muslim diversity in particular perceived.

9.6 Recommendations

The Independent Expert Group on Anti-Muslim Sentiment recommends:

› That in order to create legal certainty in everyday life and to relieve the burden on decision-makers, those legal regulations that require considerable interpretation (for instance, on clothing when holding public office) be fleshed out in administrative guidelines with clear specifications for dealing with religious concerns, including those of minorities.

› That in order to eliminate considerable uncertainties in dealing with religious practice in schools (for instance, students fasting; class absence), nationwide uniform guidelines be introduced that take religious concerns seriously and bring them into an appropriate balance with objectively justified requirements of everyday school life and the state’s educational mandate, for instance, with regard to sports events or the scheduling of examinations outside of high holidays.

› For the world of work, the creation of concrete guidelines for dealing with religious concerns (for instance, religiously connoted clothing) and religious observance leave that are oriented toward the standards of German constitutional law that are open to religion. At EU level, efforts should be made to ensure that member state regulations are respected and not undermined by an anti-religious tendency. In addition, the Federal Government should support the Council of Europe’s Special Representative on Anti-Semitic and Anti-Muslim Hatred.

› Sustained efforts to achieve equal participation of Muslim actors in state funding in both cultural and social spheres at federal, federal-state, and local level (for instance, youth and welfare associations, care). Reliable funding for full-time actors and sustainable structures are also necessary here. This can be promoted through inclusion in existing structures, but also through the conclusion of contracts with suitable actors that have a sustainable effect. The further development of clearly contoured transitional solutions to meet urgent needs is also recommended, for instance, regarding chaplaincy in prisons.

› The consistent preservation of Germany’s constitutional order, which is open to religion. This means preventing both state interference in religious freedom that cannot be objectively justified and the displacement of religious practice from the public sphere.

› A long-term design of a policy on religion in accordance with the religion-friendly constitution that does justice to the diversity of religions in Germany.
Differentiated, fact-oriented, and legally integrated political debates on topics related to Islam, also beyond the scope of discussions on current events. In this context, we recommend that experts be increasingly involved in the preparation of party policy statements in contributions to debates and political party programs.

The regular holding of symposia with the participation of relevant actors on topics related to religion policy and the publication of factual information in order to be able to address fears and anxieties in advance.

The establishment of a cross-party parliamentary working group to look into forms and cases of anti-Muslim sentiment.

The promotion of interreligious dialogue, exchange, and encounters between actors in Muslim life in Germany and political representatives.

Initiating and expanding dialogue and encounter projects on a level playing field between Muslim and Jewish representatives of their respective religious communities.

The creation of protected spaces for Jewish-Muslim dialogue on the issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
10 Culture

While the image of Islam in the traditional mass media has been regularly studied for about three decades, corresponding discourses in high and popular culture remain largely unexplored. Since the early 2000s, cinematic representations of Muslim lifestyles have increasingly become the focus of analyses in film and media studies. However, these studies are primarily interested in the question of how migration and migrant lifestyles are addressed in German-language film. Cinematic representations of Islam are only coming into the focus of more recent studies—accompanied by a generally growing interest in Islam and its public-societal participation. In contrast, scientific studies of the cultural sectors of theater and museum are characterized by a lack of pioneering work on questions of the representation of Islam and structural participation by Muslim artists. A few researchers are working to systematically take stock of the situation, although for the most part this remains a case-by-case analysis, which is certainly informative. For these reasons, the visibility of Islam in German theaters and museums remains an empirically under-researched question to this day.

The UEM has therefore set itself the task of commissioning its own research projects or obtaining current research expertise and insights from practitioners. For the social area of culture, these consist of

- a comprehensive film analysis of German-language feature films and entertainment series on the subject of Islam (Hochschule Niederrhein—University of Applied Sciences),
- a report providing an overview of Islam-related theater productions in Germany (University of Toronto), and
- a hearing with representatives of the German museum and exhibition landscape and academic experts in the field of “Islam in Museums.”

10.1 Anti-Muslim sentiment in German film

Media portrayals of Islam and Muslim ways of life are not limited to journalistic formats. In addition to traditional news journalism, it is primarily entertainment media, such as film and television, through which Islam-related narratives reach a broad audience. Fictional material in particular provides an opportunity to contradict hegemonic narration and interpretation patterns of the supposed otherness of Islam and hence to create differentiated counter-discourses (see K. Hafez/Schmidt 2020). However, recent research shows that the conflict-oriented portrayal of Muslims and Muslim-marked migrants is also predominant in the popular culture media. The UEM commissioned the first comprehensive analysis of the portrayal of Muslim lifestyles in film and television to examine this sub-area of public discourses on Islam. It was conducted by Prof. Dr. Ömer Alkin and clearly shows how anti-Muslim stereotypes—for example, of the violent affinity of Islam or the cultural foreignness of Muslim people—also find their way into the plots and character drawings of German-language feature films.

This chapter will first provide a theoretical classification of entertainment media discourses, focusing on the question of the socio-critical potential of cinematic portrayals. To what extent is it precisely the fictional narratives of film that can expose and subvert anti-Muslim narratives? Or is this not rather a genre that, due to its market orientation and production structures, lends stability to problematic stereotypes of Islam and anchors them in cultural memory? This will be followed by a brief overview of the research field “Islam in film,” where it quickly becomes clear that analyses that focus on Islam-related portrayals in German-language entertainment media have been sporadic and in the form of case studies only.
Thematically related research on the cinematic treatment of migration and flight is better studied. The main part of the chapter deals with Alkin’s findings on the representation of Islam in German-language feature films and (television) series. The guiding question here relates to thematic parallels between the classic news genres (see subchapter ↗ 7.1) and the portrayal of Islam in film, as well as the potential for critique of racism in fictional narratives about the religion of Islam and Muslim ways of life.

10.1.1 Entertainment media: Critique of racism vs. reproduction of anti-Muslim stereotypes

Films and TV series do not exist beyond socio-political discourses, even if their content is mostly based on fiction. In them, images of society and ideas of reality unfold that connect to the life worlds of their viewers, which is why they are also called “mediators” and “archives of social knowledge” (Keppler/Peltzer 2018: 349). They shape public consciousness by dealing with norms and values, and thus participate in “shaping a shared world of spectators” (ibid.: 350). In addition, they provide important offers of social participation and identification and—woven into their characters and plots—provide readily accessible orientation aids for political reality (see Klaus/Lünenborg 2004; Dörner 1999). Regarding the question of the public image of Islam, they represent a central object of investigation, since they also deal with questions of social belonging and supposed foreignness.

Various explanatory approaches and research perspectives are available for the scientific examination of cinematic portrayals. Communication studies, for instance, understand films and series as interaction media:

“They communicate with the audience, their creative devices and techniques pre-structuring the audience’s cognitive and emotional activities” (Mikos 2008: 15).

At the same time, it is the viewers who actively decode cinematic narratives against the backdrop of their knowledge and experience horizons. In the field of tension between the structures of film production, the actual film content, and the understanding and interpretation activities of the audience, films develop their manifold meanings (see Hall 2001a). In this context, the question of how viewers deal with the cinematic portrayal of Islam is primarily influenced by their own position in social knowledge about Islam and Muslims (see subchapter ↗ 3.1).

For years, there has been controversial discussion about whether feature films generate momentum to change society or whether they—especially commercial productions—rather contribute to preserving existing conditions. In brief, cultural critics and optimists are pitted against each other. Representatives of the Frankfurt School thus consider early cinema to be a cultural mass medium that distracts from “social contradictions” (Hecken 2007: 44) and grievances rather than stimulating their critical treatment. To them, entertainment represents a kind of mental standstill since the audience does not think for itself but moves exclusively “in the well-worn associative tracks” (Adorno/Horkheimer 1988: 145) of the film products. Various critical voices from the field of cultural studies clearly distance themselves from this understanding of popular culture. They understand entertainment media as offers and resources that viewers can either accept, modify, or reject (see Fiske 1989). Instead of swearing the audience in to the order of the existing, they rather served to “strengthen one’s

161 The term refers to the members of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, which was founded in 1923 and was instrumental in the development of a “critical theory” which aims at having a transformative effect on society; it is “interested in exposing injustice, in emancipation” (Ottmann 2012: 67).
own position, emancipate oneself, and resist attempts at manipulation” (Kramp 2015: 209). The extent to which this is actually the case remains controversial, mainly because popular cultural discourses also exclude—which has been repeatedly confirmed with regard to the invisibility of people of color in cinematic narratives (see, for instance, Vielfalt im Film 2020).

In Germany, feature films are generally regarded as a form of entertainment (see Hieber/Winter 2020: 2). Studies on the appropriation of Orientalist narratives from storybooks, television, and cinema films show that entertainment media are of considerable political importance in this context (see Attia 2009: 101). Attia notes, for instance, that references to feature films, such as Not Without My Daughter, 40 Square Meters of Germany, and Yasemin are repeatedly woven into the everyday narratives of non-Muslim characters. Films that address Islam can therefore serve as indirect sources of experience—the extent to which they are read critically depends largely on the viewers’ sources of knowledge (sources critical of racism). According to Dörner (1999), it can be assumed that films, due to their reduced complexity, are “orientation-friendly”, i.e., they specifically offer themselves to their viewers as trustworthy drafts of reality.

“Images of politics, patterns of interpretation, perceptual foils of entertainment culture are such an important moment of political culture because they provide media users with catchy schemes for perceiving, interpreting, and making sense of political reality in pleasant, relaxed situations freed from the burdens of everyday life. [...] One feels comfortable, believes oneself to be in a situation detached from pragmatic purposes and political ideologies, and therefore readily accepts the patterns of interpretation offered.” (Ibid.: 20–21)

Overall, the question of the relationship between affirmative and critically resistant potentials of cinematic popular culture remains unresolved, at least in the theoretical debate (see Thomas 2012). Answers are provided by empirical studies that turn to the concrete film material and question it with regard to its offers of interpretation. The following subchapter presents some central film studies in the intersection between film—migration—Islam and thus serves as an overview of the current state of knowledge in the research field of “Islam in film.”

