



Landscape Analysis

What we know on anti-gender movement measures and actors targeting trans people across Europe and Central Asia

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Suggested citation

Seb Rowlands (2023) *Landscape analysis: what we know on anti-gender movement measures and actors targeting trans people across Europe and Central Asia*. TGEU.

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Landscape analysis

What we know on anti-gender movement measures and actors targeting trans people across Europe and Central Asia

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Date of publication	March 2023

TGEU is a member-based organisation working to strengthen the rights and wellbeing of trans people in Europe and Central Asia.

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INTRODUCTION



The growing expressions of hatred against LGBTI people that we are witnessing in Europe today must be understood not merely as individual acts, but as part of this broader dynamic... Explicitly anti-LGBTI hate speech increased in 2020 in Europe. The trend of politicians verbally attacking LGBTI people is reported to have grown significantly in this period... Religious leaders also propagated hate-speech... many of them directly blaming LGBTI people for Covid-19.”¹

Fourat Ben Chikha, Rapporteur to Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

The anti-gender movement is an umbrella term for the collection of religious bodies, academics, politicians, certain right-wing governments, civil society, think tanks, individuals, and donors who broadly stand against rights relating to gender, under the remit of fighting against ‘gender ideology’. It includes historic and ongoing efforts to curtail access to abortion and sexual and reproductive rights (seen in Poland’s 2021 introduction of regressive legislation), equal marriage (such as Hungary’s Constitutional

amendment defining marriage as exclusively heterosexual) and the recognition of rights of the LGBTI+ community. The Vatican has been leading vocal opposition in United Nations (UN) processes against the inclusion of sexual and reproductive and LGBTI+ rights from the very first International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 and has actively resisted the inclusion of ‘gender’ as a category in international human rights documents. More recently, gender equality and the concept of ‘gender’ have been contested.

The anti-gender movement is growing increasingly global, is gaining ground in public discourse and in access to decision-makers in power, is incredibly well-resourced, co-opts the language of human rights, and has made significant gains in recent years in rollbacks on sexual and gender-based rights. The movement is well coordinated through meetings and cross-regional convenings which create alliances between far right, religious and ‘gender critical’ (self-described feminist) actors – including non-governmental organisations and political parties – which facilitate increasingly rapid dissemination of tactics and intel. They are connected through funding flows between the Catholic church, Russian oligarchs and US-based donors.²

Within the broader attacks on LGBTI+ rights and gender equality, the anti-gender movement is increasingly focusing on trans rights in a number of diverse contexts. The threats posed

¹ Ben Chikha, Fourat. (2021). Combating rising hate against LGBTI people in Europe. Parliamentary Assembly to the Council of Europe. Available at: <https://assembly.coe.int/LifeRay/EGA/Pdf/TextesProvisoires/2021/20210921-RisingHateLGBTI-EN.pdf>.

² Datta, Neil. (2021) Tip of the Iceberg: Religious extremist - Funders against Human Rights for Sexuality & Reproductive Health in Europe. European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Available at: www.epfweb.org/node/837.

to trans rights by anti-gender and anti-trans actors are especially significant considering their effectiveness in altering legislation and impacting rights-affirming policy choices, such as the opposition to legal gender recognition reform in the Netherlands or limitations on access to trans specific healthcare in Sweden. Traditionally human rights friendly advocacy spaces in organisations like the UN are also not immune from anti-gender narratives as we see agreed language and protections being rolled back. Some anti-gender actors have also attempted to remove funding from civil society organisations supporting trans people, and to defund global institutions supportive of trans equality. The anti-gender movement also effectively uses social media campaigns and public stunts to create one-sided debates and bias public discourse against the human rights of trans people and their basic needs. In some contexts, there is a simultaneous rise in hate crime and incitement of violence.

The anti-gender movement is well-organised and inter-connected beyond political affiliation, national borders or formal organisations,³ enabling rapid uptake of their arguments in seemingly disparate contexts, with quick and effective traction across the media. A report by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights (CoE Commissioner for Human Rights) notes that anti-gender actors may be only a few in each country, but are well-organised and

very active, giving the impression that they represent widely shared views.⁴

They are already entrenched in Europe and Central Asia with networks in every country and a transfer of tactics is underway from American organisations to Europe.⁵ Increasingly international connections are also emerging, such as organisations like Tradition, Family and Property (TFP) which originated in Brazil and is now gravitating towards eastern Europe.⁶ Its actors are permeating every sphere of influence and gaining new ground each year, and the direct consequences of anti-gender narratives on trans communities cannot be ignored.

Although there is a growing recognition of how anti-gender actors are leveraging trans rights, there are relatively limited resources that map how trans rights are targeted and most available resources and knowledge focus on the impacts to sexual and reproductive rights, or broader protections for gender equality. This paper seeks to address that gap by focusing on how the anti-gender movement organises against trans rights in particular.

This report provides an overview of the available literature, public resources, and information tracking how the actors and tactics of the anti-gender movement are targeting trans people and has two objectives. First, it draws attention to the rise in organised anti-gender and anti-trans actors across Europe

³ Mulhall, Joe and Safya Khan-Ruf. (2021) State of Hate: Far Right Extremism in Europe - HOPE not hate report. HOPE Not Hate Charitable Trust, Amadeu Antonio Stiftung, and Expo Foundation. Available at: hopenothate.org.uk/2021/02/16/state-of-hate-europe2021/.

⁴ Council of Europe and the Commissioner for Human Rights. (2021) Human Rights of LGBTI People in Europe: Current threats to equal rights, challenges faced by defenders, and the way forward - Round-table with LGBTI human rights defenders organised by the Office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Online event, 9 February 2021. Council of Europe and the Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: rm.coe.int/human-rights-of-lgbti-people-in-europe-current-threats-to-equal-rights/1680a4be0e.

⁵ For instance, the American Center for Law and Justice has set up the European Centre for Law and Justice and the World Congress of Families is developing its national arms in different European countries. Global Philanthropy Project. (2020) Meet the moment: a call for progressive philanthropic response to the anti-gender movement. Global Philanthropy Project. Available at: globalphilanthropyproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Meet-the-Moment-2020-English.pdf.

⁶ Graff, Agnieszka and Elżbieta Korolczuk, E. (2022). Anti-gender politics in the populist movement, Routledge and CRC Press, pp 102 – 106. Available at: www.routledge.com/Anti-Gender-Politics-in-the-Populist-Moment/Graff-Korolczuk/p/book/9780367679491.

and Central Asia as a point of concern for trans organisations and activists and others working to support trans communities. Second, it identifies gaps and trends in the literature, and shares key information on the patterns observed in where and how anti-gender and anti-trans actors are striking; their tactics, connections, arguments, and level of impact. It will also highlight gaps in research, knowledge, and publicly available literature on anti-trans actors, and the need for greater academic research into these areas.

Its intended audiences are trans organisations and activists, academics, and others working to support trans communities including allies and policy-makers. For trans organisations and activists, this report draws urgent attention to the anti-gender movement and the threat this poses to their work. We hope to provide insight to help empower trans communities and organisations to counter these national and regional anti-trans actors and narratives. For the academic audience, it highlights where further research could address literature gaps on anti-trans actors. For policy-makers, it provides an oversight of anti-gender organising from comparative national contexts.

ANTI-TRANS MOVEMENTS AND ORGANISING: AN OVERVIEW

This section provides a background to anti-trans organising in Europe and Central Asia. It begins with the common narratives that are employed by different anti-gender and anti-trans actors in the region, their motivations and the tactics used when they organise around key issues. Finally, we briefly explain how these actors are funded.

Narratives

The anti-gender movement is united by its opposition to what they term as ‘gender ideology’, which is an empty signifier and a term largely attributed to the Vatican in its first use. It serves as a catch-all frame which anti-rights narratives can hang their arguments upon in order to justify discrimination, and includes the claim that affording trans people their fundamental rights comes at a direct cost to the rights of others.⁷ These arguments originate from one or more actors and are often simplistic or based on falsities, make claims of potential harm, and leave no room to find solutions.

Role of the Vatican

As one of the oldest and best-funded anti-gender and anti-trans actors, the Vatican, and the broader Catholic church, wields a lot of power in discourse on trans rights. Holding Permanent Missions of the Holy See to the Council of Europe, and as the largest catholic lobbyist at the EU, the Vatican has opposed the word ‘gender’ and changes in secular law before the UN and legislative bodies across Europe and the world. The Polish Catholic Church is a vocal generator of panic around protecting children from ‘anti-genderism’⁸ and presented a legal argument which halted progress on Italy’s hate crimes and anti-discrimination law change in October 2021.⁹ Indeed the Vatican is credited with inventing the concept of ‘gender ideology’ to consolidate opposition to progressive developments in society.¹⁰ Its influence over law and policy in national, regional, and global contexts is well documented by many sources.¹¹

⁷ Shameem, Naureen. (2021). *Rights at risk: time for action*, Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report. Available at: <https://www.oursplatform.org/resource/rights-at-risk-time-for-action/>.

⁸ Kane, Gillian. (2018) Right-Wing Europe’s War on ‘Gender Ideology’. Political Research Associates. Available at: www.politicalresearch.org/2018/05/16/right-wing-europes-war-gender-ideology.

⁹ Sexuality Policy Watch. (2021) Brazil as a hub of anti-gender transnational politics (August – October 2021). Sexuality Policy Watch. Available at: sxpolitics.org/anti-gender-transnational-fluxes-august-october-2021/22198.

¹⁰ Kuhar, Roman and Paternotte, David. (2017) Anti-gender campaigns in Europe: Mobilizing against equality. Rowman and Littlefield.

¹¹ As an example, see Paternotte, David. (2017) Anti-Gender Movements in Europe: Between Catholicism and Populism. Université Libre de Bruxelles. Available at: ecpr.eu/Events/Event/PaperDetails/33577. This paper offers an overview of a transnational intersections of religious politics with rising populism and nationalistic anxieties in contemporary Europe and its national manifestations in eleven European countries.



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Several sources detail the origins of gender ideology and its arguments¹² and the landmark publication for this is European Parliamentary Forum’s “Restoring the Natural Order”: The religious extremists’ vision to mobilize European societies against human rights on sexuality and reproduction”. This reveals the arguments underpinning the anti-gender movement’s strategy to roll back human rights in Europe since 2013, orchestrated by the advocacy network Agenda for Europe, called Restoring the Natural Order: An Agenda for Europe.¹³

In practice, the diversity of actors within the anti-gender movement means there are many arguments in use, but common threads emerge. The main arguments can be grouped into two broad types of narratives: traditional, conservative view of the family, sexuality, and

gender roles; and that trans rights are opposed to women’s/other human rights.

TRADITIONAL, CONSERVATIVE VIEW OF THE FAMILY, SEXUALITY, AND GENDER ROLES

The concept of ‘natural law’ as laid out in ‘Restoring the Natural Order: An Agenda for Europe’ is presented as a set of fundamental truths based in Christianity/Judaism superseding modern human rights. It is an overarching narrative frame that includes the rejection of gender theory, homosexuality, equal marriage, trans and intersex rights, contraception, abortion, anti-discrimination protection, and argues for the rights of parents as ‘primary educators’ over the rights of the child, noting that “there is an inherent risk that

¹² Kane, Gillian. (2018) “Gender ideology”: big, bogus and coming to a fear campaign near you. The Guardian. Available at: www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/mar/30/gender-ideology-big-bogus-and-coming-to-a-fear-campaign-near-you.

Corrêa, Sonia. (2017) Gender Ideology: tracking its origins and meanings in current gender politics. Engenderings. Available at: blogs.lse.ac.uk/gen-der/2017/12/11/gender-ideology-tracking-its-origins-and-meanings-in-current-gender-politics/.

Gallo, Michelle. (2017) The Fake Ideology That Could Do Real Harm. Open Society Foundations. Available at: www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/gender-ideology-fiction-could-do-real-harm.

Graff, Agnieszka (2016) “Gender Ideology”: Weak Concepts, Powerful Politics. Religion and Gender, 6(2), pp.268–272.

¹³ Datta, Neil. (2018) “Restoring the Natural Order”: The religious extremists’ vision to mobilize European societies against human rights on sexuality and reproduction. European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Available at: www.epfweb.org/node/175.

[the Convention on the Rights of the Child] could be used to supersede the natural rights of parents”.¹⁴ The Rights at Risk report highlights that though natural law is increasingly described using language of universality and fundamental rights, rights related to gender and sexuality are framed as new, optional or subject to state discretion.¹⁵

Linked to this, anti-choice and anti-LGBTI+ positions have been purposely re-branded by the World Congress of Families under a single umbrella of the ‘protection of the family’ narrative, with the intention of creating messaging with more positive images. This has been highly effective in mobilising support.¹⁶

A report of the IE SOGI describes how faith-based groups use the same ‘defence of traditional values’ argument, along with accusations against trans people of criminal intent, paedophilia and corruption of children. Arguments of organisations like CitizenGO mirror those from the US right, of cis-heterosexism, white supremacy, and Christian hegemony and seek the redefinition of religious freedom so far that its protections can be misused to cover hate speech.

The narrative of threat to family and children has also been highly successful in appealing to people’s anxieties around their families’ futures, and securing legislative change. For instance, Kyrgyzstan’s parliament approved a 2014 bill criminalising dissemination of LGBTI+ information, and in June 2021 Hungary passed legislation banning the dissemination of sexual

education content in schools.

A related argument is one of neo-colonial imposition. This frames human rights-based and inclusive understandings of gender and diversity as a neo-colonial project of the UN and Western bodies. Any criticisms of anti-gender arguments are labelled “anti-national”, “unpatriotic” or “traitorous”. Nationalist discourses are often coupled with xenophobia, such as accusations that lesbians, bisexual and trans women threaten the survival of the national population because they are not forming heterosexual procreative relationships.¹⁷

TRANS RIGHTS ARE OPPOSED TO WOMEN’S/OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS

The second set of narratives tends to centre around the idea of trans rights being a threat to other people’s rights. For instance, trans rights are presented as impacting the right to freedom of expression and freedom of religion. In Italy, this was argued to justify why a draft law on hate speech should not be adopted.

The two most significant claims of threats to rights of other groups relate to women’s and children’s rights. A dominant argument used by ‘gender critical’ feminists is that the recognition of the differences between sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity attempts to replace the category of sex with gender, and is motivated by misogyny. TGEU has documented arguments that are commonly used – that

¹⁴ Restoring the Natural Order”: An Agenda for Europe, pages 9-12, 16-19, 24-27, 30, 51-83.

¹⁵ Shameem, Naureen. (2021). *Rights at risk: time for action*, Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report. The Observatory on the Universality of Rights. Available at: www.oursplatform.org/resource/rights-at-risk-time-for-action/.

¹⁶ Provost, Claire. (2017) *Re-branding hate?: ultra-conservative organising under a “family-friendly” banner*. OpenDemocracy. Available at: www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/re-branding-hate-family-friendly/.

¹⁷ Madrigal-Borloz, Victor. (2021). *Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity*, Victor Madrigal-Borloz, *Practices of exclusion*.



Photo by Sung Jin Cho on Unsplash.

trans people and gender self-determination laws dismantle the 'objective reality of sex' and that adding gender identity as a protected characteristic means sex is no longer equally protected.¹⁸ 'Gender critical' feminists argue that by 'undermining' sex as a legal category, legal protections based on sex are negated, and discrimination and violence suffered by cis women will become invisible in policy and practice.¹⁹ Agenda for Europe presents legal gender self-determination as a gateway to total legal and policy chaos.²⁰

Trans women are posed as a danger to women's segregated spaces like changing rooms, toilets, shelters and detention facilities, as part of a broader narrative of trans women being predators and as men avoiding prosecution who pose as trans women. In this same vein, trans

women are presented as a threat to women's sports, and a threat to lesbians, where 'gender ideology' supposedly forces lesbians into relationships with trans women for fear of being called transphobic.

Related to this are arguments that access to legal gender recognition and supporting social transition for children younger than 16 threatens their well-being, which goes hand-in-hand with the claim that comprehensive gender and sexuality education harms children and infringes on parental rights. A related argument to this is equating trans people to paedophiles who groom children to become trans by introducing them to the 'ideology' of trans rights²¹ and that parents, families, teachers, and other adults supportive of trans children sit on a similar continuum of abuse.²²

¹⁸ TGEU, GATE, and ILGA-Europe, *Trans rights are human rights: Dismantling misconceptions about gender, gender identity, and the human rights of trans people* (2021).

¹⁹ Madrigal-Borloz, Victor. (2021). *Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Victor Madrigal-Borloz, Practices of exclusion*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/192/14/PDF/N2119214.pdf?OpenElement.

²⁰ Restoring the Natural Order: An Agenda for Europe, page 53.

