



Bologna, 12 September 2021
Fondazione Studio Scienze Religiose
FSCIRE Giovanni XXIII

Bilateral Meeting

European Parliament President David Sassoli
European Muslim Leaders Council (EULEMA)

European Muslim Leaders Majlis (EULEMA)

Albania, Austria*, Bosnia*, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland*, France*, Germany, Greece*, Hungary, Ireland*, Italy*, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia*, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom*

- EULEMA is a platform consisting of muftis, imams, presidents, religious scholars and other official representatives of Muslim authorities to the national governments of Europe.
- The EULEMA is interested in better coordinating the messages and advocating for the rights of Muslim communities at European level, in engaging in Europe-wide interfaith dialogue and encouraging a productive and respectful exchange between religious and secular sectors of modern European society.
- The Majlis cooperates with Conference of European Rabbis (CER) and European Jewish communities as well as with the national councils of Catholic bishops, Orthodox churches and Protestant communities. In 2016, with the support of the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID), the Muslim-Jewish Leaders Council (MJLC) was registered in Vienna to which all members of the EULEMA belong.
- Many Board Members of EULEMA have a history of long and positive relations with different EU institutions.

* *Countries represented in the delegation*

European Islam, Identity and Vision

Issues and solutions

Misinterpretation and decontextualization:

Muslims: foreigners or criminals?

Citizens and believers!

Short-sighted policies:

Monocultural standardization or juridical double standards and social ghettos with discrimination against religious freedom for Muslims in Europe?

Unity in diversity. Religious pluralism, multicultural diversity and shared values!

The EU and EULEMA share a concern about the rise of hate speech and violence that is targeting citizens and religious believers in Europe and beyond. A new generation of European Muslim scholars and representatives need to come together to overcome the challenges of interfaith and intercultural encounter to build the relationships and spread the information which prevents hate speech and prejudice. They must take on responsibility for implementing solutions which prevent disinformation, misunderstanding and abuse of religious doctrine, symbols or practise that discriminate against individuals on the basis of their religious identity. They must establish dialogues and respectful relationships with other European communities, faiths and institutions which enable better understanding and solidarity when hate occurs. The authentic identity and history of Islamic civilization and of Muslim communities in Europe, is often forgotten and is now threatened by extreme ideologies that can lead to atrocity crimes, both through populism and fanaticism.

The European Muslim religious leaders of EULEMA, together with other Muslim scholars and associations in Europe, intend to increase the circulation of accurate information about their faith and counter-narratives to “us and them” perceptions in European society. They will promote the interpretation and contextualization of Islamic tradition and practice and develop a model of belonging to European shared values and society.

EULEMA requests that the President of the European Parliament David Sassoli develop a close cooperation with the Majlis on the basis of Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) in order to study and potentially update certain policies, programmes and implementations concerning Freedom of Religion for Muslim citizens in Europe.

EULEMA proposals

1. Support inclusive and fair policymaking: Inter-institutional and inter-disciplinary cooperation between the EULEMA and other like-minded religious organizations with EU institutions and officials in order to share data and, where necessary, create recommendations focussing on media and education, as well as aspects of welfare, security, migration, foreign policy, and interreligious dialogue which encourage fair depictions of Muslims, encourage minority participation and a sense of belonging, and discourage discrimination and exclusory discourse.
2. Link religious practise to understanding and respect of the European context: A training project for European Muslim clergy, *imams* and *murshidat*, on ‘European Shared Values and Fundamental Rights’ which would enable them to promote the rights and responsibilities of their followers within European society.

The course could cover three concrete areas of religious activity:

- Religious practise in Europe (including religious diversity)
- Interreligious cooperation against hate speech (including interfaith dialogue)
- International Relations with Islamic institutions and countries.

This pilot project could be developed with Jewish and Christian religious leaders, teachers and students who would come to constitute a wise platform of reference on religions’ rights and responsibilities in the EU. The scientific work of Fondazione per le scienze religiose Giovanni XXIII (FSCIRE) with its international network of experts should be involved in this programme.

3. Reconcile and explore religious European identities: Support the training and coordination of a Muslim network of young “European Ambassadors” from each EU Member States on *European Islamic Culture and Shared values* and who would be encouraged to promote a confident and critical discourse on religious identity as part of European society. In a second stage, this programme could also be developed with Jewish and Christian communities to create an “Abrahamic Interfaith Network of European Ambassadors”, organizing initiatives on religious pluralism and fraternity in Europe. Gender balance would be key.
4. Prevention and Integration for Citizenship: Migrants and refugees are increasingly coming from regions of the world where religious, political and cultural values have been eroded A great number of migrants are Muslims. Spiritual, psychological and communication assistance needs to be offered, together with juridical, logistic and professional solutions. Faith-based organizations, such as Caritas International or Sant’ Egidio, together with EULEMA, can provide assistance to migrants and refugees in Europe in order to prevent any future social alienation or victimization and to facilitate the understanding of the European vision of society, democracy and freedom of religion, including European Islam.
A specific programme for citizens coming from Afghanistan will be studied.