

A NEW STUDY PREPARED FOR THE FRIEDRICH EBERT FOUNDATION:



INTOLERANCE, PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION:

A EUROPEAN REPORT

An analysis of anti-democratic mentalities in eight European countries prepared by Prof. Dr. Andreas Zick, Dr. Beate Küpper and Andreas Hövermann for the Friedrich Ebert Foundation's Project on Combating Right-wing Extremism (Forum Berlin).

Context and objectives

- A diverse, tolerant and multicultural Europe committed to human rights is not only essential for the protection of minorities. These features represent the very foundation of social cohesion and robust democracy. **Intolerance, prejudice and discrimination are dangers to the cohesion of plural societies and thus to democracy itself.** They indicate the extent to which the majority is willing to accept and include social, ethnic, cultural and religious minorities and supposed "others" as equal members of society – or exclude them. **Intolerance, prejudice, anti-democratic attitudes and the willingness to discriminate against others are sensitive indicators of social cohesion.**
- With this new publication we are seeking to join the debate provoked by the increasing success of right-wing populist and extremist forces in Europe and inject constructive proposals for encouraging democracy and solidarity. The study's **comprehensive comparative data on prejudices against different target groups (group-focused enmity) in eight European countries** supplies an empirical basis for discussion and dependable input for the social policy debate.
- Six dimensions of the group-focused enmity (GFE) syndrome were investigated, focusing on extent, determinants and causes. Concrete analysis was conducted on negative attitudes and prejudices against groups defined as "other", "foreign" or "abnormal" and assigned an inferior social status. The prejudices selected for investigation were: **anti-immigrant attitudes, racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim attitudes, sexism and homophobia.**

Method

The data on which the study is based was gathered by the international *GFE Europe* research project led by Professor Dr. Andreas Zick and Dr. Beate Küpper at the University of Bielefeld and funded by private foundations (the Compagnia di San Paolo, the VolkswagenStiftung, the Freudenberg Stiftung, the Groeben Stiftung and the Amadeu-Antonio-Stiftung). In 2008 representative samples of 1,000 persons aged 16 and above were interviewed by telephone in each of eight European countries (France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and Portugal). The standardized questionnaire contained pretested questions tailored to intercultural comparison. Several statements were used to record each element of group-focused enmity (i.e. anti-immigrant attitudes, racism, anti-Semitism, anti-

Muslim attitudes, sexism and homophobia), with respondents indicating agreement or disagreement on a four-point scale.

Central findings

- **Group-focused enmity is widely disseminated in Europe. It not a phenomenon of the political margins but an issue at the centre of society.** Europeans are conspicuously united in their **rejection of immigrants and Muslims**. About half of all European respondents said that there were too many immigrants in their country and that jobs should be given to non-immigrants first in times of crisis. About half condemned Islam as a religion of intolerance. On the other hand, almost 70 percent said that immigrants were an enrichment for their own culture. Between 17 percent in the Netherlands and more than 70 percent in Poland believe that Jews seek to benefit from their forebears' suffering during the Nazi era. About one third of all respondents believe there is a natural hierarchy of ethnicity. A majority of Europeans also propagate sexist attitudes based on a traditional role division and think that women should take their role as wives and mothers more seriously. The proportion opposing equal rights for homosexuals ranges between 17 percent in the Netherlands and 88 percent in Poland.
- The representative data also allows analysis of **similarities and differences between individual countries**. Whereas **rejection of immigrants and Muslims was found everywhere**, the extent of anti-Semitism, sexism and homophobia differs noticeably between countries. Respondents in the Netherlands expressed the least prejudice overall, although anti-Muslim attitudes are as widespread there as in the other countries. The eastern European countries of Hungary and Poland stand out for their strong rejection of all the studied minorities. Alongside Hungary, anti-immigrant attitudes are also particularly strong in Great Britain; they are least strong (but still considerable) in France and the Netherlands. Anti-Semitism is especially widespread in Poland and Hungary, least in Great Britain and the Netherlands (but even there a worrying proportion still espouse anti-Semitic attitudes). Racism is conspicuously weak in Italy, while homophobia is particularly widespread, as it also is in Portugal, Poland and Hungary. The intensity of group-focused enmity in Germany is in the middle of the European range, but with respect to particular groups – including Muslims – stronger than in neighbouring western European countries. The strongest anti-immigrant attitudes, racism, anti-Semitism and sexism were found in Portugal, Poland and Hungary. Europe is largely united in its rejection of Muslims, with only in Portugal standing out for somewhat greater tolerance in this respect.
- Prejudice against one group is often associated with prejudices against others. The individual elements of group-focused enmity form a closely interlinked syndrome of rejection.
- **In all the countries a majority of respondents feel they are ignored by politicians. Political attitudes and the feeling of political powerlessness are crucial for the extent of prejudice.** Those who position themselves on the right politically, who feel politically powerless, who wish for a strong leader and who support the death penalty exhibit greater group-focused enmity. Those who have a negative view of the EU also tend to be more negative towards weak groups. The general level of political interest has little bearing on the extent of prejudices.
- **Other components of right-wing extremist attitudes** were also investigated. Group-focused enmity is associated with three fundamental ideological orientations:

authoritarianism (a basal attitude prioritizing law and order and discipline), **social dominance orientation** (support for social hierarchies) and **rejection of diversity** (of culture, ethnicity and religion).

- **Age, education and income are clearly identifiable influencing factors.** Group-focused enmity increases with age and decreases with education and income (the latter with the exception of Italy). Notably, income plays only a small role for the extent of anti-Muslim attitudes and homophobia. Men and women differ little in their attitudes.
- The **dimension of behaviour** was also investigated. **The research found that prejudiced attitudes have tangible consequences.** Those who are prejudiced against immigrants are more likely to oppose their integration, to refuse them equal political participation, to be willing to discriminate against them and to respond to them with violence.
- The most important **explanatory factors** for group-focused enmity are an authoritarian and hierarchy-supporting disposition, followed by the subjective feeling that immigrants present a threat and a general feeling of lack of orientation (anomie). Low income and subjective disadvantage also play a role.
- The most important **protective factors** against group-focused enmity are trust in other people, the feeling of being able to make firm friendships, contact with immigrants, and above all a positive disposition towards diversity. Religiosity on the other hand does not protect against group-focused enmity, and general values emphasizing security and universalism are of little relevance.

Conclusions

The findings underline the urgency of committed action by all forces in society to strengthen democracy and weaken right-wing extremism. At the end of the study the authors propose concrete measures:

- Scientifically independent ongoing **monitoring** of right-wing extremist and populist opinions and intentions at the European level (which is long overdue).
- The dissemination of group-focused enmity in Europe and especially the similarity of the causes in different countries underlines the relevance of **joint European efforts**. Individual and contextual causes must be taken into account. It is crucial to **promote attitudes and establish structures that support equality**, which means accepting cultural difference and embracing multiculturalism, rejecting authoritarian attitude and behaviour patterns and encouraging horizontal (as opposed to vertical) social structures.
- According to the study, citizens are not fundamentally disinterested in politics but feel subjectively detached from the political system. Gains made by right-wing populism show that citizens are blaming immigrants, Muslims and other minorities rather than directing their ire against the established political system. This underlines the **need for intervention and prevention strategies** to combat the collective formation group-focused enmity directed against "the others". Taking the challenge of increasing diversity in Europe seriously at the political level also means acknowledging that **all members of society need political participation and involvement**.