

Anti-gender

mobilisations in

EUROPE

Study for **POLICY MAKERS**
on opposition to sexual and
reproductive health
and rights (SRHR) in
European institutions.



THE GREENS/EFA
in the European Parliament

by Elena Zacharenko

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This study has been commissioned by Heidi Hautala
MEP, Vice President of the European Parliament.

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FOREWORD FROM MEP

Heidi Hautala

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are an important part of women's human rights and gender equality. They play an enormous role in ensuring fair, prosperous and equal societies. Furthermore, it is a prerequisite for attaining a sustainable future on this planet.

My commitment to the promotion of sexual and reproductive rights has strengthened due to first-hand accounts from women whose lives have been vastly improved due to the provision of sexual and reproductive health services.

However, we can perceive today a growing number of attempts and campaigns to reverse the progress made on enhancing women's reproductive choices, be it at national, European or international levels.

The forces whose aim is to reverse the progress made on enhancing women's reproductive choices have existed for a long time, but since the publication of the first edition in 2016, the trends described in this research are no longer marginal. They have become a widespread, global movement gaining strength, and working relentlessly to oppose women's rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

There is a strong push of anti-choice, anti-LGBTI and anti-gender ideas into the political mainstream. Anti-gender actors reckon that women's human rights are a threat to the ambiguous "traditional values" or "family values".

From time to time, the alliance of conservative governments supporting these ideas makes itself visible in international conferences on women's rights, like in 2019 in the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) that took place in Nairobi. The common denominator of this unholy alliance is the fierce opposition to women's human rights.

During the Trump presidency the US became so hostile towards SRR that Kate Gilmore, UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, called in 2019 the US policy on abortion "a form of extremist hate that amounts to the torture of women".

Within the European Parliament, the number of parliamentarians opposing SRR increased in the EU elections of 2019. This trend follows the victories of far-right and nationalist parties.

Among the EU member states, the anti-gender ideology echoes in the speeches of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the leader of the Law and Justice (PiS) party and Poland's de facto ruler Jarosław Kaczyński. Their refusal to ratify the Istanbul Convention on combatting violence against women is a part of it. Also Russia promotes "traditional values" in its interference in the EU Eastern neighbourhood where countries are struggling to evolve into modern democracies.

It is vital to inform all policymakers and the wider public about the bigger picture in which opposition to SRR is a central element. It is similarly important to understand how anti-choice organizations work and what drives their support.

This study presents the networks, identifies the actors who are part of the anti-gender movement active in Brussels, and shows the often highly questionable ways of promoting their cause.

I believe it is crucial for progressive forces to mobilize and defend the rights we have fought so hard to secure, together. I want to thank Elena Zacharenko for this skillful update of her useful and widely read study.

Heidi Hautala
MEP, Vice President of the European Parliament

EXECUTIVE summary

This edition of the study updates the research published in 2016 on the activity of anti-choice (now referred to as anti-gender) actors at EU level. This study is primarily intended for progressive politicians, policy makers and civil society actors working at EU institutions and EU member state level.

While opposition to ‘gender ideology’ or ‘gender theory’ was originally introduced by the Vatican in the late 1990s, the Holy See has long since lost its monopoly on the use of this discourse, which has now been adopted by a diverse array of actors. Leaders of some of the world’s most powerful and populous countries, such as Donald Trump in the U.S. and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil have opposed SRHR and gender equality efforts at international level, joining ranks with traditional opponents such as Russia.

The updated research demonstrates that in the EU, opposition to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), as well as other issues related to gender equality, women’s and LGBTI rights has become commonplace in mainstream political discourse, with anti-gender arguments frequently applied in national and EU level political debates.

The number of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) who are anti-gender has doubled since 2016 and at least some form of opposition to ‘gender ideology’ has been documented in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Spain since the 2010s.

At the level of policy and legislation, this trend has resulted in some EU member states adopting laws which contradict gender equality efforts or curtail access SRHR. At EU level, some member states have vetoed the adoption of Council Conclusions due to the inclusion of the term ‘gender’ in the text. In addition, the EU’s ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) is blocked in the Council of the EU due to the same objections.

Support to anti-gender movements can be interpreted as a new and very potent form of anti-establishment organising and protesting the status quo. Opponents of ‘gender ideology’ have been able to capitalise on the rising dissatisfaction with liberal democracy coupled with neoliberal social and economic policies. In order to counter the rise of this movement, it is key that progressives present their own positive agenda and narrative as an alternative to that of the conservative groups, centering on the socio-economic concerns of voters, which are set to only become more prominent as we enter another economic crisis provoked by the global pandemic of COVID-19.

WHAT IS THIS STUDY
and who is it for?

This study is primarily intended for progressive politicians, policy makers and civil society actors. It aims to provide the tools to help identify actors working to oppose sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), women's rights, gender equality, LGBT rights, described as 'anti-gender', at EU level and analyse their motivations, laying the groundwork for developing effective counter-strategies.

The study aims to provide an analysis and understanding as well as raise awareness of the activities of anti-gender actors in the EU by providing information on their activities, providing examples of their influence, listing the organisations representing these actors and describing their areas of interest and tactics adopted in order to influence the EU.

The first part of this study provides some background on the emergence of the anti-gender movement, its global presence and international connections, before describing the situation in the EU and at member state level in more detail. This is followed by an analysis on why this movement is gaining popular support and finding its way into the political mainstream in Europe as well as recommendations for progressive actors who want to challenge it.


The second part presents the main anti-choice actors operating at EU level and lists organisations aiming to influence the policy process within the EU institutions through lobbying, campaigning or activity at member state or international levels.

The third part outlines the tactics used by these organisations to influence EU policy development.

The annexes provide an index of the organisations and individuals mentioned in this study, background information on the international legal basis for sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as key EU documents outlining its position on SRHR and gender equality. A list of resources for further reading is also provided.

PART 1

WHAT DRIVES
THE ANTI-GENDER
MOVEMENT?

A large, diagonal, pink brushstroke graphic that starts from the top right corner and extends towards the center of the page, creating a textured, painterly effect.

The previous version of this study, which came out in 2016, was designed to describe a relatively new and emerging phenomenon at EU level: a rise in opposition to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), alongside other issues related to gender equality, women's and LGBTI rights within the EU institutions.

Since then, this opposition has not only become more vocal, but has managed to make its way into the mainstream political discourse, and in some cases, capture the attention and energy of broad swathes of the general public. The anti-gender or anti-‘gender ideology’ discourse is no longer a concern only for policy makers, NGOs and academics narrowly focused on gender equality – it has become a central point of discussion in national and EU level political debates.

Since 2016, political leaders using the anti-‘gender ideology’ discourse have come to power in some of the most powerful and populous countries in the world, and parties which oppose SRHR (and women’s and LGBTI rights) have doubled their numerical presence in the European Parliament.

This part of the study will outline and contextualise these developments, as well as provide an analysis on why the anti-gender movement has made such progress. It will finish by providing recommendations for progressive policy makers on how to address this trend.

1.1 Origins and current manifestations

The movements, organisations and individuals described in this study interchangeably as **anti-choice, anti-SRHR, anti-gender or anti-‘gender ideology’ are part of a wide movement.** This movement contains opponents to topics as diverse as sexual and reproductive rights (contraception, abortion, sexuality education), women’s rights and gender equality efforts, LGBTI rights (civil partnerships and same-sex marriage, same sex adoption, legal gender recognition), gender studies, gender mainstreaming and the fight against gender-based violence.

The term ‘gender ideology’ or ‘gender theory’, was coined by the Catholic Church in response to the outcomes of the 1994 International Conference on

Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo and the 1995 Fourth International Women’s Conference in Beijing. The conclusions of the two conferences, which explicitly recognised the importance of reproductive health as a driver of sustainable development and called for the empowerment of women, were unwelcomed by the Vatican, which continues to oppose modern methods of contraception, as well as abortion.

In an attempt to prevent the further proliferation of such progressive ideas, the Catholic Church thus presented ‘gender theory’ as a political project of feminists, LGBTI activists and gender studies scholars. According to the Vatican, they were aiming to impose Western values on the citizens in the rest of the world through international institutions such as the UN, and later also the EU, for the purpose of the neo-colonisation of ‘traditional’ societies.¹

Nonetheless, the Vatican has long since lost its monopoly on the use of the ‘gender ideology’ discourse. It has since been adopted by a diverse array of actors, many of which are not affiliated or even sympathetic to the Catholic Church. Indeed, categorising the divergent issues mentioned above under **the concept of ‘gender ideology’ allowed for diverging agendas and**

1 For more, see Paternotte. D., 2015, *Blessing the crowds. Catholic mobilisations against gender in Europe.*

worldviews to be brought together under one umbrella.²

By adopting a discourse opposing ‘gender ideology’, actors who may not otherwise have much in common, such as centrist, far-right and libertarian parties, as well as various religious movements and conservative grassroots organisations have been able to create alliances, which would not have otherwise been possible.

The rise in importance and influence of anti-gender civil society organisations is notable. NGOs which prioritise ‘traditional’ or ‘family values’, focusing on the rights of the heterosexual family as unit, over universal human rights values applicable to at the individual level, and promoting ‘family mainstreaming’ over ‘gender mainstreaming’, have both multiplied and gained prominence within states. In some cases, they have been supplanting women’s rights and gender equality organisations in their advisory and supportive role to governments.

Anti-gender movements have successfully entered the political mainstream, as evidenced by the gains they made in the 2019 European Parliamentary elections. They have in some cases been able to influence policy in areas such as combatting violence against women and restricting access to women’s reproductive rights. In Europe, the

most prominent example of this have been the attacks against the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (commonly referred to as the Istanbul Convention), which will be discussed below in more detail.

1.2 Global connections

At the international level, until the late 1990s, **the Vatican** was the leader of opposition to SRHR under the banner of combatting ‘gender ideology’. The Holy See influenced developments at the level of the United Nations thanks to its permanent non-member observer state status (a status which the UN has only afforded to Palestine and the Holy See) and to its long-standing history of participating in the UN-level NGO activities. Alongside this, the Vatican has used bilateral relationships with individual states, and furthermore the Pope has utilised his influence over Catholics across the world.

By the late 1990s other groups opposing SRHR or ‘gender ideology’ more broadly began forming with the purpose of lobbying the UN. This resulted in the creation of a loose traditionalist anti-gender coalition collaborating across national and religious divides to counter a set of issues, which they identify as common concerns or threats, e.g. SRHR and LGBT rights.

The ability of the anti-gender coalition to mobilise was demonstrated in 2009, when the UN General Assembly voted to delete a reference to “gender identity” and “sexual orientation” as

2 Grzebalska, W., Kováts, E., Pető, A., 2017, Gender as symbolic glue: how ‘gender’ became an umbrella term for the rejection of the (neo) liberal order, *Political Critique*

categories of non-discrimination. Support for removal of the reference came mostly from Arab and African nations.³

In 2015 Belarus, Egypt and Qatar established the Group of Friends of the Family (GoFF), which now counts 25 member countries, including **Russia**, and is supported by a number of anti-SRHR NGOs.⁴

Since then, Russia has increasingly taken a leading role in the anti-gender coalition, getting support from most **Central Asian, Arab and African states**. The coalition has for example voted in favour of a resolution challenging the universality of human rights and placing the importance on the ill-defined ‘traditional values’ over women’s and LGBT rights in the Human Rights Council in September 2012.⁵ On that occasion the European states – traditionally supporters of SRHR – were joined by the US and Canada in rejecting the resolution, which nonetheless passed by a narrow majority.

However, in 2016 Russia and its supporters were joined by **Poland** in successfully removing language, which urged for a worldwide decriminalisation of homosexuality from a UN General

Assembly resolution that called for an end to the AIDS pandemic.⁶

Investigative reporting has been able to document that funding to the global and European anti-gender movements has been channelled from such sources as Russian religious institutions, wealthy aristocratic families, and oligarchs close to the Kremlin.⁷

Brazil joined this coalition in 2019 under Jair Bolsonaro’s administration; the country abstained from voting on resolutions which aimed to secure protection based on gender identity and sexuality and supported conservative amendments that sought to weaken language on SRHR.

The role of the **United States** as an international actor, a place of origin of some of the most active anti-gender and anti-SRHR organisations and a supporter of the global anti-gender movement cannot be understated. Many of the organisations globally active in promoting the anti-gender agenda have originated in the US and remain associated to the New Christian Right, which is tied to the Republican party.

Investigative journalists have recently revealed that the New Christian Right and the Trump administration

3 Catholic Exchange, 28 December 2009, General Assembly Votes to Delete Reference to “Sexual Orientation”, accessed 10 September 2020.

4 Uniting Nations for a Family-Friendly World, Organisers, accessed 27 July 2020.

5 openDemocracy, 18 February 2013, “Traditional values” vs human rights at the UN’, accessed 17 June 2020.

6 Radio Free Europe, 9 June 2016, ‘Russia Leads Effort To Strip Gay Decriminalization From UN Measure’, accessed 17 June 2020.

7 SPL Center, 16 May 2018, How the World Congress of Families serves Russian Orthodox political interests; Mother Jones, 21 February 2014, The World Congress of Families’ Russian Network, both accessed 17 June 2020.

were among several groups that have also transferred at least \$50 million in support of anti-gender **causes in Europe** between 2008-2017.⁸

The organisations' number and influence have begun to increase since the George W. Bush administration from 2000 onwards. Their work has been further strengthened by Republican administrations' own agenda on women's and reproductive rights.

The Global Gag Rule is a US foreign policy measure that significantly restricts the availability of development aid funding for any organisation that does not agree to cease to inform about or to provide women with abortions. It has been reinstated by each Republican presidency since the Reagan administration, which first introduced it.

The **Trump administration** has significantly broadened and strengthened the scope of this ban.⁹ This was however only one element of the Trump administration's attack on SRHR and 'gender ideology' on the international stage.

The Trump administration has pushed to remove the word 'gender' (to be replaced with 'women and men'

or 'women', as appropriate) from several UN documents.¹⁰

In September 2019, at a high-level UN meeting on universal health coverage, the US, together with, among others, **Poland** and **Hungary**, refused to sign a UN statement including references to SRHR, and issued its own statement, in which it declared that there is 'no international right to an abortion'.¹¹

In May 2020, the US administration wrote to the UN asking to remove references to SRHR from the UN's Global Humanitarian Response Plan and drop the provision of abortion as an essential component of the COVID-19 pandemic response.¹²

Furthermore, in June 2020, at a meeting of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), during a discussion on a resolution on humanitarian issues, the United States again filed an objection, rejecting the inclusion of 'sexual and reproductive health services' and 'sexual and reproductive health' into the text.¹³

8 openDemocracy, 27 March 2019, Revealed: Trump-linked US Christian 'fundamentalists' pour millions of 'dark money' into Europe, boosting the far right, accessed 17 June 2020.