10.1.2 Research on migration and Islam in film: “The other” on the screen

Only a few studies have so far been dedicated to analyzing cinematic portrayals of Islam. One of the most comprehensive works is Shaheen’s “Reel Bad Arabs” (2003) which is also the basis of a film documentary of the same name. In addition, there are recent analyses of the portrayal of Muslims on US television before and after 9/11 (see Alsultany 2016; Aguayo 2009) as well as broader studies on Orientalism in film (see Bernstein/Studlar 1997). We will turn to these works in the second part of this chapter, as their focus is on English-language film productions. Our first point of interest here is what is known about feature films and entertainment series in the German-speaking world. A glance at the relevant research literature quickly shows that while only exemplary case studies are available on the image of Islam, much more has been written on the topic of migration. In this context, cinematic discourses on Islam and migration in Germany are closely related in terms of content (see Alkin 2022: 4). The following subchapter therefore first focuses on a brief overview of the cinematic portrayal of migrant lifeworlds. It becomes clear that migration in German-language film is mainly shown as a woman’s fate in claustrophobic spaces, as an emancipative identity game, or as a culture clash comedy.
10.1.2.1 Migration in film: Women’s fates, questions of identity, cultural (in)compatibility

These thematic focuses can be placed more or less chronologically in German film history. In an overview of German migration cinema in 2000, Göktürk describes how the social presence of Turkish guest workers also had an impact on the selection of subsidized film material. Initially, Turkish women only appeared in victim mode; early migration cinema imagined them as sufferers in claustrophobic spaces. Some of the most successful films of the 1970s and 1980s are about women marked by difficult fates who are imprisoned, oppressed and who are at the mercy of the patriarchal behavior of their male relatives. Productions such as Shirin’s Wedding (1975) 40 Square Meters of Germany (1986), Farewell to False Paradise (1988), and Yasemin (1988) tell stories of forced marriage, rape, imprisonment, abduction, and murder. In her analysis of these films, Göktürk exposes the power relations typical of racist discourses between the portrayed women’s fates and the expectations of the audience: “The liberation of the poor Turkish woman from captivity, oppression […] is a popular fantasy that springs from the German public’s sense of superiority” (ibid.: 336). The pity evoked in the audience serves “first and foremost its own self-affirmation.” Shohat calls this phenomenon “gendered Western gaze” (1997: 20)—a cinematic gaze that inextricably links sexist and racist discourses. By staging the Turkish woman as a victim across the board, a feeling of cultural superiority is created in the audience. A similar interest in the portrayal of Turkish women’s fates is also evident in journalistic formats from that time with Turkish women being portrayed as isolated, uneducated, disoriented, and difficult to integrate (see Toker 1996: 38–41).

In the 1990s, increasingly successful attempts are seen to depart from the “cinema of concern” of the early migration films. Some authors even speak of a “paradigm shift” characterized by the increasing presence of German-Turkish film auteurs and their stories of “cultural fusion” (Seeßlen 2000: 24–25; see also Schäffler 2007: 30–31). Although debates about integration and “German Leitkultur” dominated the political public sphere, those films begin to abandon German society’s culturalist view of Turkish migrants (see Göktürk 2017: 168). For example, Ich Chef, Du Turnschuh (1998) by Turkish-German filmmaker Hussein Kutlucan deals with the encounter between different generations of migrants and their emancipative identity play with cultural and ethnic attributions. The films by Fatih Akin are also typical examples of this theme. Already his feature film debut Short Sharp Shock (1998), which is set in the thriller genre, lives from complex characters and deliberately decides against a problematizing view of migration. Instead of addressing alienation and demands for integration, his characters refuse any clear national cultural classification (see Schreckenberg 2006: 338; Brunow 2011). Akin’s films break away from the appropriation of hegemonic ascriptions of foreignness. His stories are about post-migrant realities of life, self-determination, and cultural simultaneities. Even his most successful film Against the Wall (2004) is about individual life plans and processes of change—with stereotypical roles being at best strategically adopted here (see Neubauer 2011: 229).

From the 2000s onward, a new genre emerged in the German film landscape that deals with cultural and religious identities: the culture clash comedy. Its most popular representative is probably the ARD early evening series Turkish for Beginners (2006–2008), and films such as Kebab Connection (2005), My Crazy Turkish Wedding (2006), and Evet, ich will! (2008). Culture clash comedies are treated in research literature as productions of “intercultural love relationships” that “derive their wit from the clash and counterplay of divergent cultural habits and in particular moral concepts” (Gutjahr 2010: 236). Opinions differ widely as to whether these are suitable for reveal-
ing and dismantling stereotypes (see Domaratius 2009: 207; Valentin 2014: 110) or whether they tend to reinforce them through rigid character portraits (see Wellgraf 2008). Despite the boom in culture clash comedies at the beginning of the 21st century, they are by no means representative of the modern migration film. More recent productions, such as Shahada (2010), Almanya (2011), Oray (2019), and No Hard Feelings (2020), address, partly using humorous means, dynamic self-images, hybrid identities, and anti-migrant and anti-Muslim stereotypes of the majority society. They clearly distance themselves from clear ethnic or religious classifications and thus provide selective counter-impulses to a still highly problem-oriented image of Islam in film (see subchapter 10.1.3).

10.1.2.2 Islam in film: Long-lasting enemy images in Hollywood cinema

For a long time, no explicit attention was paid to the religion of Islam in German migration cinema (see Hamdorf 2014: 113) although it can be assumed that it was always implicitly included in the portrayal of migrants of Turkish origin, for example. Consequently, there are hardly any studies with a focus on Islam for the German-speaking countries. This is quite different in English-language film and media studies where Shaheen’s (2003) comprehensive study on the representation of Arab and Muslim film characters still represents the standard work. In his essay, he summarizes some of his most important observations based on more than 800 feature films as well as several hundred entertainment programs, documentaries, and TV news (ibid.: 23). Using various examples, he demonstrates how Hollywood cinema has, since its beginnings, been committed to the portrayal of Arab Muslim characters as uncivilized, unkempt strangers—in stark contrast to the appearance and behavior of its white, Western protagonists. In early films, such as The Sheikh (1921) or The Son of the Sheikh (1926), male Muslims were portrayed as vicious, brutal, and promiscuous desert rulers, while in the cinema of the 1970s and 1980s they were transformed into greedy, fundamentalist, and misogynistic assassins. Films such as The Jewel of the Nile (1985) or Frantic (1988) are typical examples of this new type of Islamic terrorist figure (ibid.: 25–26). Even in the 1990s, the image of Islam in Hollywood cinema did not brighten: Productions such as Not Without My Daughter (1990) or The Mummy (1999) show Muslim women as uneducated, veiled, and oppressed creatures, while male Muslims are portrayed as brutal, conniving, and lecherous (ibid.: 26–27). Shaheen shows how comprehensively stereotypical US film productions of these years were: Even Disney’s classic Aladdin (1992) couldn’t resist using an Orientalist song line about the cartoon hero’s home: “It’s barbaric, but hey, it’s home” (ibid.: 29). Here, the “Orient” is degraded to an object and spectacle quite in the sense of Said, functioning as a foil for Western fantasies and heroic stories (see Shohat/Stam 2003: 148).

In addition to Shaheen, recent research also makes clear that despite a diversification of Muslim film characters—for instance, in recent film productions such as Homeland (2011–2020) and Argo (2012), Muslims are also shown as loyal US citizens or victims of anti-Muslim hate crime—film narratives remain closely linked to the old enemy symbols (see Alsultany 2016).

How does this play out in German-language film productions? Since no studies have been conducted on this question to date that could clarify the question of cinematic representation of Muslim characters based on a comprehensive data sample, the UEM commissioned an empirical study specifically for this purpose.
10.1.3  UEM film study: The negative image of classical journalism continues

In his study “Repräsentationen des Islams in deutschsprachigen Spielfilmen und (Fernseh-) Serien zwischen 2001 und 2021” (Representations of Islam in German-language feature films and (television) series between 2001 and 2021), media and cultural scientist Prof. Dr. Ömer Alkin (Hochschule Niederrhein—University of Applied Sciences) identifies the main themes as well as the visual and action-specific stereotypes of Islam and Muslims on the basis of an extensive data corpus. Before the results are presented below, it is first necessary to outline Alkin’s methodological approach.

The data corpus was created on the basis of research in various digital film databases: Tittelbach.tv, crew-united.com, filmportal.de, tv-spielfilm.de, imdb.com. In addition, film festivals with a Turkish-German migration connection were searched for new releases during the study period. Thus, only films that explicitly refer to Islam in the film summaries were considered. Films that exclusively assign national identities (for instance, Arab, Turkish) to their characters were not included in the sample (see Alkin 2022: 12).

Non-German-language productions and documentary formats were not included. The synopses were searched for explicit references to Islam at character and plot level. Since, according to the author, a production time of at least one to four years can be assumed, film discourses always react to current socio-political events and developments with a certain delay, if at all. Methodologically, it was decided to use the production start times of the films and series (see Alkin 2022: 15).

The data corpus was created on the basis of research in various digital film databases. The search was for feature-length films (over 60 minutes) and TV series from 2001 up to and including 2021 with a production location in Germany, Austria, or Switzerland. The content-related search criteria were the keywords “Islam,” “Muslim,” and “mosque,” whereby word extensions and inflections such as “Muslim women” or “Muslims” were also considered. In addition, film summaries (synopses) were used to study whether plot-relevant characters are identified as “Muslim” and/or whether central plot developments refer to the religion of Islam. The study period was chosen because after the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, increasing cinematic treatment of Islam in the context of religious or political radicalization was assumed—which, however, is only partially confirmed in the results (see Alkin 2022: 26). After various formal and content-related filtering steps, a data corpus with a total of 83 film and series productions was created.

Alkin’s study is based on a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative analytical steps, whereby the film material was examined on the one hand for its content and interpretation offers using “close reading” methods and on the other hand for its structural production conditions using “distant reading” (ibid.: 2). The author arrives at some revealing results: If we first look at the number of feature film and series productions in the period under investigation, interesting conjunctures emerge (see Fig. 10.1). Three peaks are noticeable around the years 2010, 2014, and 2017, in which many film productions started in comparison to the years immediately before and after.
Alkin offers various interpretations in this regard. He initially answers the question of the extent to which fictional treatment of the attacks of September 11, 2001, is evident in the film output shown:

“The years following the attacks [of] September 11, 2001, which [are] seen as a turning point for the discursive construction of Islam and Muslims, [have] not led to a particularly high level of treatment of issues of Islam or Muslims.” (Alkin 2022: 14)

However, considering the production times, which sometimes last several years, the years after 2001 could also be understood as a “latency phase” during which corresponding films were already produced but had not yet been broadcast. Alkin also suspects a particular reluctance on the part of German television editors to approach the subject of terrorism in a fictional way during these years. For example, it was not until 2004 that the film Schläfer (The Sleeper) (2004), co-produced by SWR, was made; other films related to the topic, such as September (2002) and Zelle (2007), were made independently, i.e., without the involvement of television departments (ibid.: 15). This shows a slight temporal subordination of popular cultural discourses to journalistic discourses on Islam, which—at least in the news formats—are structurally oriented toward daily reporting. With a view to the social reach of cinematic portrayals of Islam, however, it is precisely their later appearance that opens up the opportunity to revisit problematic perceptions and thus anchor them in the collective memory in the long term.

A comparison of the two decades studied shows that the number of films and series with a reference to Islam has almost tripled: Between 2001 and 2011, 23 programs were produced, while as many as 60 were produced between 2012 and 2021. That being said, no conclusions can be drawn from this regarding the importance of the topic in the German-language entertainment landscape because this would require comparative data on the general, cross-thematic output to be consulted for this purpose. Nevertheless,
according to Alkin, some parallels to social developments do exist. It can be assumed, for example, that the migration movements from predominantly Muslim countries from 2015 onward also increasingly gave rise to cinematic references: “It can thus be stated as a proposition that, from 2015 onward, Muslim cultures in German-speaking countries and hence their themes increasingly appear as motifs for action in film-media communication contexts” (ibid.: 16). In this context, the narrative of the “sleeper” (ibid.)—the idea of silent jihadist actors who could be activated at any time and carry out attacks in Germany—had gained importance in film. This observation shows the characteristic of popular culture media, introduced in theory earlier in this chapter, i.e., to take up and process socio-political discourses.

