



## **GLOBAL MUSLIM DIASPORA PROJECT**

**ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE STATISTICAL,  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTRE  
FOR ISLAMIC COUNTRIES (SESRIC)**

**H.E. AMB. MUSA KULAKLIKAYA**

**Brussels, 28 May 2018**

**Dear Colleagues,**



At the outset, I would like to thank you for your availability for the meeting.

We are having this meeting in a period when the SESRIC – a subsidiary organ of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) – is intensely engaged in preparations for its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration.

Over the past decades, the SESRIC proved capable in guiding policy making process and achieving practical results, as a response to the evolving needs of region covered by the OIC.



By undertaking activities in the areas of statistics, research, training and technical cooperation, the SESRIC contributes in developing cooperation among the OIC Member States, but also in establishing a dialogue with other relevant stakeholders.

We at SESRIC are convinced that stability, security and economic prosperity in OIC countries is possible only through cooperation. Most of our activities are supportive to the global efforts for underpinning democratic trends that are respecting diversity and fostering greater social justice and inclusion.



In this regard, SESRIC pays also great attention to the Muslim communities that are living outside the borders of OIC Member States.

There are Muslim communities in all continents. They constitute one of the largest Diasporas in the world. Islam is present in European soil as a religion, but also as a cultural and civilizational value for almost fourteen centuries. For that reason, I would say that history of European civilization is closely connected with the Islamic civilization.



According to the Yearbook of Muslims in Europe, estimated size of European Muslim population in 39 European countries is around 25 million, with more than 19 million of them living in EU Member States.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Germany 4.300.000, France 4.000.000, United Kingdom 2.780.832, Spain 1.887.906, Italy, 1.600.000, Netherlands 825.000, Belgium 781.887, Bulgaria 577.139, Austria 573.876, Sweden 400.000, Greece 390.000, Cyprus 301.512, Denmark 284.000, Finland 70.000, Romania 64.337, Croatia 62.977, Portugal 55.000, Hungary 50.000, Ireland 49.204, Slovenia 47.488, Poland 35.000, Czech Republic 20.000, Luxembourg 18.000, Malta 15.000, Latvia 6.000, Slovakia 5.000, Lithuania 2.727 and Estonia 2.500.



Many European cities are meeting place for different ethnic groups and religious traditions, where over the course of centuries people have developed capacity for coexistence, trust, sensitivity to others and tolerance.

Unfortunately, it is true that recently in many European countries the extreme right is experiencing a period of revival. For that reason, today in many European countries we are witnessing the rise of exclusionary discourses directed against Muslims.



However, we are also witnessing normalization of Muslim lives, which is evident through their integration in cultural life, political participation, legal recognition of Islamic organizations, freely practicing the Islam etc.

This is why there are so many Muslim refugees in Europe. In order to win against the extreme right, we need to improve public image of European Muslim communities.

Whenever we speak about European Islam today, we have in mind a European context in which Islam lives.



However, we forget the reality that Europe is also homeland of its Muslim communities.

Extreme right people in Europe should understand that Muslims are community that works diligently and honestly, that respects family values and fosters morality, and not a community that gives birth to drug dealers and terrorists – which is a very widespread stereotype.



**Dear Colleagues,**

In September 2016 the SESRIC has launched the “Global Muslim Diaspora Project” and commissioned a comprehensive study on Muslim communities living in the non-OIC countries.

In general, the Global Muslim Diaspora Project is the first comprehensive effort of its kind, developed by SESRIC to analyse challenges, experiences and perceptions on a range of issues related to Muslim communities living in non-OIC countries.



This report provides also a range of useful statistics on the Muslim diaspora, as well as insights on similarities and differences of challenges faced by them in different countries.

The Project aims to, inter alia:

- a) Create an up-to-date database in the form of an interactive map, called Global Muslim Diaspora Atlas;



- b) Initiate forums and various forms of cooperation in order to incorporate different views and perspectives from all relevant stakeholders, thus advance mutual understanding related to Muslim diasporic communities.
- c) Contribute to the efforts of host countries towards engaging and integrating their Muslim communities;
- d) Highlight the values and importance of the Muslim diasporic communities with the intention to reduce negative discourses directed against them.



Methodology used in the comprehensive study on Global Muslim Diaspora is a mixed one, including desk research, interviews, surveys and workshops. The first pilot group of cities for fieldwork were London, Berlin and Paris. As soon as the SESRIC gives the final shape to this report, it will be an easy-to-access source of information, which affords the political elites, policy makers, analysts and general public the opportunity to understand how the Muslim diaspora in selected countries views the most pressing issues which they face today.



While preparing this report, we paid attention also to thoughts of non-Muslim public opinion leaders, thus ensured their valuable contributions.

Information about the key findings from Global Muslim Diaspora report was presented at SESRIC's workshop on 'Muslim Diaspora: Prospects and Challenges for Global Peace and Prosperity', held on 12-13 May 2018 in Istanbul.



The Workshop discussed the preliminary outcomes of the study and deliberated on policies and works done by the OIC Member States on Diasporic communities to improve the overall economic, social, and political, well-being and enhance their success, including their contributions, both in the host countries and the countries of origin.

Here, I would like to share with you some of the findings of the study.



First, majority of the interviewees do not believe to the existence of a Muslim Diaspora. Some of them do not believe in the existence of a single Muslim diaspora, but they point out to several Muslim Diasporas.

Second, lives and experiences, opportunities and challenges of Muslim communities are shaped by national context in which they live.



For example, 72.7% of London respondents indicate the religious and cultural freedom as main advantage of living in the United Kingdom, while in Berlin almost three-quarters of respondents (62.3% in total) indicate the welfare state and economic prosperity as the main advantages of living in Germany.

I would like to add that experiences and perceptions of Muslim communities living in non-OIC countries vary greatly among different generations.



For instance, third generation of Muslim migrants, which were born in Western European countries, are more integrated to their place of living, in terms of command of language, social interaction, identity etc.

When we asked European Muslim communities to name the main challenges they face, most of the answers pointed to a) lack of solidarity and representation; b) discrimination and violation of rights; c) Islamophobia and racism; d) negative and stereotypical representation of Muslims and e) Issues related to education.



**Dear Colleagues,**

We intend to continue with similar practice in the future, by including into the Global Muslim Diaspora Project other countries with significant Muslim populations. The SESRIC remains committed to the implementation of different activities, which we believe will help us make the necessary impact to change some of the issues negatively highlighted in the Global Muslim Diaspora report.



In this regard, I hope this meeting will provide an excellent opportunity to enhance the partnership and joint activities between SESRIC and European institutions, thus drive the OIC cooperation to greater heights.

**Thank you for your kind attention**