9 PAI, Trump Global Gag Rule, <https://trump-globalgagrule.pai.org/history/reprieve-and-reversal/>, accessed 17 June 2020.

10 The Guardian, 25 October 2018, Trump administration wants to remove 'gender' from UN human rights documents, accessed 17 June 2020.

11 Alex M. Azar II, 23 September 2019, Remarks on Universal Health Coverage, accessed 17 June 2020.

12 The Guardian, 20 May 2020, US demands removal of sexual health reference in UN's Covid-19 response, accessed 17 June 2020.

13 US Mission to the UN, 2 June 2020, U.S. Statement on the Proposed Resolution for the 2020 ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, accessed 27 July 2020.

It is important to note that the motivations of the different states and actors opposing ‘gender ideology’ and the elements assigned to it differ from actor to actor and across time. While the key tenets of the Vatican’s line of opposition to sexual orientation and gender identity remain in place, its tone on the issues has somewhat shifted to a more conciliatory one in recent years.¹⁴

The US government has not been consistently active in opposing ‘gender ideology’ – while a rejection of elements of SRHR such as abortion is common to Republican administrations, the rejection of the term ‘gender’ as such has only taken prominence under the Trump administration. Brazil and European countries such as Poland and Hungary are relatively recent champions of opposition to these issues in the international domain, exemplary of a growing political trend described in more detail below.

1.3 The anti-gender movement in the EU

In the previous edition of this study, the rise of opposition to gender or SRHR into mainstream EU politics was described as a new trend. Today, it would be best defined as one of the central features of the political landscape. Debates on issues and concepts,

which fall under the definition of ‘gender ideology’, as described by its opponents, are taking place at national and EU level across the bloc, in Western and Central-Eastern European member states alike.

The anti-gender movement’s growth in popularity is evident from the results of the 2019 European elections. In the European Parliament’s 9th term (2019-2024) the number of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) who oppose women’s reproductive rights, gender equality, sexuality education, same sex marriage and the Council of Europe Convention on Violence Against Women (Istanbul Convention) stands at over 210, around 30 per cent.

How are ‘anti-gender’ MEPs identified?

This number has been calculated by taking into account either one, two or all of the following factors: (1) membership of political parties whose official party lines can be classified as anti-gender or anti-SRHR (such as the Austrian FPÖ, German AFD, Hungarian Fidesz, Italy’s Lega, Poland’s Law and Justice, Spain’s VOX), or membership in openly anti-gender European-level parties, such as the European Christian Political Movement (see part two of this study), (2) signature of election pledges by anti-SRHR organisations such as FAFCE (see part two of this study), (3) a record of voting against SRHR language or against resolutions on gender equality and women’s

¹⁴ See for example: Congregation For Catholic Education, 2019, “Male And Female He Created Them”, Towards A Path Of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory In Education, accessed 11 September 2020

rights in the 8th term of the European Parliament (2014-2019).

The 9th term has seen a doubling of the number of MEPs who oppose these issues compared to the previous one, where it was estimated that around 15 per cent of parliamentarians fell into this category. The increase in opponents of ‘gender ideology’ in the European Parliament is mainly due to the strong performance of the Italian Lega (34% of the vote – 29 seats), Polish Law and Justice (45% of the vote – 27 seats), Hungarian Fidesz (53% of the vote – 13 seats) and French Rassemblement National (23% of the vote – 23 seats)¹⁵. They all came first in their respective countries in terms of the proportion of the vote they gathered.

These national parties have little in common in terms of their origins and programmes, aside from their opposition to ‘gender ideology’. Most of them belong to the new far-right Identity and Democracy (ID) group or the conservative and eurosceptic European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group. Fidesz and Bulgarian GERB are opponents of ‘gender ideology’ within the centre-right EPP, while Slovakian SMER and Romanian PSD represent this trend within the S&D group.

Anti-gender or anti-SRHR views are also held by prominent EPP

politicians, who have held the influential post of European Parliament’s President: Manfred Weber¹⁶ and Antonio Tajani,¹⁷ both of whom have in the past lent support to or associated themselves with anti-choice causes.

While the increase in the number of anti-gender MEPs in the European Parliament has not resulted in them being able to block progressive or pro-SRHR language and resolutions, these results are worrying as they reflect political trends at national level. Indeed, the past years have seen a rise in anti-gender rhetoric, campaigning and legislative initiatives, some of which have been successful in introducing anti-gender or anti-SRHR policies within EU member states.

Some form of popular mobilisation against ‘gender ideology’ at national level in the EU, be it in the form of citizens’ movements or attempts (successful or not) to introduce political-level debate have been documented as having taken place in **Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Spain** since the 2010s.¹⁸

16 BuzzFeed News, 28 July 2014, The Rise Of Europe’s Religious Right, accessed 22 June 2020

17 The Parliament Magazine, 20 February 2020, Tajani in hot water again for World Congress of Families conference, accessed 22 June 2020/

18 See for example: Paternotte, D. and Kuhar, R., 2017, Anti-gender campaigns in Europe: mobilizing against equality. London, New York: Rowman & Littlefield International; Kováts, E.,

15 European Parliament, European election results 2019, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/election-results-2019/en>, and MEPs, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/home>, accessed 22 June 2020.

Italy, Spain, Poland and **Hungary** have all hosted the global gathering of anti-gender actors, the World Congress of Families (see more in part two of this study), with official government support and representation present from their governments. Hungarian Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, has opened the conference when it was held in Budapest. Katalin Novák, the country's Minister of State for Family, Youth and International Affairs has attended several of its meetings, as has Jaime Mayor Oreja, a former government minister from the Spanish member party of the EPP.¹⁹ Matteo Salvini, leader of the far-right Lega and then member of the Italian government, was a keynote speaker at the conference in Verona in 2019.

In **Croatia**, a 2013 referendum effectively banned same-sex marriage, as over 60% of voters were against homosexual unions;²⁰ similar campaigns

(although unsuccessful) were launched in 2015 in **Slovakia** and 2018 in **Romania**. The initiators of the Croatian referendum, the conservative NGO *U ime Obitelji*, along with other ultra-conservative organisations and men's rights associations have been subsequently invited to join various government consultation processes alongside women's rights organisations.²¹

In **Poland**, since the formation of the Law and Justice government in 2015, draft bills proposing to further restrict or even criminalise abortion, and prohibit sexuality education, have been repeatedly placed on the agenda of parliamentary debates, most recently in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.²² In 2017, contrary to recommendations of the European Commission, Poland restricted access to emergency contraception by making it prescription-only.²³

Government funding has been withheld from women's organisations working with victims of gender-based violence.²⁴ Women's organizations and

Põim, M. (eds), 2015, *Gender as symbolic glue: the position and role of conservative and far right parties in the anti-gender mobilizations in Europe*, FEPS and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung 19 openDemocracy, 27 March 2019, Revealed: dozens of European politicians linked to US 'incubator for extremism', accessed 22 June 2020.

20 For a detailed analysis of how this referendum and movement surrounding it came to be successful, see Hodžić, A., and Štulhofer, A., 2017, 'Embryo, teddy bear-centaur and the constitution: Mobilizations against "gender ideology" and sexual permissiveness in Croatia', Kuhar R, Paternotte D. *Anti-gender campaigns in Europe. Mobilising against equality*. London; New York: Rowman & Littlefield

21 Roggeband, C., Krizsán, A., 2020, *Democratic backsliding and the backlash against women's rights: Understanding the current challenges for feminist politics*, UN Women, p. 15-16.

22 Euractiv, 15 April 2020, Poland debates abortion rights curbs, coronavirus limits protests, accessed 22 June 2020.

23 The Guardian, 26 June 2017, Polish government widely condemned over morning-after pill law, accessed 23 June 2020.

24 See for example: Newsweek Polska, 25 January 2017, „Niebieska Linia” do zamknięcia? Pogotowie czeka na dofinansowanie, accessed

LGBT groups have been subjected to police searches, raiding of offices²⁵ and arrests of activists.²⁶ And in the run up to Poland's 2020 presidential election, the incumbent backed by Law and Justice, Andrzej Duda, has repeatedly referred to the threats emanating from 'LGBT' and 'gender ideology'.²⁷

In **Hungary**, since 2013, the government has restricted independent women's organisations' ability to access international funding.²⁸ Instead it has begun to provide support and opportunities for non-feminist conservative women's organisations.²⁹ Government funds have been diverted from gender equality objectives towards ones opposing it, as in the case of the European Commission's Progress Fund used for an anti-abortion campaign.³⁰ In 2018, the government removed

accreditation from gender studies programmes at public universities.³¹

A controversial omnibus bill introduced under the pretext of combatting the COVID-19 pandemic and granting additional powers to Viktor Orbán's majority government in Hungary has further stoked culture wars. It removed the possibility of legally changing sex, in a move designed to rile supporters of transgender rights.³²

In a similar vein, in June 2020, **Romania** was attempting to pass a law banning the teaching of gender as a social construct distinct from sex.³³

In August 2020, far right parliamentarians submitted two legislative proposals to limit access to abortion in **Slovakia**.³⁴ A similar proposal was already proposed and rejected in 2019, but the increase in conservative representatives in the Slovak parliament after the February 2020 elections makes approval of the proposal more likely.

At the level of EU decision making, the mainstreaming of opposition to 'gender' has at times resulted in a

27 July 2020.

25 See for example: Centrum Praw Kobiet, 5 October 2017, *Policja w Centrum Praw Kobiet*, accessed 27 July 2020.

26 BBC News, 14 May 2019, *LGBT Virgin Mary triggers Polish activist's detention*, accessed 27 July 2020.

27 BBC News, 14 June 2020, *Polish election: Andrzej Duda says LGBT 'ideology' worse than communism*, accessed 27 July 2020.

28 Roggeband, C., Krizsán, A., 2020, *Democratic backsliding and the backlash against women's rights: Understanding the current challenges for feminist politics*, UN Women, p. 12.

29 Ibid., p. 15.

30 Euractiv, 17 June 2011, *EU funds used for Hungarian anti-abortion campaign*, accessed 27 July 2020.

31 DW, 18 October 2010, *Hungary's university ban on gender studies heats up culture war*, accessed 22 June 2020.

32 Eszter Kováts, Elena Zacharenko, 29 April 2020, *How Fidesz and PiS exploit the culture war*, accessed 22 June 2020.

33 Euronews, 17 June 2020, *Romania gender studies ban: Students slam new law as going 'back to the Middle Ages'*, accessed 22 June 2020.

34 Byline Times, 31 July 2020, *Neo-Nazis & Religious Conservatives Unite in Slovakia's Fresh Abortion Battle*, accessed 11 September 2020.

lack of unanimity required to adopt Council Conclusions. Since 2018, **Poland** has blocked the adoption of Council Conclusions on the basis of their inclusion of the term on at least two occasions.³⁵ In 2020, the Polish government did agree to signing on to Council Conclusions that referred to the gender concept but only on the condition of attaching an addendum clarifying that ‘where the conclusions refer to gender equality, Poland will interpret it as equality between women and men’.³⁶

In a similar move relating to another Council Conclusions document, outright rejected by **Hungary**,³⁷ **Slovakia** clarified that ‘it interprets the concept of “gender” in the text as a reference to sex and the concept of “gender equality” as reference to the equality between men and women’.³⁸

35 Politico, 7 December 2018, Hungary and Poland say no to LGBTIQ, accessed 22 June 2020.

36 Council of the EU, 2019, Gender-Equal Economies in the EU: The Way Forward: Statement from Poland, accessed 21 June 2020.

37 Agence Europe, 12 June 2020, Hungary opposes conclusions on impact of long-term care on work-life balance, accessed 22 June 2020.

38 Council of the EU, 2020, Statement of the Slovak Republic, accessed 21 June 2020.

Box 1: Istanbul Convention as collateral damage

Perhaps the greatest casualty in the ‘gender identity’ culture wars has been the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).

The Convention, first adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers in 2011, aims to set legally-binding standards to prevent violence against women and domestic violence, protect its victims and punish the perpetrators, framing the eradication of violence against women in the wider context of achieving substantive equality between women and men.

Initially seen as mostly uncontroversial, the Istanbul Convention has since become a focus of anti-gender mobilisations in Europe.

While by 2016, all EU member states had signed the Istanbul Convention, followed by the EU itself in 2017, the ratification process has been wrought with difficulty. Six EU member states (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia) are yet to ratify it. Indeed, the Bulgarian and Slovakian governments have outright refused to ratify it in 2018,³⁹ followed by Hungary in 2020.⁴⁰ In July 2020, the Polish Minister of Justice has announced that Poland would officially apply to withdraw from the Convention, due to the Convention’s “harmful” requirement to teach gender from a sociological point of view.⁴¹ Outside of the EU, Turkey, the first state to sign the convention, is also considering withdrawal.

In view of such opposition, the likelihood of the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the EU appears low. The Von Der Leyen Commission (2019-2024) stated at the outset of its term that should ratification continue to be blocked by member states, it will pursue other avenues to achieve the Convention’s goals.⁴²

The refusal to ratify the Istanbul Convention by certain member states is deeply situated within the context of opposition to ‘gender ideology’. The Convention has been described by its opponents as a ‘carrier of feminist ideology’ due to its referral to the very concept of gender (defined as ‘the social roles, behaviours, activities and characteristics that a particular society considers appropriate for

39 Euractiv, 23 February 2018, After Bulgaria, Slovakia too fails to ratify the Istanbul Convention, accessed 22 June 2020.

40 New Europe, 7 May 2020, Hungary refuses to ratify Istanbul convention on violence against women, accessed 22 June 2020.

41 Euronews, 26 July 2020, Poland to withdraw from European treaty aimed at preventing violence towards women, accessed 27 July 2020.

42 European Commission, 2019, Ursula Von Der Leyen mission letter to Helena Dalli, accessed 22 June 2020.

women and men”) rather than the biological distinction of sex, and the demand that state parties work towards the eradication of stereotyped gender roles.⁴³

The popular protests and grassroots or government campaigns against the Istanbul Convention which took place in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia in the past years went even further, accusing the Convention of denying the distinction between the male and female sexes and imposing the legal recognition of gender identity – claims which are unsubstantiated by the provisions of the Convention.