Instead of the common claim that feature films are “merely entertainment” and hence politically irrelevant, Alkin’s findings confirm that change processes in society—such as those that can arise in connection with migration movements—are also reflected in fictional media. They thus become another platform for social self-perceptions and perceptions of others, which makes them extremely relevant as an object of study for social and media studies.

If we now take a closer look at the themes of the films examined, Alkin’s study makes it clear how much even fictional material is tied to a conflict-centered perception of Islam. “Theme clustering” makes it clear which contents the programs deal with (see Fig. 10.2).

Figure 10.2: Distribution of films among the thematic clusters identified, 2001–2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thematic Cluster</th>
<th>Number of Films/Series</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identity crisis: Islam versus modernity</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversion with no intention of attack</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppression of women in Islam</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacks of September 11, 2001</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign war context</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture clash</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrorist attack at home, radicalization</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total number of films = 83

Source: Alkin 2022: 22.

This shows that almost 90 percent of the films examined have a negative thematic reference to Islam: More than half deal with crisis and conflict topics at home and abroad (a total of 48 productions on terrorist attacks and radicalization, wars abroad and 9/11), another third are dedicated to cultural differences, and the topic of women’s oppression in Islam (a total of 25 productions).

Alkin’s qualitative analysis of the “culture clash” theme shows that Islam is usually discussed “as a religious-cultural phenomenon” in contrast to “Christian and Jewish cultural attributions” (Alkin 2022: 25), with Islam being constructed as culturally incompatible. These results can be understood as a continuation of conflict-oriented exceptional topics since they are also characteristic
of coverage of Islam by traditional media (see chapter 7). Instead of making the wide spectrum of Muslim lifeworlds visible on screen and also dealing with everyday topics, both fictional and journalistic portrayals of Islam focus on thematic contexts around violence, conflict, and a lack of cultural fit. The media discourse is hence predominantly narrowed to conflict and exceptional topics.

A categorization of the films by genre confirms the negative focus of the research material: More than half are dramas (50.6%), just under a third are crime films or thrillers (31.3%) and

“only about 18% of the films deal with the topic of ‘Islam’ in a comedic way at all and can thus be read as potentially pro-Islamic reconciliation stories of religious-cultural differences” (ibid.: 24).

Since the genres of crime and drama are linked with predominantly negative feelings of tension that are sometimes only resolved in a cathartic way at the end of the film, the films, according to Alkin, would have a certain potential to inscribe Islam as a conflict theme in the audiences’ perceptions. This is all the more likely as the programs studied are high-reach productions with a market share of around 10 to 20 percent (ibid.: 21). A certain danger of this circumstance is that the culturalisms about Islam (“they don’t fit in with us”), which are established at film content level, are perpetuated at the audience end. Although, from a theoretical point of view, different readings of a film are possible and it is ultimately the viewers themselves who draw meaning from the narrative material and their own interpretations, the combination of problematic content and conflict-centered genres (crime, thriller, drama) strongly suggests that the audience will take over the narrative.

By looking at some salient visual strategies and stereotypes, the study also concludes that, due to the specific mediality of film, which also makes what is presented as fictional appear realistic, audiovisual signs are particularly similar to real-world objects. Alkin shows, for instance, that drone images over cities in the context of so-called “attack thrillers” created a particular fear of threat. This, according to Alkin, is discursively linked to the narrative of the jihadist “sleeper” described earlier, who can hide anywhere and be activated at any time. Other visual elements are Muslim head coverings, which are not only used to mark Muslim women (as frequently seen in film), but also for the cinematic identification of “ghettos” and “foreigners’ quarters”: The headscarf becomes a visual means for “urban places of exclusion” (ibid.: 30–31). Mosques also appear as a place of threat, cast in a greenish light in today’s horror films and reminiscent of torture chambers. These image aesthetics show similarities with the front pages about Islam that repeatedly appeared on major German news magazines: Grim-faced jihadists with long beards, violent followers, machine guns, anonymous female burqa wearers, dark backdrops. Here, too, striking similarities can be seen between popular cultural and journalistic portrayals of Islam. Both seem to draw on the same stereotypical canon of images—the faceless burqa-wearing woman and the bearded jihadist thus become collective icons, deeply embedded in the social imagination about Islam and Muslims.

Alkin’s study is based on the question regarding the extent to which fictional portrayals of Islam are shaped by news media discourses. A look at his results confirms this:

“The results of the study show that feature films as well as fictional series play to other racist momentum of the media worlds. Cultural image momentum known from other media contexts is taken up and continued. The representation of Muslims is linked to emotional experiences that are increasingly linked to feelings of tension and fear.” (Ibid.: 35)
At several points in his study, the author points to analytical limitations: On the one hand, the meanings of the films cannot be conclusively determined since they ultimately emerge in interaction with viewers and depend on their readings (see above), and on the other hand, due to the selection criteria, it was not possible to consider all films containing representations of Islam, so the data corpus was not complete. Finally, it should also be mentioned that in an analysis of films with reference to Islam, such a reference must also be explicitly present. Film characters who were not marked as Muslim in one way or another automatically fell out of the investigator’s focus of observation. This posed a problem in so far as it is very difficult to examine possible cinematic normalizations of Muslims as self-evident members of society (see Alkin 2022: 7–10, 12, 26–30).

Despite the author’s justified reflection on methodology, the synopsis of the study results paints a bleak picture of the cinematic presence of Islam. A range of topics narrowed to problematic issues, a preponderance of conflict-centered genres, and an image aesthetic that picks up on familiar icons from photojournalism add some negative weight to the—generally positive—fact that Islam is increasingly becoming the subject of cinematic narratives. Overall, the entertainment media’s image of Islam differs little from that of traditional journalism despite their enormous potential to tell new and innovative stories.

### 10.2 Anti-Muslim sentiment in German theater

According to recent surveys, more than 70 percent of visitors to theaters and opera houses have a formal academic degree, and close to 60 percent are female (see Kliment 2016). Although the exact demarcation between popular and high culture is open to debate, the social composition of theater audiences seems to speak a clear language. This means that theater as an apparently social “niche event”—unlike other areas of popular culture, such as film and television—has rarely been the focus of racism research so far (see Sharifi 2022: 3). The state of research on the topic of anti-Muslim sentiment on German stages is thus significantly more limited than in most of the other fields investigated by the UEM (see, for instance, Haakh 2021; Sharifi 2016; Meyer 2016). This is all the more astonishing because any assumption that people with a higher formal level of education are less racist is unfounded, at least in terms of anti-Muslim sentiment, as anti-Muslim attitudes are also clearly evident in more educated circles (see K. Hafez/Schmidt 2015: 59–61).

One of the main reasons for this phenomenon is that the educational canon in high culture in Germany may also be Eurocentric. At the same time, stage traditions with regard to the image of Islam have rarely been seriously reflected upon up to now. But initial debates in recent years on structural racism in German theaters show that in-depth analyses in this field are overdue. At the same time, there are indications that theater is already heading toward fundamental renewal and occasionally functions as a place for a new “post-migrant” approach (see Haakh 2021). Can theater provide momentum in society to reform traditions of perception that are hostile to Muslims and question traditional representations? Can the theater of both today and tomorrow even become an avant-garde of cultural renewal?

The UEM has very limited resources to work on this innovative field. For this reason, it does not see itself in a position, either in terms of personnel or finances, to undertake comprehensive research into the image of Islam on German stages. The following subchapter nevertheless attempts to give an insight into contemporary developments with the help of reports from practitioners and theater studies. In addition, an expert report was commissioned to conduct an overview analysis of both municipal and national theaters, independent theaters as well as children’s and youth
theaters in Germany, which largely forms the basis for the following:

- Expert opinion on “Theater and Islam: Representations of Islam and Muslims in German Theater” (University of Toronto).

10.2.1 A theoretical classification of the analysis results

The following explanations focus on the question of the thematic areas in which Islam and Muslims are addressed on German stages, providing an initial assessment of the thematic visibility of Islam in German theater. However, this limits the theoretical approach to the problem of anti-Muslim sentiment in many ways, because neither all aspects of the “stage text” nor aspects of structural racism can be taken into account.

In this context, it is important to remember the different levels of racist statements, which in principle may not only manifest themselves in stereotypical and derogatory general statements (“all Muslims are ...,” “Islam is ...”), but also in terms, symbols, and themes—i.e., in the narrative structures of a discourse rather than in individual statements (see chapter 2.2). This finer level of analyzing meaning, i.e., the way something is presented rather than what is presented, calls for in-depth analyses of stage texts, which are barely available at present. Such studies are difficult because dramas and their texts would have to be examined in their complex meaning, which would also include, for instance, ironic refractions and deliberate provocations for the purpose of exposing stereotypical patterns. The following analysis is not capable of identifying whether a play reproduces common stereotypes or debunks and readdresses ethnic attribution patterns (see Voss 2017). Complex actor constellations and drama characters are also not addressed.

A second theoretical limitation should also be pointed out. While other parts of this report examine the aspect of structural and institutional racism and thus also look at the mechanisms that—consciously or unconsciously—(re)produce anti-Muslim sentiment, such an in-depth analysis was not possible given the current lack of research in the field of theater to date. Thus, the following analysis is also not to be understood as a contribution to the very intense debates about racism behind the scenes of theaters that emerged during the course of the Black Lives Matter movement. In 2021, for instance, a dispute arose in conjunction with the planned production of “Danton’s Death” in Düsseldorf that focused on the racist experiences of actors during rehearsals (see Slevogt 2021).

In principle, it is very possible for racist practices to be handed down through the routines of acting which are partly transnational and yet strictly hierarchically organized—as is the case with sexism. It is also not possible to say that in a country like Germany, the composition of theater practitioners automatically reflects the diversity of the population—even if further research is needed here. The question of (self-)representation on stage must also be raised if one takes into account that assuming artistic roles creates completely different possibilities than those in the field of politics, for instance, where the self-representation of migrants and minorities must be a declared goal despite all the dangers of artificial ethnicization through quotas, etc.

In the following, we will take stock of “hegemonic narratives” and critical counter-discourses, as presented by Dr. Azadeh Sharifi in her expert report prepared for the UEM (2022: 5). The focus here is on the question of the predominant thematic settings of the topic of Islam as well as the diversity-oriented currents that have been emerging on German stages for several decades, usually summarized under the term post-migrant theater (see Haakh 2021).
10.2.2 Islam and Muslims on German stages

The historical perspective of the present analysis and the commissioned expert report begins in the early 1960s, especially with the recruitment agreement between Germany and Turkey, because artists and cultural workers also moved to Germany at that time (see Sharifi 2022: 4). Despite institutional discrimination due to a lack of social recognition and access to production and presentation venues, these artists and cultural workers found a way to perform on stage and establish theaters, such as Arkadaş Theater in Cologne (now closed) or Tiyatrom in Berlin (ibid.). Nevertheless, up until the 1980s, Muslim artists and those who were perceived as such were mostly confined to silent supporting roles and extra roles (ibid.: 6). It was not until the reopening of Ballhaus Naunynstraße theater in Berlin in 2008 that the artistic work of migrant artists began to receive broader social appreciation (ibid.: 5). The fact that Muslim theater practitioners became more visible on stage around the year 2000 is related to overarching social processes, such as the political recognition that Germany is a migration society and the emerging confrontation with Germany’s colonial past, as well as the social advancement of Muslim people to leading positions in German theater.