²¹ Chaplain, Chloe. (2022) Toxic transgender rights debate mirrors old tropes of calling gay men paedophiles, says equalities minister. Inews. Available at: [inews.co.uk/news/politics/toxic-trans-rights-debate-mirrors-old-tropes-around-gay-men-1529429](https://www.inews.co.uk/news/politics/toxic-trans-rights-debate-mirrors-old-tropes-around-gay-men-1529429).

Lavietes, Matt. (2022) 'Groomer,' 'pro-pedophile': Old tropes find new life in anti-LGBTQ movement. Nbcnews. Available at: www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-politics-and-policy/groomer-pedophile-old-tropes-find-new-life-anti-lgbtq-movement-rcna23931.

²² Shaw, Diana. (2022) New Law in Spain Allows Children to Self-Identify Their Sex on Official Documents. Women are human. Available at: www.womenarehuman.com/new-law-in-spain-allows-children-to-self-identify-their-sex-on-official-documents/.

Narratives entering UN spaces

The arguments of 'gender critical' and anti-trans feminists have found purchase with key international human rights bodies that have traditionally advanced the concept of gender in the international agenda. For instance, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), a UN body, recently took a stance resonant with the arguments made by anti-trans women's groups. In its recommendations on Portugal's Universal Periodic Review in 2022, the Committee expressed concern about the use of 'gender' over 'sex' in Portugal's policy and legislation and recommended "avoiding the broad concept of 'gender' when addressing the rights of women." More recently in November 2022, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls, Reem Alsalem, also echoed 'gender critical' anti-trans arguments in a letter addressed to the Scottish Parliament as it was considering amendments to the legal gender recognition legislation. She argued against instituting a simplified procedure based entirely on self-determination and reducing the waiting periods because it "would potentially open

the door for violent males who identify as men to abuse the process of acquiring a gender certificate and the rights that are associated with it."²³ This a direct pivot from 2021 where she previously co-signed a letter in support of self-determination.²⁴ The Special Rapporteur's arguments were especially pernicious because these were framed under the guise of supporting trans rights and respect for trans people.

Motivations of anti-gender actors

A note on the motivations of anti-gender and anti-trans actors emerged from a small selection of academic sources. The personal emotional responses and geopolitical factors that drive some of the anti-gender discourse in different contexts can present potential entry points for engagement.²⁵

There are broadly three different types of motivations recorded.

1. The first is from 'gender critical' feminists which are rooted in an emotional response to fear of losing the gains made in women's rights. The belief that trans women are not women sees trans inclusion and access to single sex spaces and legal protections under anti-discrimination frameworks as

²³ Learmonth, Andrew (2022) Scottish Human Rights Commission reject UN gender recognition warning. The Herald Scotland. Available at: www.heraldsotland.com/politics/23173411.scottish-human-rights-commission-reject-un-gender-recognition-warning/.

²⁴ Mofokeng, Tlaleng; Brian Nougères, Ana; Madrigal-Borloz, Victor; and Alsalem, Reem. (2021) Mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; the Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy; the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity; and the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=26484

²⁵ Kováts, Eszter. (2017) *The Emergence of Powerful Anti-Gender Movements in Europe and the Crisis of Liberal Democracy*, Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe.

the expansion of misogyny and a threat to cisgender women's liberation. This causes 'gender critical' groups to double down on trans exclusion, particularly of trans women.²⁶

2. Related to this is an argument that the trans rights movement, along with other rights movements, is creating a fundamental paradigm shift in the language of sex and gender identity difference.²⁷ Anti-gender and anti-trans actors are motivated by a perceived threat to cis-heteronormative social structures to create documents like An Agenda for Europe, as a conscious attempt to refute and push against this tidal change.
3. The third motivation is discontent with, or a perception of being left behind by, the neoliberal model and rejecting it as a Western imposition that does not work. The rise of the anti-gender movement is described as a political response to find alternatives to "the current crises of the liberal democracy" which fails to meet people's needs and rights, and not a backlash to progress on trans rights.²⁸ The focus on women's and LGBTI+ rights are a surface response to deeper discontent with socioeconomic failure of neoliberalism.²⁹ Others highlight the use of anticolonial language to label Western elite liberals as 'colonisers' and 'genderism' as an ideology imposed on the poor. This framing gives the

anti-gender movement a consistent ideology across differing contexts and is a strong mobiliser, especially when paired with the narrative of protecting ordinary people and religious conservatives.³⁰

Tactics

Anti-gender and anti-trans actors use a variety of tactics to achieve their goals, which we explore in this section. They pay attention to legislative and policy processes to push forward their agenda, in addition to using other tactics like convenings, training and funding, as well as using social media to influence public opinion or target trans activists. We divide their tactics broadly into: legal and policy change, convenings and training, and other tactics.

LEGAL AND POLICY CHANGE

Many sources agree on the specific types of tactics being repeated across different contexts. A Southern Poverty Law Center report found the anti-gender movement uses an organised three-pronged attack combination of litigation, legislation, and activism (or lobbying in other sources) to push for legal and policy changes.³¹ As the European Consortium for Political Research notes, these tactics can be reactive against progressive reforms (e.g. adding homophobic definitions of marriage into

²⁶ Armitage, Luke. (2020) *Explaining backlash to trans and non-binary genders in the context of UK Gender Recognition Act reform*. Positive non-binary and / or genderqueer sexual ethics and politics, (Special Issue 2020), pp.11–35.

²⁷ Preciado, Paul B. (2021) *Can the Monster Speak?* Fitzcarraldo Editions.

²⁸ Kováts, Eszter. (n.d.) *Anti-Gender Movements – Resistances Against... What?* The European Consortium For Political Research. Available at: ecpr.eu/Events/Event/PaperDetails/33893.

²⁹ Kováts, Eszter. (2017) *The Emergence of Powerful Anti-Gender Movements in Europe and the Crisis of Liberal Democracy*. Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe.

³⁰ Korolczuk, Elżbieta and Agnieszka Graff (2018) *Gender as "Ebola from Brussels": The Anticolonial Frame and the Rise of Illiberal Populism*. Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 43(4), p.797. Available at: www.academia.edu/36688360/Gender_as_Ebola_from_Brussels_The_Anti_colonial_Frame_and_the_Rise_of_Illiberal_Populism?auto=download.

³¹ Southern Poverty Law Center. (2019). "Global Hate: Hate Travels" *Intelligence Report*. Southern Poverty Law Center. Available at: www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2019/global-hate-hate-travels.



Photo by Alexey Novikov on Canva: the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Croatia's Constitution in 2013 when on track to pass a marriage equality law) or preventative to stop reforms emerging (e.g. the Slovenian anti-gender movement's 2009 referendum campaign).³² The World Congress of Families and its allies are using this combined strategy to build an anti-LGBTI+ infrastructure across Europe and 'pump out legislation', supported by US anti-LGBTI+ activists.³³

1. Strategic litigation

This is an exported tactic from the United States which involves initiating cases before national and international courts on key issues. Strategic litigation has long been effectively used by human rights actors to bring about broad societal changes beyond the scope of the law being considered. Anti-gender and anti-trans actors are using this tactic effectively to change legislation, policies, and practice that protect trans people and to set legal precedents to shape

future laws.³⁴ For instance, the prominent anti-gender actor Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) filed an amicus brief (or third party intervention) in support of an anti-LGBTI+ referendum in Slovenia in 2014.³⁵ Campaigns are also used to support litigation, such as in Romania and Slovakia, where language guides were developed to provide a template for effective campaign framings and tactics.³⁶

2. Model legislation

Anti-gender actors aim to develop a legal model which can be easily replicated in other contexts. Alliance Defending Freedom developed model laws on the rights of trans people in 2015 and 2017 – 'bathroom bills' and 'fairness in women's sports acts'³⁷ – which are being used as templates and adopted across US states. These templates for model laws are shared publicly for replication via one website.³⁸

³² Gergorić, Maja. (n.d.) *LGBTI activists face growing opposition across Eastern Europe*. The Loop. Available at: theloop.ecpr.eu/lgbti-activists-face-growing-opposition-across-eastern-europe/.

³³ Southern Poverty Law Center. (2019). *"Global Hate: Hate Travels" Intelligence Report*. Southern Poverty Law Center. Available at: www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2019/global-hate-hate-travels.

³⁴ The highly informative Rights at Risk report from the Observatory on the Universality of Rights shares great detail on many of these tactics. Shameem, Naureen. (2021). *Rights at risk: time for action, Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report*. The Observatory on the Universality of Rights. Available at: www.oursplatform.org/resource/rights-at-risk-time-for-action/.

³⁵ Human Rights Campaign. (2014). *Anti-Rights Profile: 10 Things You Should Know About the Alliance Defending Freedom*. Human Rights Campaign. Available at: www.hrc.org/press-releases/10-shocking-facts-about-the-alliance-defending-freedom.

³⁶ Shameem, Naureen. (2021). *Rights at risk: time for action, Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report*. The Observatory on the Universality of Rights. Available at: www.oursplatform.org/resource/rights-at-risk-time-for-action/.

³⁷ Lang, Nico. (2021). *A Hate Group Is Reportedly Behind 2021's Dangerous Wave of Anti-Trans Bills*. Them. Available at: www.them.us/story/hate-group-reportedly-behind-2021-anti-trans-bills.

³⁸ Sosin, Kate. (2021). *Anti-LGBTQ+ orgs are drafting anti-trans bills for policymakers with an online form*. The 19th. Available at: 19thnews.org/2021/03/anti-lgbtq-orgs-drafting-anti-trans-bills-policymakers/.

3. Lobbying

Anti-trans actors increasingly have a big presence in major sites of policy advocacy from where they seek to directly influence negotiations. For instance, Agenda Europe, a pan-European Christian network composed of non-governmental organisations, conservative academics, European and national government officials, and American Christian Right actors has a presence in Brussels, Strasbourg, and Luxembourg. Agenda Europe is explicitly anti-trans and use their annual members-only meetings as a space to strategise on European policy and legislative initiatives on contraception, divorce, anti-LGBTI+ citizens' initiatives, abortion restrictions, and opposition against the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).

Anti-gender actors employ a number of tools to be visible in policy spaces and influence decision-makers, such as direct advocacy and interventions, traditional advocacy tools like briefs and white papers, and delegitimisation of human rights bodies. In many countries, the main actors or their alumni occupy key positions in government ministries, academia, the judiciary and other public institutions.

The lobbying and activism has a strong focus on UN and EU advocacy through two strategies:

a. Direct advocacy

Anti-gender actors directly participate in official processes through side events and using special statuses to make official statements, participate in processes, access decision-makers, and influence outcomes. For instance, ADF has had ECOSOC status since 2010, has staff registered at the EU, has been involved in NGO Committees on Freedom of Religion and Belief at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and previously the Council of Europe. It has used these positions to intervene in cases before the European Court of Human Rights like in *A.P. Garçon and Nicot v. France*,³⁹ which challenged European sterilisation requirements for trans people to gain legal gender recognition. Actors like CitizenGo/HazteOir have made oral statements at the UN Human Rights Council for the last three years and in universal periodic review processes for Spain and others. They use their ECOSOC status to block language at the Commission on Status of Women on sexual and reproductive health and sexual orientation and gender identity topics, and are now aiming their sights on the Commission on Population and Development.⁴⁰

b. Delegitimising and defunding the work of UN actors

In particular, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), World Health Organisation (WHO), UN

³⁹ Applications nos. 79885/12, 52471/13 and 52596/13 (6 April 2017). See ILGA-Europe's breakdown of the case at www.ilga-europe.org/case-law/a-p-v-france-garcon-v-france-and-nicot-v-france/.

⁴⁰ Shameem, Naureen. (2021). *Rights at risk: time for action*, *Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report*. The Observatory on the Universality of Rights. Available at: www.oursplatform.org/resource/rights-at-risk-time-for-action/.

Special Procedures, and treaty monitoring bodies.⁴¹

Through these methods, anti-gender actors prioritise capture of law and policy spaces to advance their agenda and narratives. Reports have highlighted how the interventions on gender issues at the European Parliament (EUP) are systematic and increasing, and more openly use the language “of gender-ideology discourse.” A report of the UN Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (IE SOGI) noted that he received 297 replicated template submissions to one of his consultations, and the report surmised that anti-gender actors’ common traits include vigorous social media messaging, simple catchy slogans and adaptability to local contexts.⁴²

In parallel with a shift towards attacking LGBTI+ rights as a core tactic of anti-gender mobilisation, Member States are increasingly choosing non-compliance with the European Union ‘community of values’ around anti-discrimination and equality protections. Most recently this has been seen with Hungary, Romania, Poland, and Bulgaria. Within the Council of Europe, anti-gender actors have been pushing a stronger stance over the latter

half of the last decade, with more organised contestation to change agreed human rights language, including the modification or deletion of key language, and opening case-by-case discussions on previously agreed documents.⁴³

An ambitious aim of the anti-gender movement is to develop a parallel ‘human rights’ framework. Multiple alternative human rights declarations and documents have been created such as the Declaration on Rights of Children and their Families,⁴⁴ the Family Articles,⁴⁵ the World Family Declaration,⁴⁶ the Declaration on the Rights of the Family,⁴⁷ the Decalogue of Commitments for Human Dignity and the Common Good,⁴⁸ and the San Jose Articles which set out arguments against abortion.⁴⁹

CONVENINGS AND TRAININGS

An important tactic of anti-gender actors is to support the work of smaller organisations and individual actors in their respective countries. Support is offered through training as well as funding and financial assistance. For example, the Alliance Defending Freedom International invests in training lawyers and advocates, and has multiple initiatives such as the Areté Academy, European Leadership Academy, Veritas Scholarship for immersion into its International Europe team, and Young Lawyers

⁴¹ The Observatory of the Universality of Rights. (2017). *Key Information: Our Human Rights Under Attack*. The Observatory of the Universality of Rights. Available at: www.oursplatform.org/resource/key-information-human-rights-attack/.

⁴² Madrigal-Borloz, Victor. (2021). *Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Victor Madrigal-Borloz, Practices of exclusion*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/192/14/PDF/N2119214.pdf?OpenElement.

⁴³ Denkovski, Damjan. (2022) *Disrupting the multilateral order? The impact of anti-gender actors on multilateral structures in Europe?* Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy. Available at www.centreforffp.org.

⁴⁴ *A Declaration on the Rights of Children and Families: A Call from Children of the World*, Family Watch International. Available at: familywatch.org/2020/01/29/a-declaration-on-the-rights-of-children-and-families-a-call-from-children-of-the-world-fwi-petition/#_UXHbP2Uk.

⁴⁵ *The Family Articles Official Platform "Civil Society for the Family"*. Civil Society for the Family. Available at: civilsocietyforthefamily.org/.

⁴⁶ World Family Declaration. Available at: www.worldfamilydeclaration.org/.

⁴⁷ *Declaration on the Rights of the Family*. International Catholic Jurists Forum. Available at: rightsofthefamily.org/.

⁴⁸ *Decalogue of Commitments for Human Dignity and the Common Good*. Political Network for Values. Available at: politicalnetworkforvalues.org/en/our-values/#:-:text=Decalogue%20of%20Commitments%20for%20Human,the%20common%20good%20of%20humanity.

⁴⁹ San Jose Articles. Available at: sanjosearticles.com/?page_id=2.

Academy, and Blackstone Legal Fellowship.⁵⁰ It also claims that it has provided lawyers with more than US\$52 million to take up cases dealing with religious freedom, sanctity of life, marriage and family.⁵¹

International and cross-regional convenings are another important tactic for actors like the World Congress of Families, who use their annual general meetings regularly held in different European capitals, to disseminate information and replicate approaches from the US.⁵² The Observatory on the Universality of Rights notes that trainings are offered within these spaces to build a strong European infrastructure, often delivered by US activists and targeting UN delegates⁵³ as well as activists. The Rights at Risk report gives examples – CitizenGO worked with the Leadership Institute to organise anti-rights training camps in 2017 and trained delegates ahead of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).

OTHER TACTICS

Social media is used effectively by the movement for online organising, recruitment, and to radicalise supporters. Open Democracy

tracked how anti-gender actors target audiences vulnerable to extremism and emotionally manipulated them through misinformation.⁵⁴ This was witnessed in Ireland where young women were recruited into fighting abortion reforms.⁵⁵ The Trans Safety Network has observed that networks on social media (in particular ‘gender critical’ groups) accelerate narratives and gather distorted facts from the fringes, and then connect their alt right sources with network members. They are effective in moving rapidly and in presenting themselves as credible.⁵⁶ However, the arguments are often backed up by pseudo-science and flawed research, which actors like the World Congress of Families propagate.⁵⁷

Doxing of trans people (releasing their name, deadname, phone, address, email, photos) is less reported but used in some cases. The CoE Commissioner for Human Rights reports that in Russia, a list of LGBTI+ human rights defenders’ names and details was published with a call to hunt and kill all those named.⁵⁸

⁵⁰ Shameem, Naureen. (2021). *Rights at risk: time for action*, Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report. The Observatory on the Universality of Rights. Available at: www.oursplatform.org/resource/rights-at-risk-time-for-action/.