The EU’s attempts to ratify the Istanbul Convention as a bloc have also come under increased scrutiny from opponents of ‘gender ideology’. A 2018 letter to the Council of Europe’s Secretary General from over 300 (predominantly anti-choice) NGOs pointed out that the EU’s own interpretation of the Convention appears to define ‘gender based violence’ beyond the confines of the text (i.e. male violence against women), as ‘violence that is directed against a person because of that person’s gender, gender identity or gender expression’.⁴⁴

In 2020, the Polish conservative think tank *Ordo Iuris* (see section 2.1 below) launched a campaign called Stop Gender Convention, which includes a petition to President von der Leyen against the EU ratification of the Istanbul Convention. The petition claims that the convention ‘undermines family and marriage’ and ‘imposes gender ideology on the Member States’. As of July 2020, the petition had gathered nearly 50,000 signatures.⁴⁵

43 Lídia Balogh, 2020/07, The Ratification Status of the Council of Europe’s Istanbul Convention Among EU Member States, MTA Law Working Papers

44 Religious Information Service of Ukraine, 20 March 2018, 333 NGOs from 9 Member States of the Council of Europe ask about amendments to the Istanbul Convention, accessed 22 June 2020.

45 Stop Gender Convention, <https://stopgenderconvention.org/en/>, accessed 27 July 2020.

1.4 Is it a backlash?

As the opposition to ‘gender ideology’ intensifies, attempts to understand the phenomenon and its rise are contentiously being made on the progressive side. Often, analysts and policy makers resort to describing this trend as a backlash or backsliding, suggesting that the rise in anti-genderism is a result of a conservative opposition to the achievements already made and the inevitable progress towards gender equality and securing LGBTI rights.

This interpretation was also endorsed by the European Parliament, which in February 2019 adopted a resolution condemning the backlash on women’s rights and gender equality in the EU.⁴⁶

However, the backlash argument can only explain a part of the phenomenon we are observing. Notably, it fails to account for why voters, even those who may have previously voted for progressive or left-wing parties, have begun to support right-wing and conservative actors holding anti-gender views. It also fails to account for the fact that these anti-gender actors often have much more complex narratives and intricate political programmes than progressives give them credit for.

When debating on how the anti-gender movement is able to gather so much popular support, it is therefore

important to analyse both the supply side (what these movements offer) and the demand side (what voters are missing, or dissatisfied with, in progressive politics) of the current political landscape.

Indeed, opposition to ‘gender ideology’ is increasingly described as a new and very potent form of anti-establishment organising and protesting against the *status quo*.⁴⁷ Anti-gender movements have been able to capitalise on the rising dissatisfaction with liberal democracy coupled with neoliberal social and economic policies, with their pronounced discourse on human rights and the protection of minorities but a lack of social and economic protections or safety net for wide swathes of the population.

In addition, the current progressive political discourse, which has at times been characterised by excessive attention to political correctness at the expense of engaging with topics which may benefit from being publicly debated (sometimes referred to as ‘call out’ or ‘cancel culture’) has potentially resulted in voters becoming alienated and feeling unrepresented in political debates.

This characteristic of the current progressive scene may mean that

⁴⁶ European Parliament resolution of 13 February 2019 on experiencing a backlash in women’s rights and gender equality in the EU, accessed 23 June 2020.

⁴⁷ For example: Grzebalska, W., Kováts, E., Pető, A., 2017, Gender as symbolic glue: how ‘gender’ became an umbrella term for the rejection of the (neo)liberal order, Political Critique; Grzebalska, W., Anti-genderism and the crisis of neoliberal democracy, Visegrad Insight, accessed 29 June 2016

popular concerns are dismissed as ‘backwards’. Hotly contested issues, instead of being openly discussed, are presented as settled and beyond debate, further fuelling frustration and dissatisfaction.

Support for anti-systemic (including anti-gender) parties and movements therefore likely rises as the progressive political scene is perceived as neither concerned with the problems of the average voter, nor able to offer anything beyond the centrist ‘politics as usual’.

Meanwhile, the right-wing and conservative parties are able to offer voters an alternative vision of society alongside the anti-gender discourse, based on a vision of familiarity and solidarity – even if when given the opportunity to govern, they perpetuate the same neoliberal policies as their opponents.

While not all voters will automatically be drawn to this conservative vision, their disappointment with the current political system, which fails to address their needs, means they are not likely to join a progressive mobilisation against conservatives.

What is clear is that addressing the challenge presented by anti-gender movements is not simply a policy problem but a political one. Consequently, progressives must reflect on what is wrong with the *status quo* and the political alternatives on offer which drives voters to support anti-systemic and anti-gender parties.

Progressives’ reaction cannot therefore be limited to countering

anti-gender actions, but must present its own positive agenda and narrative as an alternative to that of the conservative groups, offering not only slogans about rights but concrete proposals on how to improve the socio-economic conditions and move the political debate between the false dichotomy of the progressive ‘us’ and the illiberal ‘them’.

1.5 Recommendations

To reverse the trend of growing support to anti-gender movements and votes for parties supporting and propagating these views, progressive politicians should address the issues lying at the heart of voters’ dissatisfaction. Especially in times of economic and sanitary crisis brought on by a global pandemic, there is a need to redraw the social contract and construct a society which provides social and economic protection for all, including by securing women’s and LGBTI rights.

The following recommendations are intended to lay out the path for enacting this approach. They are meant for progressive politicians, activists and representatives of civil society.

- » Do not confuse opponents of ‘gender ideology’ and SRHR with their voters: voters may support these parties despite their positioning on these topics rather than because of them. Even if they do oppose what they term

‘gender ideology’, this does not mean a wholesale rejection of the rights based agenda, but rather the feeling that it is being imposed from the above in conjunction with a lowering of the quality of life, loss of a place in society, or of financial security. These voters need to be presented with a viable alternative and an option which is neither the *status quo* nor a right-wing anti-systemic response to it.


- » Question the *status quo* from a progressive position: progressive politicians have a duty to ensure a better, more equal and secure future for their constituents. Times of crisis provide a risk but also an opportunity to redraw the social contract and present a vision of a society, which provides social and economic protection for all. For

civil society actors, there is a need to reflect on the position they want to advocate for: can you continue to call on governments to support your cause in separation from all other social concerns? Can you claim that a government is a supporter of human rights or gender equality if it advances an economically conservative agenda, which erodes the rights of workers or other groups?

- » Hold open and constructive discussions, within the progressive movement and with opponents: refusing to debate controversial issues is visibly backfiring as a political strategy. Holding open and honest discussions, even with those who disagree with you, allows to reach new audiences, promotes buy in from broader sections of society and promotes feelings of recognition and representation.

PART 2

MAIN ANTI-GENDER ACTORS AND THEIR TACTICS AT EU LEVEL



The organisations and networks described in this section are some of the main actors opposing SRHR at the level of the EU institutions – the list is by no means exhaustive, especially given that some organisations are active primarily at international or national levels and only occasionally engage with EU policy makers.

For the purpose of this study, the entities are divided into two groups: lobbying organisations are registered as interest representatives in the Transparency Register and are therefore assumed to carry out direct advocacy, even if they lack a permanent presence in Brussels; and supporting actors, who are not presumed to access the EU institutions directly on a regular basis but provide a legal, research, organising or information exchange networks, which facilitate the work of the organisations that do direct advocacy.

2.1 Lobbying organisations registered in the EU's Transparency Register

ADF International (Alliance Defending Freedom)



One of the largest conservative Christian legal advocacy organisations in the world, ADF International is the advocacy branch of the US-based *Alliance Defending Freedom*, an organisation which uses judicial litigation to ‘defend religious freedom, the sanctity of life, marriage and family.’

In Europe, under its more neutral-sounding acronym, ADF International, it operates from its headquarters in Vienna with a dedicated EU office located in Brussels, with offices also in Strasbourg, Geneva and London.¹

ADF International presents itself as an advocacy organisation focused on religious freedom. It has been actively advocating for EU engagement on the topics of freedom of religion and belief² and organises events on the situation of fundamental rights in the EU, with a focus on the freedom

of conscience and human dignity³ – interpreted as protecting the freedom of homophobic religious speech, religiously rooted discrimination and conscientious objection by professionals, e.g. against performing abortion.

It is also active at the level of EU member states, by supporting legal proceedings in cases of strategic importance to its goals, such as those relating to parental rights, understood as the right of non-intervention in family life from the part of the state.⁴

Thanks to its Strasbourg office, ADF International has a constant presence with the European Court of Human Rights⁵ as well as the Council of Europe. However, in 2019 it was denied participatory status at the Council of Europe because of its active efforts⁶

3 See for example: ADF International, 19 June 2019, 10th anniversary of EU Charter: experts highlight shortcomings of human rights protections, accessed 28 May 2020.

4 ADF International, 15 May 2020, Bulgaria: new law poses threat to parental rights, accessed 28 May 2020.

5 It has been involved in the cases of: *Lautsi v. Italy*, relating to the display of crucifixes in school classrooms which the applicant claimed resulted in indoctrination and violated the right of parents to ensure their children’s education in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions; and *A, B and C v. Ireland*, where applicants complained about Ireland’s failure to implement its then existing abortion law and challenged the restrictive law as such. In the case of *Lautsi v. Italy*, ADF represented 33 MEPs. See: ADF, European Court of Human Rights: Crosses can stay in Italy’s classrooms, accessed 28 May 2020.

6 ADF International, Brief: The Istanbul

1 ADF International, Where we are, accessed 9 June 2020.

2 See for example: ADF International, 14 May 2020, International experts appeal to European Commission President to do more for religious freedom worldwide, accessed 28 May 2020.

to oppose the Council of Europe's own Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women (Istanbul Convention – see box 1 in part one above).⁷

ADF International has actively worked against organisations promoting SRHR, such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). In 2015, in collaboration with the EPP Working Group on Bioethics and Human Dignity,⁸ it co-hosted an event at the European Parliament designed to slander the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).

Its former Brussels advocacy lead, **Sophia Kuby**, now based in the Vienna office, is also a board member of another anti-SRHR organisation, the **European Dignity Watch** (see below).

ADF International listed its budget between July 2018 and June 2019 as €2 million, of which between €200,000 to €300,000 was dedicated to EU advocacy. An openDemocracy investigation has revealed that ADF International's U.S. partner organisation, Alliance Defending Freedom, has channelled \$9.800.000 to Europe between 2008-2017.⁹



Figure 1. Screenshot of the website of the Alliance Defending Freedom (www.adflegal.org), the US-based parent organisation of ADF International

Convention, accessed 22 June 2020.

⁷ openDemocracy, 20 March 2019, Revealed: US anti-LGBT 'hate group' dramatically increases UK spending, accessed 9 June 2020.

⁸ The European People's Party (EPP) Working Group on Bioethics and Human Dignity gathers EPP group members to organise events with an anti-choice perspective.

⁹ openDemocracy, 29 March 2019, Revealed: Trump-linked US Christian 'fundamentalists' pour millions of 'dark money' into Europe, boosting the far right, accessed 9 June 2020.

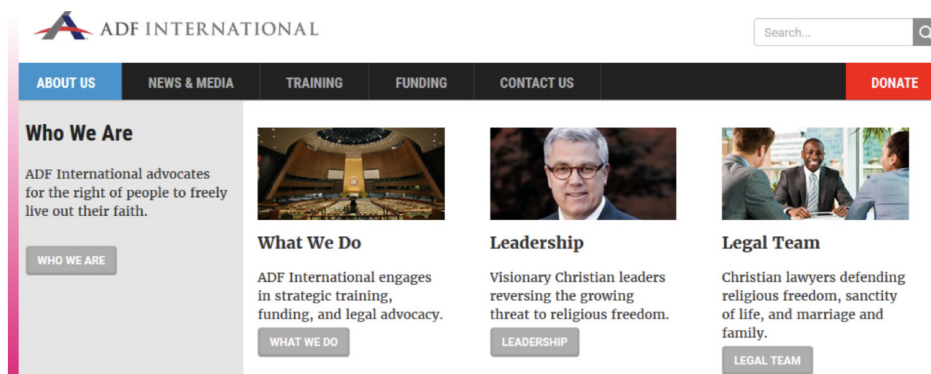



Figure 2. Screenshot of the website of ADF International (www.adfinternational.org).



Figure 3. Screenshot of the ADF International briefing on the Istanbul Convention



You can't put
a price on
a baby's heart

SALE OF BABY ORGANS

Truth about the abortion industry

Hosted by **Miroslav Mikolášik** MEP, **Michaela Šojdrová** MEP
Alojz Peterle MEP and **Marijana Petir** MEP

Guest speaker: **Lila Rose**, Founder of Live Action, USA

Thursday 15 October 2015 from 08.30-10.00 hrs
Room JAN 6Q1, European Parliament, Brussels



Figure 4: Poster advertising an ADF International and One of Us sponsored event in the European Parliament specifically targeting IPPF, October 2015

Alliance VITA



A French association created in 1993 by Christine Boutin of the Christian political party Force Vie. Alliance VITA gained notoriety due to its stance against same-sex marriage and misleading websites presenting anti-abortion propaganda as ‘counselling’ to pregnant teenagers.

While Alliance Vita has a lobbying office registered in Brussels, the address provided is shared with the European Institute for Bioethics, a Belgian non-profit focused on maintaining restrictions on access to abortion and decriminalising euthanasia in the country.

Alliance Vita listed its 2018 budget as €2,502,958, of which between €25,000 to €50,000 was dedicated to EU advocacy.

Commission of Bishops’ Conferences of the European Community (COMECE)



Consisting of Bishops delegated by the Catholic Bishops’ Conferences of the 27 member states of the EU, COMECE is the main representation of the Vatican *vis-à-vis* the EU institutions today. Its explicit mission is to monitor the political process of the EU in all areas of interest to the Catholic Church.

The COMECE is designed to act like other interest representatives *vis-à-vis* the EU institutions, although it is granted favourable access to policy makers under the provisions of Article 17 of the Treaty of the European Union relating to religious dialogue. Thanks to the clout of the Vatican, it is able gain access and present its positions to policy makers unofficially at the highest levels of the EU institutions.¹⁰ While it holds *ad hoc* meetings with EU officials on a wide scope of issues¹¹ and hosts meetings with the EU member states taking on the agenda-setting role of the rotating

¹⁰ See for example the conference (Re)thinking Europe: Christian contributions to the European Project on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the signature of the Treaties of Rome, (accessed 8 June 2020) with participation of European Commission’s First Vice-President, Franz Timmermans, MEP Manfred Weber chair of the EPP and President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani.