Discourses about religious affiliation and the culture-based attributions of difference that often accompany these discourses (“us” vs. “the Muslims”) do not take place outside of theater practice. Rather, the construction and staging of “Muslimized bodies” on German stages (Haakh 2021) must be understood as a negotiating space of social “we” narratives and associated cultural-political debates (see Sharifi 2022: 6). It is only in recent years that the stereotypical portrayal of Muslim people on German stages has changed to a more differentiated examination of Islam and Muslim lifeworlds. This is related, among other things, to the fact that in German theater business—although still characterized by “exclusive access mechanisms”—“participation by members of less privileged or marginalized groups constructed as minorities is clearly increasing” (Haakh 2021: 14).

10.2.2.1 Municipal and national theaters

There are no statistics available on the number of Muslim artists in German theaters. Nevertheless, perusal of some websites of “publicly supported theaters” (see Deutscher Bühnenverein n.d.) suggests that Muslim artists are still underrepresented in German municipal and national theaters (see Sharifi 2022: 9). The series of events “Islam im Theater—Theater im Islam” at Staatstheater Mannheim also addresses this circumstance: “With regard to the approx. 5–6% of Muslims in this country, it can be said that they rarely appear on German theater stages as a part of society or are usually represented in historical material in a stereotypical way.” (National-theater Mannheim 2022)

Islam still seems to appear on German theater stages mainly as a “gap in the repertoire” (Schopp 2022). Moreover, existing Islam-related theater discourses are predominantly shaped by non-Muslim actors (see Sharifi 2022: 9). There is evidence that anti-Muslim narratives, such as that of “Islamization,” are acted out on German theater stages with some regularity: for instance, in various theater adaptations of the novel “Submission” by Michel Houellebecq which addresses, in fiction form, the fear of the resurgence of fascist parties as well as an “Islamization of Europe” (ibid.: 15). Critics of these productions complain that they reproduce a clear demarcation between the own and the foreign (see Disselhorst 2016). Sharifi also objects to the lack of critical engagement.
“with the problematic settings of the novel [...], of which, first and foremost, the construction of the ‘Occident’ as an intellectually ‘superior’ project as the (post[-])colonial justification for centuries of exploitative relations and the dehumanization of the racialized other would have to be addressed” (2022: 16).

In this context, the theatrical treatment of the “Islamization” narrative is fundamentally legitimate and can be part of a permissible criticism of Islam, which should not, however, be confused with anti-Muslim sentiment (see subchapter ↗ 2.6). At the same time, the question arises as to whether the artistic reference to the “image of Islam as an enemy,” as it arises in media discourses, for instance, through the restriction to Islam-related conflict topics (see chapter ↗ 7), is not in contradiction with an open and unbiased approach to the topic of Islam. If theater productions are predominantly oriented toward a conflict-laden Islamic agenda, they run the risk of fulfilling the criteria of discourse-structural racism (see chapter ↗ 2).

Hans Neuensfels’ production of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s “Idomeneo” (2003) at Deutsche Oper Berlin can be seen here as a turning point in the public perception of Islamic stereotypical plays, a viewpoint also shared by Sharifi (see 2022: 9–10). The play, which featured the severed heads of the prophets Muhammad and Jesus, as well as Buddha and Poseidon, and the ensuing public debate about its cancellation garnered considerable media attention. After the director of Deutsche Oper was warned by the then Berlin Senator of the Interior of a “serious threat” from jihadist actors, she decided to cancel the production (Friedrich 2006). In the ensuing debate, the accusation was made that this endangered “civil liberties,” especially the right to artistic freedom (ibid.). However, no self-critical confrontation with anti-Muslim racism took place (see Sharifi 2022: 10).

The scandal surrounding “Idomeneo” not only reinforced new developments in independent theater in the short term (see below), but also contributed to positive changes at municipal and national theaters in the long term. In 2013, Shermin Langhoff was appointed director of Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin, which marked the beginning of “another form of self-representation of Muslims and Muslimized theater practitioners” (ibid.: 11). This also led to a more self-reflective and critical examination of the representation of Islam and Muslims in other theaters, on panels, and in discussion series. One of the results of this development was that various theaters came together and formed the action alliance “NSU-Komplex auflösen,” which led to several plays about the murders by the right-wing terrorist organization Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund (NSU): such as “Die Lücke” (The Gap) (2014) by Nuran David Calis at Schauspiel Köln, “Urteile” (Verdicts) (2014) by Azar Mortazavi, Christine Umpfenbach and Tunay Önder at Residenztheater München or “Fahrräder könnten eine Rolle spielen” (Bicycles Might Play a Part) (2012) by Sasha Marianna Salzmann and Deniz Utlu at Ballhaus Naunynstraße (ibid.: 11–12).

Moreover, more recent Mozart productions are sometimes clearly more sensitive to racism. Luk Perceval, for instance, used the novel “The Miraculous Mandarin” by Aslı Erdoğan in his production of “The Abduction from the Seraglio” (2022) to critically examine racializing attributions and the original Orientalist character drawings (ibid.: 12; Rothschild 2022).

Despite these positive developments, debate continues about which stagings are appropriate for a diverse migration society. In 2014, for instance, the then director of Berliner Ensemble described the protests against an event with Thilo Sarrazin as “terrorism of opinion” (see Nachtkritik 2014). The right to artistic freedom and freedom of expression is defended against the experiences of discrimination by Muslim persons in much the same
manner, for instance, as in the case of the so-called Muhammad caricatures (see chapter 7.4.6). Various interventions, also on the part of Muslim and Muslim-perceived theater practitioners, drew attention to this fact (see Sharifi 2022: 11).

**10.2.2.2 Independent theaters**

Overall, engagement with Islam and Muslim representation in the independent scene is far more differentiated than in municipal or national theaters. According to Sharifi, independent theaters had “allowed for a greater diversity of artists and theater-makers” much earlier (2022: 12). One example is the “Beyond Belonging” festival, which took place for the first time in 2006 and at which the play “Schwarze Jungfrauen” (Black Virgins) by Feridun Zaimoğlu and Günter Senkel premiered. The play consists of monologues that the authors developed on the basis of interviews with young Muslim women (see Ballhaus Naunynstraße 2023). The characters do not bear names but are distinguished by their national affiliation as well as by the way they live out their religiosity, whereby their faith was voluntary and part of a process of emancipation (see Sharifi 2022: 19). In addition to parental and societal ideas within the Muslim community were also criticized. At the same time, a critical demarcation from the “Western world” takes place. All in all, the protagonists become personalities who break with patriarchal norms and thus escape the image of the submissive Muslim woman (ibid.: 20).

Theaterzentrum Kampnagel in Hamburg and Theaterkollektiv Markus&Markus are further examples in the independent scene where discourses critical of racism are initiated. The former initiated various activities for illegalized refugees in Hamburg in order to trigger discourse on a solidarity-based design of public space (see Theater der Zeit 2016). In their 2018 performance “Zwischen den Säulen” (Between the Pillars), Markus&Markus addressed their two-year research work on the topic of Islam, addressing both their own Christian socialization and conversion to Islam. Sharifi on this: “The performance is a differentiated attempt to challenge stereotypical images and notions as well as anti-Muslim racism from a white perspective and to make one’s own ignorance visible.” (2022: 13)

**10.2.2.3 Children’s and youth theater**

Due to its target group, children’s and youth theater came into contact with Islam and Muslims at a comparatively early stage (ibid.). Its young audience represents Germany’s post-migrant reality more than other age groups. In 2021, for instance, 40.4 percent of all children under the age of five in Germany had a “migration backdrop” (see Federal Statistical Office 2022: 39). It could therefore be assumed that “almost half of the young audience had migration as part of their own biography” (Sharifi 2022: 13), including many children and young people who are Muslim or perceived to be Muslim.

Among the plays that specifically deal with stereotypical narratives about Islam and thereby address a young target group is “Keiner hat mich gefragt” (Nobody asked me) (2011) by Asma Zaher, Ahmed Shah and Esther Jurkiewicz. The play, which was also invited to participate in the 2011 Theatertreffen der Jugend contest, tells the story of a young Muslim woman’s life and deals with “topics such as forced marriage, social structures, discrimination against women with headscarves, and questions of integration in Germany, as well as everyday racism against foreigners, especially those with a Muslim backdrop” (Bundeswettbewerb der Berliner Festspiele 2012: 17).

Director Tuğsal Moğul’s research piece “Deutsche Konvertiten” (German Converts) (2016) is also about a differentiated portrayal of religious identities. In it, converts are portrayed in a way that breaks with the image of radical fanatics and shows other perspectives (see Sharifi 2022: 17).
In this way, Moğul counters the predominantly negative debates about converts with a true-to-life and unagitated narrative and encourages more mutual tolerance (see Westphal 2016).

In addition to plays aimed at children and young people, there are a number of theater education initiatives that focus on cultural participation by young people with diverse cultural and religious identity references. One example is the Berlin cooperation network TUSCH, which mediates between schools and theaters and aims to address and involve pupils as active theater-makers (see Tusch Berlin n.d.).

Children’s and youth theater also examines the “Islamization” narrative, for instance, in plays such as “Inside IS” by Yüksel Yolcu (2016) or “Dschihadista” (Jihadista) (2018) by Nicole Oder. However, it remains questionable whether this thematic setting serves the cultural education of a young audience or rather illustrates the fear of the majority of non-Muslim German theater-makers of the radicalization of young Muslims or people perceived as Muslim (see Sharifi 2022: 16).

Despite this continuation of problem-oriented Islamic themes in children’s and youth theater, a clear shift in discourse can be discerned in the field of theater pedagogy, where perspectives critical of power and discrimination are moving into focus (see Falk/Schüler/Zinsmaier 2022). Sharifi mentions here, for instance, the Theatertreffen der Jugend contest, which in its 2022 program “addressed issues such as social inequalities, discrimination against minorities, classism, sexism, migration, or unequal access opportunities” (Berliner Festspiele 2022).

10.2.2.4 Post-migrant theater

Ballhaus Naunynstraße (since 2008) and Maxim Gorki Theater (since 2013), both in Berlin, offer important spaces for Muslim artists with the “self-selected label of ‘post-migrant theater’” where self-empowerment, differentiated performance possibilities, and thus resistance to related hegemonic discourses and exclusions are made possible (see Sharifi 2022: 17; see also Hall 1997). The term post-migrant describes a social condition in which migration and the accompanying processes of social change are (politically) recognized and “Structures, institutions, and political cultures are adapted to the recognized migration reality in a catching-up (i.e., post-migrant) manner, resulting in more permeability and social advancement, but also in defensive reactions and distribution struggles” (Foroutan 2015, emphasis in original).

