

Preface

The Open Society Institute (OSI) Budapest is a private operating and grant-making foundation that develops and implements a range of programmes in civil society, culture, education, media and public administration, public health and human and women's rights, as well as social, legal and economic reform.¹

In 2002, as part of its programme on minority protection in Europe, EUMAP, OSI's EU Accession Monitoring Program, now renamed the EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program,² published a volume of reports on minority protection in the five largest EU member states. The reports looked at the situation of Muslims in France, Italy and the United Kingdom and of the Roma/Sinti communities in Germany and Spain.

The UK report, *Monitoring Minority Protection in the EU: the Situation of Muslims in the UK*, launched by the then Home Office Minister Lord Filkin, was a snapshot of the situation of Muslims, in terms of minority rights and their experiences of discrimination and disadvantage. It identified the severe levels of disadvantage and discrimination that are experienced by British Muslims, and are significant barriers to their participation and integration in British society.

One underlying theme in the UK report was the need for policy makers in government and public bodies to ensure that their policies for tackling disadvantage and discrimination took account of the faith dimension in the identities of Muslim communities. The report made over 30 recommendations to the UK Government and other public bodies, calling upon them to take steps to encourage, facilitate and support participation in society by Muslims.

Following publication of the UK report, and noting the positive attitude to engagement in the issues raised by the report from the Government, the Open Society Institute is keen to ensure that the recommendations are taken forward. To this end, this report focuses on four areas: equality and discrimination, education, employment and criminal justice.

The four chapters of this report explore the most relevant issues for British Muslims in each of these areas, and the extent to which policy is presently addressing their needs as a group. Each paper also puts forward a number of recommendations aimed at

¹ Further information on the Open Society Institute is available on the OSI website at www.soros.org.

² Further information on OSI's EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program (EUMAP) and published reports are available on the EUMAP website at www.eumap.org.

supporting the development of more nuanced Government policy which is sensitive to the needs of Muslims. An overview chapter resumes the main general findings of these papers.