¹¹ Between 2015-2018, the COMECE held meetings with high-level EU officials, including at European Commissioner and Director-General level, on issues such as agriculture, the European Monetary Union and employment policy, www.integritywatch.eu, accessed 24 April 2018.

presidency of the Council of the EU,¹² it shies away from explicitly advocating against SRHR.

COMECE listed its 2019 budget as €1,305,989, all of which was dedicated to EU advocacy.

European Dignity Watch



European Dignity Watch describes itself as a non-governmental and not-for-profit organisation which defends ‘fundamental freedoms and responsibility, marriage and the family, and the protection of life from conception to natural death’. It engages in policy analysis, research and lobbying on anti-discrimination legislation and bio-ethical issues from an anti-choice perspective. European Dignity Watch organises semi-annual advocacy academies for religious lobbyists from across Europe.¹³

European Dignity Watch played a vital role in launching the **One of Us European Citizens Initiative** by

providing the background research on the specific allocations of EU funding to pro-SRHR initiatives in the developing world. This was a follow up to its 2012 report *Funding of Abortion through EU Development Aid*,¹⁴ which accused SRHR organisations such as IPPF and Marie Stopes International of misallocating EU funds. **Sophia Kuby**, Director of Strategic Relations and Training at **ADF International**, is one of the founders and a former Executive Director of EDW; she currently serves as a board member.

European Dignity Watch listed its 2018 budget as €65,000, of which between €25,000 to €50,000 was dedicated to EU advocacy.

Extract from the ‘Funding of Abortion through EU Development Aid’ report by European Dignity Watch

‘(...) one is tempted to wonder whether in the current situation the EU’s development policy is not “fighting the poor” rather than “fighting poverty”, or whether development aid should not be directed at providing food, drinking water, health, and education, to children in need, rather than reducing their numbers through abortion.’

¹² See for example: Maltese EU Presidency: Revitalizing faith in the European Project, 9 January 2017; COMECE and CEC meet with Slovak EU Presidency, 13 July 2016, accessed 6 May 2018.

¹³ See: <http://www.europeandignitywatch.org/trainings/>, and <http://www.europeandignitywatch.org/making-an-impact-in-public-life/>, accessed 28 May 2020.

¹⁴ European Dignity Watch, *Funding of Abortion through EU Development Aid*, 2012, p.19, accessed 28 May 2020.

Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe (FAFCE)



FAFCE is a conservative lobby group and an umbrella organisation representing 18 European Catholic organisations active at the Council of Europe and EU level. It supported the **One of Us European Citizens' Initiative**. FAFCE launched a Vote for Family pledge¹⁵ ahead of the 2014 and 2019 European elections, in which it called candidates to 'respect life at all its stages, from conception to natural death'.

FAFCE listed its budget between January and September 2019 as just short of €98,000, all of which was dedicated to EU advocacy.

One of Us Federation for Life and Human Dignity



In 2012, anti-SRHR organisations from 16 EU member states came together to launch a European Citizens'

Initiative (ECI)¹⁶ entitled **One of Us**,¹⁷ calling for an end to EU financing of activities which presuppose 'the destruction of human embryos', in particular in the areas of research, development aid and public health.

The petition surpassed the necessary quorum of one million signatures, with a total of 1.74 million signatures collected, but was rejected after the European Commission found its proposals to be inadmissible. The organisers decided to take this decision to the European Court of Justice (General Court case 'One of Us vs EU Commission'), which rejected the appeal in December 2019.¹⁸

The individuals involved in the original launch of the ECI are predominantly well-known anti-SRHR organisations and activists. The initiative was the brainchild of the then **MEP Carlo Casini** (2006-2014, EPP, IT), Honorary Member of the Vatican's Pontifical Academy for Life and the founder and President of the Italian Movement for Life (Movimento per la Vita).

The German organisers, Familien-schutz.de, are part of the Zivile Koalition e.V. network, founded by former

¹⁶ See European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), <http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/welcome>

¹⁷ One of Us ECI, accessed 28 May 2020

¹⁸ Court of Justice of the EU, 19 December 2019, The Court holds that the General Court did not err in upholding the decision of the Commission not to submit a proposal for legislation in response to the European citizens' initiative 'One of us', accessed 8 June 2020.

¹⁵ FAFCE 2019 Manifesto for the elections of the European Parliament, accessed 28 May 2020.

MEP Beatrix von Storch (from the German AFD). Grégor Puppink, Director of the **European Centre for Law and Justice**, served as the initiative's president. At the European level, the initiative was supported by the **European Christian Political Movement**.

Since its rejection as an ECI, One of Us has been transformed into a federation of European anti-SRHR actors. The federation hosted its first Policy Forum in Paris in March 2016 and a second one in 2017 in Budapest. The 2017 Budapest forum was held jointly with the World Congress of Families (see below, under **International Organisation for the Family**), with the patronage of the Hungarian government and opened by Prime Minister Viktor Orban.¹⁹

One of Us listed its budget for 2019 as €165,361, all of which was dedicated to EU advocacy.

The federation's constituent member from Poland, Fundacja Jeden z Nas, is also registered within the Transparency Register as a separate entity, although its stated goals closely mirror those of the One of Us federation. Jeden z Nas lists Polish ECR MEP Ryszard Legutko as a key donor, who has provided €14,591, or nearly one third of the foundation's budget, to it in 2018.

Ordo Iuris Institute for Legal Culture



Established in 2013, Ordo Iuris is a legal institute based in Warsaw, Poland which aims to promote traditional values and the 'natural order' by providing legal advice and counselling, legislative drafting, holding seminars and hearings. It also provides training to young lawyers. While it is ostensibly independent of the state, it acts as a legal expert centre for the Law and Justice government in Poland, and has been the initiator of several anti-SRHR and anti-gender-equality legal initiatives, including the 2016 legislative proposal for a complete ban on abortion in Poland.

Ordo Iuris monitors developments on the EU policy arena and has organised or participated in events with former or sitting MEPs in Brussels.²⁰ It is furthermore actively involved in advocacy against the Istanbul Convention

19 International Organisation for the Family, WCF XI Budapest Family Summit Launches Worldwide Pro-Family Revolution, 2 June 2017, accessed 28 May 2020.

20 See for example: Ordo Iuris, 27 July 2018, Draft of the Convention on the Rights of the Family presented in Brussels, accessed 8 June 2020.



Stop gender Convention – the Ordo Iuris international conference - 9th June, 12:00 AM

Published: 06.06.2020



Adobe Stock

The European Commission intends to adopt an extremely ideological document which will negatively impact the family and social norms under the guise of combating violence. The Istanbul Convention undermines the right of parents to raise their children according to their own beliefs and regards traditional gender roles as a 'source of violence'. In practice, the implementation of this act by the EU authorities will result in its primacy over national laws, despite the fact that the area it regulates lies outside of EU's competencies. Ordo Iuris Institute is organising the international conference about that case. Representatives of pro-family organizations from many countries will take part in the event.

Figure 5: Announcement of an Ordo Iuris conference on the Istanbul Convention 'Stop gender Convention'

at both Polish²¹ and EU levels.²² It is promoting an alternative to the Istanbul Convention, the Convention on the Rights of the Family, which it has presented in the European Parliament.²³

Aleksander Stępkowski, its founder and former director, has recently been appointed as the head of Poland's Supreme Court by the Law and Justice government.²⁴ Independent Polish media report that several other

founders or employees of the institute taken up posts in government or administration structures in the country.²⁵

While the data entered by Ordo Iuris into the Transparency Register of the EU suggests that the institute's total income in 2018 was just under €104,000, the financial statements the organisation made public on its website state that its total income for that year was over €1 million.²⁶ The statement for the income received in the 2019 financial year is even higher –

21 Ordo Iuris, *Dlaczego nie należy ratyfikować konwencji?*, accessed 8 June 2020.

22 Ordo Iuris, 9 June 2020, Stop Gender Convention conference, accessed 8 June 2020.

23 Ordo Iuris, 1 October 2018, The Convention on the Rights of the Family - international guarantee in defence of families, accessed 27 July 2020.

24 Natemat.pl, 15 May 2020, Trudno uwierzyć, że to on zastąpi Zaradkiewicza. Założyciel Ordo Iuris pokieruje Sądem Najwyższym, accessed 5 June 2020.

25 OKO.press, 6 January 2020, Podboje Ordo Iuris, accessed 8 June 2020.

26 Ordo Iuris, Sprawozdanie finansowe za rok 2018, <https://ordoiuris.pl/dokumenty>, accessed 9 June 2020.

€1,4 million, all listed as coming from donations.²⁷

Profesionales por la Ética (PPE)



While this Madrid-based organisation is primarily active in the Spanish national context, it is accredited to the European Parliament, the Fundamental Rights Platform of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency in Vienna and the OSCE.

In close alliance with other anti-choice organisations such as **ADF** and **European Dignity Watch**, the PPE focuses on working with parliamentarians, and has overseen the organisation of the Parliamentary Forum at the World Congress of Families in Madrid in 2012.

PPE listed its budget for 2018 as €15,089, all of which was dedicated to EU advocacy.

World Youth Alliance Europe (WYA Europe)



The World Youth Alliance was founded during UN meetings reviewing the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in opposition to the Youth Coalition – an international coalition of young people supporting advancement on sexual and reproductive health and rights. Anna Halpine, WYA's President and co-founder, is a former intern of an anti-choice former MEP Dana Scallion (1999-2004, EPP).

While it presents itself as a youth organisation with a general interest in health and education and a particular focus on the family, women and children, the WYA has a clear anti-choice agenda. It has published a set of advocacy white papers and fact sheets outlining its positions, which contradict international jurisprudence, stating for example that abortion and contraception do not fall under the terms 'reproductive health' or 'family planning services' (see screenshots below).²⁸ This line of argumentation is an excellent example of the attempts to reinterpret international standards in line with ideological beliefs.²⁹

The activities of WYA Europe are **co-funded through the EU's Erasmus+ Programme**.³⁰ The Alliance

²⁷ Ordo Iuris, Sprawozdanie finansowe za rok 2019, <https://ordoiuris.pl/dokumenty>, accessed 9 June 2020.

²⁸ World Youth Alliance white papers: www.wya.net/publications/white-papers/, accessed 28 May 2020.

²⁹ For a detailed list of international legal standards in support of sexual and reproductive health and rights, see Annex 1.

³⁰ See WYA website: <https://www.wya.net/>, accessed 28 May 2020.

provides internships and organises training opportunities, summer camps, European leadership training conferences³¹ and other training programmes on the dignity of the person.

WYA Europe listed its budget for 2018 as €240,700, of which €80,700 was received through the Erasmus+ programme. Between €25,000 and €50,000 was dedicated to EU advocacy.

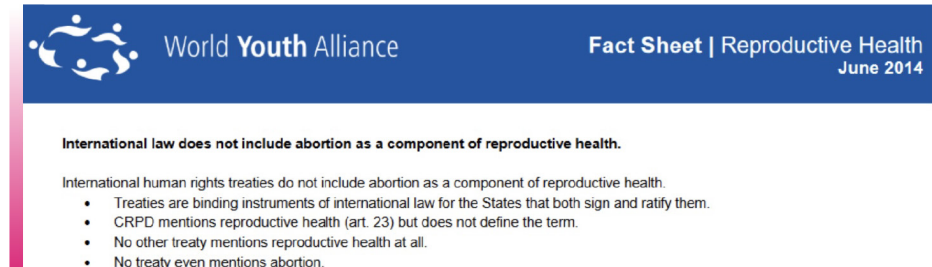


Figure 6*

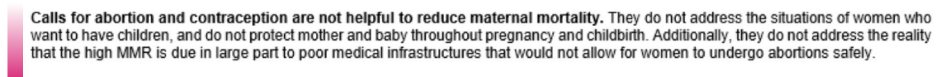


Figure 7*

*World Youth Alliance fact sheets on reproductive health (fig. 6) and maternal health (fig. 7).

31 See for example: WYAE Emerging Leaders Conference 2020: Youth for Women's Health & Rights, 3-7 November 2020, accessed 28 May 2020.

2.2 Other key actors

Agenda Europe

A 2018 publication of the European Parliamentary Forum on SRR (EPF) exposed Agenda Europe as more than simply an anonymous blog.³² It is now known that an advocacy network with this name was established in 2013 and convenes annual summits of 100-150 individuals representing various anti-SRHR organizations.

The network follows a programme outlined in a planning and strategy document allegedly written and published by an organizer of Agenda Europe called ‘Restoring the Natural Order’, which lays out the network’s aims to repeal laws on SRHR, gender equality and LGBTI rights across Europe.

According to EPF, several politicians are members or sympathisers of Agenda Europe, such as Luca Volonté, former Italian parliamentarian and EPP President at the Council of Europe, chair of **Dignitatis Humanae Institute** and Jan Figel, former European Commissioner and current EU Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief. Representatives of **ECPM**, **FAFCE**, **CitizenGo**, **HazteOir** and **Ordo Iuris** are recorded as having attended meetings.

The network has published an anonymous statement in response to the EPF publication claiming that the ‘Agenda Europe network has no links

to or control over the Agenda Europe blog (and the Twitter Account), despite the use of the same name. The document “Restoring the Natural Order” is not an Agenda Europe publication. It is a paper drafted by an individual person without any involvement of Agenda Europe.”³³

CITIZEN GO



An online petition platform generating public donations and support for campaigns aimed at furthering a conservative Christian agenda, frequently featuring anti-choice causes. Its president and founder, Ignacio Arsuaga, has also founded the Spanish anti-choice online petition platform HazteOir. Arsuaga organized the **VI World Congress of Families** in Madrid. In the **VII World Congress of Families** in Sydney, Australia, he was awarded the 2017 title of ‘Man of the year in defence of the natural family.’

³² Neil Datta, 2018, Restoring the Natural Order: An Agenda for Europe, European Parliamentary Forum for SRR, accessed 5 June 2020.

³³ Agenda Europe, <http://agendaeurope.org/>, accessed 5 June 2020.

The board of trustees of CitizenGo includes Luca Volonté, a former Italian parliamentarian and former EPP President at the Council of Europe (2008-2013), who is currently the chair of **Dignitatis Humanae Institute**. Brian Brown, the head of the National Organization for Marriage and a prominent anti-LGBT activist who coordinates the World Congress of Families on behalf of the **International Organization for the Family** is also a board member.