At the Ballhaus Naunynstraße theater, the label “post-migrant” stands for a break with traditional anti-migrant and anti-Muslim discourses. Shermin Langhoff, artistic director of the theater from 2008 to 2013, is working to make visible the “stories and perspectives of those who have no longer migrated themselves, but who bring this migration backdrop with them as personal knowledge and collective memory” (Langhoff 2011).

For Haakh (2021), who analyzed significant productions by the Ballhaus Naunynstraße theater, these stories not only stand for a “substantive confrontation” with the topic of Germany as an immigration society, rather, theater (with the effect of an increasingly nationwide perception in literary writings, academia and among activists) succeeds in “breaking up common mechanisms of exclusion and established habits of seeing” (ibid.: 18). The Ballhaus Naunynstraße theater provides post-migrant artists with access to the theater stage and also weaves an intersectional perspective into contemporary theater work.

The play “Schwarze Jungfrauen” (Black Virgins), for instance, written by Feridun Zaimoglu and Günther Senkel and commissioned and curated by Langhoff, was performed at Ballhaus Naunynstraße...
and other venues. Addressing the topic of female Muslim religiosity (see subchapter \(\textit{\ref{10.2.2.2}}\)), this play received supraregional attention inside and outside the independent scene (see Haakh 2021: 101). Today, it is considered an early work of post-migrant theater.

Another central piece is the production “Verrücktes Blut” (Crazy Blood) by Jens Hillje and Nurkan Erpulat (2010), which was also performed at Ballhaus Naunynstraße. According to Sharifi, this play not only gains its special significance by unmasking stereotypical representations of migrant students and engaging an ensemble composed of people of color (see 2022: 21), it also had an interventionist effect, as it triggered debates about the audience’s racist expectations (“white gaze”)—in theater reviews, the actors were accused of being too close to the characters they portrayed, thus “disputing the professionalism of their acting” (ibid.).

Besides Ballhaus Naunynstraße, Maxim Gorki Theater is today considered one of the post-migrant theater par excellence. In 2015, the “Exil Ensemble” theater platform was established to offer a permanent engagement to artists living in exile. With productions such as “Winterreise” (Winter Trip) (2017), the platform casts light on the perspectives of “New Berliners” in German society (2017) (see Gorki Theater n.d.). At Gorki Theater, spaces are opened up for differentiated debates, as can be seen by the “Days of Jewish-Muslim Leitkultur” initiated by Max Czollek in 2020, where Muslim and Jewish cultural workers come together to produce “counter-narratives and new narratives” to the irritating concept of “Leitkultur” (see Sharifi 2022: 18).

With a view to post-migrant theater, the American play “Disgraced” (2013) by Ayad Akhtar also deserves mention. This play was performed at Residenztheater in Munich, among others, and deals with the life of a professionally successful Islamic Pakistani in New York after 9/11. Theater critics highlight the fact that the play addresses “smoldering prejudices” and bourgeois “racism” against Muslims (Hallmayer 2016). According to Sharifi, it is one of the most important plays dealing with anti-Muslim racism (see 2022: 21).

Despite the observation by relevant experts that Islam is still primarily addressed in problematic contexts on German stages, the work of post-migrant projects and Muslim artists is helping to nuance Islam-related plays. Since theater art and practice are by no means decoupled from social reality, but closely interact with current debates and processes of social change, the differentiated representation and active participation of Muslim artists are of particular importance. In addition to recent tendencies toward opening up and diversification in the field of municipal and national theaters, it is primarily the independent scene and (here) in particular post-migrant theaters that are doing a great deal to make diverse cultural, religious, social, and other perspectives visible. Even though, according to Sharifi, the German theater landscape still lacks sustainable and broad-based debate that is critical of racism—and relevant research is at best also only available in isolated cases—the plays and initiatives mentioned can be considered to provide important stimulus for the necessary change in German theater toward a place of diverse, socially critical, and inclusive debates.

10.3 Anti-Muslim sentiment in German exhibitions

Media discourse is not the only way images and ideas about the religion of Islam and Muslims reach the German public. In addition to news, film, and theater, museums and galleries also play a significant role in shaping society’s knowledge about this topic. Within current museum research, there is a clear awareness of the social responsibility of museum exhibition and mediation work: Kamel and Gerbich, for instance, ask about the role of museums when “sweeping generaliza-
tions and anti-Muslim racisms are omnipresent” (2014a: 11). And Weber reminds us of their task to close existing gaps in knowledge about Islam and to question stereotypical self-perceptions and perceptions of others (see 2018: 239–241). As places of cultural education, museums thus participate in the public discourse on Islam. The UEM has therefore committed itself to take a closer look at this area too. The focus is not only on the question of which images of Islam are conveyed in German museums and galleries, but also on the range of topics and perspectives represented. Which strategies are used by which actors in cultural education and outreach work? To what extent are Muslims represented as artists and culture workers in exhibition spaces? And how are the diverse needs of a plural civil society (visitors) addressed there?

To find practical and scientifically sound answers to these questions, the UEM conducted two hearings in which a total of nine experts from the field of German museum research and practice took part (see overview of experts ↗ External expertises). Using an interview guide, current problems with regard to anti-Muslim sentiment in the German museum landscape were discussed in the interview, whereby positive developments and pioneering projects were also mentioned again and again. In order to ensure a systematic approach, the questions were directed at the analytical levels of production—content—reception of museum work. In addition to status quo descriptions, root cause analyses, and possible or already implemented improvement measures were also queried. Instead of conducting a study specifically for the UEM (as was carried out for subchapter ↗ 10.1.3), the hearings provided insights into the topic of “Islam in museums” from the perspective of relevant experts. Another advantage of the hearing is its discursive form: In cases of ambiguity and detailed interest, questions could be asked immediately, and further explanations encouraged. Some of the experts also spoke directly with each other, so that additional content, more in-depth analyses, and varied perspectives on museum work became both possible and visible.

The following chapter will present the results of the hearings for the above-mentioned analytical levels. To begin with, some selected current debates from the field of recent museum research—the New Museologies (see Kamel/Gerbich 2014b: 23)—will be outlined. This briefly points to the social functions of museums, the problematic nature of the concepts of “Islamic art” and “Islamic culture,” and a contemporary understanding of visitors as active meaning-makers (see Hein 2011).

10.3.1 Current debates in museum research: Museums as places for all

What is the social function of museums? How do they position themselves in a religiously and culturally plural society? And to what extent do they question their role in shaping society’s knowledge of Islam and Muslims? According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM), a museum is “a permanent non-profit institution, open to the public and at the service of society and its development. It acquires, conserves, researches, presents, and communicates the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of study, education, and enjoyment.” (ICOM 2020)

Museums are therefore places of cultural education and recreation that should be open to all and where the cultural products of all can be found. Various approaches from the field of New Museologies critically discuss this claim. With a view to processes of social exclusion and marginalization, they question what knowledge is exhibited in museums, what perceptions of the world are created in the process, and how or whether marginalized groups are represented (see Kamel/Gerbich 2014b: 23). The openness of museums has also increasingly come under scrutiny since museums are still widely regarded as institutions of high culture.
that are not readily accessible to some segments of the population due to their social backdrop, gender, educational backdrop, or limited health. Visitor surveys confirm that museum visits are essentially reserved for an educated elite; many people associate them with financial hurdles (ibid.: 32–33). Current research on museums specifically targets such barriers: While “issues such as equality, diversity, social justice, and human rights” were relatively insignificant just a few years ago, they have now “moved to the center” (Sandell/Nightingale 2014: 96) of museum work.

From the perspective of museum history, there is evidence that the portrayal of “Islamic art and cultures” was characterized by limitations of content, Orientalist foreign perceptions, and colonial aspirations (see Kamel 2014: 40–41). As the hearings also prove, “Islamic” art collections are sometimes still affected by this today. The reason for this is a culturalist principle of order that is used in the selection of exhibits and their forms of presentation: In conversation, this is referred to as mapping the world into separate “cultural circles”—a way of pseudo-scientific mapping dating back to the 19th century that shapes European notions of “us” and “the others” to this day. What comes on top in the case of the religion of Islam is the fact that it is usually presented as a separate world region (“Islamic world”) rather than being represented in all places just like other religions.

According to the experts, the very terms “Islamic art” and “Islamic culture” are characterized by simplifications and delimitations of content. Although these terms are widely used, critics point to various problems with these categories: for example, the reduction of culture to religion, the restriction of cultural practices to certain places and times, the fixation on Muslim-majority regions, and the disregard for modern, Islamic-inspired cultural productions (see Shaw 2012: 10). What’s more, this focus also shifts contributions by Jewish, Christian, and other creative artists out of view. Even though a few museums now use a broader understanding of “Islamic culture” and also present modern art forms such as hiphop (see Grinell 2014: 200–202), exhibitions still dominate that portray Islam as past, static, or foreign.

In addition to questions of representation and accessibility, the role of visitors is also undergoing change in museum studies and practice. They are consequently no longer seen as passive consumers of objects that speak for themselves, but as active “meaning-makers” (Kamel/Gerbich 2014b: 24). It is only through their viewing of and engagement with the exhibits, which is different and individual depending on their lifeworld backdrop, that the exhibition contents gain meaning. Such a perspective provides new momentum for the question of what is included in a museum exhibition, how the contents are presented, and who feels addressed by them and how. Here, it is important to “involve different publics in the process of exhibition development from the very beginning” (ibid.) and thus to specifically include the public in processes of curating (see Bystron/Zessnik 2014: 322–323).

All these debates suggest that today’s museum landscape is in flux. Museums are facing demands that confront them with the social reality of plural societies, putting previous practices of collection, presentation, and mediation to the test. The theoretical debate, it can be stated, is therefore definitely progressive. But what about museum practice?

10.3.2 UEM hearing with experts: Perspectives on the German museum landscape

It goes without saying that the considerations compiled above represent just a few highlights of what has become an extremely productive debate in museum studies. For the (specifically Islam-oriented) hearing results, they provide a (general) theoretical framework. Their portrayal is based on the following three guiding questions: What images of Islam are circulating in the German mu-
seum landscape (content)? How is museum work involved in shaping them (production)? And what audience expectations and needs do they meet (reception)? The hearings provide informative answers in this regard, even though they should not be misunderstood as representative data, but as individual professional observations.

10.3.2.1 Content level: Lack of diversity and culturalist reduction

All the experts consulted agree unanimously that the religion of Islam is still predominantly presented in a problematic way in German museums. In the evaluation of the hearing, three central representation problems can be identified:

1. The stereotypical portrayal of Islamic religious practices and Muslim ways of life;
2. The limited visibility of Islamic diversity; and
3. The implicit suggestion that Islam is a foreign, closed world.

