



FEMYSO

**Your Vote,
Your Voice**

Voices of Diversity: FEMYSO's Manifesto for an Inclusive Europe.

EUROPEAN ELECTION 2024

Your Vote, Your Voice



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What is FEMYSO?

FEMYSO is a pan-European network of 32 Member Organisations across 22 European countries and is the voice of Muslim Youth in Europe and is regularly consulted on issues pertaining to Muslim Youth. FEMYSO has long-standing relationships with the European Parliament, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations and a host of other significant intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations at the European and international level.

A youth-based approach.
A youth first approach.



Voices of Diversity: FEMYSO's Manifesto for an Inclusive Europe.

The upcoming European Parliamentary Elections bear a great significance in the future direction of the European Union. With recent polls suggesting an upswing for right-wing political parties¹, there exists a pervasive sense of concern among Muslim youth across Europe regarding the political landscape and the security of their rights. This unease persists as they continue to grapple with being marginalised throughout society. Taking a proactive approach, the FEMYSO Election manifesto is a series of policy asks to our to-be elected representatives raising awareness of the issues that most concern young European Muslims. This manifesto also enables the Muslim youth to exercise their democratic rights in holding their elected representatives to account, and fully participate as active citizens. This manifesto has been developed through rigorous consultation with the network of Muslim Youth and Student organisations that FEMYSO represents. These national organisations were conferred with, ensuring that a diverse range of opinions were expressed, and that the following recommendations are truly reflective of the European Muslim youth. Through these pledges, our future decision-makers have a unique opportunity to make a difference to the lives of young European Muslims.

We call upon political parties, parliamentarians and policymakers to engage with these priorities and demands emanating from young European citizens and work towards meaningful change in Europe.

(1) Wax, Eddy, and Sergey Goryashko. 2024. "EU Election 2024: New Poll Shows Right-Wing Populist Surge." POLITICO. POLITICO. February 1. <https://www.politico.eu/article/right-wing-populist-surge-eu-election-policy/>.

1. Youth & Education.

Young people have an essential role to play in shaping our societies. Their dynamic force is capable of steering conversations and provide unique insights to topical issues. As such, their engagement in civic spaces is vital for a progressive future. Empowering young people and encouraging their active participation, is the only way that we can move towards a resilient and forward-looking future.

Education is a universal right, regardless of age, religion or race, established within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The pursuit of education for many young Muslims is hindered by exclusionary policies and systemic discrimination. The hijab and abaya bans in schools, or non-faith compliant loans for further education are just some examples of ways that institutions limit access to education. FEMYSO underscores the necessity for protective measures to safeguard this essential right. In recognition of the concerns of young Muslims in Europe, we want to see education that includes all European citizens, is accessible, is decolonial and promotes fundamental human rights in its approach.

Recommendations

- Commit to advancing equitable opportunities for young people from underprivileged backgrounds within the domain of education.
- Commit to mandating that all internships, both in the public and the private sector, must be remunerated monetarily in order to enhance equity and avoid exploitation in the workplace.
- Commit to increasing initiatives that encourage greater participation of minoritised communities in sports, especially prioritising the inclusion of Muslim women.
- Commit to the adequate teaching of religion and religious values within primary and secondary education systems portraying religions accurately and factually, while promoting respect and tolerance.

2. Artificial Intelligence & Digital Rights.

Young Muslims are exposed to multiple layers of discrimination, ranging from the gendered Islamophobia faced by Muslim women to the racism endured by the ethnically diverse Muslim communities found across Europe. Artificial intelligence (AI) and digitalisation, if well regulated, could provide useful tools for addressing many of these systemic biases. They can also, however, render these systematic prejudices invisible and increase these existing inequalities. As a diverse and minoritised group, Muslims navigate an area of high risk when accessing services mitigated through AI due to the digital rendering of Muslim identity. Specific attention must, therefore, be given to the impact of AI on young Muslims in Europe.

Recommendations

- Commit to a mandatory declaration by Member States, made available to the public, for AI-based systems used to determine access to state welfare, including but not limited to: education, healthcare, childcare benefits and employment benefits.
- Commit to ban harmful AI practices in 'high risk' contexts, including but not limited to:
 - the use of biometric and facial recognition software that categorises and can be used for identification, in publicly accessible spaces.
 - the use of AI-driven systems that do not have human oversight and accountability structures accessible to the subjects of the AI system.
- Commit to funding non-Governmental and grassroots organisations to monitor the use of AI in 'high-risk' areas.
 - Further that the data produced from the monitoring be used to develop mitigation recommendations and impact assessments of AI on existing inequalities.
- Commit to the inclusion of factors such as social and economic inequality in Ethical Approval standards for AI providers and AI users which must be passed before the technology can be implemented.

3. Islamophobia, Anti-Racism & Human Rights.

Islamophobia continues to proliferate through every layer of European society; whether on a structural, institutional or interpersonal level. European Muslims face prejudices which impede them from leveraging their immense potential and limit their ability to contribute fully to society. The false narratives which often depict European Muslims as a security threat, economic burden and incompatible with the European identity are found across educational materials, research papers and mass media². Moreover, the over-policing and hyper-surveillance of Muslim communities, under the banner of counter-terrorism legislation³, has severely impacted the way Muslims have engaged with vital services, including education and healthcare⁴.

Interpersonal Islamophobia manifests through prejudice and hatred perpetuated in personal interactions and communications. This represents a heightened manifestation of Islamophobia that is normalised by politicians and media outlets perpetuating divisive rhetoric. Consequently, it fosters a hostile atmosphere leading to increased vulnerability of Muslims.

