



CONTRIBUTION

The European Parliament takes on Islamist entryism

*A strong start,
with work still to do*



Dr. Tommaso Virgili

Jurist · CERIF expert



CONTRIBUTION BY

Dr. Tommaso Virgili

Jurist, specialist in comparative law in Islamic countries

CERIF expert

Senior Policy Advisor at the AJC Transatlantic Institute, visiting researcher at the WZB Berlin Social Science Center and associate researcher at the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies. He co-authored, with Florence Bergeaud-Blackler, the report *Unmasking the Muslim Brotherhood. Brotherism, Islamophobia and the EU* (2025).

The European Parliament takes on Islamist entryism

A strong start, with work still to do

CERIF briefing: Contribution no. 2026/34

By: Dr. Tommaso Virgili, jurist, CERIF expert

Subject: European Parliament resolution of 8 October 2026 on Islamist entryism and the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood network

Date: October 2026

On 8 October 2026, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the need for an EU strategy to counter Islamist entryism and the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood network. The text, presented by the EPP, was adopted by a large majority spanning from Renew's liberals to the far right, with 381 votes in favour, 167 against and 15 abstentions. While not legally binding, the resolution sends a strong political signal, adding to years of pressure that individual MEPs have put on the Commission concerning its support to and engagement with individuals and entities belonging to the Brotherist sphere. Furthermore, it gives fresh impetus to the scrutiny the Parliament already exercises in the budget and discharge procedures, where its leverage over the Commission is real.

In its discharge resolutions, the Parliament has indeed already called on the Commission to “stop all funding of Islamism and organisations linked to Islamism” and insisted that EU funds must never go to organisations linked to “Islamist anti-Semitic, anti-Christian and anti-Islamic movements”, including indirectly through third parties. It has also asked for ex ante mechanisms to identify NGOs with “acknowledged ties to religious fundamentalist networks”, and, in its 2023 Budget resolution, named the Muslim Brotherhood explicitly.

Now these demands are turned into a comprehensive position of the House.

What is the “Muslim Brotherhood” in Europe?

The first merit of the text is to dispel a dangerous misunderstanding about the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe, clarifying that it is not about a single organisation but a “broad and fragmented ecosystem” of associations, foundations and youth, educational, charitable and anti-discrimination structures (recital G) whose method “relies more on relays, associated structures, slogans, alliances [...] than on visible formal membership” (recital H). This is crucial, as the strength of Brotherhood-linked organisations has always been their ability to hide behind a neutral and benevolent façade, denying any affiliation with Islamism, and to act independently from one another under a common ideological project. Former MB member, turned critic, Mohamed Louizi compares this model to a starfish, whose arms can be cut without endangering the others or the creature's existence. The text reaches the same conclusion, noting that a Brotherhood-linked organisation can reconstitute itself under other names or in other Member States when challenged (recital Y).

The Parliament draws the consequences in two ways. It calls for a European methodology to identify the signs of Islamist entryism, and it already sketches the indicators, from institutional doublespeak and financial opacity to proximity to already identified networks and the instrumentalisation of anti-discrimination frameworks (para. 6). It also asks the Council, when assessing terrorist listings, to look beyond formally declared structures to “associated entities, front organisations, reconstituted structures, financial relays, youth networks, ideological platforms, logistical support networks and individuals playing a leadership, coordination or facilitation role” (para. 14). The resolution also gives concrete examples, correctly describing the Council of European Muslims as the “cornerstone” of the Brotherhood's European structure and Europe Trust as its financial arm (recital I), and also naming several organisations with links to the Brotherhood network, FEMYSO and Islamic Relief among them, that have benefited from EU funding (recitals I and J).

“Islam” vs “Islamism”

The resolution is also clear in distinguishing Islam as a religion, pertaining to freedom of conscience, from Islamism as a political and societal project aiming at placing “collective norms, derogatory regimes or community allegiances” above common law (recitals C and D) – the very objective of Islamist entryism, producing detrimental effects on individual rights, social cohesion and the neutrality of public institutions (para. 1).

Truth be told, it is theologically debatable whether “Islam, as a religion, is not inherently political” (recital C), for the Quran and hadiths contain very clear political and legal prescriptions that are not without consequences among believers, as I will return to below. However, this distinction has the merit of recognising that many Muslims live their religion peacefully and spiritually, and it thus avoids their essentialisation – which is both a normative imperative and a strategic necessity, since the Brotherhood's goal is precisely to define the “true” Muslim as one who embraces its interpretation of Islam, and so to claim the exclusive representation of Muslims.