Stereotypes are found here in both negative and positive ways: Several experts addressed the issue of exoticizing and problem-oriented portrayals of Muslim dress practices that perpetuated the narrative of the oppressed Muslim woman or evoked harem associations. Positive stereotypes were shown, for example, in depictions of a supposedly typical Muslim migrant everyday culture; the kebab as an exhibition object was mentioned as one example of this. The topics of Islam and migration are thus intertwined in a problematic way, whereby the common idea that Muslims are also migrants per se is presupposed and implicitly confirmed. Cultural practices are also linked to a religious affiliation, simplified, and marked as foreign, since the majority society’s perspective on Muslims or migrants dominates in the object of the kebab. Beyond this example, one expert reports on Orientalist stereotypes in educational museum materials that aim to introduce children to the “Islamic world” through illustrations of deserts and camels, stately mosques, and “oriental” recipes. This can be seen as a continuation of well-known anti-Muslim culturalisms, as expressed in the topos of the oppressed Muslim woman or the exotic oriental woman. Synonymization of Muslim and migrant identities also implicitly contributes to the symbolic exclusion of Muslims from the narrative of the German nation.

Limited visibility of Islamic diversity was identified at different levels of the museum landscape: Several experts mentioned the fact that the portrayal of religious practices—if at all—focused on Sunni Islam as well as the Near and Middle East. Other theological currents, regions, and their traditions received much less attention; countries with significant Muslim majorities, such as Indonesia, were hardly represented, with a few international exceptions (for instance, the Amsterdam Tropical Museum). In Germany, Islam is mainly presented in the context of migration or in Islamic art collections. Some experts also observed a marginalization of Islam in religion collections where Islam is given comparatively little space. Others even noted the almost complete lack of exhibition spaces for the portrayal of religious practices and pleaded for the establishment of museums of religious studies. Furthermore, there was a lack of postcolonial perspectives that could help to deconstruct Islam-related colonialist attributions as well as question the related (earlier) collection practices. Although perspectives have now changed, for instance, on the exhibition practice of so-called “African art,” these are still hardly available for Islamic-affiliated exhibits and postcolonial art and cultural productions. According to one expert, the fact that exhibition organizers hardly noticed contemporary Muslim artists in their religious identity further exacerbates this problem. These statements reveal an entire potpourri of discursive problems with regard to Islam. For example, a lack of visibility of Muslim actors, a lack of information about heterogeneity in Islam, insufficient representation of postcolonial or post-migrant perspectives, and the reduction of Muslim identities to their religious affiliation.
are well-known structural defects in the discourse that we also know from analyses of classic media reports (see chapter 7). According to the experts, this continues at least in parts of the museums’ high culture. At the same time, however, positive developments are also seen, as well as efforts to overcome structural constraints (see below) and to find new ways of portrayal.

According to experts, the Orientalist idea that Islam is a “foreign, closed world” that is diametrically opposed to “European culture” can still be found in German museums today. This is mainly due to historical reasons, as Islamic art and cultural collections emerged in the context of colonialist efforts and culturalist myths, according to which the world could be divided into clearly definable cultural areas. According to one expert, this mapping of the world from the 19th century continues in today’s forms of museum presentation. These are inspired by “closed narratives” that are blind to cultural, religious, and ethnic cross-connections and exchange relations between Europe, Africa, Asia, and the so-called “Orient.” As a result, essentialist notions of separate worlds and cultures would be reinforced and culturally racist figures—such as “Homo Islamicus”—perpetuated. Such a principle of separation and standardization made it very difficult to perceive transregional interdependencies which have always existed, and which are increasing under current conditions of globalization. This goes as far as the fact that identities are not experienced as changeable and complex, but as static, exclusive, and clearly assignable: “you Muslims” versus “we Europeans.”

A look at the experts’ statements with regard to the content of Islam-related exhibitions clearly shows: Orientalist foreign attributions, qualitative limitations, and stereotypical images still characterize the German exhibitions on the subject of Islam to this day. Although several actors in this field are making efforts to broaden the view and to highlight cross-border cultural interconnections, the (implicit) notion—and portrayal—of Islam as a closed culture and past civilization still ensures that culturalist othering takes root in the museum.

10.3.2.2 Production level: Structural weaknesses promote stereotypical portrayals

Insights into the production conditions under which museum work takes place today can be divided into three categories: artists, museum staff, and museum structures.

According to various experts, Muslim artists are confronted with a double challenge: There was a tendency to ascribe a Muslim identity to Muslim artists or to give them a Muslim label. Their art is thus not only limited to a specific genre and thus identified as decidedly “Islamic art,” they are also given a burden of representation and expected to stand for more than just their personal works. They implicitly stand for contemporary Islamic art per se (see Mercer 1994 on the concept of “burden of representation”). According to one expert, many young artists want to free themselves from this attribution and prefer to work under the label of contemporary art. This not only expands the field of meaning in which their artworks are located and interpreted, but also—quite practically—their exhibition options and hence their visibility. This shows a clear discrepancy between the artists’ self-perception and the attributions of others through categorizations in museum practice. Enormous forces of persistence obviously exist that “Muslimize” Muslims in the exhibition system, i.e., restrict them to their religious identity.

This fact becomes all the more ambivalent by the observation of one of the experts that there is a flourishing international art market where, for instance, modern calligraphies are traded at high prices. Under the somewhat casual, informal label

of “headscarf art,” young artists produce pleasing works of art for an affluent audience and thus contribute—indirectly and unintentionally—to the stereotyping of modern Islamic art. Instead of focusing on the presentation of complex cultural, religious, and regional influences to which they are exposed as artists in a globalized world, and thus breaking down common stereotypes, they are turning back to the popular and the expected. What becomes clear here is how much the taste of a financially strong audience can contribute to the preservation of traditional clichés. This is an important factor for the analysis and evaluation of the German art market since the potential of small, independent galleries becomes clear here: Instead of relying on stereotypical mainstream taste, they offer spaces for innovative art that offer the potential to express criticism and resistance.

A third observation from the group of experts concerns the willingness of young Muslim artists to disclose their religious identity in the context of exhibitions and cultural cooperation projects. Unlike the contemporary artists mentioned above, it is not limited visibility that underlies a decision not to name one’s religious identity, but a decided concern for personal well-being. According to one expert, some artists do not see the museum as a “safe space” where they can present themselves at ease and in an unrestricted way. This sometimes leads to a situation where collaborations with young Muslim artists are difficult to implement since they are hesitant to participate. This shows the concrete consequences of the anti-Muslim sentiment that is present in society as a whole, which has an unsettling effect on those affected and sometimes restricts their personal development prospects.

Several revealing insights were also gained with regard to museum staff. The experts repeatedly and emphatically pointed to two structural defects: On the one hand, a lack of knowledge about Islam and Muslim lifeworlds in parts of today’s museum staff, and, on the other hand, a blatant lack of academically trained museum employees—especially a lack of personal and/or professional expertise in Islam. There was a lack of staff with diverse identity references at all organizational levels, which not only had a negative impact on exhibition content and presentation methods, but also made it difficult to access Muslim communities as potential creative artists, museum staff, and exhibition visitors. People with contacts to associations, communities, and neighborhoods could establish valuable networks and generate momentum here. To this end, more financial resources were urgently needed, so that a sustainable and diverse human resources policy could be implemented and culturally and racially sensitive training programs developed. If these statements are also related to the definition of anti-Muslim sentiment as presented at the beginning, then both the lack of knowledge about Islam in parts of today’s museum staff and the lack of diversity at staff level can be recognized as structural forms of anti-Muslim sentiment. With a view to the recommendations for action, there is an urgent need for readjustment.

One expert additionally reported that, specifically in smaller museums and spaces in regions where the AfD is represented in city and federal-state parliaments, a certain fear of contact with the topic of Islam is evident. This kind of reluctance is not always due to a lack of knowledge about religion, but also results from fear of right-wing attacks. The “Making Museums Matter” series of events recognized this issue and drew attention to the challenges for cultural institutions that are “on the right-wing radar.” The expert reports a considerable range of right-wing attacks and disruptive actions, ranging from smashed car windows to right-wing protest walks, from reduced exhibition budgets to sacked museum directors. According to the expert, museums that attract the attention of right-wing actors with exhibitions about social diversity in the broadest sense need secure and stable political support.
In addition to the problems mentioned above, there are also structural challenges facing museum makers that are related to the institution of the museum in general and with Islamic art collections in particular. The latter are still primarily oriented toward the past, with reference to the present sometimes posing a considerable challenge. While the historical focus leads to Islam-related cultural productions appearing closed and outdated, thus favoring Orientalist othering, contemporary representations also run the risk of essentializing Muslim religious and cultural practices. The above-mentioned kebab example is emblematic of this problem. According to another expert—and this observation applies to religious studies collections in general—there was a considerable discrepancy between the representation of religious practices in museums and the practice of religion and faith in the real world. While the one goes hand in hand with transcendental states of being, the transfer to the museum leads to rationalization and objectification. Instead of experiencing religion in a spiritual or emotional way, as is its original purpose, it becomes an object of contemplation in the museum, which often leads to visitor alienation.

Overall, the experts’ statements at production level show that we are dealing with structural defects (a lack of sustainable structures and expert staff, a lack of diversity among employees) as well as with othering processes (“Muslimization” of Muslim artists, see subchapter 2.3). Both factors not only lead to a perpetuation of stereotypes of Islam in the museum landscape, but also noticeably restrict the personal development opportunities of the creative artists concerned.

10.3.2.3 Reception level: A lack of representation and participation

As mentioned at the beginning, integrating different social publics is a special task for museum work today. The experts’ descriptions also provide practical insights into the specific challenges this entails. Analytically, these challenges can be differentiated according to both the expectations of the majority society and the needs of marginalized population groups.

As far as the expectations of the majority society are concerned, various experts see a problematic interplay between publicly disseminated stereotypes of Islam and the interpretations of visitors. Sometimes unfortunate reproductive effects would arise if non-Muslim visitors saw their own stereotypes confirmed, for example, in the portrayal of oppressed Muslim women. This not only led to cultural distancing (“they” are different from “us”), but also to uncritical self-assurance that unequal gender relations only exist “with them,” but not “with us.” The normative claim which describes museums as places of encounter, cultural education, and participation, does not apply due to this effect, and is sometimes even counteracted.

Some experts see an even more fundamental problem in the lack of representation and participation of marginalized population groups. Visitor surveys and exchange talks with people affected showed that the question was on the minds of many: “Why am I not shown? Why am I not pictured?” This follows on from the above-mentioned observation that Islamic faith and cultural practices are underrepresented in their diversity and range. A lack of accessibility with regard to financial, linguistic, and socio-spatial barriers also makes it difficult to address the plural society in its entirety and to bring it into the museum. The latter refers to the fact that especially large and renowned museums are often located in places that are rarely frequented by marginalized population groups: major promenades, expensive city centers, or sightseeing spots.

With a view to the reception level, we can therefore state that museums are confronted with the expectations of their audiences, which are often (implicitly or unconsciously) about the confir-
mation of widespread stereotypes of Islam (for instance, oppression of women). Since museums also depend on high visitor numbers, there is a degree of pressure here not to irritate this public taste too much. At the same time—and this is certainly one of the major challenges for today’s museum work—society demands that museums address all population groups and make them visible. Even though some pioneering projects exist in this area, German museums seem to be only marginally fulfilling this representational and participatory role.

10.3.2.4 Necessary innovations: What needs to exist and where can critical approaches to racism be found?

The talks held with museum experts were very solution-oriented. The discussion repeatedly focused on how to remedy existing shortcomings and problems, what support is needed from the government, and how museum professionals can actively contribute to meeting these challenges with projects that are already underway.