In 2018, CitizenGO reported revenue of €2,4 million, allegedly collected through small online donations.³⁴ An openDemocracy investigation suggests that CitizenGO and HazteOír may serve as a vehicle to circumvent Spanish campaign finance and disclosure laws in support of the conservative right-wing Vox party.³⁵

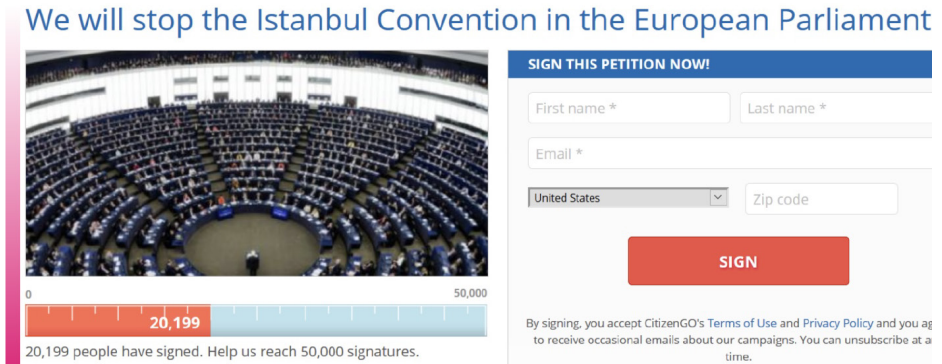


Figure 8: A CitizenGo petition (9 August 2017, accessed 28 May 2020), calling for the European Parliament to reject a resolution on the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul

³⁴ CitizenGO, Financial Statements, <https://www.citizenngo.org/en/financial-statements>, accessed 3 June 2020.

³⁵ openDemocracy, 25 April 2019, Revealed: the Trump-linked ‘Super PAC’ working behind the scenes to drive Europe’s voters to the far right, accessed 3 June 2020.

guía de voto

Elecciones Generales, 10 de noviembre de 2019

Principales partidos de centro-derecha
que concurren a las elecciones



Vida (aborto, eutanasia)	○	✓
Familia	○	✓
Libertad económica	✓	✓
Libertad de educación	✗	✓
Libertad religiosa	○	✓
Unidad nacional	○	✓
Derogar la ley de violencia de género	✗	✓
Derogar las leyes LGTBI	✗	✓
Derogar la ley de memoria histórica	✗	✓

sí
 NO
 A MEDIAS

Figure 9. HazteOir's 2019 European elections voting guide comparing the Partido Popular (EPP) and Vox (ID) and their position on abortion and gender-based violence laws among others.



DHI is a think tank aiming to ‘protect and promote human dignity based on the anthropological truth that man is born in the image and likeness of God.’³⁶ It conducts research, monitors EU-level policy developments and coordinates parliamentary working groups in the UK, Lithuania and Romania. It further promotes its own Universal Declaration of Human Dignity, which it encourages European and national parliamentarians to sign.

The founder and president of DHI is Benjamin Harnwell, a former assistant to a former MEP Nirj Deva (ECR) and current board member of the **European Christian Political Movement (ECPM)**. DHI’s chairman is Luca Volonté, a former Italian parliamentarian and the EPP President at the Council of Europe, and a board member of **CitizenGo**.

In past years, media reports have alleged that the DHI is funded by the controversial U.S. political figure, Steve Bannon, who is a trustee of the DHI.³⁷

Bannon is reported to have been planning to use a monastery that had been leased by DHI from the Italian state as a launching pad for a European alt-right movement.³⁸ The Italian state revoked DHI’s lease in 2019, citing contractual violations and protests from local residents.³⁹

European Christian Political Movement (ECPM)



The ECPM is an alliance of small Christian political parties with a distinctly anti-SRHR stance. It started in 2002 with representatives from political parties of 15 different countries. It registered its activities in 2005 and has been receiving European Parliament funding as a political party since 2010.

³⁶ DHI, About the institute, accessed 28/09/2016

³⁷ openDemocracy, 29 March 2019, Revealed: Trump-linked US Christian ‘fundamentalists’ pour millions of ‘dark money’ into Europe, boosting the far right, accessed 9 June 2020.

³⁸ The Washington Post, 25 December 2018, With Support from Steve Bannon, a Medieval Monastery Could become a Populist Training Ground, accessed 5 June 2020.

³⁹ openDemocracy, 11 July 2019, The American dark money behind Europe’s far right, accessed 9 June 2020.

Currently, four sitting MEPs are members, Cristian Terhes (RO), Helmut Geuking (DE) and Bert-Jan Ruisen (NL) from the ECR group, as well as Peter van Dalen (NL) from the EPP. The ECPM maintains a research foundation called the Christian Political Foundation for Europe (CPFE) and a youth branch, called the European Christian Political Youth (ECPY) which organises summer schools and academies for activists.

European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ)



ECLJ was founded by the US Christian televangelist Reverend Pat Robertson in Strasbourg in 1998 as a European off shoot of the American Centre for Law and Justice (ACLJ). The ECLJ is a Christian legal advocacy organisation. It presents legal analysis to institutions such as the European Court of Human Rights, the Council of Europe and EU bodies on key cases relating to SRHR and religious freedom.

The African arm of the ACLJ, the East African Centre for Law and Justice (EACLJ), has supported anti-abortion⁴⁰

and homophobic⁴¹ initiatives in several African countries. There is also a Russian affiliate, called the Slavic Centre for Law and Justice (SCLJ), based in Moscow.

The General Director of the ECLJ is Grégor Puppincq, who was also the president of the **One of Us European Citizens' Initiative**.

In June 2019, the ECLJ launched a report entitled 'Empowering women: a Criticism of contraception' at a conference in the Council of Europe.⁴² This report came in response to a motion for a resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe entitled 'Empowering women: promoting access to contraception in Europe'.⁴³

The ECLJ report aims to debunk the current scientific consensus on hormonal contraception, as well as smear organisations working to deliver family planning services, such as EPF and IPPF.

According to BuzzFeed, the ECLJ's budget for 2012 was nearly €1 million.⁴⁴ The ECLJ's U.S. parent organisation,

[EACLJ Continues its fight against Abortion in Kenya](#), accessed 11 September 2020.

⁴¹ [The Nation](#), 4 April 2014, [It's Not Just Uganda: Behind the Christian Right's Onslaught in Africa](#), accessed 11 September 2020.

⁴² [ECLJ](#), 2019, [Empowering women: a criticism of contraception](#), accessed 8 June 2020.

⁴³ [PACE](#), 28 June 2018, [Motion for a resolution, Doc. 14597, Empowering women: promoting access to contraception in Europe](#), accessed 8 June 2020.

⁴⁴ [Buzzfeed](#), 29 July 2014, [The Rise of Europe's Religious Right](#), accessed 9 June 2020.

⁴⁰ See for example: [EACLJ](#), 29 March 2017,

the ACLJ, has declared its own income for 2014 at over \$50 million.⁴⁵ An openDemocracy investigation revealed that between 2008-2017, the ACLJ has channelled \$12,4 million towards its European operations.⁴⁶

Federation Pro Europa Christiana



Federation pro Europa Christiana is part of an ultra-conservative movement called Tradition, Family, Property (TFP), whose members call for an XXI century crusade to bring about a Christian revolution. This umbrella organisation seeks to influence the moral and social development of Europe with Christian values.

It has had a presence in Brussels since 2008.⁴⁷ It condemns same-sex unions, divorce, relationships outside of marriage, and abortion. As part of the TFP network, the Federation is intricately linked to **Ordo Iuris** and other

national-level TFP organisations.⁴⁸

TFP affiliates organise summer youth camps and student associations across Europe. Together with the US-based Leadership Institute, TFP members organise training events in Europe, with workshops focusing on fundraising, lobbying and advocacy.⁴⁹

The FPEC declares an average of approximately €2 million to the French authorities, originating from membership fees across Europe.⁵⁰

International Organisation for the Family



Founded in 1995 as the World Congress of Families, and since rebranded as the International Organization for the Family (IOF). The US-based IOF is one of the leading global anti-SRRH organisations.

The IOF organises the annual World Congress of Families (WCF), an international conference that seeks to 'unite and equip leaders, organizations, and families to affirm, celebrate,

⁴⁵ ACLJ, 2015 Financial report, accessed 9 June 2020.

⁴⁶ openDemocracy, 29 March 2019, Revealed: Trump-linked US Christian 'fundamentalists' pour millions of 'dark money' into Europe, boosting the far right, accessed 9 June 2020.

⁴⁷ FPEC has at a point been registered as a lobbying organisation in the Transparency Register, although as of July 2020 this was no longer the case.

⁴⁸ For more, see: Datta, N., 2020, Modern Day Crusaders in Europe. Tradition, Family and Property: Analysis of a Transnational, Ultra-conservative, Catholic-inspired Influence Network, European Parliamentary Forum for SRR

⁴⁹ Ibid., p.17.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 15.

and defend the natural family as the only fundamental and sustainable unit of society.⁵¹ The WCF has hosted thirteen international conferences and dozens of regional conferences, and these events have been attended by thousands of individuals representing organizations from throughout the world.

The latest of these conferences was held in Verona, Italy in March 2019. The speakers included the then deputy prime minister of Italy and head of the Lega party, Matteo Salvini, Hungarian Minister for Family and Youth Affairs, Katalin Novak, and president of **CitizenGo**, Ignacio Arsuaga.⁵²

The IOF reported a total revenue of \$5.4 million from 2008 to 2017.⁵³

Political Network for Values



51 WCF, About the Congress, <https://wcfverona.org/en/about-the-congress/>, accessed 5 June 2020.

52 WCF, <https://wcfverona.org/en/>, accessed 5 June 2020.

53 “International Organization for the Family,” Nonprofit Explorer, ProPublica, <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/208568180>

The Political Network for Values is a global network of politicians who commit to ‘actively defending and promoting a decalogue⁵⁴ of shared values among which is the protection of human life, marriage, family or religious freedom and conscience’.⁵⁵ It aims to collect and share best practices and promote the protection of life from its moment of conception.

PNfV’s members are asked to sign a Decalogue of Commitments for Human Dignity and the Common Good.⁵⁶ It further has a dedicated Youth Programme providing young people with training on advocacy towards international institutions.⁵⁷ In April 2017, the PNfV organised its second Transatlantic Summit in the European Parliament, hosted by former MEP Laima Liucija Andrikiene and the EPP Group.⁵⁸

Headquartered in the United States, this initiative was created by the Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute (C-FAM), an anti-choice organisation actively lobbying the UN. The PNfV advisory board includes a number of

54 decalogue = ten commandments

55 Political Network for Values, <https://politicalnetworkforvalues.org/en/who-we-are/>, accessed 3 June 2020.

56 PNfV, Decalogue of Commitments for Human Dignity and the Common Good, accessed 3 June 2020.

57 Political Network for Values, Youth Program, accessed 3 June 2020.

58 EPP Group, 27 April 2017, 2nd Transatlantic Summit: Political Network for Values brings together key political players and civil society leaders in the European Parliament, accessed 3 June 2020.

European politicians, including the Hungarian Minister for Family and Youth Affairs, Katalin Novak, former Spanish Minister of the Interior and MEP Jaime Mayor Oreja (EPP), former promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU, Jan Figel (of the Slovak European Commissioner and current special envoy for the EPP-affiliated KDH) and former MEP Marijana Petir.

Its board of directors includes Ignacio Arsuaga, president of **CitizenGO**. Its committee of experts includes Sophia Kuby of **ADF International** and **European Dignity Watch** and Luca Volonté, former Italian parliamentarian and EPP President at the Council of Europe, chair of **Dignitatis Humanae Institute**. The PNfV lists the **ECPM** as an allied network.



Thursday, April 27th, 2017

Venue: European Parliament, Room A5E2
Interpretation: English, French, Spanish

13:00 hrs - Registration and Welcoming Lunch (European Parliament)

15:00 hrs - Opening remarks

Jaime Mayor Oreja, Chairman of the Political Network for Values.
Laima Andrikiene, Member of the European Parliament

15:15 hrs - A critical momentum in a new global scenario

Chair: **Miroslav Mikolášik**, Member of the European Parliament.
Alberto Bárcena, Professor of Contemporary History, San Pablo CEU University, Spain.
Anca Maria Cernea, President of the Association of Catholic Doctors of Bucharest, Romania.
Marguerite A. Peeters, Founder of the Institute for Intercultural Dialogue Dynamics.

16:15 hrs - The emergence of a family citizenry in Europe and America

Chair: **Marijana Petir**, Member of the European Parliament.
Colombia: Alejandro Ordóñez, Attorney General of Colombia.
Mexico: Rodrigo Iván Cortés, Spokesperson of Frente Nacional por la Familia.
United States of America: Travis Weber, Director of the Center for Religious Liberty, Family Research Council.
Croatia: Željka Markić, 'In the name of the Family. Promoter of the marriage referendum in Croatia.

17:15 hrs - Coffee break

17:30 hrs - Inspiring policy initiatives in Europe and the Americas

Chair: **Branislav Škripek**, Member of the European Parliament.
Defending religious freedom from the European Institutions. Jan Figel, European Union Special Envoy for the Promotion of Freedom of Religion or Belief.
The resolution by the European Parliament on the systematic, mass murder of religious minorities: Lars Adaktusson, Member of the European Parliament, Sweden.
The Family Friendly Country Program: Katalin Novák, Minister of State for Family and Youth Affairs, Hungary.
Palliative care and euthanasia prevention: Sir Jeffrey Donaldson, Member of Parliament, United Kingdom.

18:30 hrs - Closing of first session

19:00 hrs - Dinner hosted by EPP Group
Venue: Members' Restaurant of the European Parliament.
Key note speaker: **HE Gintaras GRUŠAS**, Archbishop Metropolitan of Vilnius.

Friday, April 28th, 2017

08:00 hrs - **Holy Mass** (optional)
Venue: European Parliament, meditation room.

09:00 hrs - A Call to Action:

Session 1 - Global challenges in International Organizations

Venue: European Parliament, Room A5E2
Interpretation: English, French, Spanish

Chair: **Brian Brown**, President of the International Organization for the Family.

- The UN Agenda: proposals for action.
Sharon Slater, President of Family Watch International.
- The voice of Africa.
Theresa Okafor, President of the Foundation for African Cultural Heritage (Nigeria)
- Specific proposals:
Carlos Polo and Carlos Beltramo, Population Research Institute.
Leo van Doesburg, European Christian Political Movement.
Sophia Kuby, Alliance Defending Freedom.
- The CitizenGO platform.
Alvaro Zulueta, CEO.
- Inter-parliamentarian dialogue.

11:30 hrs - Coffee break

11:45 hrs - A Call to Action:

Session 2 - Regional Working Groups

Floor will be open to parliamentarians to share initiatives and reflections within the working groups.