⁵¹ Shameem, Naureen. (2021). *Rights at risk: time for action*, Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report. The Observatory on the Universality of Rights. Available at: www.oursplatform.org/resource/rights-at-risk-time-for-action/; Alliance Defending Freedom, Grants and Funding. Available at: <https://adfllegal.org/for-attorneys/grants-funding>.

⁵² Shameem, Naureen. (2021). *Rights at risk: time for action*, Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report. The Observatory on the Universality of Rights. Available at: www.oursplatform.org/resource/rights-at-risk-time-for-action/.

⁵³ The Observatory of the Universality of Rights. (2017). *Key Information: Our Human Rights Under Attack*. The Observatory of the Universality of Rights. Available at: www.oursplatform.org/resource/key-information-human-rights-attack/.

⁵⁴ Provost, Claire. (2017). *Tracking the backlash: why we’re investigating the “anti-rights” opposition*. OpenDemocracy. Available at: www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/why-we-are-tracking-the-backlash/.

⁵⁵ Whyte, Lara. (2017). *On the warpath: the young women leading Ireland’s campaign against abortion*. OpenDemocracy. Available at: www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/young-women-leading-ireland-campaign-against-abortion/.

⁵⁶ VICE contributor. (2021). *The Anti-Trans “Gender-Critical” Movement Is Overflowing with Bullshit*. VICE. Available at: www.vice.com/en/article/v7dm53/gender-critical-movement-misinformation.

⁵⁷ The Southern Poverty Law Center. (n.d.) *World Congress of Families*. The Southern Poverty Law Center. Available at: www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/world-congress-families.

⁵⁸ Council of Europe and the Commissioner for Human Rights. (2021) *Human Rights of LGBTI People in Europe: Current threats to equal rights, challenges faced by defenders, and the way forward - Round-table with LGBTI human rights defenders organised by the Office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Online event, 9 February 2021*. Council of Europe and the Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: rm.coe.int/human-rights-of-lgbti-people-in-europe-current-threats-to-equal-rights/1680a4be0e.

Funding

The European Parliamentary Forum (EPF) and Global Philanthropy Project (GPP) provide detailed analysis of the funding flows between American, Russian and other anti-gender donors and European recipients, and the connections between key stakeholders in this architecture. GPP's report in particular highlights that between 2013 and 2017, pro-LGBTI+ movements worldwide received USD 1.2 billion, while the anti-gender movement received USD 3.7 billion; more than triple the LGBTI+ funding.⁵⁹

Although the primary sources of funding are the United States and Russian Federation, today over 60% of funding for anti-gender actors in Europe comes from within Europe. The top two European funders are Fondation Jérôme-Lejeune, a French research foundation with a clear anti-abortion stance, and Tradition, Family and Property, a Catholic fundamentalist network involved in the anti-abortion legislation in Poland.

US financing comes mostly from ultra-conservative Christian organisations, funded by private individuals linked to far-right and libertarian US causes. GPP has mapped financial flows of USD 174 million into Europe, from the key US-based donors like the Christian Broadcasting Network, American Center for Law and Justice, Alliance Defending Freedom, Focus on the Family, Human Life International,

American Society for the Defence of Tradition, Family and Property, Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty, and the Population Research Institute.⁶⁰ They seek to influence European institutions and their presence in Europe has become significant.

Russian donors are involved in different ways. Two oligarch donors in particular have set up 'influence factories' which engage in advocacy and outreach. A second source of funding are 'laundromats', moving illicit money from the Russian Federation to Europe. A third source are agencies set up by the Russian government, active in "anti-gender soft diplomacy".⁶¹

The report of the IE SOGI adds that funding is funnelled through private donations, contributions from non-profit charitable foundations, and financial sponsorships of projects that focus on defence of the 'natural order'.⁶² EPF's Tip of the Iceberg reports that money is being spent on transnational coalitions (against abortion, LGBTI+ rights or surrogacy); new political projects as anti-gender activists move into far-right political parties; new anti-gender social media platforms like CitizenGo in Spain; a new presence in the EU to lobby and target institutions; and infiltration of positions of power in member states.

⁵⁹ Global Philanthropy Project. (2020) *Meet the moment: a call for progressive philanthropic response to the anti-gender movement*. Global Philanthropy Project. Available at: globalphilanthropyproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Meet-the-Moment-2020-English.pdf; Datta, Neil. (2021) *Tip of the Iceberg: Religious extremist - Funders against Human Rights for Sexuality & Reproductive Health in Europe*. European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Available at: www.epfweb.org/node/837.

⁶⁰ Based on US 990 tax reporting using the ProPublica database.

⁶¹ European Parliamentary Forum. (2021). *Tip of the Iceberg: Religious extremist - Funders against Human Rights for Sexuality & Reproductive Health in Europe*. [online] Available at: <https://www.epfweb.org/node/837>.

⁶² Madrigal-Borloz, Victor. (2021). *Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Victor Madrigal-Borloz, Practices of exclusion*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/192/14/PDF/N2119214.pdf?OpenElement.

ANTI-TRANS ORGANISING: TRENDS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

This section digs deeper into how and why anti-trans organising differs by national context. It is possible to look at trends in the type of context in multiple ways:

1. By political-geographical region: between Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, and Western Europe; or by EU and non-EU membership; or by post-Soviet and non-post-Soviet countries.
2. By contrasting overall states of progress for trans rights: between countries with growing positivity (like the Czechia's more progressive government moving away from its neighbours' rhetoric), negativity (like Hungary), or more neutrality (where no movement is being made).
3. By style of anti-gender and anti-trans organising.

It is not helpful to think of anti-gender movements as regional phenomena where a restrictive East sits in opposition to the liberal West in Europe, but that the presence of the movement is universal although their flavour might be different based on contexts, political and cultural differences, and historical antipathy towards trans rights.⁶³ Further, a state of progress analysis also lacks nuance in the ways anti-trans actors are organising.

The third option is therefore chosen here as a way to divide contexts, to best understand the motivations and tactics of anti-trans and anti-gender actors, and reflect on how to begin countering them. The sections below

categorise anti-trans movements by types of organising, and draws out country examples within these types to illustrate the actors, their tactics, narratives and impacts to demonstrate the similarities and differences between them. Although countries have been categorised under one style, this does not preclude the presence of other forms or styles of anti-trans organising in the country. Information on some countries and contexts was more readily available than others. This section covers the countries where we accessed publicly available information and shows that more research is needed on anti-trans organising in other parts of Europe and Central Asia.

This report analyses anti-trans organising in different contexts broadly to the following styles of organising:

- Gender critical organising
- Far right and religious alliances and Nationalist protectionism
- Post-socialist nationalism and traditional values

Gender critical organising

SPAIN

POLITICAL AND LEGAL CONTEXT

The context around anti-trans organising in Spain can be best understood by looking at the reforms to legal gender recognition. In 2016, the process began, with overwhelming public

⁶³ Kováts, Eszter. (2017) *The Emergence of Powerful Anti-Gender Movements in Europe and the Crisis of Liberal Democracy*. Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe.

support, to develop new legislation that would move Spain towards a self-determination legal gender recognition model and support better access to medical care. The bill was blocked directly by the Vice-President of the Spanish government.⁶⁴ In May and June 2020, historical trans allies such as the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party published a transphobic paper rejecting the right to self-determination.⁶⁵ The bill was debated in May 2021, following a hunger strike by 70 trans activists and parents of trans children but the Spanish parliament voted against it.

However, in June 2021, a new draft bill was approved allowing anyone over the age of 14 with parental consent and anyone over 16 years without parental consent to change legal gender without a medical diagnosis of gender dysphoria or hormone therapy.⁶⁶ This was welcomed by activists alongside retention of self-determination as the model.⁶⁷ Discourse around the reform has included heavy opposition from the Socialist left party and women's rights advocates, including Deputy Prime Minister Carmen Calvo and Spain's Feminist Party founder Lidia Falcón. The main arguments claim that self-determination will

lead to "erasing" women and skewing national statistics, would "promote" gender dysphoria amongst young people, and that trans people promote paedophilia.⁶⁸ The self-determination bill was passed into law in February 2023.⁶⁹

THE MAIN ACTORS

Hazte Oir was founded in 2001, has 40 staff, 50 volunteers. The organisation came to prominence in 2010 with the 'Right to Life' campaign that mobilised hundreds of thousands of protestors in Madrid against a bill to liberalise Spain's abortion laws. The Ministry of the Interior withdrew HazteOir's charity status in February 2019.⁷⁰

CitizenGO is one of the main actors in Spain, as well as across Europe. It launched in 2010 as a project of HazteOir and is an online campaign hub coordinating large e-petitions (similar to *change.org*). Many e-petitions focus on rolling back trans and LGBTI+ rights as well as access to abortion and women's rights. Social media is its primary tool and priority campaigns are sometimes translated into seven languages. Though connected to Hazte Oir's roots in Spain, it also operates across Europe. In 2017, CitizenGO claimed to influence institutions,

⁶⁴ Ben Chikha, Fourat. (2021). *Combating rising hate against LGBTI people in Europe*. Parliamentary Assembly to the Council of Europe. Available at: assembly.coe.int/LifeRay/EGA/Pdf/TextesProvisoires/2021/20210921-RisingHateLGBTI-EN.pdf.

⁶⁵ *elDiario.es* (2020). *El argumentario del PSOE contra la "teoría queer" anticipa el conflicto con Unidas Podemos por la ley trans*. *ElDiario.es*. Available at: www.eldiario.es/politica/argumentario-PSOE-conflicto-Unidas-Podem-os_0_1036596464.html.

Fedoroko, Boglarka; Ogrm, Anwar; and Kurmanov, Sanjar. (2021) *Impact assessment: COVID-19 and trans people in Europe and Central Asia*. TGEU. Available at: tgeu.org/covid19-and-trans-people-in-europe-and-central-asia/.

⁶⁶ Álvarez, Pilar. (2021) *Spain takes "giant step" towards gender self-identification*. EL PAÍS English Edition. Available at: english.elpais.com/news/2021-06-30/spain-takes-giant-step-towards-gender-self-identification.html
Draft law available at english.elpais.com/society/2021-02-03/spains-equality-ministry-drafts-law-that-would-let-citizens-change-official-gender-without-medical-checks.html.

⁶⁷ Ben Chikha, Fourat. (2021). *Combating rising hate against LGBTI people in Europe*. Parliamentary Assembly to the Council of Europe. Available at: <https://assembly.coe.int/LifeRay/EGA/Pdf/TextesProvisoires/2021/20210921-RisingHateLGBTI-EN.pdf>.

⁶⁸ Parra, Aritz. (2021) *Gender identity bill divides Spain's feminists, left-wing*. AP News. Available at: apnews.com/article/health-spain-gender-identity-1d53f28df5988032e538c37f80928633.

DW. (2022) *Spain: Gender identity bill passes parliament*. DW. Available at: www.dw.com/en/spain-gender-identity-bill-passes-parliament/a-64191566.

⁶⁹ Euronews. (2023) *Spain passes law allowing people to freely change gender from age 16*. Euronews. Available at: www.euronews.com/2023/02/16/spain-passes-law-allowing-people-to-freely-change-gender-from-age-16.

⁷⁰ Shameem, Naureen. (2021). *Rights at risk: time for action*, *Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report*. Available at: <https://www.oursplatform.org/resource/rights-at-risk-time-for-action/>.

governments, and organisations in 50 countries through over 9 million members and employees on three continents.

The **VOX political party** are radical right-wing and a strong proponent of anti-trans ideology. They have close connections with both Hazte Oir and CitizenGo via the latter two's founder, Ignacio Arsuaga, and more recently formed an alliance with Feminist Party of Spain president Lidia Falcón against the trans equality law. VOX's main concern is defence of traditional values and the defence of the Spanish nation against 'immigrant threats' and the morally corrupt 'La Anti-España' (Anti-Spain), alongside opposing abortion, same-sex marriages, and trans rights.⁷¹

Strong opposition to the recent 'trans law' also came from anti-trans self-labelled feminist groups. They portray trans people as threats to society and women and supportive parents of trans children as criminals. High level political support to transphobia from **La Confluencia Movimiento Feminista** - a collective of women's groups opposed to the draft law⁷² - legitimised violence against trans people and denial of care.⁷³

TACTICS USED

The tactics of CitizenGo are primarily using e-petitions. It is common practice for CitizenGo to hand-deliver petitions as a lobbying tool to target specific decision-makers, accompanied by

a press conference. This escalated at the 2019 CSW where a petition to block the inclusion of rights related to gender and sexuality in the CSW Agreed Conclusions targeted the session facilitator, Deputy Ambassador Koki Muli Grignon. Tens of thousands of people texted Grignon's personal mobile, who was forced to suspend negotiations and leave the UN building to obtain a new phone number.

Hazte Oir and CitizenGo use shock tactics to garner media coverage and boost their campaign messages. Both purposely take advantage of the counter protests and condemnation to these actions to claim they are being victimised, and gather sympathy and support. This includes large photo ops, or public stunts being organised increasingly offline. The most notorious example is the 'bus of freedom' which in 2017 toured Spain with transphobic slogans like "boys have penises, girls have vulvas, don't be fooled." This bus later toured multiple countries, and was parked in front of UN headquarters during the 2017 CSW. In August 2017 CitizenGO chartered a 'hate plane' opposing the proposed law against discrimination based on sexual orientation. Another bus toured Spain with the #StopFeminazis hashtag alongside an image of Adolf Hitler wearing a cap with a 'feminist symbol' and the slogan 'repeal the gender laws'. The attempt was to position transphobia as common sense and increase hostility against trans and intersex people in public space.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Rama, José, Stuart J. Turnbull-Dugarte, and Andrés Santana. (2020) Who are Vox, and who are their voters? London School of Economics. Available at: blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2020/07/30/who-are-vox-and-who-are-their-voters/.

⁷² Carreño, Belén and Allen, Nathan. (2021) Spain moves step closer to gender self-identification. Reuters. Available at: www.reuters.com/world/europe/spains-government-approves-first-draft-gender-self-identification-bill-2021-06-29/.

⁷³ Ben Chikha, Fourat. (2021). Combating rising hate against LGBTI people in Europe. Parliamentary Assembly to the Council of Europe. Available at: assembly.coe.int/LifeRay/EGA/Pdf/TextesProvisoires/2021/20210921-RisingHateLGBTI-EN.pdf.

⁷⁴ Shameem, Naureen. (2021) *Rights at risk: time for action*, Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report. Available at: <https://www.oursplatform.org/resource/rights-at-risk-time-for-action/>.

Building networks is an additional strategy. Representatives of the VOX political party have been building support within Latin America for the Madrid Charter, which it describes as an international initiative to counter the advance of communism.⁷⁵ CitizenGO is also increasing activity at the regional level and spreading to other cities around the world and took supporters by bus from Spain to France in 2016 to attend protests by La Manif Pour Tous against France's marriage equality bill.

THE IMPACT

CitizenGo heavily targeted the 'trans law' in Spain,⁷⁶ affecting the public debate so much that the conversation soured around self-determination as the model for legal gender recognition.⁷⁷ Trans activists report that the hostile discourse supported by the highest political levels has legitimised violence against trans people. Trans- and non-binary-focused organisations have been excluded from political discussions.⁷⁸



Photo by HazteOir.org.

⁷⁵ Sexuality Policy Watch. (2021) *Brazil as a hub of anti-gender transnational politics (August - October 2021)*. Sexuality Policy Watch. Available at: sxpolicy.org/anti-gender-transnational-fluxes-august-october-2021/22198.

⁷⁶ Biino, Marta. (2021) *Anti-transgender campaigns bussed across the Atlantic transform European politics*. Coda Story. Available at: www.codastory.com/disinformation/transatlantic-migration-of-far-right-agendas/.

⁷⁷ Ogrm, Anwar. (2021) *What happened to the money? Fundraising toolkit for trans organising in times of COVID-19*. TGEU, Available at: tgeu.org/toolkit-for-trans-organising-in-covid-times/.

⁷⁸ Ben Chikha, Fourat. (2021). *Combating rising hate against LGBTI people in Europe*. Parliamentary Assembly to the Council of Europe. Available at: assembly.coe.int/LifeRay/EGA/Pdf/TextesProvisoires/2021/20210921-RisingHateLGBTI-EN.pdf.