Existing measures include cooperation and participation projects of the Museum für Islamische Kunst in Berlin. As part of the project “Multaka: Museum as Meeting Point,” refugees from Syria and Iraq act as museum guides and discover cultural and historical connections between their “old” and “new” homelands together with their visitor groups (some of whom are also refugees). The same museum developed teaching and learning materials for schools as part of the pilot project “Cultural Histories,” which support teachers in deepening knowledge of Islam in schools and making it more inclusive and vivid. Here, too, the aim is to recognize historical connections and cultural commonalities and thus counteract the widespread perception of Islam “as other” at an early stage.

In the context of other initiatives, mosque communities and imams are specifically integrated into museum work as cooperation partners in order to enable a mutual transfer of knowledge. Together with museum and social scientists, innovative forms of presentation and mediation for exhibitions are also being tested in order to make the experience of cultural interconnections visible here as well.

The experts identified a host of necessary measures which, for the sake of clarity, are combined under the following bullet points:

- **Theme-specific funding:** Sustainable funding is needed for existing institutions as well as for future initiatives in order to employ academic staff on a long-term basis, to realize cooperation, participation, and further education projects, and to transport museum work to socially disadvantaged urban areas.
- **Support for the independent scene:** According to the experts, exhibition spaces of the independent scene offer special potential for the presentation of complex themes of identity and belonging. These spaces are often more flexible in terms of content and less characterized by demand for high visitor numbers than the large spaces. The independent scene as a whole needs greater social awareness and—likewise—reliable government funding.
- **Diversification of museum staff:** In order to make exhibition content more plural and less stereotypical, and to meet representational and participatory needs, there is a need for more diverse staff at all levels of museum organization, especially where key decisions are made.
- **Knowledge transfer between research and practice:** Many of the experts interviewed are well aware of the discrepancy that exists between scientific findings and museum practice—and want to reduce it. Exchange forums and scientific support must be intensified and realistic demands on museum work formulated.
• **More research in the field of museum didactics:** The communication of exhibition content to different target groups is especially a task of particular social significance. Future research should specifically investigate how this can succeed, what is missing in current approaches, and to what extent perspectives critical of racism are also helpful and can be integrated here.

The needs for development identified by the experts provide important input for the UEM to formulate its own recommendations for action. The latter, however, take a more distanced perspective and look at the field of museum high culture against the backdrop of the definition of anti-Muslim sentiment as developed at the beginning. Based on this definition, there is a need for action both at structural level (diversification of staff and museum types), discursive level (socially widespread stereotypes of Islam that become part of the expectations of museum visitors), and at individual level (target group-oriented museum education and recognition of hybrid identities on the part of Muslim artists). The following recommendations for action are oriented toward these levels of anti-Muslim sentiment.

### 10.4 Conclusion

Anti-Muslim sentiment is proving to be a problem in various areas of culture. A comprehensive analysis of the portrayal of Islam in German-language films, for instance, shows that almost 90 percent of the films examined have a negative thematic reference. The focus is on stories of terrorist attacks, radicalization, wars, and the oppression of women, thus narrowing the cinematic range of Islamic themes to a few conflict and crisis topics. A preponderance of problem-oriented film genres (drama, thriller, crime) and the widespread use of visual stereotypes of Islam (women wearing headscarves as a cinematic reference to “ghettos”) contribute to the portrayal of Islam as threatening, repressive, and not belonging. The diversity of Muslim lifestyles and stories remains largely invisible in German-language film productions. This is particularly regrettable as Islam has increasingly become the subject of cinematic material in recent times. Instead of using the potential of fictional entertainment media to tell new and everyday stories and thus also to counter the conflict-oriented news agenda, the latter is rather perpetuated and solidified in cinema.

The presence of Islam-related themes on German theater stages suggests a similar problem. Even though research here is extremely patchy, the UEM was able to obtain initial indications of focal points in terms of content by means of a relevant expert report. The “Islamization” narrative, for instance, has been taken up in various theater productions, where culturalist stereotypes have been perpetuated instead of adopting a fact-oriented criticism of Islam. Observers of the field have for some time also criticized the general lack of visibility of Islam. Theater practitioners with Muslim identity references are also still a rarity both on and off stage. On the other hand, the emergence of post-migrant theater and the productions that are decidedly critical of racism and oriented toward diversity, most of which are rooted in the independent theater scene, are having a lasting positive effect. They are helping to make Muslim theater practitioners, or those perceived as Muslim, and positive themes of Islam more present on German stages.

In the museum area, a hearing conducted by the UEM provides deep insights into the phenomenon of anti-Muslim sentiment. The invited experts describe various challenges at both content and structural level. Developments in museum history, for instance, contribute to the fact that Islam is still predominantly presented today as distant, foreign, and “limited in terms of cultural space.” Present-day representations are also often dominated by (well-meaning) clichés and stereotypes. Although various innovative projects highlight the commonalities and interrelations
between Islam and the “Western” world, there still seems to be plenty of room for positive—and above all structurally sustainable—developments in the museum sector. One factor is the lack of staff with specialist expertise in Islam combined with a personnel policy that is not diversity-oriented. Moreover, artists who are perceived as Muslim are frequently culturalized and thus pinned down to “Islamic art.” Overall, there is also a need for greater willingness to critically examine one’s own (often stereotypical) ideas of Islam and to transport this into the museum space.

### 10.5 Recommendations

The Independent Expert Group on Anti-Muslim Sentiment recommends:

- That the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media adopt a comprehensive diversity strategy to address the demographic and cultural diversity of people with Muslim identity references.

- For the *film culture sector*, financial support for film productions that depict the diversity of Muslim realities in order to overcome predominantly conflict-oriented portrayals of Islam in film.

- A sensitive and anti-racist approach to visual markers (for instance, head coverings, religiously connoted clothing) that are often used to identify Islam and Muslims in film.

- Further anti-racist training programs for sustainable awareness-raising among media professionals at all levels of film production, which can help to reduce stereotypical portrayals in film.

- Sustainable promotion of persons with Muslim identity references in the film industry, especially in leadership and management positions, in order to achieve diversification among filmmakers.

- The promotion of further research on the visual representation of Muslim lifeworlds, for instance, in order to gain insights into similar problems in the field of literature, everyday culture, or children’s media.

- For the *theater culture sector*, the promotion of productions that address the diversity of Muslim lifeworlds on German stages.

- The expansion of financial support for diversity-oriented organizational development of theaters with the aim of engaging persons with Muslim identity references at all levels of theater operations.

- The promotion of fundamental research into the causes, forms, and conditions of discrimination against artists with Muslim identity references in all areas of the German theater landscape (as well as the expansion of corresponding monitoring strategies).
For the museum culture sector, targeted opening processes in the representation of Muslim lifeworlds in order to avoid widespread stereotypes in art and cultural exhibitions related to Islam. Furthermore, cross-cultural interactions (“Islamic-Western dialogue”) and commonalities should be made visible in such exhibitions.

Avoiding culturalist attributions to artists with Muslim identity references. The aim is to make the range of their art visible.

The targeted involvement of Muslim communities in the process of exhibition design in order to achieve a better representation of Islam and Muslim lifeworlds at exhibition level.

Training courses critical of racism and culturally sensitive, which can help to reduce stereotypical representations and culturalist approaches in museums and museum education and to raise awareness among museum professionals in the long term.

The diversification of museum staff through increasing representation of people with Muslim identity references or racism-sensitive skills at all levels of museum operations, especially in management and leadership positions.

The promotion of museums and exhibition spaces in regions where anti-Muslim attitudes are particularly prevalent, as well as corresponding protection concepts.


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<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Auswärtiges Amt (Federal Foreign Office)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADAS</td>
<td>Anlaufstelle Diskriminierungsschutz an Schulen (Contact point for protection against discrimination in schools)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADS Bund</td>
<td>Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADS DITIB</td>
<td>Antidiskriminierungsstelle des DITIB (Anti-discrimination office of DITIB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AfD</td>
<td>Alternative für Deutschland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGG</td>
<td>Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz (General Equal Treatment Act also &quot;Anti-Discrimination Act&quot;)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALLBUS</td>
<td>Allgemeine Bevölkerungsumfrage der Sozialwissenschaften (General Population Survey of the Social Sciences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMR</td>
<td>Anti-Muslim racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAMF</td>
<td>Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BGB</td>
<td>Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch (German Civil Code)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BfV</td>
<td>Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BKA</td>
<td>Bundeskriminalamt (Federal Criminal Police Office)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BKM</td>
<td>Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien (Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMBF</td>
<td>Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (Federal Ministry of Education and Research)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMFSFJ</td>
<td>Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMI</td>
<td>Bundesministerium des Innern und für Heimat (Federal Ministry of the Interior and Home Affairs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BpB</td>
<td>Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Federal Agency for Civic Education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BVerwG</td>
<td>Bundesverwaltungsgericht (Federal Administrative Court)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDU</td>
<td>Christlich Demokratische Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSU</td>
<td>Christlich-Soziale Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIK</td>
<td>Deutsche Islam Konferenz (German Islam Conference)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DITIB</td>
<td>Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion e.V. (Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DJI</td>
<td>Deutsches Jugendinstitut (German Youth Institute)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EKD</td>
<td>Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (Protestant Church in Germany)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECHR</td>
<td>European Convention on Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETF</td>
<td>Theologische Faculteit (ETF), Leuven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAU</td>
<td>Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg</td>
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<tr>
<td>FDP</td>
<td>Freie Demokratische Partei</td>
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<tr>
<td>FES</td>
<td>Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GG</td>
<td>Grundgesetz (Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFE</td>
<td>Group-focused enmity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICOM</td>
<td>International Council of Museums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDA-NRW</td>
<td>Informations- und Dokumentationszentrum für Antirassismusarbeit Nordrhein-Westfalen (Information and Documentation Center for Anti-Racism Work in North Rhine-Westphalia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDZ</td>
<td>Institut für Demokratie und Zivilgesellschaft (Institute for Democracy and Civil Society)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IKG</td>
<td>Institut für interdisziplinäre Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung (Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence)</td>
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<tr>
<td>IOM</td>
<td>International Organization for Migration</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRU</td>
<td>Islamic religious education</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISD</td>
<td>Institute for Strategic Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISIS</td>
<td>Islamic State in Iraq and Syria</td>
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<tr>
<td>KMI</td>
<td>Kontaktbeamte für muslimische Institutions (Contact officers for Muslim institutions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KRM</td>
<td>Koordinationsrat der Muslime (Coordinating Council of Muslims)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LKA</td>
<td>Landeskriminalamt (Federal-state Criminal Police Office)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRW</td>
<td>North Rhine-Westphalia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSU</td>
<td>Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund (National Socialist Underground)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODIHR</td>
<td>Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSZE</td>
<td>Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIL</td>
<td>Private international law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMK</td>
<td>Politically motivated crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAHMA</td>
<td>Muslimisches Zentrum für Mädchen, Frauen und Familie e. V. (Muslim Center for Girls, Women and Family)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SED</td>
<td>Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPD</td>
<td>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SVR</td>
<td>Sachverständigenrat für Integration und Migration (Expert council for integration and migration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TGD</td>
<td>Türkische Gemeinde in Deutschland e. V. (Turkish Community in Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOM</td>
<td>Tag der offenen Moschee (Open Mosque Day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UEA</td>
<td>Independent Expert Group on Anti-Semitism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UEM</td>
<td>Independent Expert Group on Anti-Muslim Sentiment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UpJ</td>
<td>Union of Progressive Jews in Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VBRG</td>
<td>Verband der Beratungsstellen für Betroffene rechter, rassistischer und antisemitischer Gewalt (Association of counseling centers for those affected by right-wing, racist, and anti-Semitic violence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZdJ</td>
<td>Zentralrat der Juden (Central Council of Jews)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZfA</td>
<td>Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung (Center for Research on Antisemitism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZMD</td>
<td>Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland (Central Council of Muslims in Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZMSBw</td>
<td>Zentrum für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften der Bundeswehr (Center for Military History and Social Sciences of the German Armed Forces)</td>
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External expertises:
Studies, expert reports and hearings