1 Working group 1: Organization of American States / Inter-American Human Rights System

Language: Spanish - Venue: Room A3F383
Alfonso Aguilar, American Principles Project (Washington DC)
Lisbeth Hernández Lecona, Member of Senate (Mexico)
Neydy Casillas, Alliance Defending Freedom (Washington DC)

2 Working group 2: European Institutions (EU, CoE, ECHR)

Language: English - Venue: Room A5F385
Gregor Puppink, Center for Law and Justice.
Lorcan Price, Alliance Defending Freedom.

13:30 hrs - Closing reception - wine and snacks - hosted by EPP Group
Venue: European Parliament

- Final remarks and conclusions.
- Brief presentation of the Youth Program of the Political Network for Values.

Figure 10. Programme of the II Transatlantic Summit of Policy Makers, organised by the Political Network for Values at the European Parliament 27-28 April 2017 and hosted by the EPP group.

PART 3

TACTICS USED BY ANTI-GENDER MOVEMENTS

The tactics used by anti-choice organisations to influence policy at EU level include standard lobbying and advocacy approaches, such as meeting policy makers, holding public events, providing briefings and policy papers, submitting voting amendments and parliamentary questions. These organisations are also proficient in the use of online campaigning tools and citizen mobilisation.

However, it is the more disingenuous methods used at times by some organisations, such as spreading slanderous messages and misinformation, which can have a negative impact on the political debate on SRHR. International or U.S.-centred anti-choice campaigns have in the past been used to exert influence on the EU policy process, demonstrating the interconnectedness of the anti-gender movement.

The collection of examples below serves to structure and categorise the tactics and approaches used by anti-choice organisations and gather evidence of how they have been used in recent years.

Misinformation

False accusations and slander:

Accusations of SRHR organisations' involvement in illegal activities is a frequent strategy adopted by the anti-choice movements – the European Dignity Watch 2012 report¹ accusing Marie Stopes International and IPPF of misappropriation of EU funds is a case in point, as is the #DefundIPPF campaign (see box 4) based on the false allegations² about the organisation's US affiliate engaging in an 'illegal trade in body parts.'

Slander and the use of fear-rousing language is another tactic, which often involves equating SRHR, gender equality and LGBTI rights with sexual deviations and social pathologies. An example of this are the emails to MEPs sent ahead of the vote on the Estrela report, accusing the report of promoting masturbation in toddlers and paedophilia (see box 3). Similar allegations have been used in different legal and national contexts to oppose the Istanbul Convention (see box 1 in part one).

Furthermore, anti-SRHR activists do not abstain from personal attacks and smear campaigns against individuals, with pro-choice MEPs being compared to Nazis³ or targeted with homophobic attacks.⁴

1 European Dignity Watch, Funding of Abortion through EU Development Aid, 2012, accessed 28 May 2020

2 ADF International, 2015, IPPF Fact Sheet, accessed 5 June 2020.

3 C-FAM, EU: while 1.3 million sign the pro-life petition, radical pro-abortion-politicians don't want to learn the lesson, accessed 5 June 2020.

4 C-FAM, European Parliament: the Lunacek-Report, and why it should be rejected, accessed 5 June 2020.

Box 2: #DefundIPPF campaign

In September 2015, the International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (IPPF EN), its work and Brussels-based staff became targets of a particularly vicious campaign spearheaded by ADF International, the One of Us Federation and European Dignity Watch. The anti-choice organisations exploited the US-based media storm around the release of deceptively edited videos which claimed that IPPF's US member, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA), illegally harvested organs from aborted fetuses.

Dubbed #DefundIPPF (adapting the #DefundPP slogan from the US), the campaign used underhanded tactics, which combined both online and offline elements to mobilise several MEPs for the anti-choice cause.

Online, the hashtags #DefundIPPF and #TruthAboutIPPF were promoted on social media such as Facebook⁵ and Twitter,⁶ with the involvement of the existing network of supporters. In parallel, CitizenGo launched a petition⁷ calling to end EU funding to IPPF.

These activities created a buzz providing a backdrop to the offline offensive. This began with a few MEPs (including EPP's Anna Zaborška and ECR's Bronislav Skripek) and anti-choice activists disrupting an IPPF event organised at the European Parliament by handing out flyers with false accusations against the organisation, placing posters with the #DefundIPPF hashtag throughout the room and heckling speakers.

In the weeks preceding and following these events, a series of virtually identical parliamentary questions were posed by anti-choice MEPs (now all former MEPs: EPP's Miroslav Mikolášik⁸ and Marijana Petir,⁹ ENF's Lorenzo Fontana,¹⁰ S&D's Luigi Morgano¹¹) to the European Commissioner of Development Neven Mimica, repeating the false allegations against PPFA and asking if EU funding provided to IPPF would be revoked. Mr Mimica's answer clarified that while the

5 Facebook page of the #DefundIPPF campaign, www.facebook.com/DefundIPPF

6 Twitter stream of the #DefundIPPF hashtag, <https://twitter.com/search?q=%23defundippf&src=typd>

7 CitizenGO, EU Commission: stop funding IPPF petition, accessed 5 June 2020.

8 Question for written answer to the Commission, Miroslav Mikolášik, 20 July 2015, Illegal trafficking of human body parts

9 Question for written answer to the Commission, Marijana Petir, 28 October 2015, Unlawful activities of the Planned Parenthood organisation

10 Question for written answer to the Commission, Lorenzo Fontana, 26 August 2015, Planned Parenthood scandal

11 Question for written answer to the Commission, Luigi Morgano, 7 October 2015, Potential action against the International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (IPPF-EN)

EC was aware of the allegations against the PPFA, the organisation was not a recipient of EU funding.¹²

Anti-choice campaigners followed up by sending a letter signed by 19 MEPs to the Prime Minister of Luxembourg, Xavier Bettel, requesting the withdrawal of the patronage for the European Week of Action for Girls 2015 if IPPF EN remained one of the co-organisers.

They also sent a letter signed by 63 MEPs to the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz. This letter called for IPPF to be banned from organising events at the European Parliament and for its staff to be stricken from the Transparency Register. Both requests were disregarded.

ADF International and the One of Us Federation then proceeded to organise an event hosted by the EPP¹³ whose sole purpose was to slander IPPF EN and its associates. Among the panellists was Lila Rovse, a prominent US anti-choice activist, who has repeatedly been involved in the creation of misleading video footage against PPFA.¹⁴

Her organisation, Live Action, has close links to anti-choice groups who have in the past engaged in violent criminal activity in the US.¹⁵ Ahead of the event, ‘fact sheets’¹⁶ were sent to MEPs with misleading and factually inaccurate information on IPPF services.

12 See for example joint answer given by Mr Mimica on behalf of the Commission, 11 January 2016

13 ADF International, ADF Intl to co-host event at European Parliament on current Planned Parenthood video scandal, accessed 5 June 2020.

14 The Atlantic, The Face of the Millennial Anti-Abortion Movement, accessed 5 June 2020.

15 Right Wing Watch, Live Action Praises Church-bombing Cult Leader, accessed 5 June 2020.

16 ADF International, IPPF Fact Sheet, accessed 5 June 2020.



Figure 11: Facebook page of the #DefundIPPF campaign, June 2016

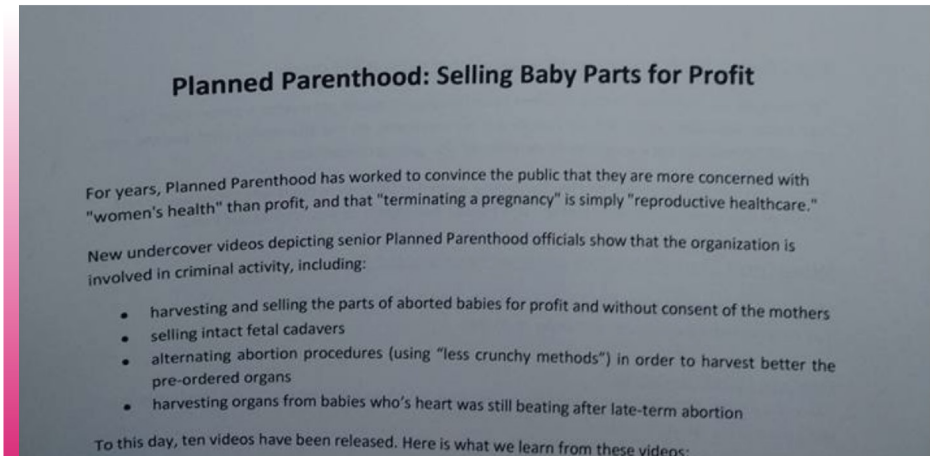


Figure 12: Flyers handed out at the IPPF event in the European Parliament on 22 September 2015

Misrepresentation of legal and scientific facts: Anti-choice publications often present falsified, misinterpreted or selectively chosen facts – the argumentation and studies they quote are not widely accepted by the academic community.

They are often ideologically motivated and based on poor methodology.

While presented as well-researched reports, citing academic journals and providing opinions from experts, anti-choice publications are primarily designed to mislead policy makers and the general opinion to win them over to the anti-choice cause. This was the case for example with an academic study referenced in European Dignity Watch's 2012 report claiming that 'almost 10% of all mental health problems are directly linked to abortion',¹⁷ a finding decisively debunked by the scientific community.¹⁸

In another example, the initiators of the One of Us ECI, which included several qualified lawyers, have misled their supporters by citing the 2011 European Court of Justice case of 'Brüstle v Greenpeace'¹⁹ as the legal justification for the initiative. In this

ruling, the Court declared that scientific findings emanating from procedures which involved the destruction of the human embryo could not be patented, meaning essentially that human embryos cannot be experimented upon. However, the judgment explicitly stated that the court is not referring to the destruction of embryos resulting from pregnancy termination. This means that the judgment cannot have an impact on the regulation of abortion, nor the provision of funding for abortion in third countries through EU development aid.

A recent case in point is the ECLJ's report 'Empowering women: a criticism of contraception', which makes claims such as: 'contraception has not proven itself successful so far and some of its justifications remain questionable' and manipulates statistical data to create the impression that

17 European Dignity Watch, *Funding of Abortion through EU Development Aid*, 2012, p.6, accessed 28 May 2020

18 Guttmacher Institute, *Study Purporting to Show Link Between Abortion and Mental Health Outcomes Decisively Debunked*, accessed 5 June 2020.

19 ECLJ, *Synthetic analysis of the ECJ Case C-34/10 Oliver Brüstle v Greenpeace e.V. and its ethical consequences*, accessed 5 June 2020.

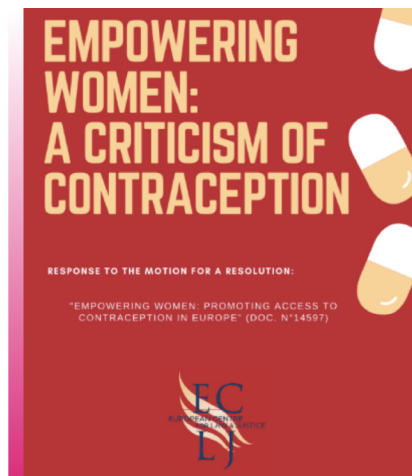


Figure 13. Cover of the ECLJ report 'Empowering women: a criticism of contraception'

contraception is not effective at preventing unwanted pregnancy.²⁰

Colonisation of progressive notions: Anti-choice organisations frequently present themselves as defenders and promoters of human rights. European Dignity Watch claims to defend ‘fundamental freedoms’, ADF International aims to ‘promote religious freedom’ and the World Youth Alliance ‘defends the dignity of the person’ – all positive notions rooted in international legal treaties.

It is however not specified that the interpretation of these notions by these organisations differs fundamentally from international jurisprudence. In particular, the anti-SRHR movement is increasingly using the concept of conscientious objection, which is usually understood to refer to individuals opting out from performing acts they morally condemn, and applied e.g. in the context of objection to military service.

In the anti-choice interpretation, the term ‘conscientious objection’ is used to justify doctors’ or pharmacists’ refusal to perform lawful abortions or provide contraceptives. However, these contentions have no basis in international law – in fact, under human rights law, the right to conscientious objection is subject to limitations to protect the rights of others. With regards to healthcare specifically, conscientious

objection is constricted by legal standards that protect the right to life, health and privacy.

The use of positively associated human rights notions by the anti-SRHR movement serves a double purpose: firstly, by positioning themselves as human rights NGOs, these organisations earn policy makers’ trust and open pathways to establishing a relationship with them. ADF International frequently organises events on religious freedom and freedom of conscience which build its legitimacy within the European Parliament.

Secondly, by positioning themselves as the ‘true’ representatives of human rights, anti-choice activists can accuse pro-SRHR organisations of being anti-human rights (e.g. against the ‘right to life of an unborn child’²¹), anti-faith and anti-human dignity. They thus re-define progressive notions in accordance with their interests.

Citizen mobilisation

Social media campaigns: Anti-choice organisations have demonstrated their ability to create successful social media campaigns that mobilise tens of thousands of supporters around their goals.

While these campaigns are presented as instigated by individual concerned citizens, the organiser behind is often an anti-SRHR lobby group. While

20 ECLJ, 2019, Empowering women: a criticism of contraception, accessed 8 June 2020.

21 ADF International, ADF Intl Defends Right to Life of Unborn Before European Court, accessed 5 June 2020.

social media campaigns are also organised by progressive civil society organisations, they are usually done in a more open and transparent way, clearly identifying the organisers.

The social media campaigns serve to create public pressure on policy makers aiming to incline them to support certain policies rather than others.

Aside from targeting the IPPF and the Estrela report (see boxes 2 and 3), the anti-choice lobby has also targeted the Noichl report on an EU strategy for equality between women and men post-2015²² with the #StopNoichl hashtag.

The online petition site CitizenGo, promoting conservative Christian values, regularly hosts calls for the rejection of pro-SRHR and pro-gender equality reports in the EP. Its petition to reject the Estrela report²³ collected nearly 50,000 signatures, while the petition²⁴ against the Tarabella report on equality between women and men in the European Union in 2013²⁵ (launched by **FAFCE**) was signed by over 60,000 people.

Spam and mass emailing: Ahead of the plenary vote on the Estrela report on SRHR, MEPs received an estimated 80,000 to 100,000 emails from citizens designed to flood their inboxes and demonstrate a large-scale opposition to the report. This was a result of a campaign instigated by the **European Dignity Watch**, which sent out a highly emotive and misleading call to action to its supporters (see box 3).

Despite the falseness of the allegations made against the Estrela report, the campaign resulted in a relatively high mobilisation and doubtlessly made a major contribution to the subsequent rejection of the report.