Despite experiencing widespread discrimination, a study by the EU's Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) found that EU Muslims tend to have a higher sense of trust in EU institutions compared to other Europeans⁵. It is therefore imperative that European Institutions deliver on this trust by continuing to protect the fundamental rights of young Muslims in the context of an unprecedented rise of Islamophobia in Europe.

Recommendations

- Commit to engaging with Muslim youth organisations such as FEMYSO and ensure their meaningful participation in European decision-making.
- Commit to reviewing the impacts of Islamophobia and its interplay with other forms of discrimination, and how this negatively affects the prospects of individuals who experience multi-layered discrimination. (For example, black Muslim women often face the 'triple-penalty', discrimination based on gender, race, and religion).
- Commit to reviewing the EU's compliance on civic, political and human rights, including but not limited to, evaluating the status of rights among EU's minoritised communities and assessing the status Member States in respect to international law violation.

(2) Poole, Elizabeth. *Reporting Islam media representations of British Muslims*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2009.

(3) Sanaullah, Nabil. 2022. "Suspicion, Discrimination, and Surveillance: The Impact of Counter Terrorism Law and Policy on Racialised Groups at Risk of Racism in Europe." *European Network Against Racism*. March 21. <https://www.enar-eu.org/suspicion-discrimination-and-surveillance-the-impact-of-counter-terrorism-law-and-policy-on-racialised-groups-at-risk-of-racism-in-europe/>.

(4) "The Prevent Duty and Its Chilling Effect on Human Rights." 2024. Amnesty International UK. Accessed January 13. <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/prevent>.

(5) "Muslims in the EU: High Levels of Trust despite Pervasive Discrimination." 2022. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. March 8. [https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2017/muslims-eu-high-levels-trust-despite-pervasive-discrimination#:~:text=The%20vast%20majority%20of%20Muslims,Fundamental%20Rights%20\(FRA\)%20shows](https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2017/muslims-eu-high-levels-trust-despite-pervasive-discrimination#:~:text=The%20vast%20majority%20of%20Muslims,Fundamental%20Rights%20(FRA)%20shows).

4. Mental health.

Accessing mental health services has often been challenging for young people. In 2022, FEMYSO [Study Session on mental health](#) highlighted specific issues impacting young Muslims, and the current lack of adequate support⁶. The constant vilification of Muslims in legislation and in the media, coupled with the increase in far-right rhetoric creates a harmful environment for both accessing and receiving counselling. It risks reinforcing biases held by those delivering the assistance and rendering the intervention ineffective. Furthermore, the prejudgement of Muslim patients often leaves them at risk from receiving incorrect treatment as such environments discourage patients from trusting medical professionals. Mental health care needs to recognise the cultural and religious contexts of patients, and how this impacts their daily life, in order to effectively treat the individual. As such, FEMYSO welcomes the adopted conclusions of the 2023 Spanish presidency of the council, which sought to prioritise mental health and well-being, with a particular focus on the most urgent matters and the most vulnerable groups such as people doing precarious work and young people¹⁰.

Recommendations

- Commit to increase funding to public health services in Member States to urgently address the shortage in the provision of mental health services.
- Commit to increasing representation of minority communities within the provision of mental health services through initiatives such as the encouragement of quota systems within public bodies and increase in specific scholarships and traineeships targeted towards minoritised communities.
- Commit to requiring public bodies to issue internal guidance to medical professionals and those in positions of safeguarding in public institutions, educating them on cultural sensitivities across minority communities in order to understand how best to approach and treat patients whilst being delicate on sensitive issues.
 - Additionally, commit to the inclusion of the impact on mental health of being a member of a minoritised community into mental health education syllabi.
- Commit to funding and publishing research into investigating the impact of Islamophobia on access to, experience in, and recovery rates for anxiety, depression and psychosis of Muslims in Europe.

(6) 2024. Accessed March 9. <https://femyso.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Study-Session-Report-Mind-The-Gap-%E2%80%93-Achieving-Mental-Health-to-Facilitate-Youth-Participation-II-1.pdf>

(7) 2024. Accessed February 18. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-health-policy/>.

5. Socioeconomic Mobility

The overrepresentation of Muslims in lower economic percentiles means that socioeconomic issues have a disproportionate impact upon Muslim communities⁸. Disparities in access to essential public services, economic opportunities and the lack of financial services adhering to their faith-based principles are just some of the issues encountered by young Muslims. Experiences of institutional prejudice in early life further exacerbate their struggles to enter the employment market, break through, and achieve upward mobility. Effective policy development and implementation can only be achieved if grounded in a thorough understanding of the needs and multi-faceted challenges faced by young European Muslims.

Recommendations

- Commit to a review into religious disparity, understanding the nature of the EUs religious relations, dissecting where disparities exist, and how to mitigate them. The review should aim to identify and rectify disparities in access to public services, economic opportunities, employment, and financial services, ensuring equitable access and socioeconomic development.
- Commit to name-blanking of CVs to avoid potential bias and discrimination, and impartially assess job applications.
- Commit to the adoption of affirmative action policies aimed at facilitating minority representation in the European political sphere, with a particular emphasis on empowering European Muslim youth; this should include: trainings, mentorship programmes and outreach initiatives.

(8) 2024. Accessed January 14. https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/1936-EUMC-highlights-EN.pdf.





FEMYSO

Working for a diverse, cohesive,
and vibrant Europe.

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