UNITED KINGDOM

POLITICAL AND LEGAL CONTEXT

The UK has experienced four changes in conservative government leadership since the Brexit referendum in 2016. This has led to incumbent Prime Ministers reneging on political commitments of their predecessors, accompanied by a gradual shift to more regressive attitudes towards trans rights in the political mainstream.

For example, though reform of the 2004 Gender Recognition Act was promised, no action was taken after a 2-year public consultation and majority support was ignored. The need for a gender dysphoria diagnosis and 2-year lived experience remain legal requirements and non-binary identities are still not recognised.⁷⁹ More overtly, Lizz Truss – then Minister for Women and Equalities and later Prime Minister – stated in May 2021 that the government did not support legal gender recognition based on self-determination.⁸⁰

Anti-trans rhetoric in the UK argues that “sex is immutable and gender identities are not valid”. This is used to frame trans rights as a threat to cisgender women and girls and children. A Council of Europe report criticised the UK’s treatment of trans people, where arguments defending freedom of expression are being used to justify transphobia, making it impossible for anyone to publicly affirm trans people

without being subject to hostility.⁸¹

The public debate around trans rights was thrown under the spotlight when Keira Bell, an individual who detransitioned, supported by ‘gender critical’ feminists and the organisation, Transgender Trend, brought the *Bell v Tavistock*⁸² case to UK courts, which resulted in a restriction on the rights of trans minors to make decisions about their gender-affirming care, even though UK law allows minors to make guided healthcare decisions in other contexts. Although this decision was overturned,⁸³ it resulted in healthcare providers halting access to puberty blockers for young trans people. The decision also inspired Sweden to follow suit and pause services to young people.⁸⁴

Amidst the heightened tensions around trans rights in the UK, the 2022 reforms to legal gender recognition in Scotland showed promise. The Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill proposed moving closer to a depathologised model of self-determination, though it would not grant self-determination to under 16s. Despite the opposition from ‘gender critical’ feminists and the opinion of the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, the final bill passed successfully on 22 December 2022. However, less than a month later, the central British government overruled the decision in an unprecedented legal action.

⁷⁹ Fedorko, Boglarka, Anwar Ogrm, and Sanjar Kurmanov. (2021) *Impact assessment: COVID-19 and trans people in Europe and Central Asia*. TGEU. Available at: tgeu.org/covid19-and-trans-people-in-europe-and-central-asia/.

⁸⁰ Shewan Stevens, Hannah. (2021) *Council Of Europe Criticises UK's Treatment Of Transgender People*. EachOther. Available at: eachother.org.uk/council-of-europe-criticises-uks-treatment-of-transgender-people/.

⁸¹ Ben Chikha, Fourat. (2021). *Combating rising hate against LGBTI people in Europe*. Parliamentary Assembly to the Council of Europe. Available at: <https://assembly.coe.int/LifeRay/EGA/Pdf/TextesProvisoires/2021/20210921-RisingHateLGBTI-EN.pdf>.

⁸² *R (on the application of Quincy Bell and A) v Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust and others*, [2020] EWHC 3274 (Admin).

⁸³ *Bell and another v The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust*, [2021] EWCA Civ 1363.

⁸⁴ Ogrm, Anwar. (2021) *What happened to the money? Fundraising toolkit for trans organising in times of COVID-19*. TGEU. Available at: tgeu.org/toolkit-for-trans-organising-in-covid-times/.

In January 2023, the UK Government also proposed to withdraw recognition of some countries' legal gender recognition for migrants to the UK.⁸⁵



Photo by Ehimetalor Akhere Unuabona on Unsplash: trans rights protest in London in November 2022.

THE MAIN ACTORS

In the UK, anti-trans groups of women are various and portray themselves as feminists. The key individual stakeholders and leaders are primarily middle- and upper-class white women who retain a strong amount of credibility and influence within public discourse.⁸⁶ Attacks on trans rights are orchestrated by a group of vocal people, some with large media platforms, such as prominent author JK Rowling and activist Posie Parker, and despite public support for trans people. These individuals and groups frame themselves as 'gender critical' feminists.⁸⁷ Key organisations include the **LGB Alliance**, **Transgender Trend**, **Women's Place UK** and **Fair Play for Women**, and the **Women's**

⁸⁵ Anarte, Enrique. (2023) *Britain plans to limit a scheme to recognise legal gender changes granted by other countries*. Openly. Available at: <https://www.openlynews.com/i/?id=560a30c8-902a-485e-81b6-0a826aab9363>.

⁸⁶ Lewis, Sophie. (2019) *How British Feminism Became Anti-Trans*. *The New York Times*. Available at: www.nytimes.com/2019/02/07/opinion/terf-trans-women-britain.html.

⁸⁷ Siddiqui, Sophia. (2021) *Feminism, biological fundamentalism and the attack on trans rights*. Institute of Race Relations. Available at: irr.org.uk/article/feminism-biological-fundamentalism-attack-on-trans-rights/.

Human Rights Campaign (WHRC) who want to eliminate the Gender Recognition Act.

TACTICS USED

Many tactics employed by 'gender critical' feminists in the UK have been imported from the US. One of the main approaches is regular, mainstream newspaper coverage. In the run up to the Gender Recognition Act consultation deadline, almost daily anti-trans news and opinion pieces helped generate moral panic. This includes both those which seem ill-informed (e.g. the Guardian's 2018 editorial on the GRA only took gender critical talking points), and traditional LGBTI+ opposition (e.g. Daily Mail/Daily Express which use dehumanising language). Many opinion pieces explicitly deny the validity of trans identities or claim that trans people are predators or are mentally ill.

Gender critical actors have been effective in creating institutional bias, and it has become common practice for national broadcasters to deny trans people a platform entirely or pit a trans person against a gender critical 'expert' in regular TV interviews under pretence of balance.

Vitriolic media campaigns run alongside these online and offline, and are supported by slogans on public statues, monuments, and billboards. Targeted pile-ons using sock puppet accounts on twitter focus on individual trans activists, staff of organisations supporting trans people, or allies speaking out, and spread false narratives and allegations of paedophilia,

misgender and target personal appearances of people they suspect are trans, and doxing. Intense attacks sometimes turn into hate mongering which strongly impact the well-being of trans communities and activists.⁸⁸

'Gender critical' groups recruit women who are often vulnerable, survivors of violence or without social support mechanisms, using the rhetoric of threat to women's rights and resources to cause them to side with anti-equality rhetoric they might otherwise oppose.⁸⁹

Misinformation is used prolifically. One example is Scottish parliamentary candidate Margaret Lynch who falsely claimed that the LGBT charity Stonewall was campaigning to lower the age of consent to ten years old.⁹⁰ The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe reports that trans women are vilified and misrepresented in particular, and campaigns focus on creating a moral panic through intentional exaggeration and distortion of threats posed to toilets and single-sex spaces, positioning trans women as sexual threats.⁹¹ Attempts at defunding have impacted the charity Mermaids, which supports trans children. An anti-trans social media campaign convinced the Big Lottery Fund to review their grant, though funding was upheld when the claims were found to be baseless.⁹²

NARRATIVES

The main argument used is bioessentialist; that sex cannot be changed. 'Gender critical' actors argue for 'sex based rights' and campaign under the slogan 'adult human female'. This goes hand in hand with the narrative that trans rights are a threat to women's rights. The sex/gender distinction is often used to claim that being assigned female at birth is the only factor in who experiences misogyny, and that trans women are the oppressors. The threat to children narrative is also repeatedly used to encourage anxiety and feelings of threat.⁹³

UK 'gender critical' actors often tend to feign inclusion. Lobby groups campaigning against trans rights can go to great lengths to emphasise support for trans people. For example, Transgender Trend, an organisation of 'concerned parents, professionals, and academics', alleges that "transgender people deserve the same civil and human rights as all of us and should not face discrimination... we are not afraid of, or prejudiced against, transgender people in any way", but that trans rights are separate. This inclusion disappears when asked to respect trans women as women, and is apparent when they argue that trans rights threaten women and girls' rights.⁹⁴ Many 'gender critical' actors are from the gay

⁸⁸ Council of Europe and the Commissioner for Human Rights. (2021) *Human Rights of LGBTI People in Europe: Current threats to equal rights, challenges faced by defenders, and the way forward - Round-table with LGBTI human rights defenders organised by the Office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Online event, 9 February 2021*. Council of Europe and the Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: rm.coe.int/human-rights-of-lgbti-people-in-europe-current-threats-to-equal-rights/1680a4be0e.

⁸⁹ Armitage, Luke. (2020). *Explaining backlash to trans and non-binary genders in the context of UK Gender Recognition Act reform*. Positive non-binary and / or genderqueer sexual ethics and politics, (Special Issue 2020), pp. 11–35.

⁹⁰ VICE contributor. (2021). *The Anti-Trans "Gender-Critical" Movement Is Overflowing with Bullshit*. VICE. Available at: www.vice.com/en/article/v7dm53/gender-critical-movement-misinformation.

⁹¹ Armitage, Luke. (2020). *Explaining backlash to trans and non-binary genders in the context of UK Gender Recognition Act reform*. Positive non-binary and / or genderqueer sexual ethics and politics, (Special Issue 2020), pp.11–35.

⁹² Persio, Sofia Lotto. (2019) *Trans kids charity Mermaids awarded National Lottery grant following review*. Pink News. Available at: www.pinknews.co.uk/2019/02/19/trans-kids-charity-mermaids-national-lottery-grant-review/.

⁹³ Armitage, Luke. (2020). *Explaining backlash to trans and non-binary genders in the context of UK Gender Recognition Act reform*. Positive non-binary and / or genderqueer sexual ethics and politics, (Special Issue 2020), pp.11–35.

⁹⁴ McLean, Craig. (2021) *The Growth of the Anti-Transgender Movement in the United Kingdom. The Silent Radicalization of the British Electorate*. International Journal of Sociology, pp.1–10.

liberation movement and position it as divested from trans rights.⁹⁵

The final narrative of free speech being restricted is being used to push the radical agenda of gender critical feminists, which are framed as 'reasonable concerns'. Whilst arguing that criticisms of trans people and hate speech should be protected under free speech, any questioning or pushback from trans people is decried as being cancelled or attacked.⁹⁶

THE IMPACT

As the Parliamentary Assembly to the Council of Europe report noted, the gender critical campaign against trans rights directly contributed to stalling progress on legal gender recognition.⁹⁷ Bioessentialist arguments are benefitting the extreme right who want to see anti-discrimination protections removed, and are gaining political traction with the UK Government and beyond.⁹⁸

Academics analysing gender critical forces in the UK argue they have been impactful in turning public sentiment and pushing legislative changes because they effectively co-opt mainstream media to whip up a moral panic, which has become the main perspective

available to the general public on trans rights. Trans identities were suddenly highlighted to the general public in a negative way and trans people have been constructed in the public imagination predominantly in terms of threat creating a cognitive radicalisation of the public.⁹⁹ The strong belief in freedom of speech means the Government continues to ignore outright hate speech.¹⁰⁰

GERMANY

POLITICAL AND LEGAL CONTEXT

In 2018, Germany became the first European government to introduce a third legal gender option. On 19 May, 2021, party politics resulted in the German parliament voting against two bills to reform the gender recognition law from the 1980s, that would have simplified the name change and civil status process and held the potential for self-determination.¹⁰¹

More positively, following a change in government in 2022, Germany appointed a commissioner for sexual and gender diversity, Sven Lehmann, who will oversee a national LGBTI action plan, suggesting that the political situation has the potential for a shift towards

⁹⁵ Greig, James. (2021) *How the Anti-Trans Movement is Weaponising Gay Liberation*. Novara Media. Available at: novaramedia.com/2021/09/17/how-terfs-are-weaponising-gay-liberation/.

⁹⁶ McLean, Craig. (2021) *The Growth of the Anti-Transgender Movement in the United Kingdom. The Silent Radicalization of the British Electorate*. International Journal of Sociology, pp.1-10.

⁹⁷ Ben Chikha, Fourat. (2021). *Combating rising hate against LGBTI people in Europe*. Parliamentary Assembly to the Council of Europe. Available at: assembly.coe.int/LifeRay/EGA/Pdf/TextesProvisoires/2021/20210921-RisingHateLGBTI-EN.pdf.

⁹⁸ Siddiqui, Sophia. (2021) *Feminism, biological fundamentalism and the attack on trans rights*. Institute of Race Relations. Available at: irr.org.uk/article/feminism-biological-fundamentalism-attack-on-trans-rights/.

⁹⁹ Armitage, Luke. (2020). Explaining backlash to trans and non-binary genders in the context of UK Gender Recognition Act reform. Positive non-binary and / or genderqueer sexual ethics and politics, (Special Issue 2020), pp.11-35.

¹⁰⁰ McLean, Craig. (2021) *The Growth of the Anti-Transgender Movement in the United Kingdom. The Silent Radicalization of the British Electorate*. International Journal of Sociology, pp.1-10.

¹⁰¹ Ogrm, Anwar. (2021) *What happened to the money? Fundraising toolkit for trans organising in times of COVID-19*. TGEU, Available at: tgeu.org/toolkit-for-trans-organising-in-covid-times/.

Jahn, Thilo. (2021) *Transsexuellengesetz: Bundestag lehnt Reform ab*. Deutschlandfunk Nova. Available at: www.deutschlandfunknova.de/beitrag/transsexuellengesetz-reformantraege-von-gruenen-und-fdp-abgelehnt.

self-determination.¹⁰² On 30 June 2022 the coalition government presented the main points of a self-determination bill to be developed.¹⁰³ This draft is expected to be released in 2023 and the current government is keen to push the reform process forward. Notwithstanding this, politicians from the current coalition government continue to put out misinformed statements about the self-determination law and its implications for single-sex spaces, which raises concerns about how the draft law will look. At the same time, there is a strong campaign from ‘gender critical’ feminist groups against the reform process who are taking active steps to generate public sentiment against the reform process.

THE MAIN ACTORS

The **Women’s Declaration International (WDI)**, previously the Women’s Human Rights Campaign (WHRC), is an online declaration seeking signatures in support of the argument that women’s and girls’ rights are based on their gender, and are fighting the “replacement of the category of sex with ‘gender identity’”.¹⁰⁴

Radfem Munich is a social media based initiative intended for ‘women wanting to know about feminism’. It shared positions against the self-determination act on social media, and currently has over 12,000 followers on facebook.¹⁰⁵

In October 2022, the **FrauenAktionsBündnis FAB** was founded with the single aim to prevent the self-determination law from being adopted. Initiating groups are Arbeitskreis “Geschlechtsbasierte Rechte der Frau”, Detrans, Fairplay für Frauen, Lesbenfrühlingstreffen LFT2021 Bremen, and Women’s Declaration International/WDI Deutschland. FAB has published an appeal to parliamentarians to reject the self-determination law and protect the rights of women and girls.¹⁰⁶

Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany, or Alternative for Germany, is a populist party on the radical right which opposes the European Union and is anti-immigration. It is funded by prominent anti-gender donors from within the European aristocracy. One of these donors, Beatrix von Storch (the Duchess of Oldenburg), is a parliamentarian affiliated with the party elected to the European Parliament in 2014.

TACTICS USED

Many of Women’s Declaration International’s tactics include in person action such as demonstrating in front of a gender clinic (similar to tactics used by anti-abortion activists),¹⁰⁷ fostering open hostility towards individual trans people, propagated via social media comment sections, encouraging conspiracy thinking,¹⁰⁸ and building connections with the far right.

¹⁰² Brady, Kate. (2022). *LGBTQ+ rights: Germany appoints first “commissioner for queer affairs”*. DW. Available at: www.dw.com/en/lgbtq-rights-germany-appoints-first-commissioner-for-queer-affairs/a-60351173?utm_source=ADF+International&utm_campaign=6c2c373806-EMAIL_CAM-PAIGN_2018_09_30_09_41_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_7732cae558-6c2c373806-93888625&mc_cid=6c2c373806&mc_eid=6e-27780bae.

¹⁰³ Bundesministerium Für Family Senioren Frauen Und Jugend. (2022) *Eckpunkte für das Selbstbestimmungsgesetz vorgestellt*. Bundesministerium Für Family Senioren Frauen Und Jugend. Available at: www.bmfsfj.de/bmfsfj/aktuelles/alle-meldungen/eckpunkte-fuer-das-selbstbestimmungsgesetz-vorgestellt-199378.

¹⁰⁴ Women’s Declaration International. (n.d.). *Erklärung über die Rechte von Frauen auf der Grundlage ihres Geschlechts*. Women’s Declaration International. Available at: womensdeclaration.com/de/.