While this is the most prominent example of the use of mass emailing in recent years, it is by far not an isolated case. The most recent case in 2020 concerns the European Commissioner for Justice, Vera Jourova, was targeted with a mass emailing campaign organised by Ordo Iuris (see section 2.1. above) in response to the European Commission's letters sent to Polish regional authorities. The authorities had adopted resolutions establishing 'LGBT-free zones'.

The European Commission's letters to Polish regional authorities stated that in the opinion of the European Commission, the adoption of these homophobic resolutions, which reduced the LGBT community to an 'ideology', called into question the regional institutions' ability to implement

22 European Parliament resolution of 9 June 2015 on the EU Strategy for equality between women and men post 2015

23 CitizenGO, Reject the Estrela Report! Petition, accessed 5 June 2020.

24 CitizenGO, Stop Tarabella relaunching Estrela! No EU support to abortion, accessed 5 June 2020.

25 European Parliament resolution of 10 March 2015 on progress on equality between women and men in the European Union in 2013

the principle of non-discrimination.²⁶

The email protest stated an objection to the ‘political pressure and unfair blackmail that [the EC used] against Polish local government authorities.’ According to the statistics on the site, the email has been sent to Commissioner Jourova’s cabinet over 23,000 times as of July 2020.²⁷

Mass emailing has been deployed (without success) also ahead of the votes on the Lunacek,²⁸ Tarabella and

Noichl reports. As early as in 2002, the Van Lanker report on SRHR was targeted using the same tactics: the constituencies of anti-choice organisations in several countries, including France, Germany, Poland, Canada and the United States, organised an email and fax smear campaign asking MEPs to vote against the report and branding it as an effort to ‘impose abortion’ on EU candidate countries.²⁹

STRONA GŁÓWNA KAMPANIE AKTUALNOŚCI WESPRZYJ

Jest nas już **412527**
wysłaliśmy **1572182** protestów

PROTESTUJ!
PROTESTY • PETYCJE • INICJATYWY SPOŁECZNE

NIE dla antyrodzinnej presji eurokratów na polskie samorządy!
wysłanych protestów: **23023**

Figure 14. Screenshot of the email campaign against the European Commission’s actions to oppose Polish regional authorities’ adoption of homophobic ‘LGBT-free zones’. Protestuj.pl, NIE dla antyrodzinnej presji eurokratów na polskie samorządy!, accessed 27 July 2020.

²⁶ Rule of Law, 2 June 2020, The European Commission intervenes on “LGBT-free” zones in Poland, accessed 27 July 2020.

²⁷ Protestuj.pl, NIE dla antyrodzinnej presji eurokratów na polskie samorządy!, accessed 27 July 2020.

²⁸ European Parliament resolution of 4 February 2014 on the EU Roadmap against homophobia and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity

²⁹ Catholics for a Free Choice, 2003, ‘Preserving power and privilege. The Vatican’s agenda in the European Union’, p.21, accessed 23 June 2020.

Box 3: Opposition to the Estrela report

In 2012, the Anne van Lanker report on SRHR from 2002 was due for an update, especially in light of the EU's enlargement by 12 member states and the vast discrepancies in access to sexual and reproductive health and rights between the Western, and the Central-Eastern European member states. Portuguese MEP Edite Estrela of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) was appointed as rapporteur.

Estrela's draft report³⁰ was strongly endorsed by the FEMM committee despite MEP Anna Zaborska's opposition to it. She cited the demands of the then-ongoing One of Us ECI as being at odds with the recommendations of the report regarding abortion.

However, once the report was due for a vote in the plenary, it attracted opposition from organisations such as European Dignity Watch,³¹ World Youth Alliance³² and FAFCE.³³ These organisations mobilised support for their cause through platforms such as CitizenGO, which collected nearly 50,000 signatures on a petition calling for the rejection of the report.³⁴

They further called out for individual citizens to email MEPs demanding they reject the report. A template message accused the report of enforcing 'mandatory masturbation in children at age 0-4' and 'a form of paedophilia that could lead to child abuse'.

Overall, an estimated 80,000-100,000 emails were received by MEP Estrela and several other pro-SRHR MEPs, some of them containing violent language or direct threats. At the same time, anti-choice organisations employed offline tactics such as the placement of plastic dolls representing a human foetus in MEPs' post boxes, along with a letter calling on them to reject the Estrela report.

As a result, the report was sent back to committee for re-drafting in October 2013, and some of its passages were watered down to make it more palatable to the conservative side of the EP. Nonetheless, the report was finally rejected when an alternative (and completely devoid of content) EPP/ECR resolution³⁵ was adopted.

30 European Parliament draft report on SRHR, 3 December 2013, accessed 5 June 2020.

31 European Dignity Watch, 22 October 2013, Victory: European Parliament Stands for Human Dignity. ESTRELA Report Not Adopted, accessed 5 June 2020.

32 WYA, The Estrela Report: Battle at the European Parliament, accessed 5 June 2020.

33 FAFCE, 12 reasons to vote against the Estrela Resolution on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, accessed 5 June 2020.

34 CitizenGO, Reject the Estrela Report! Petition, accessed 5 June 2020.

35 European Parliament resolution of 10 December 2013 on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, accessed 5 June 2020.

The debate ahead of the vote, as well as the vote's outcome was accompanied by heckles and jeering from the report's opponents. The Estrela report was lost mainly on abstentions – i.e. centrist MEPs who chose not to take a side. This in turn allowed the opposition to overtake the report's active supporters by a narrow majority.

From: European Dignity Watch
Sent: Monday, November 25, 2013 9:23 AM
Subject: Action Alert: Estrela report back on the agenda for tomorrow!



The Estrela Report: promoting compulsory sex education for toddlers and a right to abortion, and calling for restrictions on conscientious objection

The scandalous [Estrela Report on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights](#) is back on the agenda! (...) The proponents of this [radical anti-freedom and anti-life report](#) are very nervous: No debate will be allowed, no new amendments will be allowed to be tabled and the existing tabled alternative resolution, which was a good, non-ideological text, is completely banned from the agenda. This means that the content of the report will be changed in cosmetic details at best, which means that MEPs will be asked to vote on the same toxic report which they referred back to the committee, because it was not acceptable to the majority of the house.

(...) The number of amendments and "split votes" tabled for this report prior to the last plenary session was unusually high - an indicator that European Parliament is deeply divided over this controversial proposal. Nevertheless, the MEPs who proposed it still hope to find a way to [advance their ultra feminist agenda](#) of compulsory sex and gender education starting with toddlers onwards, [free abortion on demand](#), and serious restrictions on doctor's right to conscientious objection.

On the other hand, thanks to a massive reaction by citizens across Europe, more and more MEPs are aware that they need to demand that the boundaries of EU competence be respected—which does not allow for the promotion of abortion and stands for the dignity of women, the right to life and for the protection of fundamental freedoms for all. As a result of the efforts of human rights organizations to raise public awareness in Europe of the many problems contained in the Estrela Report, [MEPs received thousands of emails before the last plenary session](#). But there are still reasons to be concerned and the battle is not yet over. (...)

What can you do to help?

- [Contact the MEPs of your country who are members of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality \(see the attached list\)](#). Ask them to vote against the report in the final Committee vote, no matter what changes are made to the report. The radical Estrela Report is simply unacceptable.
- You may use arguments from the analysis below when contacting your MEPs.

What's problematic in the Estrela Report on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights?

- The Estrela Report calls for a so-called "right to abortion". But the EU has no competence to promote abortion. Hence, such a call is against EU law. Furthermore, it is incompatible with the fundamental right to life of every human being.
- The Report calls for restrictions on the right to conscientious objection, which it considers an obstacle to establish a so-called "right to abortion" (Paragraph 35 of the Report). But conscientious objection is an internationally recognized right. Everyone has the fundamental freedom to not participate in a practice that is contrary to one's conscience, within the boundaries prescribed by law.
- The Report calls for compulsory sexual education according to the Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe published by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the German BzgA. (...). Although these standards differentiate between "minimum" and "optimal achievements", [masturbation at age 0-4 is mandatory](#). In short, this is a programme for sexual initiation beginning at the toddler age. And one seriously has to ask oneself whether this kind of sexual education is not in fact [a form of paedophilia that could lead to child abuse](#), albeit under a pretext of "education" or "skill development".

Figure 15: Fragments of an email from European Dignity Watch calling on citizens to email MEPs about the Estrela report, November 2013 (highlights by the author).

Institutional pathways

Invoking the principle of subsidiarity:

Anti-choice organisations frequently exploit the political position embraced by a number of political groups in the European Parliament with regards to the principle of subsidiarity. This principle, enshrined in the EU treaties, limits the areas in which the EU has a legislative competence. One of the policy areas excluded from EU competence is the area of healthcare.

Anti-choice organisations argue that hereby the European Parliament should altogether refrain from debating or adopting positions on issues such as reproductive health, pertaining to this area. This argument was quoted as the basis for opposition e.g. to the Tarabella and Noichl reports by the **FAFCE**³⁶ and the **European Dignity Watch**.³⁷ **FAFCE** organised an event on the importance of the subsidiarity principle³⁸ in this context, in January 2014.

While legal provisions relating to abortion and reproductive health are indeed the sole competence of the EU member states, it does not mean that

the European Parliament is not allowed to express its opinion on these matters. On the contrary, it expresses its opinion on a number of issues, which do not fall under EU competence.

The claim that politicians who wish to discuss or establish a policy position on SRHR work against the principle of subsidiarity is unfounded and has the sole purpose of shutting down debate on the topic.

Use of European Citizens' Initiatives:

The European Citizens Initiative (ECI) One of Us was one of the most successful citizens' initiatives to date, with 1.7 million signatures collected across the EU. It was also the first time that the anti-choice movement engaged with citizens on such a massive scale to further its goals.

While most organisations involved in the initiative had religious backgrounds, religious belief was never mentioned as a motivation for the initiative. The focus was on legal arguments, such as the *Brüstle v. Greenpeace* case.

This tactic was designed to create a misleading impression of the ECI as having a sound legal – rather than ideological – basis. After the ECI was rejected by the EC,³⁹ the One of Us Federation attempted to have the decision overturned by taking the matter to the

36 See for example: FAFCE, *Contradictory EU Parliament Report affirms subsidiarity on "Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights", Double Breach of Subsidiarity Ahead?* 2 EU Parliament reports overstep EU competence, accessed 5 June 2020.

37 European Dignity Watch, *Estrela revisited: Noichl report calls for aggressive sex ed programmes, abortion, and medically-assisted reproduction*, accessed 5 June 2020.

38 FAFCE, *The EU and Abortion: a twofold need for subsidiarity*, accessed 26/09/2016

39 European Commission, *One of Us ECI*, accessed 8 June 2020.

Court of Justice of the EU. The court also rejected the claim.⁴⁰

In 2015, an ECI called Mum, Dad and Kids⁴¹ was registered. It proposed to adopt an EU-wide definition of the terms ‘family’ and ‘marriage’, with the implicit suggestion that these should exclude same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex couples.

The individuals listed as the organisers of the ECI were Riger Kiska, formerly working for **ADF International**, **FAFCE’s** Maria Hildingsson and a founder of **Ordo Iuris**, Aleksander Stępkowski. However, this ECI failed to recreate the success of One of Us, collecting an insufficient number of signatures to be considered by the EC.

Alternative resolutions: Proposing alternative resolutions to those reports that contain a strong reference to SRHR is a common tactic applied by MEP opponents of SRHR in the European Parliament.

In the case of the Estrela report, the original text was not directly rejected but rather replaced by a joint EPP and ECR resolution, which referred to the subsidiarity principle. The EPP presented alternative resolutions also

to the Noichl⁴² and Honeyball⁴³ reports⁴⁴ which were opposed to on the basis of the references to SRHR.

Coordinate parliamentary questions: Anti-choice MEPs have made use of parliamentary questions to the European Commission in order to create pressure towards to Commission to further their cause. This was the case at the time of the false allegation campaign against IPPF in 2015 (see box 2): seven separate but similar parliamentary questions were posed by 13 MEPs⁴⁵ in the space of three months concerning the EU’s development funding provided to the organisation.

42 Motion for a resolution replacing non-legislative motion for a resolution A8-0163/2015 on behalf of the EPP group

43 Report on the situation of women refugees and asylum seekers in the EU, February 2016

44 Motion for a resolution replacing non-legislative motion for a resolution A8-0024/2015 on behalf of the EPP group, accessed 26/09/2016

45 Miroslav Mikolášik (EPP) ‘Illegal trafficking of human body parts’, Lorenzo Fontana (ENF) ‘Planned Parenthood scandal’, Jadwiga Wiśniewska (ECR), Janusz Wojciechowski (ECR), Stanisław Ożóg (ECR), Zbigniew Kuźmiuk (ECR), Commission funding for the International Planned Parenthood Federation, Daniela Aiuto (EFDD), IPPF scandal, Luigi Morgano (S&D), Potential action against the International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (IPPF-EN), Marie-Christine Arnautu (ENF), Sylvie Goddyn (ENF), Bruno Gollnisch (NI), Jean-Marie Le Pen (NI), Mylène Troszczynski (ENF), EU funding for the International Planned Parenthood Federation, Marijana Petir (EPP) ‘Unlawful activities of the Planned Parenthood organisation’,

40 Court of Justice of the EU, 19 December 2019, The Court holds that the General Court did not err in upholding the decision of the Commission not to submit a proposal for legislation in response to the European citizens’ initiative ‘One of us’, accessed 8 June 2020.

41 European Commission, Mum, Dad and Kids ECI, accessed 8 June 2020.

Attempts to remove SRHR organisations from the Transparency Register:

In October 2015, as part of the #DefundIPPF campaign, 63 MEPs issued a letter to the European Parliament's President Schulz calling for the removal of IPPF EN and its staff from the Transparency Register. This was in connection to the slanderous campaign led by **ADF International** and **European Dignity Watch** (see box 2).

Election pledges: Ahead of the European elections in 2014 and 2019, a number of anti-choice organisations proposed pledges for candidates to sign. In 2014, these included **European Dignity Watch**, **ECPM**, **FAFCE** and the **Novae Terrae Foundation**.