The differentiation between Islam and Islamism also has an important corollary: “criticism of a political ideology must not be equated with an attack on a religion”. This matters, because Member States still disagree on abolishing blasphemy laws, but criticism of a political ideology is unambiguously protected as a fundamental right. Islamist groups seek to merge the two in order to promote their own notion of “Islamophobia”, which, under the guise of fighting “racism” or “anti-Muslim hatred”, aims to silence criticism of religious dogma and of the Islamist groups themselves. The Parliament explicitly rejects this move: “the fight against discrimination must not be diverted to prevent any criticism of Islam or to confer institutional legitimacy on organised Islamist networks” (para. 7).

Islamism and Antisemitism

The resolution has the additional merit of addressing the specific link between Islamism and antisemitism. It correctly lists antisemitism and hatred of Israel among the markers of Islamist influence (recital E), and denounces efforts to leverage the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to spread antisemitic narratives and intensify polarisation in European societies (para. 4). Throughout their history, and to an unprecedented level after the 7 October massacre, Islamist groups have stoked hatred of Israel to fuel antisemitism and division, and the effects are plain to see: a 2024 survey conducted by Ifop for Fondapol and AJC found that 32% of French Muslims feel antipathy towards Jews, against 6% of the general population. Among Muslims who attend religion classes in a Quranic school, 53% agree that the Jews used the Shoah to justify the creation of the State of Israel, against 38% of those who have not attended such classes. The survey also identifies a spike in antisemitism among Muslims between 2022 and 2024.

The recognition of a link between antisemitism and hatred of Israel (distinct from legitimate criticism of its policies), and of the way Islamism exploits both, is all the more important at a time when that hatred has become one of the main drivers of antisemitism in Europe.

Call for Action

After identifying the problem, the resolution contains some concrete requests to counter it.

On the one hand, it tackles foreign interference and support to Islamist movements. The Commission has had this issue, and in particular undesirable foreign funding, on its radar for years, first through the Radicalisation Awareness Network and now through the EU Knowledge Hub on Prevention of Radicalisation. The resolution adds the demand for stricter controls at the external borders and over movement within the Schengen area, backed by stronger border, intelligence, judicial and police cooperation, including through Europol and Eurojust, so that Islamist actors cannot exploit Europe's area of freedom and free movement to circumvent national bans (paras. 25–28). Not least, it calls for an EU-level list of hate preachers, modelled on the national ones, with stricter checks on visas and residence permits for those linked to them (para. 16) – an unfortunate watering down of the original EPP version that extended such controls to all those having links with Islamist movements.

On the other hand, the text moves the gaze internally, to the EU's own house, asking that organisations linked to the Brotherhood or to other Islamist entities stop receiving EU funding and institutional legitimisation, including by being denied access to the EU institutions and removed from the Transparency Register (paras. 12, 18-24). Importantly, the Parliament does not shy away from naming the organisations as all those linked to the Council of European Muslims, such as FEMYSO, and others including Islamic Relief and the European Network Against Racism.

When it comes to the vexed question of a potential placement of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in the EU terror lists, as requested among others by the French National Assembly, the resolution adopts a smartly cautious formulation, requesting the blacklisting “where the criteria of Common Position 2001/931/CFSP are met” (para. 15). This qualification, combined with the recognition that the Brotherhood takes many forms, is very important: it allows the Parliament to move beyond the idea of listing the movement as a whole – an approach that may be pertinent in some Middle Eastern contexts, but that in Europe would run up against both the difficulty of proving who belongs to the Brotherhood and the sacrosanct rule-of-law guarantees on evidence. From this perspective, a good starting point to assess the terrorist nature of some entities and individuals linked to the Brotherist galaxy should rest on their connection with Hamas – which is already on the EU terrorist list and which its own foundational Charter defines as “one of the wings of Moslem Brotherhood in Palestine”. This point is briefly mentioned but not developed in the text. Under the Common Position, a listing rests on a deci-

sion by a competent national authority, which may consist of the opening of an investigation or a prosecution: the investigations into Hamas networks in Europe, such as those currently under way in Italy, can therefore provide the legal anchor for designations.

Where the Technical Tools Fall Short

The resolution rightly urges the Commission to make full use of the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) to detect entities that promote Islamist entryism and exclude them a priori from accessing EU funding (para. 23). However, it does not dwell on the limits of the instrument. As Florence Bergeaud-Blackler and I have shown in *Unmasking the Muslim Brotherhood*, EDES is extremely formalistic and largely toothless in this form: an entity cannot be excluded for having links with extremist groups, and not even for holding itself an extremist, anti-democratic or hateful ideology, but only for conduct amounting to “incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence”. That conduct must be established by a final judgment or administrative decision, or else through a cumbersome procedure involving a panel of Commission officials and independent experts. On top of that, the misconduct must affect, or concretely risk affecting, the performance of the legal commitment. As currently designed, EDES cannot capture the links to Islamist entryism that the resolution asks it to address. The Parliament's call for “new control and assessment tools adapted to entryism strategies and network structures” (para. 22) implicitly acknowledges the gap, but closing it will require amending the Financial Regulation. Likewise, the “binding written commitments” on EU values proposed in para. 23 risk reproducing the reliance on self-declarations that the European Court of Auditors has already criticised (recital X). Written commitments test an organisation's façade, while the problem lies in its links.