¹⁰⁵ Radfem Munich facebook post, at www.facebook.com/radfemmunich/posts/768269280698445.

¹⁰⁶ Fairplay fuer Frauen. (n.d.) *Nein zum „Selbstbestimmungsgesetz“!* Fairplay fuer Frauen. Available at: fairplayfuerfrauen.org/frauenaktionsbueundnis-fab/.

¹⁰⁷ WDI Deutschland facebook post, at www.facebook.com/whrcgermany/posts/231067518745656.

¹⁰⁸ See WDI Deutschland facebook posts, at www.facebook.com/whrcgermany/posts/169483428237399, and www.facebook.com/whrcgermany/posts/168606764991732, and <https://www.facebook.com/whrcgermany/posts/165411205311288>.

The WDI has also called for ‘shitstorms’ to be created, mobilising supporters against selected targets.

Radfem Munich also operates via social media, using cartoons to popularise anti-trans sentiments. One cartoon imagines the ‘cancelling’ of Anne Frank’s book and stirs up resentment against inclusive feminism such as the expansion of Munich’s action week against gender-based violence to include non-binary people alongside women.¹⁰⁹ Radfem also seeks to mobilise its followers, for instance around fighting the proposed self-determination law.¹¹⁰ Anti-trans actors also employ deliberate twisting of information like the claim that the inclusion of trans masculine and non-binary people into language around fertility and reproduction actually demands the removal of women. Exaggerating the incidence of individual cases is also used to augment apparent threats to women’s rights, whilst avoiding issues actually affecting the broader trans community, such as discussions around toilets and women’s shelters.

In contrast, statements of solidarity have been issued against anti-trans voices such as the following statements of solidarity against the Women’s Declaration International campaign, in November 2020 by Munich Girls’ Work Initiative,¹¹¹ Condrops,¹¹² LeTRa Lesbenberatung,¹¹³ Rosa Alter,¹¹⁴ Aidshilfe



Photo by HazteOir: trans rights protest in Stuttgart, Germany.

¹⁰⁹ Radfem Munich facebook posts, at www.facebook.com/radfemmunich/photos/a.253100712215307/780536969471676 and www.facebook.com/radfemmunich/photos/a.253100712215307/723510925174281.

¹¹⁰ Fairness für Frauen. (n.d.). *Fairness für Frauen*. Fairness für Frauen. Available at: ffrauen.de/?fbclid=IwAR3WZxGUXSNzqEhC6570twiPvBZ2_91F-2EgYSpxDb0hbVv8wKwiB9rUT_a4.

¹¹¹ iMMA. (2020) *Fachliche Bewertung zu Aussagen von Women’s Human Right Campaign*. iMMA. Available at: imma.de/%C3%BCber-uns/dasbewegtimmer/fachliche-bewertung-zu-aussagen-von-womens-human-right-campaign/.

¹¹² Condrops. (2020) *Frauen*rechte lassen sich nicht spalten*. Condrops. Available at: www.condrops.de/aktuelles/frauenrechte-lassen-sich-nicht-spalten/.

¹¹³ See LeTRa Lesbenberatung Facebook post at www.facebook.com/letralesbenberatung/posts/3672138039510924.

¹¹⁴ See Rosa Alter Facebook post at www.facebook.com/rosaAlterBeratung/posts/3282806918513840.

München,¹¹⁵ der Paritätische¹¹⁶, Evangelische Frauen e.V.¹¹⁷, Kinderschutzbund, Deutscher Frauenrat,¹¹⁸ and Frauenhauskoordinierung e.V.¹¹⁹

SWEDEN

Sweden has experienced similar trends to the UK, with a rapid shift in the public discourse from support for trans people to whipping up a moral panic, instigated by concern from 'experts' and 'gender critical' organisations pushing the narrative of a sudden rise in adolescents coming out as trans and seeking gender-affirming healthcare.

Gender Identity Challenge Scandinavia (GICS) are behind the push to change the public debate. Set up by retired neurophysiologist Ring, toxicologist Karin Svens and Norwegian teacher Marit Rønstad, they label themselves as a group of concerned parents.¹²⁰ Other actors are psychiatrist Christopher Gillberg whose article in newspaper Svenska Dagbladet decried hormone treatment and surgery for young people. An investigative TV programme

also attacked a hospital providing gender-affirming care.¹²¹ The campaign against securing access to gender-affirming healthcare for trans people along with media transphobia led to the Swedish government halting plans to change the age for young people to access gender-affirming care. In February 2022, the National Board of Health and Welfare issued new guidelines preventing young trans people accessing puberty blockers, arguing incorrectly that 'costs outweigh the benefits' and in disagreement with guidance from the World Professional Association of Transgender Health.¹²² This was in response to seeing a rise in people assigned female at birth accessing services.¹²³

Anti-trans actors tend to verge on social media, particularly since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. They place themselves outside the pro-feminist and pro-LGBTI+ rights discourse in Sweden, which they see as undermining the state's ability to protect people during the pandemic.¹²⁴

It is argued that this approach is not yet

¹¹⁵ See Münchner Aids-Hilfe Facebook post at www.facebook.com/muenchner.aidshilfe/posts/3755419024482219.

¹¹⁶ Frank, Katrin. (2021) *Paritätische Eckpunkte zum menschenrechtlichen Schutz von sexueller Orientierung und geschlechtlicher Identität*. Der Paritätische Gesamtverband. Available at: www.der-paritaetische.de/alle-meldungen/paritaetische-eckpunkte-zum-menschenrechtlichen-schutz-von-sexueller-orientierung-und-geschlechtlicher-identitaet/.

¹¹⁷ Kahl-Passoth, Susanne; and Weigt-Blätgen, Angelika. (2022) *Zum Recht auf Selbstbestimmung transgeschlechtlicher Menschen. Positionierung der Evangelischen Frauen in Deutschland e. V. zum Transsexuellengesetz*. Evangelische Frauen in Deutschland e.V. Available at: [evangelischefrauen-deutschland.de/images/stories/efid/Presse/pm_efid_positionierung_zum_transsexuellengesetz_13_oktober_2022.pdf](https://www.evangelischefrauen-deutschland.de/images/stories/efid/Presse/pm_efid_positionierung_zum_transsexuellengesetz_13_oktober_2022.pdf).

¹¹⁸ Schmalz, Alexander. (2022) *Neues Gesetz für Transmenschen: Kinderschutzbund und Frauenrat sind dafür*. Berliner Zeitung. Available at: www.berliner-zeitung.de/news/neues-gesetz-fuer-transmenschen-kinderschutzbund-und-frauenrat-sind-dafuer-li.241782.

¹¹⁹ Frauenhaus-Koordinierung e.V. (2022) *FHK-Positionierung: Gewaltschutz für ALLE Frauen*. Frauenhaus-Koordinierung e.V. Available at: www.frauenhauskoordinierung.de/aktuelles/detail/fhk-positionierung-gewaltschutz-fuer-alle-frauen.

¹²⁰ Parson, Vic. (2020) *Anti-trans "concerns" over "experimental" puberty blockers have reached Sweden*. PinkNews. Available at: www.pinknews.co.uk/2020/02/24/anti-trans-sweden-healthcare-puberty-blockers-gender-dysphoria-malou-von-sivers/.

¹²¹ Orange, Richard. (2020) *Teenage transgender row splits Sweden as dysphoria diagnoses soar by 1,500%*. The Observer. Available at: www.theguardian.com/society/2020/feb/22/ssweden-teenage-transgender-row-dysphoria-diagnoses-soar.

¹²² Coleman, E., Radix, A. E., Bouman, W.P., Brown, G.R., de Vries, A. L. C., Deutsch, M. B., Ettner, R., Fraser, L., Goodman, M., Green, J., Hancock, A. B., Johnson, T. W., Karasic, D. H., Knudson, G. A., Leibowitz, S. F., Meyer-Bahlburg, H. F.L., Monstrey, S. J., Motmans, J., Nahata, L., ... Arcelus, J. (2022) *Standards of Care for the Health of Transgender and Gender Diverse People, Version 8*. The World Professional Association for Transgender Health. Available at: www.wpath.org/media/cms/Documents/SOC%20v7/SOC%20V7_English.pdf.

¹²³ Selin Davis, Lisa. (2022) *What Happened in Finland and Sweden?* TOMBOY. Available at: lisaselindavis.substack.com/p/letter-from-finland-and-sweden.

¹²⁴ Martinsson, Lena and Mathias Ericson. (2022) *"Fight pandemics with protective masks or gender?" Emerging collective identities and anti-gender movements on Twitter during the COVID-19 crisis in Sweden*. *Feminist Media Studies*, pp.1-17.

having the same impact as 'gender critical' groups in the UK or Spain because feminism is a less politically charged idea in Sweden than other European countries. Barring one, all political parties include feminism in their policies.¹²⁵ However, this appears to be shifting and concerning, the HOPE not Hate Charitable Trust found the Swedish general public expressed more anti-feminist sentiment than Poland (30%), the UK (28%), France (26%), Hungary (22%), Germany (19%) and the Netherlands (15%).¹²⁶

IRELAND

POLITICAL AND LEGAL CONTEXT

Ireland enacted three substantial legal changes in the last few years. In 2015, two laws on equal marriage and a self-determination law allowing trans people to change their legal gender and apply for a new birth certificate without medical treatment were passed and in 2018, abortion was legalised.

Ireland is an example of a country which has historically been successful in pushing back 'gender critical' groups who are trying to import British gender critical organising.¹²⁷ Since 2018, as abortion reform was being discussed, 'trans exclusionary radical feminist' (TERF) groups have been gaining influence, replicating tactics employed in the UK. However, they have failed to gain critical hold because of these contextual differences.

First, Ireland has traditionally seen itself as more European and outward looking since

the mid-1990s, when feminism also became more widespread. During the initial growth in feminist conferences, the inclusion of trans women in these spaces was considered and debated. Discussions concluded that trans women were welcome, and movement leaders and organised groups normalised that trans women were part of women's groups. Trans people were also embedded into gender and women's studies courses.

Second, being so well integrated, women's groups who were advocating for marriage equality and abortion reform also advocated for legal gender recognition reform as part of this - for instance ensuring that legislative abortion reform was trans and non-binary inclusive. Trans rights were platformed in the same rallies and spaces.

Third, the main political parties have been more centrist and less divided than in the UK, resulting in support for trans rights from all the main parties for fear of not wanting to be seen as regressive. Senior politicians have expressed vocal support for trans people, including deputy head of government Leo Varadkar, and the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Roderic O'Gorman. A small minority of Catholic opposition exists, but with limited influence.

The result of this can be seen for example in 2018, when the We Need To Talk tour organised meetings in advance of the British Gender Recognition Act reform decision. An open letter from a number of Irish feminists told 'gender critical' groups not to bring their transphobia to Ireland and accused them of

¹²⁵ BBC News. (2017) *Is Sweden's feminist agenda working?* BBC News. Available at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-39004991.

¹²⁶ Mulhall, Joe and Safya Khan-Ruf. (2021) *State of Hate: Far Right Extremism in Europe - HOPE not hate report*. HOPE Not Hate Charitable Trust, Amadeu Antonio Stiftung, and Expo Foundation. Available at: hopenothate.org.uk/2021/02/16/state-of-hate-europe2021/.

¹²⁷ Interview with Sara Phillips.



Photo by Devonyu: Vote.

acting colonially.¹²⁸ However, this is starting to change and in the last 12-18 months, UK-based 'gender critical' groups have been gaining some footholds in Ireland.

THE MAIN ACTORS

Most gender critical actors are emigrants returning from the UK or people originally from the UK, importing their narratives to Ireland. Several groups are forming, usually consisting of only one or two individuals, such as **Women's Space Ireland**, **The Countess Wouldn't Stand for This**, and the psychotherapist **Stella O'Malley**, with high overlap in staff and representatives between them. They have connections to prominent UK anti-trans spokespersons, such as Julie Bindel, Posey Parker, and Graham Lineham. The **LGB Alliance** has also travelled to Ireland from Belfast. More money is coming in to support anti-trans actors now, resourcing actions like sending copies of Helen Joyce's book to every member of Parliament.

¹²⁸ Wilson, J. (2018). "Stay away from Ireland," *British anti-trans feminists told*. IrishCentral. Available at: www.irishcentral.com/news/irish-feminists-warn-away-british-terfs.

¹²⁹ Tracey, Lynne. (2021) *Statement by the Coalition Against Transphobia - TENI*. Transgender Equality Network Ireland. Available at: www.teni.ie/statement-by-the-coalition-against-transphobia/.

In contrast to the 'gender critical' feminist groups, the National Women's Council in Ireland – a membership of 180 women's groups – is a strong ally and positive voice within the European Women's lobby, a largely anti-trans space at the European level is trans inclusive.

TACTICS USED

In February 2019, a transphobic documentary on trans healthcare was aired, which fed negative messaging into the media. Groups began forming in 2020 during the COVID-19 outbreak, and in March 2021, increased attempts to infiltrate the media and succeeded in getting multiple letters published a week. Trans-supportive organisations and trans individuals have been refuting these published pieces as a regular counter-measure and are working closely with newspapers to raise awareness of the impact of these narratives on trans rights.¹²⁹

Social media pile-ons, similar to the UK, are used to target visible trans activists. Anti-trans groups are also using misinformation as a tactic, pushing false narratives around unisex toilets in schools (which in reality are in addition to binary toilets), and using biased survey questions to promote misleading statistics that are picked up by the media.

Given the vocal pushback from feminist groups, anti-trans organisers no longer mention trans people explicitly, but frame their messages under protecting women's spaces. Some analysis of anti-abortion and anti-equal marriage campaigns suggest 'heteroactivism' as the pattern of belief linking anti-abortion and anti-LGBTI+ campaigners, which is focused on emphasising heterosexuality focused around ideas of protection, and constructing Irish women as mothers and caretakers, rather than vilifying homosexuality or queerness.¹³⁰ Only when actors attack trans organisations like the Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI) on social media are they explicitly anti-trans.

THE IMPACT

Overall, anti-trans actors have had limited impact on rights for trans people. Because the visible trans community is small, TENI is the main trans voice in Ireland allowing it to focus and shape the narrative very closely. Recent changes from 2018 to present though require careful monitoring, and are affecting how trans people feel in public spaces.

Far right and religious alliances and Nationalist Protectionism

Countries in this category are typified by far-right or religious extremist narratives that are often blended with nationalist rhetoric. They may also be found together with xenophobic or Islamophobic arguments and in some cases, the narrative of rejecting the neoliberal order as a Western idea.

HUNGARY

POLITICAL AND LEGAL CONTEXT

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights report describes anti-gender and anti-trans actors in Hungary as associations defending an ultra-conservative agenda, gaining strength at the grassroots level, thanks to new sources of funding.¹³¹ Anti-gender actors also use heavily nationalist rhetoric.

As Prime Minister Viktor Orbán gained the right to rule by decree in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, on 31 March 2020 (which is also the Trans Day of Visibility) a draft bill was presented to define gender as 'biological sex based on primary sexual characteristics and chromosomes'. The bill also put forward that people's 'sex at birth' should be legally registered for birth, marriage and death certificates and not possible to amend at any

¹³⁰ Browne, Kath and Catherine Jean Nash (2020) *In Ireland We "Love Both"? Heteroactivism in Ireland's Anti-Repeal Ephemera*. *Feminist Review*, 124(1), pp.51–67;

Transvanilla. (2020). *Legal gender recognition (LGR) for Hungary!* Transvanilla. Available at: transvanilla.hu/home/news/legal-gender-recognition-lgr-for-hungary.

¹³¹ Council of Europe and the Commissioner for Human Rights. (2021) *Human Rights of LGBTI People in Europe: Current threats to equal rights, challenges faced by defenders, and the way forward - Round-table with LGBTI human rights defenders organised by the Office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Online event, 9 February 2021*. Council of Europe and the Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: rm.coe.int/human-rights-of-lgbti-people-in-europe-current-threats-to-equal-rights/1680a4be0e.



Photo by Nacho Arteaga on Unsplash: the Pope has a close relationship with religious networks in Hungary.

point.¹³² On 19 May 2020 Parliament voted the bill into law replacing sex with sex assigned at birth on the civil registry.¹³³

In the following months, the Hungarian parliament adopted several anti-LGBTI+ laws; an amendment to the Constitution that enshrined the traditional notion of gender, defining marriage and the family unit as ‘the mother is a woman, the father is a man’, and legislation banning adoption by same-sex couples.¹³⁴ These were adopted along with changes to national human rights structures, reducing transparency for public funds and

electoral law.¹³⁵ In addition, on 15 June 2021, a ban on the ‘portrayal and the promotion of gender identity different from sex at birth, the change of sex and homosexuality’ for persons under 18 was written into several laws.¹³⁶

Viktor Orbán further announced a referendum on child protection for April 2022, presenting homosexuality and trans identities as a threat to children and as a ‘pre-emptive strike against gender ideology’.¹³⁷

In October 2021, Hungary and Poland together vetoed references to LGBTI+ content, which prevented adoption of a common position on

¹³² Transvanilla. (2020). *Legal gender recognition (LGR) for Hungary!* Transvanilla. Available at: transvanilla.hu/home/news/legal-gender-recognition-lgr-for-hungary.