Many of the pledges contained various more general and nuanced promises, such as focus on health care and protection of patients' rights, designed to attract signatures from politicians who might not be persuaded by an openly anti-choice declaration. In 2019, only ECPM and FAFCE repeated these efforts, with ECPM launching its manifesto containing priorities such as 'protecting human dignity and promoting pro-life policies'⁴⁶ and FAFCE re-launching its Vote for Family pledge.⁴⁷

Introduction of anti-SRHR language into reports or resolutions not primarily concerned with SRHR:

Anti-choice MEPs regularly introduce amendments to resolutions with a view to removing or watering down SRHR or gender equality language, which can easily be missed by staff who have not received training on gender sensitive and pro-SRHR formulations. What more, anti-choice language is sometimes being inserted into reports which seemingly do not touch on the subjects of healthcare or SRHR.

This was the case in April 2016, when then MEP Miroslav Mikolasik (EPP, SK), introduced wording condemning 'trafficking in human organs, tissue and cells, including unlawful trade in reproductive cells (ova, sperm), foetal tissue and cells, and adult and embryonic stem cells' into the Opinion of the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) on the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) on the fight against trafficking in human beings in EU external relations.⁴⁸ The reference to the 'illegal trading in foetal tissue and cells' was the exact language used by the anti-choice opposition to demand that IPPF EN be defunded and stricken from the Transparency Register in 2015 (see box 2).

⁴⁶ ECPM, Campaign Launch EU elections 2019, <https://ecpm.info/events/campaign-launch-eu-elections-2019.html>, accessed 8 June 2020.

⁴⁷ FAFCE, Vote for Family Manifesto 2019, accessed 8 June 2020.

⁴⁸ EP resolution on the fight against trafficking in human beings in the EU's external relations, 5 July 2016,

Strategic litigation at national and regional level: **ADF International**, the **ECLJ** and **Ordo Iuris** are all specialised in strategic litigation and legal advocacy which they engage in primarily within their countries or in the European Court of Human Rights.

They focus and engage on cases relevant to abortion⁴⁹ or on the ‘rights of the unborn child’⁵⁰ in the hope that amending laws or legal practice at national level or in the Council of Europe will eventually influence EU policies and agenda. While Ordo Iuris is primarily focused on attempts to change the legal provisions in Poland through its submissions to the country’s Constitutional Court,⁵¹ it also closely follows developments at the European Court of Human rights in Strasbourg, regularly providing legal analysis of the judgments on cases of interest to its conservative agenda.⁵²

Investing in the future

Training future anti-choice lobbyists: Virtually all major anti-choice organisations offer internship programmes, mainly aimed at young law graduates, which offer to train them on litigation, legal advocacy, lobbying, campaigning or communications with a view to promoting the anti-choice message. In Europe, the World Youth Alliance offers specific advocacy training programmes, partly funded by the Erasmus+ programme;⁵³ ADF International offers scholarships at its Vienna offices⁵⁴ and academies for legal graduates.⁵⁵ The European Dignity Watch organises semi-annual European Advocacy Academies.⁵⁶

49 ECLJ, Written Observations submitted to the ECHR in the case of Anita KRŪZMANE against Latvia, accessed 26/09/2016

50 ECLJ, Communication to the Committee of Ministers on the execution of the judgment A. B. and C. v Ireland, accessed 26/09/2016

51 Ordo Iuris, Opinion regarding non-conformity of certain provisions of the Act on family planning, protection of the human foetus and admissibility conditions for the termination of pregnancy with the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, accessed 8 June 2020.

52 Ordo Iuris, An analysis of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) judgement of 14 January 2020 in the case of Beizaras and Levickas v. Lithuania, accessed 8 June 2020.

53 WYA, Emerging Leaders Conference 2020: Youth for Women’s Health & Rights, co-funded through Erasmus+, accessed 8 June 2020.

54 ADF International, Veritas Scholarship, accessed 8 June 2020.

55 ADF International, Areté Academy, accessed 26 September 2016

56 European Dignity Watch, Trainings, accessed 8 June 2020.



Figure 16. World Youth Alliance Europe Emerging Leaders Conference flyer, July 2019

Conclusions

AS part two and three of this study show, the anti-gender actors active at EU level are well networked and often dispose of notable funding and resources. This allows them to implement the advocacy and lobbying strategies described above. While the results of these efforts are currently more visible at national rather than EU level, the developments have a significant impact on policy making within the community, blocking discussions in the Council or watering down the language included in European Parliament resolutions.

These developments cannot be brushed aside as the actions of a small group of out of touch conservatives – indeed, the strong performance of anti-gender political parties in the European election of 2019 demonstrates that the ideas espoused by these groups find resonance among the general public. To counter these developments, progressive political forces must reflect not only on how to counter the activities of anti-gender actors but also on what is driving the support they receive. A close analysis of the demand side of the anti-gender movement can reveal weaknesses in the progressive agenda which need to be addressed in order to win back support from voters.

At the same time, it is crucial to continue analysing the actors who are prominent members of the anti-gender movement as well as the tactics they employ. This knowledge is fundamental to the ability to counter their messaging and undermine their support, by pointing out the misinformation and oversimplification which are often intrinsic to it. This study has aimed to contribute to a better understanding and analysis of this phenomenon.

ANNEX 1

LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS MENTIONED

- 28 • [ADF International \(Alliance Defending Freedom\)](#)
- 32 • [Alliance VITA](#)
 - [Commission of Bishops' Conferences of the European Community \(COMECE\)](#)
- 33 • [European Dignity Watch](#)
- 34 • [Federation of Catholic Family Associations in Europe \(FAFCE\)](#)
 - [One of Us Federation for Life and Human Dignity](#)
- 35 • [Ordo Iuris Institute for Legal Culture](#)
- 37 • [Profesionales por la Ética \(PPE\)](#)
 - [World Youth Alliance Europe \(WYA Europe\)](#)
- 39 • [Agenda Europe](#)
 - [CITIZEN GO](#)
- 42 • [Dignitatis Humanae Institute \(DHI\)](#)
 - [European Christian Political Movement \(ECPM\)](#)
- 43 • [European Centre for Law and Justice \(ECLJ\)](#)
- 44 • [Federation Pro Europa Christiana](#)
 - [International Organisation for the Family](#)
- 45 • [Political Network for Values](#)

ANNEX 2

LIST OF *INDIVIDUALS* **AND ASSOCIATED** *ORGANIZATIONS*

Laima Liucija Andrikiene (MEP)*	→ Political Network for Values
Ignacio Arsuaga	→ Hazteoir → CitizenGo → Political Network for Values
Steve Bannon	→ Dignitatis Humanae Institute
Brian Brown	→ CitizenGo → International Organization for the Family
Christine Boutin	→ Alliance VITA
Carlo Casini (MEP)*	→ One of Us
Jan Figel	→ Political Network for Values
Helmut Geuking (MEP)*	→ European Christian Political Movement (ECPM)
Benjamin Harnwell	→ Dignitatis Humanae Institute → European Christian Political Movement (ECPM)
Sophia Kuby	→ ADF International → European Dignity Watch → Political Network for Values
Ryszard Legutko (MEP)*	→ One of Us
Jaime Mayor Oreja (MEP)*	→ International Organization for the Family → Political Network for Values

*Where this table indicates an individual is a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) this may mean they are a current or a former member.

Katalin Novak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → International Organization for the Family → Political Network for Values
Viktor Orbán	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → International Organization for the Family
Marijana Petir (MEP)*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Political Network for Values
Grégor Puppinc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → European Centre for Law and Justice → One of Us
Matteo Salvini	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → International Organization for the Family
Bert-Jan Ruissen (MEP)*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → European Christian Political Movement (ECPM)
Aleksander Sępkowski	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ordo Iuris
Cristian Terhes (MEP)*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → European Christian Political Movement (ECPM)
Luca Volonté	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → CitizenGo → Dignitatis Humanae Institute → Political Network for Values
Peter van Dalen (MEP)*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → European Christian Political Movement (ECPM)
Beatrix von Storch (MEP)*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → One of Us

ANNEX 3

INTERNATIONAL LEGAL BASIS FOR SRHR

The term sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) refers to a diversity of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights affecting the sexual and reproductive life of individuals and couples. While there is no individual international human rights instrument dedicated to SRHR, their protection is provided through the various elements of the main United Nations and regional human rights instruments, the most relevant of which are listed below.

International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, 1994

- describes reproductive rights as based on the right of couples and individuals to decide free from discrimination, coercion and violence whether to have children, how often and when to do so, and having the necessary information and means to make such decisions;
- highlights the connection of SRHR to the right to the highest attainable standard of sexual and reproductive health;
- stresses the relationship between women's health and their ability to access family planning and other reproductive health services;
- commits states to provide universal access to a full range of family planning methods and to recognize the specific needs of vulnerable groups;
- recognises unsafe abortion as a major public health concern, and commits states to reducing the need for abortion through expanded and improved family planning services, while at the same time stating that, in circumstances where not against the law, abortion should be safe.

The United Nations General Assembly review and appraisal of the implementation of ICPD in 1999 (ICPD+5) further agreed that, 'in circumstances where abortion is not against the law, health systems should train and equip health-service providers and should take other measures to

ensure that such abortion is safe and accessible.²¹

Beijing Platform for Action, 1995

- affirms that the rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence;
- asserts the right of all women and men to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice;
- affirms the ICPD conclusions on abortion.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979

- obligates states parties to ensure access to health care services, including those related to family planning, and stresses the need for appropriate services in connection with pregnancy and the right to decide on the number and spacing of children;
- prohibits the discrimination against women, including in the provision of women-specific healthcare services.

²¹ General Assembly Resolution S-21/2, Key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, A/RES/S-21/2 (1999), para. 63(iii).

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966

- establishes the general right to the highest attainable standard of health, of which contraception and family planning are key dimensions;
- prohibits the discrimination against women, including in the provision of women-specific healthcare services.

Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990

- protects children's right to the highest attainable standard of health.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2008

- specifically mentions the right of persons with disabilities to sexual and reproductive health.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966

- protects the right to life, which is violated by the high level of preventable maternal mortality.

International human rights bodies

- characterise laws generally criminalizing abortion as discriminatory and a barrier to women's access to health care. They have recommended that states remove all punitive provisions for women who have undergone abortion. These bodies have also requested

that states permit abortion in certain cases. ermit abortion in certain cases².

Treaty body jurisprudence

- indicates that denying women access to abortion where there is a threat to the woman's life or health, or where the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest violates the rights to health³, privacy⁴ and, in certain cases, to be free from cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment⁵.

2 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Concluding Observations on Peru, CEDAW/C/PER/CO/7-8 (2014), para 36; Statement on sexual and reproductive health and rights: Beyond 2014 ICPD Review (2014).

3 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, L.C. v. Peru, CEDAW/C/50/D/22/2009, para. 8.15.

4 Human Rights Committee, K.L. v. Peru, CCPR/C/85/D/1153/2003, para. 6.4; V.D.A. v. Argentina, CCPR/C/101/D/1608/2007, para. 9.3.

5 K.L. v. Peru, para. 6.3; V.D.A. v. Argentina, para. 9.2. 7 International Conference on Population and Development, Programme of Action (1994), para. 8.25

ANNEX 4

EU COMMITMENTS TO SRHR AND GENDER EQUALITY- KEY EXAMPLES

Council of the EU

Council Conclusions on Gender-Equal Economies in the EU: The Way Forward, 10 December 2019.

Council Conclusions on Gender in Development, 26 May 2015.

‘The Council remains committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the ICPD and the outcomes of their review conferences and remains committed to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), in this context. Having that in mind, the Council reaffirms the EU’s commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of every individual to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence. The Council further stresses the need for universal access to quality and affordable comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and health-care services.’

European Parliament

EP resolution on an EU strategy to put an end to female genital mutilation around the world, 12 February 2020.

EP resolution on the criminalisation of sexual education in Poland, 14 November 2019.

EP resolution on the future of the LGBTI List of Actions (2019-2024), 14 February 2019.

EP resolution on experiencing a backlash in women’s rights and gender equality in the EU, 13 February 2019, rapporteur João Pimenta Lopes.

EP resolution Towards an EU external strategy against early and forced marriages – next steps, 4 July 2018, rapporteur Charles Goerens.

EP resolution on El Salvador: the cases of women prosecuted for miscarriage, 14 December 2017.

EP resolution on EU funds for gender equality, 14 March 2017, rapporteur Clare Moody.

EP resolution on the situation of women refugees and asylum seekers in the EU, 8 March 2016, rapporteur Mary Honeyball.

EP resolution on the EU Strategy for equality between women and men post-2015, 9 June 2015, rapporteur Maria Noichl.

European Commission

EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024

EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025

Joint Staff Working Document on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment:

Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through EU External Relations 2016-2020

ANNEX 5

FURTHER *READING*

On anti-SRHR movements at the UN level

The Observatory on Universality of Rights (OURS), 2017, Rights at Risk: OURs Trends Report 2017

Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), 2013, Lobbying for Faith and Family: A study of religious NGOs at the United Nations

Chamberlain, P., 2006, UNDOing Reproductive Freedom: Christian Right NGOs Target the United Nations

On anti-SRHR movements at EU level

Datta, N., 2018, Restoring the Natural Order: An Agenda for Europe, European Parliamentary Forum for SRR

Hodzic, A., Bijelic, N., 2014, Neoconservative threats to sexual and reproductive rights in the European Union, CESI

Catholics for a Free Choice, 2003, Preserving power and privilege. The Vatican's agenda in the European Union

On anti-SRHR and anti-gender movements at EU member states' level

Roggeband, C., Krizsán, A., 2020, Democratic backsliding and the backlash against women's rights: Understanding the current challenges for feminist politics, UN Women

Datta, N., 2020, Modern Day Crusaders in Europe. Tradition, Family and Property: Analysis of a Transnational, Ultra-conservative, Catholic-inspired Influence Network, European Parliamentary Forum for SRR

EPRS, 2018, Backlash in Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Rights, Study requested by the FEMM Committee

Grzebalska, W., Kováts, E., Pető, A., 2017, Gender as symbolic glue: how 'gender' became an umbrella term for the rejection of the (neo)liberal order, Political Critique

Grzebalska, W., Soos, E., 2016, Conservatives vs. the "Culture of Death". How progressives handled the war on "gender", FEPS

Kemper, A., 2016, Foundation of the nation: how political parties and movements are radicalising others in favour of conservative family values and against tolerance, diversity, and progressive gender politics in Europe, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Kováts, E., Pöim, M., Tanczos, J., 2015, Beyond gender? Anti-gender mobilisations and lessons for progressives, FEPS-FES Policy Brief

Kováts, E., Pöim, M. (eds), 2015, Gender as symbolic glue: the position and role of conservative and far right parties in the anti-gender mobilizations in Europe, FEPS and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung



THE GREENS/EFA
in the **European Parliament**