Studies and expert reports

The UEM commissioned recognized experts and obtained the following expert opinions and reports on areas that have not been explored up to now:

Analyse der Islam-Berichterstattung in deutschen Medien
Freie Universität Berlin / Prof. Dr. Carola Richter, Dr. Sünje Paasch-Colberg, in collaboration with Dr. Katharina Nötzold (2022)

Begriffswelten von Islamfeindlichkeit in deutschen sozialen Medien
Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz / Prof. Dr. Pascal Jürgens (now Trier University) (2022)

Die Islampolitik der im Deutschen Bundestag vertretenen Parteien. Entwicklungen, Positionen, Konfliktlinien
Dr. Malte Dreß (2022)

Ebenen der Muslimfeindlichkeit und des antimuslimischen Rassismus am Beispiel der Regelungen religiös konnotierter Kleidung
Aktionsbündnis muslimischer Frauen e.V. / Gabriele Boos-Niazy (2022)

Fallstudie: Auswirkungen von Moscheeangriffen auf Gemeindemitglieder
FAIR international, Federation against Injustice and Racism e.V. / Büşra Gök Akca, Murat Gümüş, Meryem Küçük hüseyin, Orgun Özcan (2023)

Islam und antimuslimischer Rassismus in Parteiensystem und Bundestag: Eine diskursanalytische Studie des offiziellen Diskurses zwischen 2015–2021
University of Erfurt / Dr. Imad Mustafa (2022)

Islam und deutsche Familiengerichtsbarkeit
Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich / Prof. Dr. Anatol Dutta and Felix Aiwanger (2023)

Islamfeindlichkeit in christlichen Medien. Eine qualitative Studie zu antimuslimischem Rassismus in ausgewählten christlichen Online-Medien
University of Bremen / Prof. Dr. Gritt Klinkhammer, Jacob Chilinski, Rosa Lütge (2023)

Muslimische Erfahrungen und Wahrnehmung der Muslim- und Islamfeindlichkeit in der Gesellschaft. Eine Mixed-Methods-Studie
Institut für interdisziplinäre Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung (IKG) / Bielefeld University
Prof. Dr. Andreas Zick, Zeynep Demir, Marco Eden
Goethe University Frankfurt/Main / Vertr.-Prof. Dr. Meltem Kulacatan, Prof. Dr. Harry Harun Behr, Berna Rumpold, Selin Aydin (2023)

Social Media-Selbst(re)präsentation von Muslim*innen in Deutschland. Akteur*innen, Themen und Positionierungen zu muslimfeindlichen Diskursen
University of Erfurt / Tessa von Richthofen, Antonia Hafner, Kirsten Wünsche (2022)

Schulbücher und Muslimfeindlichkeit: Zur Darstellung von Musliminnen und Muslimen in aktuellen deutschen Lehrplänen und Schulbüchern
Georg-Eckert-Institute / Jan Düsterhöft, Prof. Dr. Riem Spielhaus, Radwa Shalaby (2023)
Rechtliche Aspekte des Umgangs mit religiös konnotierter Kleidung, insbesondere dem Kopftuch
Europa-Universität Flensburg / Prof. Dr. Anna Katharina Mangold (2022)

Rechtliche Rahmenbedingungen für die Entfaltung muslimischen Lebens in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
Georg-August-Universität Göttingen / Prof. Dr. Hans Michael Heinig (2022)

Repräsentationen des Islams in deutschsprachigen Spielfilmen und (Fernseh-)Serien zwischen 2001 und 2021
Hochschule Niederrhein / Prof. Dr. Ömer Alkın, Project assistant: Sarah Schwaibold (2022)

Theater und Islam – Studie zur Repräsentation des Islams und von Muslim*innen im deutschen Theater
University of Toronto / Dr. Azadeh Sharifi (2022)

Wahrnehmung über muslimische Schülerinnen und Schüler in der Schule
Stiftung Zentrum für Türkeistudien und Integrationsforschung – Institut an der Universität Duisburg-Essen / Cem Serkan Yalçın (2022)

Hearings

Through hearings and networking meetings, the UEM has also sought different perspectives from politics, NGOs, and civil society. Due to the pandemic, the UEM held these talks online using video conferencing services.

Hearing of the commissioners for religion of the parties of the Bundestag on anti-Muslim and anti-Islam sentiment as well as anti-Muslim racism
May 31 and June 1, 2021
(In alphabetical order of surname)
• Christine Buchholz for die Linke
• Prof. Dr. Lars Castellucci for the SPD in writing
• Hermann Gröhe for the CDU/CSU
• Volker Münz for the AfD
• Benjamin Strasser for the FDP
• Filiz Polat for Bündnis 90/Die Grünen

Hearing on the perspective of those affected: Counseling centers, youth associations, Muslim associations
June 24 and 25, 2021

Hearing I
• Ahmadiyya-Muslim-Jamaat Deutschland e.V.
• Islamische Gemeinschaft der schiitischen Gemeinden Deutschlands e.V. (IGS)
• Koordinationsrat der Muslime e.V. (KRM)
• DITIB – Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion e.V.
• Terno Drom e.V.
• Türkische Gemeinde in Deutschland e.V. (TGD)

Hearing II
• Aktionsbündnis muslimischer Frauen e.V. (AmF)
• Anlaufstelle für Diskriminierungsschutz an Schulen (ADAS) bei LIFE – Bildung, Umwelt, Chancengleichheit e.V.
• Fachstelle #MehralsQueer bei Queeres Netzwerk NRW e.V.
• FAIR International – Federation Against Injustice and Racism e.V.
• Muslimisches SeelsorgeTelefon Berlin (MuTeS) e.V.
• RAHMA – Muslimisches Zentrum für Mädchen, Frauen und Familie e.V.

Hearing III
• Alhambra Gesellschaft e.V.
• Avicenna Studienwerk e.V.
• Inssan e.V.
Hearing with German researchers on the topic of anti-Muslim sentiment in the executive branch

September 30 and October 1, 2021

• Juma e.V.
• Mosaik e.V.
• Regionale Arbeitsstellen für Bildung, Integration und Demokratie (RAA) e.V.
• Muslimisches Bildungswerk für Demokratie und Bildung e.V.

• Sabine Horn
  German Police University (DHPol)
• Maren Wegener
  German Police University (DHPol)

Hearing with legal experts

October 7, 2021

Expert reports submitted to the workshop:

• Dr. Alexander Collo
  Judge at Magdeburg District Court / Ministry of Justice of Saxony-Anhalt
  → Collo, Alexander (2021): Was passiert im familiengerichtlichen Verfahren, wenn “der Islam” thematisiert wird?

• Prof. Dr. Anatol Dutta
  Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich

• Prof. Dr. Bettina Heiderhoff
  University of Münster
  → Heiderhoff, Bettina (2021): Umgang mit “dem Islam” in Gerichtsverfahren – Stellungnahme zur familiengerichtlichen Praxis

• Dr. Doris Liebscher
  Lawyer, Berlin

• Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Stefan Muckel
  University of Cologne
  → Muckel, Stefan (2021): Stellungnahme zum Umgang mit dem Islam in Gerichtsverfahren

• Prof. Dr. Mehrdad Payandeh
  Bucerius Law School Hamburg
  → Payandeh, Mehrdad (2021): Islam und muslimische Religionszugehörigkeit im Gerichtsverfahren

• Dr. Nahed Samour in collaboration with Mehmet Osman Gülyesil
  Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin
  → Samour, Nahed/Mehmet Osman Gülyesil (2021): Der Islam in der Gerichtspraxis
• Prof. Dr. Nadjma Yassari  
Max Planck Institute for Comparative and 
International Private Law Hamburg  
→ Yassari, Nadjma (2021): Unpublished 
statement on the request by the UEM

**Hearing with CLAIM**  
**November 12, 2021**  
Interlocutor:  
Rima Hanano, Head of CLAIM

**Hearing with German journalists on the**  
**causes of reporting on Islam**  
**January 21 and 28, 2022**  
The contributions to the hearing were 
anonymized.

**Hearing with Prof. Dr. Werner Schiffauer**  
(formerly European University Viadrina  
Frankfurt (Oder) and long-time chairman of  
Rat für Migration e.V.)  
**March 10, 2022**

**Hearing with Meryem Küçükhüseyin and**  
Büşra Gök Akca for brandeilig and fair e. V.: Pre- 
liminary presentation of the study: Hintergründe 
**March 17, 2022**

**Hearing with representatives of the German**  
museum and exhibition landscape and academic  
experts in the field of “Islam in Museums”  
**March 24, and April 1, 2022**  
• Prof. Dr. Bärbel Beinhauer-Köhler  
Philipps-Universität Marburg  
• Christine Gerbich  
Centre for Anthropological Research on Museums  
and Heritage, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin  
• Sandrine Micossé-Aikins  
Diversity Arts Culture, Stiftung für Kulturelle  
Weiterbildung und Kulturberatung, Berlin  
• Dr. Anahita Mittertrainer  
Museum Fünf Kontinente, Munich  
• Prof. Wendy Shaw  
Freie Universität Berlin

• Dr. Jonas Tinius  
Saarland University
• Prof. Dr. Melanie Ulz  
University of Regensburg
• Ismahan Wayah  
Neue deutsche Museumsmacher*innen
• Prof. Dr. Stefan Weber  
Museum für Islamische Kunst, Berlin

**Hearing with representatives of the Directorate-**  
**General ÖS—Public Security at the Federal**  
**Ministry of the Interior/Working Group ÖS II 2**  
**International Terrorism and Extremism**  
**June 24, 2022**  
Representatives of the Working Group ÖS II 2

**Hearing with the Federal Criminal Police Office**  
on the criteria for recording “politically  
motivated crime”  
**September 8, 2022**  
Representatives of the State Security Division  
and the Research Unit Terrorism/Extremism

**Hearing with Dr. Seyran Bostanci**  
(German Centre for Integration and Migration  
Research, DeZIM) on the topic of “Anti-Muslim  
Racism in Day-care Centers”  
**September 13, 2022**
Imprint

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