¹³³ Muñoz Padrós, Ana. (2020) *Hungary rolls back legal protections, puts trans and intersex people at risk*. ILGA Europe. Available at: ilga-europe.org/resources/news/latest-news/hungary-rolls-back-legal-protections-puts-trans-and-intersex-people-risk.

Boglarka Fedorko, Anwar Ogrm, and Sanjar Kurmanov (2021) *Impact assessment: COVID-19 and trans people in Europe and Central Asia*. TGEU. Available at: <https://tgeu.org/covid19-and-trans-people-in-europe-and-central-asia/>.

¹³⁴ Euronews. (2020) *Hungarian parliament adopts package of anti-LGBT laws*. Euronews. Available at: www.euronews.com/2020/12/15/hungarian-parliament-adopts-anti-lgbt-laws-including-de-facto-ban-on-adoption-by-same-sex-

DW. (2020). *LGBT rights: Hungary passes law banning same-sex adoption*. DW. Available at: www.dw.com/en/lgbt-rights-hungary-passes-law-banning-same-sex-adoption/a-55947139.

¹³⁵ Fedorko, Boglarka; Ogrm, Anwar; and Kurmanov, Sanjar. (2021) *Impact assessment: COVID-19 and trans people in Europe and Central Asia*. TGEU. Available at: tgeu.org/covid19-and-trans-people-in-europe-and-central-asia/.

¹³⁶ Ben Chikha, Fourat. (2021). *Combating rising hate against LGBTI people in Europe*. Parliamentary Assembly to the Council of Europe. Available at: <https://assembly.coe.int/LifeRay/EGA/Pdf/TextesProvisoires/2021/20210921-RisingHateLGBTI-EN.pdf>.

¹³⁷ Visegrad Group. (2022) *Fidesz: Child protection referendum “pre-emptive strike against gender ideology.”* Visegrad Group. Available at: www.visegradgroup.eu/news/fidesz-child-protection.

Szakacs, Gergely.; Komuves, Anita. (2021). *Orban referendum plan raises stakes in Hungary’s LGBT row with EU*. Reuters. Available at: www.reuters.com/world/hungarys-pm-call-referendum-child-protection-issues-2021-07-21/.

the EU strategy for the rights of the child.¹³⁸ The **IE SOGI's** report also details how the Hungarian parliament rejected ratification of the Istanbul Convention because it defines gender as a social construct.¹³⁹

THE MAIN ACTORS

The European Parliamentary Forum's Tip of the Iceberg report describes **Viktor Orbán** as a strong opponent of 'gender ideology' in the European Parliament. His ruling political **Fidesz Party** is far right, and has links with prominent anti-gender organisation Alliance for Defending Freedom, who helped empower the Fidesz Party. Their actions are also supported by US evangelicals.¹⁴⁰ It has led recent legislative rollbacks on LGBTI+ rights through constitutional amendments and laws banning legal gender recognition, serving to divert attention from simultaneous changes to electoral law, national human rights structures, and decreased transparency on public expenditure.

Catholic Pope Francis has a close relationship and influence with Hungarian religious networks, having visited in September 2021 to reiterate his criticism of 'gender' to a group of Jesuits. The Pope's interventions fed into concurrent debates in Italy, and contributed to the halting of a hate crimes and anti-discrimination law change the following month. After the Pope's visit, the fourth Demographic

Summit was held in Budapest and promoted by the Hungarian government, to discuss Europe's fertility decline and the 'migration problem' - broader issues of concern for the anti-gender movement, to which trans rights are interconnected.

In October 2021 Marine le Pen met Viktor Orbán to discuss 'EU impositions' on the 'constitutional identities of their countries', as political leaders opposed to trans rights within their anti-gender agendas. France and Hungary have a collaboration agreement between the collegium Intermarium - a University created by Polish right wing think tank Ordo Iuris - and the French Institut de Sciences Sociales, Économiques et Politiques (ISSEP).¹⁴¹

The **World Congress of Families** is another critical actor, facilitating a Global Forum for Political Leaders in Budapest at the Hungarian Parliament in 2017. Similar to many contexts where these conferences are hosted, legislative change soon followed. Brian Brown, President of the ultraconservative and evangelical US-based hate group International Organisation for the Family and board member of CitizenGO, has repeatedly visited Hungary. Along this same timeline, Hungary's legislation began to reflect the set of 'family values' defined by the Christian right. In October 2018, the Fidesz Party passed a law banning gender studies University programmes.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Wesolowsky, Tony. (2021) *The Worrying Regression Of LGBT Rights In Eastern Europe*. RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty. Available at: www.rferl.org/a/lgbt-rights-eastern-europe-backsliding/31622890.html.

¹³⁹ Madrigal-Borloz, Victor. (2021). *Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Victor Madrigal-Borloz, Practices of exclusion*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/192/14/PDF/N2119214.pdf?OpenElement.

¹⁴⁰ Datta, Neil. (2021) *Tip of the Iceberg: Religious extremist - Funders against Human Rights for Sexuality & Reproductive Health in Europe*. European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Available at: www.epfweb.org/node/837.

¹⁴¹ Sexuality Policy Watch. (2021) *Brazil as a hub of anti-gender transnational politics (August - October 2021)*. Sexuality Policy Watch. Available at: sxpolicy.org/anti-gender-transnational-fluxes-august-october-2021/22198.

¹⁴² Southern Poverty Law Center. (2019). *"Global Hate: Hate Travels" Intelligence Report*. Southern Poverty Law Center. Available at: www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2019/global-hate-hate-travels.

TACTICS USED

Most tactics have involved legislative changes, using the power held by Fidesz as ruling party and Viktor Orban as Prime Minister, to ban LGBTI+ information being shared in schools, legal gender change, same sex adoption, and equal marriage. The ban on legal gender recognition has been described as a diversion tactic, to take attention away from changes to electoral law.

In banning legal gender recognition, the Fidesz Party framed their actions as countering the notion of 'gender ideology' as 'western lifestyle values'. New legislation banning LGBTI+ information being shared in schools equates homosexuality with paedophilia, arguing that the law change would protect children and families.

THE IMPACT

The impact of the various legislation changes is not just creating a hostile environment for LGBTI+ people, but impacting the legal rights and protections previously enshrined in law. This has real and concrete impacts on trans people who cannot have their gender legally recognised, are forced to live with their natal name on all civil records (birth, death and marriage certificates), and gay couples cannot adopt.

POLAND

POLITICAL AND LEGAL CONTEXT

The 'anti-genderism' movement in Poland originated with the right-wing movement against gender equality and sexual and reproductive rights, and made it possible for nationalists and religious fundamentalists to connect. Organising began in 2012 with a focus on fighting abortion, LGBTI+ rights, and divorce. In 2012, the Minister of Justice opposed the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, as a 'carrier of gender ideology', which resonated with those agitating against gender. Movements connected gradually via Polish think tank Ordo Iuris Institute for Legal Culture and regional platforms like CitizenGO. The movement has been effective at generating panic around protecting children, on which the Polish Catholic church was highly vocal. Anti-genderism was also part of the Law and Justice party's policy of 'Change for the Better'.¹⁴³

In June 2020, President Andrzej Duda signed the Family Charter that defends the institution of marriage, not allowing same-sex couples to adopt children, and protecting children and the family from 'LGBT ideology'.¹⁴⁴ A month later, in August 2020, the Catholic episcopate in Poland adopted an official position on the question of LGBTI+ people that called for 'clinics to help people who want to regain their...natural sexual orientation'.¹⁴⁵ In October 2021, Poland aligned with Hungary in vetoing the EU strategy for the

¹⁴³ Kane, Gillian. (2018) *Right-Wing Europe's War on "Gender Ideology."* *The Public Eye*. Political Research Associates. Available at: www.politicalresearch.org/2018/05/16/right-wing-europes-war-gender-ideology.

¹⁴⁴ Reid-Smith, T. (2020). *Poland's president signs Family Charter against LGBT+ education and marriage equality*. MEAWS. Available at: meaws.com/news/poland-s-president-signs-family-charter/9266.

Fedorko, Boglarka, Anwar Ogrm, and Sanjar Kurmanov. (2021) *Impact assessment: COVID-19 and trans people in Europe and Central Asia*. TGEU. Available at: tgeu.org/covid19-and-trans-people-in-europe-and-central-asia/.

¹⁴⁵ Tilles, Daniel. (2020) *Polish bishops call for "clinics to help LGBT people regain natural sexual orientation."* Notes From Poland. Available at: notesfrom-poland.com/2020/08/30/polish-bishops-call-for-clinics-to-help-lgbt-people-regain-natural-sexual-orientation/.

rights of the child because of references to LGBTI+ content.¹⁴⁶

The notorious ‘LGBT-free zones’ created by individual towns and municipalities, who declared themselves unwelcoming to ‘LGBT ideology’, had reached around 100 municipalities and provinces by June 2020 – equal to a third of the country.¹⁴⁷ This was decried by the European Union as violating the EU charter of fundamental rights, and threatened to withhold funding, causing four provinces to withdraw the measures.¹⁴⁸ However, they continue to operate in some places.

THE MAIN ACTORS

Ordo Iuris Institute for Legal Culture, as one of the main European civil society anti-gender actors, is a civil society organisation presenting itself as a legal institute situated in Poland. In addition to being active at the European level, it is also behind regressive actions in Poland such as the creation of the ‘LGBT-free’ zones and drafting the 2016 abortion ban. It has been increasingly active in advocacy towards EU institutions and the Council of Europe, for example sharing an anti-sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) memorandum with European Parliamentary

representatives ahead of a debate. Its plans include ‘expanding the number of Ordo Iuris branches in Europe and finalising the establishment of a branch in the United States’ with Croatia and Slovakia as priority countries for this expansion. A dozen people, including the former Vice President, recently left Ordo Iuris to set up a new institute – The Logos – to focus on human rights and environmental protection.¹⁴⁹ See the European Parliamentary Forum’s Intelligence Brief on Ordo Iuris for more.

Tradition Family and Property (TFP) is another critical actor working across the European Union, and is hosted in Poland. Ordo Iuris is the newest arm of, and receives donations via, the international network Tradition Family and Property (TFP). TFP is a transnational, ultra-conservative, Catholic-inspired influence network.¹⁵⁰ TFP gains its influence through aristocrats like Paul, Duke of Oldenburg, as representatives to the European Union. Its affiliates are typified by a model of shared leadership, shared branding, youth outreach, fundraising tactics, a focus on religious veneration, and links with far-right movements. Headquartered in Krakow, the Polish arm of the TFP spent millions setting up new affiliates in Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Slovakia, the Netherlands,¹⁵¹ and Switzerland.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ Wesolowsky, Tony. (2021) *The Worrying Regression Of LGBT Rights In Eastern Europe*. RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty. Available at: www.rferl.org/a/lgbt-rights-eastern-europe-backsliding/31622890.html.

¹⁴⁷ Ciobanu, Claudia. (2020) *A Third of Poland Declared “LGBT-Free Zone.”* Balkan Insight. Available at: balkaninsight.com/2020/02/25/a-third-of-poland-declared-lgbt-free-zone/.

¹⁴⁸ Cooper, Alex. (2021) *3 Polish Regions End “LGBT-Free Zones” in Money Grabbing Effort*. Advocate. Available at: www.advocate.com/world/2021/9/29/3-polish-regions-end-lgbt-free-zones-money-grabbing-effort.

¹⁴⁹ European Parliamentary Forum. (2021) EPF Intelligence Brief: Foundation Ordo Iuris Institute for Legal Culture. European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Available at: www.epfweb.org/node/816.

¹⁵⁰ Datta, Neil. (2020). *Modern-day Crusaders in Europe. Tradition, Family and Property: Analysis of a Transnational, Ultra-conservative, Catholic-inspired Influence Network*. European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Available at: www.epfweb.org/node/610.

¹⁵¹ European Parliamentary Forum. (2021) EPF Intelligence Brief: Foundation Ordo Iuris Institute for Legal Culture. European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Available at: www.epfweb.org/node/816.

¹⁵² Datta, Neil. (2020). *Modern-day Crusaders in Europe. Tradition, Family and Property: Analysis of a Transnational, Ultra-conservative, Catholic-inspired Influence Network*. European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Available at: www.epfweb.org/node/610.

The **World Congress of Families**¹⁵³ (WCF) is a global network of US-Russian activists run through an annual conference held in different cities, and is active in Poland and has situated its more recent conferences in countries close to Poland. It includes Matteo Salvini (Italy's Interior Minister), mayors, governors, MPs, ministers, ambassadors, heads of state, and several cardinals and aristocrats. The Southern Poverty Law Centre recognised them as an LGBTI+ hate group. Open Democracy's analysis of conference attendees since 2004 found that most were from conservative and religious groups, including 100 current or former politicians, half of whom are from far-right parties; such as Marek Jurek previously of the Law and Justice party from Poland; Lech Kaczynski, Poland's former president and a former MEP, and former Interior Minister Jaime Mayor Oreja. Over a dozen Hungarian politicians have attended, including Fidesz Party Vice President Katalin Novak, 2017 leader of the far-right Serbian Dveri party Bosko Obradovic. Victor Orbán delivered an address in 2017.¹⁵⁴ Open Democracy gives an overview of recent tactics from the World Congress of Families and their connections.¹⁵⁵

Poland's **Law and Justice party (PiS - Prawo i Sprawiedliwość)** is similarly a nationalist, right-wing political party, chaired by Jarosław Kaczyński and is closely allied with Alliance for Defending Freedom and the Catholic Church. It has also been involved in anti-LGBT repression during protests and Poland's 'LGBT-free zones'.

President Andrzej Duda has publicly stated that "LGBT is not people, it's an ideology which is worse than Communism."

TACTICS USED

In 2007, the fourth World Congress of Families organised a European Parliamentary Forum in the Polish Senate, put on by members of the European Parliament who had previously organised a seminar on the future of families in Europe at the European Parliament itself.¹⁵⁶

TFP focuses on policy and litigation through Ordo Iuris. This is led by a small group of men who exchange their roles as board members and directors across different TFP affiliates. TFP specialises in grassroots mobilisation, including social mobilisation campaigns and agenda setting by convening meetings (e.g. TradFest, where former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in Poland Aleksander Stepkowski attended). It also uses its policy and legislative expertise to undermine progressive reforms (e.g. Ordo Iuris used its legal expertise to develop proposals to restrict abortion in Poland and Spain).

Legal strategies like litigation and engaging with human rights bodies is a tactic that Ordo Iuris has taken advantage of to exert influence at national, European and international levels. In February 2017, Ordo Iuris obtained Consultative Status with the UN. The new Croatia Ordo Iuris affiliate secured a position in a Croatian government working group and has put up cases before Polish courts.

¹⁵³ The Southern Poverty Law Center. (n.d.) World Congress of Families. The Southern Poverty Law Center. Available at: www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/world-congress-families.

¹⁵⁴ Archer, Nandini and Claire Provost. (2019) Revealed: dozens of European politicians linked to US 'incubator for extremism'. OpenDemocracy. Available at: www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/revealed-dozens-of-european-politicians-linked-to-us-incubator-for-extremism/

¹⁵⁵ Provost, Claire. (2017). Re-branding hate?: ultra-conservative organising under a "family-friendly" banner. OpenDemocracy. Available at: www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/re-branding-hate-family-friendly/.

¹⁵⁶ The Southern Poverty Law Center. (n.d.) World Congress of Families. The Southern Poverty Law Center. Available at: www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/world-congress-families.



Photo by Bartosz Staszewski on Wikimedia Commons: Sign relating to the Polish LGBT free zones.

Ordo Iuris is effective at infiltrating decision making spaces. Its alumni occupy positions in government ministries, academia, the judiciary and other public institutions including advising the Polish President. Its Vice-Director Tymoteusz Zych became a member of the European Economic and Social Committee. Ordo Iuris founder Aleksander Stepkowski was appointed Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2015, where he laid the path for the draft abortion ban to progress through government. In February 2019 he was confirmed as a judge on the Polish Supreme Court and was selected as a candidate for the European Court of Human Rights.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ Datta, Neil. (2020). *Modern-day Crusaders in Europe. Tradition, Family and Property: Analysis of a Transnational, Ultra-conservative, Catholic-inspired Influence Network*. European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Available at: www.epfweb.org/node/610.