As concerns the crucial point of EU funding, the resolution requires an account of the funds granted in the past to organisations suspected of links to the Brotherhood, including the justifications given and the failures of control (paras. 19–20), and, for the future, transparency on how exclusion criteria are applied (para. 21). What is missing is a structured reflection on inclusion criteria, namely what an organisation must positively demonstrate to receive public money and why a project it proposes is worth financing. The myriad of EU-funded programmes that frame Islamophobia in Brotherist terms testifies that the question is far from academic. Since the Parliament co-decides the EU budget and alone grants discharge to the Commission, it is best placed to start this reflection.

As we argued in our report, the bar for criminal prosecution must remain higher than the bar for public funding. But a clean criminal record cannot be enough to qualify for taxpayers' money.

The Open Questions

Beyond these technical gaps, the resolution does not fully address the connection between Islamism and the lack of integration among certain Muslim communities. Indeed, a literalist reading of the legal and political prescriptions highlighted above brings certain Muslims towards what scholar Elham Manea calls “societal Islamism”: the radical rejection of individual freedoms and the attempt to impose customs drawn from a rigorist interpretation of Islam. Political and societal Islamism do not necessarily go hand in hand or belong to the same groups, but they feed each other. The text addresses parallel communities (recital D) without spelling out what they consist of. It calls for consequences for those who actively promote the subjugation of women (para. 17), but its sole concrete measure in this field is support for national bans on the niqab and the burqa, for reasons of both security and women's rights (para. 8). Other forms of social separatism, however, go unmentioned. The text could have called explicitly for blasphemy laws to be abolished and no new ones introduced; it could have rejected parallel tribunals, criminal-law exceptions based on cultural arguments and school exemptions for Muslim students; it could have ruled out any compromise on secularism in public services or on mixed-gender access to shared spaces; it could have invited local authorities not to create monocultural immigrant enclaves; and it could have called for consequences for immigrants who promote Islamist ideas, as per the EPP's original motion. Finally, it could have called for refusing public space to those who glorify terrorism, whether 7 October, Hamas or Hezbollah, and for using every criminal and administrative tool to prevent and punish such glorification, which continues unabated and unchecked in the streets of Europe. To be sure, the motion had to reconcile different religious, political and national sensitivities. But it is worth remembering what separatism is, and why it needs to be countered.

A second open question is the alternative. The resolution calls for support for the Muslim representatives and civil society actors who defend democratic values and resist Islamist pressure (para. 9). But how are they to be identified, and by what criteria? What can, should or should not the Member States and the EU do to foster a form of Islam compatible with liberal-democratic values? And how can they promote the social integration of communities that often suffer from an integration deficit and are therefore more exposed to Islamist appeals? This long-standing debate on “European Islam” lies beyond the scope of the resolution, but it is its necessary corollary.

Finally, the elephant in the room is the political dimension of entryism. Part of the Islamist infiltration is certainly due to the ability of these organisations to disguise their true nature and aims. But a less benign explanation also has evidentiary grounds: the connivance between Islamism and certain parties and ideologues that, naively or with ulterior motives, champion its causes. The resolution touches on this when it deplores that FEMYSO was invited to Parliament by Members of The Left and the Greens (para. 12), but it does not develop the point further.

Conclusion

Overall, the text is an excellent start and a powerful public acknowledgement of a phenomenon that has finally become a cross-party political issue, despite the opposition of almost the entire left of the chamber – which, regrettably, champions secularism when it concerns the interference of autochthonous Christian churches but not when it comes to political Islam. It is true that, as Bergeaud-Blackler observes, the text affirms the need for an EU strategy without setting one out. Yet, this is consistent with its nature as a programmatic document, and does not constitute a problem in itself, provided that the resolution truly plays the role such a document is designed for: that of setting in motion a concrete process, through which the Commission, the Council and the Member States translate its requests into policy. Whether this happens will depend not only on the institutions, but also on the vigilance of the resolution's sponsors and of the concerned civil society, who now bear the responsibility of ensuring that this long-awaited acknowledgement of the problem does not remain a dead letter, but becomes the starting point of a genuine European response.

Dr. Tommaso Virgili

Jurist, specialist in comparative law in Islamic countries

CERIF expert - European Centre for Research and Information on the Muslim Brotherhood