¹⁵⁸ Graff, Agnieszka, and Elżbieta Korolczuk. (2022). *Anti-gender politics in the populist movement*, Routledge and CRC Press, pp 102 – 106. Available at: www.routledge.com/Anti-Gender-Politics-in-the-Populist-Moment/Graff-Korolczuk/p/book/9780367679491.

¹⁵⁹ Kurasinska, Lidia. (2020). "This Is War": The Story Behind Poland's Bid to Ban Abortion Today. *Transitions*. Available at: tol.org/client/article/28842-this-is-war-the-story-behind-polands-bid-to-ban-abortion-today.html
Ordo Iuris. Available at: ordoiuris.pl/samorządowa-karta-praw-rodzin.

¹⁶⁰ Walker, Shaun; and Sitnicka, Dominika. (2022) *Trans community in Poland braces for political attacks as election nears*. The Guardian. Available at: www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/24/trans-community-in-poland-braces-for-political-attacks-as-election-nears.

NARRATIVES

Anti-gender actors tend to use an anti-colonial frame to portray Poland as a victim of gender invasion. This was used in the 2015 campaign against sex education in schools, which framed the Istanbul convention as 'the Ebola from Brussels'. The metaphor of contagion was used to incite moral panic and position Brussels as the coloniser and bringer of destruction to national Polish identity and order to be replaced by a new multi-faith, multi-ethnic society. This framing also came through in a 2019 anti-LGBTI+ drive, epitomised in the film 'Invasion' which showed pride marches as dangerous to children and families, as linked with paedophilia, and as sexualisation of minors.¹⁵⁸

THE IMPACT

Ordo Iuris has had far-reaching on law and policy in Poland and is working actively to turn public sentiment against sexual and reproductive rights and LGBTI+ rights. It was instrumental in lobbying for and contributing to the charter that created Poland's now infamous 'LGBT-free zones'.¹⁵⁹ While 2022 saw a reduction in general public hostility towards gay people, it indicates an incoming switch to targeting trans people. Law and Justice (PiS) party chair Jarosław Kaczyński used talks with supporters in the summer to target trans people, suggesting a rise in hate speech to come from politicians ahead of 2023 elections.¹⁶⁰

UKRAINE

The report of the IE SOGI noted that the **All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations** argued that ‘gender’ and ‘sexual orientation’ present threats to Christianity and the ‘identity’ of Ukraine to successfully prevent ratification of the Istanbul Convention. Local councils also called on the parliament to reject LGBTI+ rights, which was welcomed by the anti-gender CSO, Vsi razom!, who share a cooperation agreement with Polish anti-gender think tank Ordo Iuris. When the IE SOGI visited Ukraine, he was told that lesbian, bisexual, and trans women were portrayed as unpatriotic by extreme right-wing groups because they defied societal expectations for reproduction and motherhood.¹⁶¹

ROMANIA

Romania has pushed for various anti-gender and anti-trans legislative reforms, with the support of multiple US and international actors, demonstrating strong connections between far-right Christian beliefs and nationalism. In an instance of violent speech against LGBTI+ people, the president of **Romania’s Coalition for the Family**, a coalition of conservative NGOs, was accused of organising an anti-LGBTI+ Christian nationalist protest with signs reading “Die F-----” and “Get out of the country”,

while others used Nazi salutes.¹⁶²

Four US-based religious right groups pushed for a referendum to amend the Romanian constitution to redefine the basis for families as marriage between a man and a woman. International anti-gender actor Alliance Defending Freedom and the European Centre for Law and Justice submitted briefs to the Romanian Constitutional Court, and with a Romanian coalition lobbied the European Parliament with a petition signed by 3 million people. The World Congress of Families also delivered a petition to the Romanian Parliament. In September 2018, the Romanian Constitutional Court allowed the referendum to go ahead but it was undermined by only 20 percent of Romanians showing up to vote.¹⁶³ Alliance Defending Freedom International has partnered with groups that have ties to far-right Christian nationalism and white nationalism.

In May and June 2020, the education law was amended to introduce a blanket ban on the discussion of gender theory in education settings which was framed as a ban on ‘activities propagating theories and opinions on gender identity according to which gender is a separate concept from biological sex’.¹⁶⁴ In December 2020, the law was overturned by the Constitutional Court which ruled it unconstitutional.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Madrigal-Borloz, Victor. (2021). *Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Victor Madrigal-Borloz, Practices of exclusion*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/192/14/PDF/N2119214.pdf?OpenElement.

¹⁶² Southern Poverty Law Center. (n.d.). *Alliance Defending Freedom*. Southern Poverty Law Center. Available at: www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/alliance-defending-freedom.

¹⁶³ Southern Poverty Law Center. (2019) “Global Hate: Hate Travels” *Intelligence Report*. Southern Poverty Law Center. Available at: www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2019/global-hate-hate-travels.

¹⁶⁴ Tidey, Alice. (2020) “Back to the Middle Ages”: *Outrage in Romania over gender studies ban*. Euronews. Available at: www.euronews.com/2020/06/17/romania-gender-studies-ban-students-slam-new-law-as-going-back-to-the-middle-ages.

Madrigal-Borloz, Victor. (2021). *Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Victor Madrigal-Borloz, Practices of exclusion*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/192/14/PDF/N2119214.pdf?OpenElement.

¹⁶⁵ Fedorko, Boglarka, Anwar Ogrm, and Sanjar Kurmanov. (2021) *Impact assessment: COVID-19 and trans people in Europe and Central Asia*. TGEU. Available at: tgeu.org/covid19-and-trans-people-in-europe-and-central-asia/.

ITALY

The **World Congress of Families** held its annual conference in Verona in 2013, where the anti-LGBTI+ Italian activist group **Generazione Famiglia** was launched. The organisation is connected to Spanish campaign organisation **CitizenGO**, sharing several staff via CitizenGO Italy and collaborating on campaigns. CitizenGO organised a four-day training in Rome in July 2018 to help local anti-LGBTI+ and anti-abortion activist groups best support “the natural family, life and liberty.”¹⁶⁶ With CitizenGO Italy and Anti-abortion group **ProVita**, **Generazione Famiglia** organised anti-LGBTI+ rallies (‘Family Days’) in Italy in 2015 and 2016 which gathered tens of thousands to oppose same-sex civil unions.¹⁶⁷ One organiser of the 2015 event was **Gianfranco Amato**, an attorney for the Alliance for Defending Freedom.¹⁶⁸

Much of the public and political debate of homophobia or transphobia has centred around the Zan hate crimes and anti-discrimination law, which is a draft legislation intended to strengthen hate crimes protections to cover sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability. This was approved by the lower house of parliament in November 2020 but has been blocked by the Senate since.¹⁶⁹ Pope Francis played an important role as his speech in

Hungary and Slovakia which criticised ‘gender’ as a concept that “exerts a diabolical fascination because it is not incarnate” influenced the parliamentary debate. A month later, a legal argument from the Vatican contributed to halting the law.¹⁷⁰

FRANCE

The anti-gender movement in France has its origins with **La Manif Pour Tous** in 2010. Led by the catholic church, this grassroots movement capitalised on conservative anxiety about the expansion of LGBTI+ rights and the political victory of the Socialist Party in 2012. La Manif Pour Tous held anti-marriage equality protests in 2013 under the ‘One of Us’ campaign following the adoption of laws on equal marriage and adoption.

Aware that widespread public acceptance meant LGBTI+ rights could not be attacked directly, La Manif Pour Tous adopted a religious language of protecting children and downplayed their extreme views. Protests drew in huge numbers of young people. The campaign failed to change the law, but La Manif Pour Tous became an official political party in 2015. As a direct consequence of La Manif Pour Tous’ influence, the government later withdrew a bill intended as the second “chapter” of the 2012 equality law, which wanted to open medically

¹⁶⁶ CitizenGo (n.d.) *CitizenGO International Summer School*. Archive.is. Available at: <https://archive.is/AjmEI>.

¹⁶⁷ Fa, Anna. (2015) *Family day, cattolici in piazza a Roma contro le unioni civili: "Siamo più di un milione"*. Cronaca. Available at: www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2015/06/20/news/famiglia_cattolici_in_piazza_contro_ddl_cirinna_manifestazione_a_roma-117288755/

The Local. (2016) *Poor turnout for Rome anti-gay union protest*. The local. Available at: www.thelocal.it/20160131/poor-turnout-for-rome-anti-gay-protest/.

¹⁶⁸ Southern Poverty Law Center. (2019). *“Global Hate: Hate Travels” Intelligence Report*. Southern Poverty Law Center. Available at: www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2019/global-hate-hate-travels.

Comitato “Difendiamo i Nostri Figli”. (2018) *Ogni Bambino Ha Diritto Ad Una Madre Ed Un Padre*. Comitato “Difendiamo i Nostri Figli”. Available at: web.archive.org/web/20180330194453/https://www.difendiamoinostrifigli.it/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2017/03/Brochure-CDNF.pdf.

¹⁶⁹ Ben Chikha, Fourat. (2021). *Combating rising hate against LGBTI people in Europe*. Parliamentary Assembly to the Council of Europe. Available at: assembly.coe.int/LifeRay/EGA/Pdf/TextesProvisoires/2021/20210921-RisingHateLGBTI-EN.pdf.

¹⁷⁰ Sexuality Policy Watch. (2021) *Brazil as a hub of anti-gender transnational politics (August – October 2021)*. Sexuality Policy Watch. Available at: sxpolicy.org/anti-gender-transnational-fluxes-august-october-2021/22198.



Photo by Bulat Silvia.

assisted procreation to 'same-sex' couples. In 2021, the bioethics law opening medically assisted procreation to same-sex couples was finally adopted but excluded trans masculine people who change their legal marker.

La Manif Pour Tous' actions inspired a campaign 'Mum, Dad & Kids' led by Edit Frivaldsky of the Hungarian Dignity Centre, and provided fundraising opportunities for La Manif Pour Tous' to receive funding from Lejeune Foundation, Alliance Vita, Catholic NGOs, and Russian oligarch Konstantin Malofeev.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ Datta, Neil. (2021) *Tip of the Iceberg: Religious extremist - Funders against Human Rights for Sexuality & Reproductive Health in Europe*. European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Available at: www.epfweb.org/node/837.

¹⁷² ILGA-Europe. (2020) *ILGA-Europe's Annual Review Of The Human Rights Situation Of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans And Intersex People Covering Events That Occurred In Europe And Central Asia Between January-December 2020*. ILGA-Europe. Available at: www.ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/2021/france.pdf. <https://www.ilga-europe.org/report/annual-review-2021/>.

Hird, Alison. (2020) *French court rejects transgender woman's demand to be recognised as a mother*. RFI. Available at: www.rfi.fr/en/france/20200917-french-court-rejects-transgender-woman-s-demand-to-be-recognised-as-a-mother-adoption.

¹⁷³ Anastasiadou, Marianthi. (2020) *Striking back: Right-wing gender politics in Greece*. Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Gunda-Werner-Institut. Available at: www.gwi-boell.de/en/2020/08/14/striking-back-right-wing-gender-politics-greece.

On 16 September 2020, the Court of Cassation ruled against a trans woman's right to be recognised as the mother of her child. Because the child was conceived before the woman had changed her legal gender to female the court argued "two maternal filiations cannot be established with regard to the same child, outside of adoption".¹⁷² However, this decision was eventually overturned in 2022 by a French court of appeal.

Additionally, the **National Rally (Rassemblement National)**, previously the National Front, is France's right-wing opposition party. Its rhetoric is anti-immigration, anti-Semitic, nationalist, and anti-LGBTI+. Jordan Bardella as Acting President took over from Marine Le Pen who has led the party since 2012. The party has strong links to CitizenGO, World Congress of Families, and Alliance Defending Freedom.

GREECE

The anti-gender movement in Greece is typified by the far-right political movement, the Greek orthodox church, and women fighting together under anti-feminist rhetoric. Greece has an increasingly right-wing and authoritarian party in power. Following pressure from the church and more far right party members, the ruling party abolished reference to equality regardless of gender, sexuality, or gender identity from the Greek constitution.¹⁷³

TURKEY

In March 2021, **President Erdoğan** withdrew Turkey from the Istanbul Convention.¹⁷⁴ The government justified the decision claiming the Convention was incompatible with Turkey's family values, being "hijacked by a group of people attempting to normalise homosexuality", despite being the first to ratify it. This followed lobbying from Muslim orders and has been seen as part of Erdoğan's moves to bolster his position by engaging ultraconservative political allies.¹⁷⁵ There have been several cases documented of trans people being stopped for document checks under the guise of COVID-19 without justified cause, and being abused by police officers.¹⁷⁶

Turkey has a long history of anti-LGBTI+ and anti-feminist discourse from political Islamist and nationalist groups, but these have become a more organised movement gaining lobbying power in the last two years. The movement holds elite leaders of the political and religious establishment and civil society who want to return to traditional values, motivated by a fear of loss of status and power. Though the two types of actors share their anti-gender motivations, there is disagreement and conflict,

with nationalist groups holding some feminist positions.¹⁷⁷

RUSSIA

In July 2020, the **State Duma** introduced a draft law (Project law No. 989011-7) introducing the new fixed category 'sex' on Russian birth certificates, where "corrections and changes to the record of the birth certificate of a person who has changed their sex are not allowed."¹⁷⁸ The bill was revoked in November.¹⁷⁹

Key actors in Russia include the oligarchs **Konstantin Malofeev**, who funded La Manif Pour Tous and CitizenGo and has links to the Russian Orthodox church, St Basil the Great Foundation, and Patriarchal Commission for the Family; the Protection of Motherhood and Childhood; and **Vladimir Yakunin**, who set up the Istoki Endowment Fund and St. Andrew the First-Called Foundation, and supports the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute.¹⁸⁰

International anti-gender convener, the **World Congress of Families**, holds close ties with Russia. It helped found *FamilyPolicy.ru* in 2012 and supported the anti-gay propaganda law to

¹⁷⁴ Madrigal-Borloz, Victor. (2021). *Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity*, Victor Madrigal-Borloz, *Practices of exclusion*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/192/14/PDF/N2119214.pdf?OpenElement.

¹⁷⁵ Aslı Aksoy, Hürkan. (2021) What lies behind Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention? Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. Available at: www.swp-berlin.org/publikation/what-lies-behind-turkeys-withdrawal-from-the-istanbul-convention.

Callamard, Agnes. (2021) Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention rallies the fight for women's rights across the world. Amnesty International. Available at: www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/07/turkeys-withdrawal-from-the-istanbul-convention-rallies-the-fight-for-womens-rights-across-the-world-2/.

¹⁷⁶ Fedorko, Boglarka. (2018) *Deprived of liberty, deprived of rights: A community report on policing and detention of trans people in Central-Eastern Europe and Central Asia*. TGEU. Available at: tgeu.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Prison_Report_2018_EN.pdf.

¹⁷⁷ Hülägü, Funda. (2020) *Organized Anti-Feminism in Turkey: A Quick Picture*. Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Gunda-Werner-Institut. Available at: www.gwi-boell.de/en/2020/08/03/organized-anti-feminism-turkey-quick-picture.

¹⁷⁸ TGEU. (2020) *Russia plans to outlaw legal gender recognition*. Available at: tgeu.org/russia-outlaws-lgr.

¹⁷⁹ Roache, Madeline. (2020) *Russian Activists Just Won an Important Battle Over LGBTQ Rights. But the War Is Far From Over*. Time. Available at: time.com/5915828/russia-lgbtq-victory/; Fedorko, Boglarka; Ogrm, Anwar; and Kurmanov, Sanjar. (2021) *Impact assessment: COVID-19 and trans people in Europe and Central Asia*. TGEU. Available at: tgeu.org/covid19-and-trans-people-in-europe-and-central-asia/.

¹⁸⁰ Datta, Neil. (2021) *Tip of the Iceberg: Religious extremist - Funders against Human Rights for Sexuality & Reproductive Health in Europe*. European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Available at: www.epfweb.org/node/837.

be passed.¹⁸¹ This law has since been expanded in December 2022 to include any public expression of LGBTI+ behaviour or identity, including online, or in media.¹⁸² The expanded foreign agents laws also came into force in December 2022, under which any individual or organisation engaging in activism can be targeted - including people and organisations that work on trans rights.¹⁸³

Similar to Turkey, many cases are documented of trans people being stopped and harassed by police using COVID-19 as justification.¹⁸⁴

Post-socialist nationalism and traditional values

Many authors and organisations have called for a more refined division than the East-West dichotomy often portrayed when characterising the anti-gender and anti-trans movement within Europe.¹⁸⁵ Takács describes post-socialist societies as being characterised by a move towards re-embedding traditional gender roles, and a process of mixing late modern commodification with nationalism. There is a disconnect between the messages of local LGBTI+ communities, who call for social acceptance of LGBTI+ people as a desirable Western value, and from nationalists who want

to evict homosexuality from 'their' nation as a 'foreign import'.¹⁸⁶

At the same time, some countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia are characterised by closed civic spaces and trans activists from these countries report the need to go underground or leave their countries for safety reasons.¹⁸⁷ More closed civic spaces makes it difficult to get an accurate impression of the nature of the lived situation for trans communities, and sometimes to disaggregate the ways trans people are being targeted specifically among the broader LGBTI+ community.

For this reason, we must acknowledge that the linkages between the agendas of post-Soviet governments who are broadly against LGBTI+ rights and the wider anti-gender movement are difficult to shed light onto. Where the State is the main aggressor, with the power and means to enact systemic change that creates a repressive environment on the whole for trans people, it is often challenging to determine whether government-led actions that infringe upon trans rights are part of the same organised global anti-gender movement, whether a relic of past Soviet influence, or whether they are simply one set of rights affected by broader human rights violations and restrictions.

What we have been able to track is some of the ways trans people are targeted. The

¹⁸¹ The Southern Poverty Law Center. (n.d.) *World Congress of Families*. The Southern Poverty Law Center. Available at: www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/world-congress-families.

¹⁸² Jones, Gareth. (2022) *Putin signs law expanding Russia's rules against 'LGBT propaganda'*. Reuters. Available at: www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-signs-law-expanding-russias-rules-against-lgbt-propaganda-2022-12-05/.

¹⁸³ Human Rights Watch. (2022) *Russia: New Restrictions for 'Foreign Agents'*. Human Rights Watch. Available at: www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/01/russia-new-restrictions-foreign-agents.

¹⁸⁴ Fedorko, Boglarka. (2018) *Deprived of liberty, deprived of rights: A community report on policing and detention of trans people in Central-Eastern Europe and Central Asia*. TGEU. Available at: tgeu.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Prison_Report_2018_EN.pdf

¹⁸⁵ Takács, J. and Szalma, I. (2019) *Democracy deficit and homophobic divergence in 21st century Europe*. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 27(4), pp.459–478.

¹⁸⁶ Takács, Judith. (2019) *Lecture summary - Disciplining Gender and (Homo)sexuality in Hungary*, *Hungarian Academy of Sciences*, Leiden University. Available at: www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/events/2019/03/disciplining-gender-and-homosexuality-in-hungary.

¹⁸⁷ Ogrm, Anwar. (2021) *What happened to the money? Fundraising toolkit for trans organising in times of COVID-19*. TGEU, Available at: tgeu.org/toolkit-for-trans-organising-in-covid-times/.

Trans* Coalition documented cases of violence during COVID-19 and recorded 28 incidents of discrimination and violence. Half of the discrimination cases were unlawful police actions: unreasonable detention or arrest, inappropriate behaviour of police officers and, in one case, blackmail and extortion.¹⁸⁸ The Eurasian Coalition for Health, Rights, Gender and Sexual Diversity reported significant aggression during COVID-19, including 'verbal and physical violence against trans* people on the streets' across Armenia, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, felt hardest by trans people with intersecting vulnerabilities such as migrants, those who are unemployed, or involved in sex work.¹⁸⁹

KAZAKHSTAN

In June 2020 an amendment was proposed to the draft Code on the health of the people and the healthcare system to make it impossible for trans people aged 18-21 and trans people of all ages with 'behavioural disorders' to access legal gender recognition and other human rights ratified by Kazakhstan.¹⁹⁰ 80% of trans people have experienced discrimination or violence based on their gender identity.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁸ Fedorko, Boglarka; Ogrm, Anwar; and Kurmanov, Sanjar. (2021) *Impact assessment: COVID-19 and trans people in Europe and Central Asia*. TGEU. Available at: tgeu.org/covid19-and-trans-people-in-europe-and-central-asia/.

¹⁸⁹ Fedorovich, Irina.; Yorsky, Yuri.; and Orsekov, Daniyar. (2022) *Research report on the violation of the rights of trans* people in Armenia, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan during the COVID-19 pandemic*. ECOM. Available at: ecom.ngo/library/prava-trans-ludey-kovid.

¹⁹⁰ Boglarka Fedorko, Anwar Ogrm, and Sanjar Kurmanov (2021) *Impact assessment: COVID-19 and trans people in Europe and Central Asia*. TGEU. Available at : <https://tgeu.org/covid19-and-trans-people-in-europe-and-central-asia/>.

¹⁹¹ Shenker, Timofey. (2021) *Living Our Lives Unseen. Research of the Realities of Life for Transgender People in Kazakhstan*. ALMA-TQ. Available at: www.alma-tq.org/live.

¹⁹² Ogrm, Anwar. (2021) *What happened to the money? Fundraising toolkit for trans organising in times of COVID-19*. TGEU, Available at: tgeu.org/toolkit-for-trans-organising-in-covid-times/.

¹⁹³ Kyrgyz Indigo. (2022) FOLLOW UP REPORT On hate crimes and torture in relation to LGBT+ people in Kyrgyzstan. Committee Against Torture. Follow up review to Concluding observations of Kyrgyzstan. United Nations. Available at: tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2F50911&Lang=en; Kyrgyz Indigo. (2022) SHADOW REPORT "Violence and discrimination against LGBT+ people in the Kyrgyz Republic". United Nations Human Rights Committee Review of the Third Periodic report of the Hyrgyz Republic. 136th Session. United Nations. Available at: tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2F50269&Lang=en.

A civic movement called 'Edinstvo osoznannykh' formed in 2020 against the renewed Health Code, which includes the addition of sexuality education for children and gender-affirming medical and social care in the Code's article, 'On the change of one's sex identity.' The movement is also against draft legislation developed specifically to combat domestic and familial violence.

KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyzstan introduced a new law in July 2021 targeting non-governmental organisations' finances, increasing the scrutiny on trans human rights defenders' work. Legal gender recognition was removed from the Civil Code during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.¹⁹² Trans people are subject to violence in prisons, and at the hands of police (particularly for trans women selling sex). Huge barriers exist to access to hormones, and employment.¹⁹³

TAJIKISTAN

In June 2022, the country adopted anti-discrimination legislation, though sexual orientation and gender identity are absent as a basis of non-discrimination. There are no

procedures for legal gender recognition, no medical protocols to provide trans specific services, no doctors qualified to provide medical services to trans people. Health experts refuse to work with trans people.¹⁹⁴

GEORGIA

Georgia uses the same administrative offence code as in Kyrgyzstan under the guise of 'hooliganism' to target trans people.¹⁹⁵ In Tbilisi in July 2021, LGBTI+ protestors and journalists were attacked by a mob, with one journalist dying as a result. The government placed responsibility for the violence on the LGBTI+ protesters.¹⁹⁶

In his report on a 2018 visit to Georgia, the IE SOGI described abusive requirements for amending legal gender markers, where surgeons deem whether someone is a "true transsexual" based on their willingness to undergo surgery or not. The surgeries they recommend lead to unnecessary interventions and sterilisation.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁴ ECOM. (2022) *Human Rights Violations Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Tajikistan*. ECOM. Available at: tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCESCR%2fCSS%2fTJK%2f49798&Lang=en.

¹⁹⁵ Fedorko, Boglarka. (2018) *Deprived of liberty, deprived of rights: A community report on policing and detention of trans people in Central-Eastern Europe and Central Asia*. TGEU. Available at: tgeu.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Prison_Report_2018_EN.pdf

¹⁹⁶ Ogrm, Anwar. (2021) *What happened to the money? Fundraising toolkit for trans organising in times of COVID-19*. TGEU. Available at: tgeu.org/toolkit-for-trans-organising-in-covid-times/.

¹⁹⁷ United Nations. (2019) *Human Rights Council Forty-first session 24 June–12 July 2019 Agenda item 3 "Visit to Georgia - Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity"*. United Nations General Assembly. Available at: static1.squarespace.com/static/55098723e4b011797c300d41/t/5d00238e0eea6d0001686913/1560290190861/A_HRC_41_45_Add.1.pdf.

CONCLUSION

There are several conclusions we can draw from this analysis of the anti-gender, and specifically anti-trans, landscape that can inform ongoing work by trans activists, allies, policy-makers, and academics.

First, now more than ever, cross-movement alliance building and mutual action is a critical protective factor against the anti-gender movement and the rapidly shifting socio-political contexts in a number of countries across Europe and Central Asia. There is a trend towards growing conservatism, populism, nationalism, and anti-trans sentiment and examples like the UK and Sweden, and increasingly Ireland, demonstrate how quickly previously progressive contexts can shift in legal, policy, and public spheres and how anti-trans narratives can come from feminists, socialists, and liberal actors who would traditionally have been considered as allies. The anti-gender movement is not only transphobic, but racist, classist, nationalist, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic, ableist, misogynistic in varying degrees. The fight for trans rights is also a fight for racial, social, and economic justice, sex worker justice, and HIV justice. These movements need to be interconnected to progress rights across all these fronts, and strengthen the pool of collective resources available.

Strengthening partnerships between trans communities and research organisations, think tanks, and media outlets is also necessary to shape the research agenda, set the tone of policy and public discourse, and proactively

prime key power-holders and gatekeepers, particularly within mainstream media, to see the value and positive trajectory of taking supportive stances towards trans people.

Second, the gap in research, knowledge, and publicly available literature on actors specifically targeting trans people would benefit from greater research and attention by academics, civil society and communities. There are limited resources or press on the language and narratives of anti-trans public discourse. There are fairly limited summaries documenting tactics specifically targeting trans people. Though there are mentions of some examples of cases affecting trans rights and actors in certain contexts focusing on trans people in particular, the overwhelming majority of resources accessed for this paper give information on actors targeting LGBTI+ rights more broadly, sexual and reproductive health and rights, or attacks on gender equality as the broader frame for the anti-gender movement. Many overview resources focus on the US, and those that cover Europe do not look at anti-trans actors.

Monitoring the tactics, connections, narratives, and funding sources of anti-trans and anti-gender actors in national and regional contexts must be ongoing to detail their methods of organising and to predict upcoming actions. This includes tracking the impact anti-trans narratives have on public attitudes towards trans people, concrete protections and access to services and support, and the mental health

of trans people. Much of this information is not public or easily accessible or is held at community grassroots, which makes it more difficult for trans organisations and communities who are less well resourced to respond or act preemptively. Information needs to be shareable amongst trusted networks of trans organisations and allies.

Finally, the growing capture of EU spaces and the cross-cutting regional nature of the anti-trans and anti-gender movement calls for stronger interventions by policymakers at regional and national levels. This includes being vocal in support of trans rights, standing up to prevent regressions in existing rights and promoting progressive reforms. It also means learning to recognise the type of anti-trans arguments being used which might be couched in milder language, being aware of the relationships that indicate an actor is no longer an ally such as when a women's groups develops into an anti-trans group and forms alliances with far right actors, and engaging peer policymakers who sit on the fence about trans rights to build support.

RESOURCES

There are several insightful reports which share good overviews of the key actors targeting trans people, their connections, histories, tactics, and narratives. Key resources are listed below.

European Parliamentary Forum:

- Tip of the Iceberg: Religious extremist - Funders against Human Rights for Sexuality & Reproductive Health in Europe¹⁹⁸
- “Restoring the Natural Order”: The religious extremists’ vision to mobilize European societies against human rights on sexuality and reproduction¹⁹⁹

Observatory on the Universality of Rights (OURS) 2021 trends report Rights at risk: time for action - Gives detailed information on the overall trends, tactics, and advocacy strategies of the anti-gender and anti-gender actors.²⁰⁰

Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe, Newsletter 2 2021²⁰¹ - A good overview of anti-gender organisations’ tactics, funding, and connections, with some focus on anti-trans organising (in UK and US contexts).

Attack on democracy? Anti-Gender-Movements in Europe, **Heinrich Boll Stiftung**²⁰² - A great library of articles on different national contexts, narratives being used and actors within the anti-gender movement.

Political Research Associates, Gender Ideology Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow²⁰³ - provides useful resources, tracking the anti-gender movement. They also have a Gender Ideology Monitoring Group.

Global Philanthropy Project, Meet the moment: a call for progressive philanthropic response to the anti-gender movement²⁰⁴ - identifies key actors and funding bodies behind the anti-gender movement and connections between its origins in the US and Europe.

Open Democracy:

- Open Democracy’s 50:50 project tracking conservative and fundamentalist anti-rights actors²⁰⁵
- Open Democracy’s article ‘Re-branding hate? ultra-conservative organising under a “family-friendly” banner’²⁰⁶ gives an overview

¹⁹⁸ Datta, Neil. (2021) *Tip of the Iceberg: Religious extremist - Funders against Human Rights for Sexuality & Reproductive Health in Europe*. European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Available at: www.epfweb.org/node/837.

¹⁹⁹ Datta, Neil. (2018) *“Restoring the Natural Order”: The religious extremists’ vision to mobilize European societies against human rights on sexuality and reproduction*. European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Available at: www.epfweb.org/node/175.

²⁰⁰ Shameem, Naureen. (2021). *Rights at risk: time for action*, *Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report*. The Observatory on the Universality of Rights. Available at: www.oursplatform.org/resource/rights-at-risk-time-for-action/.

²⁰¹ Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe. (2021) *No to Gender - Yes to what exactly? Insights into the European anti-gender movement*, Newsletter 2. Observatory for Sociopolitical Developments in Europe. Available at: www.genderportal.eu/sites/default/files/resource_pool/2021_nl_2_anti-gender_en.pdf.

²⁰² Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Gunda-Werner-Institut. (n.d.) *Attack on democracy? Anti-Gender-Movements in Europe*. Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Gunda-Werner-Institut. Available at: www.gwi-boell.de/en/attack-democracy-anti-gender-movements-europe.

²⁰³ Greensmith, Heren. (2020) *Gender Ideology Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*. Political Research Associates. Available at: politicalresearch.org/2020/03/26/gender-ideology-yesterday-today-and-tomorrow.

²⁰⁴ Global Philanthropy Project. (2020) *Meet the moment: a call for progressive philanthropic response to the anti-gender movement*. Global Philanthropy Project. Available at: globalphilanthropyproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Meet-the-Moment-2020-English.pdf.

²⁰⁵ Provost, Claire. (2017) *Tracking the backlash: why we’re investigating the “anti-rights” opposition*. OpenDemocracy. Available at: www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/why-we-are-tracking-the-backlash/.

²⁰⁶ Provost, Claire. (2017) *Re-branding hate?: ultra-conservative organising under a “family-friendly” banner*. OpenDemocracy. Available at: www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/re-branding-hate-family-friendly/.

of recent tactics from the World Congress of Families and their connections.

TGEU:

- Impact assessment: COVID-19 and trans people in Europe and Central Asia²⁰⁷ - An overview of the impact of COVID-19 and anti-trans attacks on trans communities across Europe during the pandemic. Includes a timeline of attacks on trans rights.
- What happened to the money? Fundraising toolkit for trans organising in times of COVID-19²⁰⁸ - gives an update on timelines of anti-trans attacks across Europe and Central Asia.

Office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights report on threats faced by LGBTI human rights defenders, from a 2021 roundtable²⁰⁹ - speaks in general terms of trends in the anti-gender movement.

Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Practices of exclusion²¹⁰ - shares an overview of anti-gender narratives, how they target trans people with examples from different countries.

²⁰⁷ Fedorko, Boglarka, Anwar Ogrm, and Sanjar Kurmanov. (2021) *Impact assessment: COVID-19 and trans people in Europe and Central Asia*. TGEU. Available at: tgeu.org/covid19-and-trans-people-in-europe-and-central-asia/

²⁰⁸ Ogrm, Anwar. (2021) *What happened to the money? Fundraising toolkit for trans organising in times of COVID-19*. TGEU, Available at: tgeu.org/toolkit-for-trans-organising-in-covid-times/.

²⁰⁹ Council of Europe and the Commissioner for Human Rights. (2021) *Human Rights of LGBTI People in Europe: Current threats to equal rights, challenges faced by defenders, and the way forward - Round-table with LGBTI human rights defenders organised by the Office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Online event, 9 February 2021*. Council of Europe and the Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: rm.coe.int/human-rights-of-lgbti-people-in-europe-current-threats-to-equal-rights/1680a4be0e.

²¹⁰ Madrigal-Borloz, Victor. (2021). *Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Victor Madrigal-Borloz, Practices of exclusion*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Available at: documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/192/14/PDF/N2119214.pdf?OpenElement.

