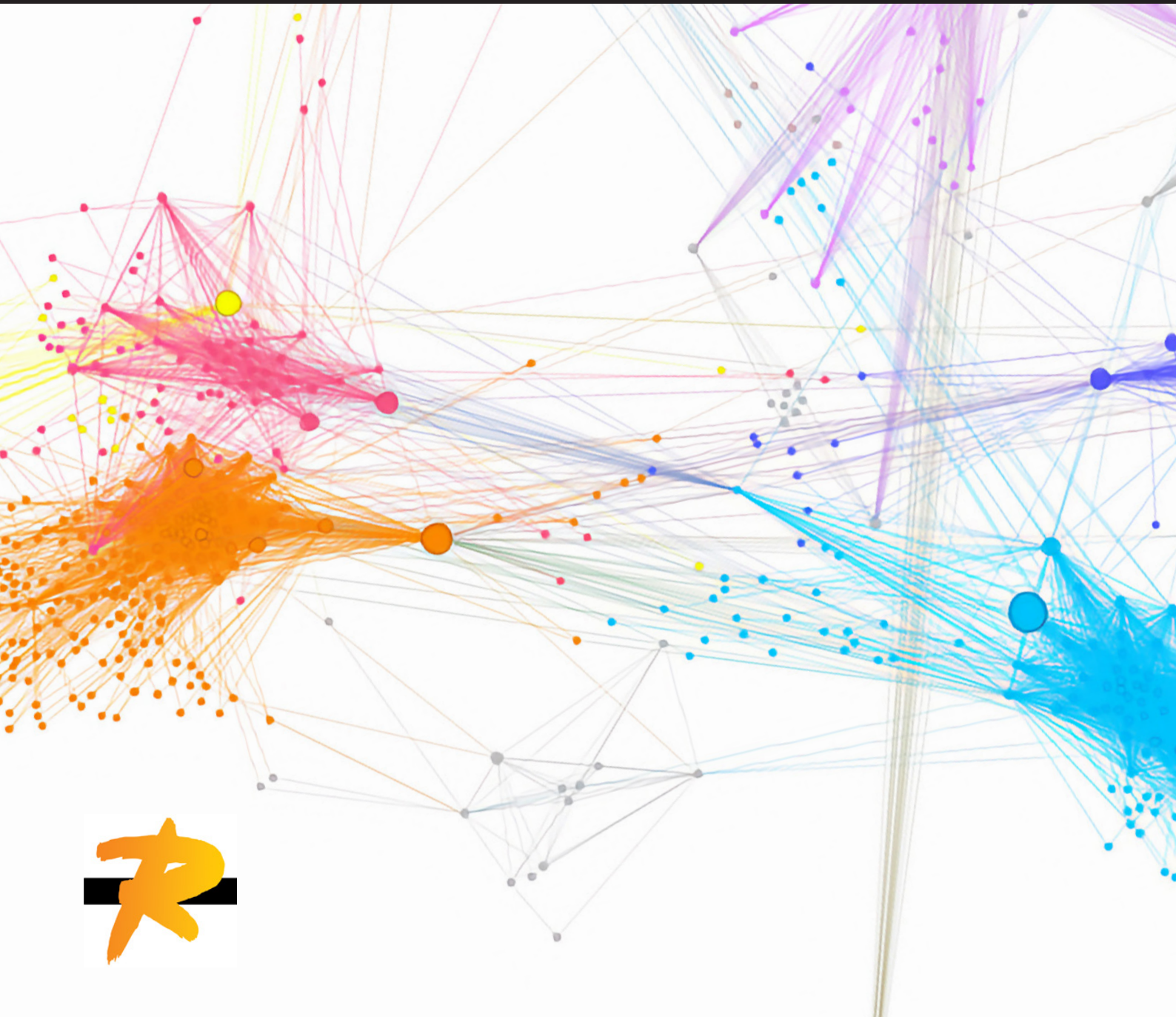



ANTI-GENDER TACTICS IN EUROPE

The RESIST project: research findings



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RESIST

Fostering Queer Feminist Intersectional Resistances against Transnational Anti-Gender Politics

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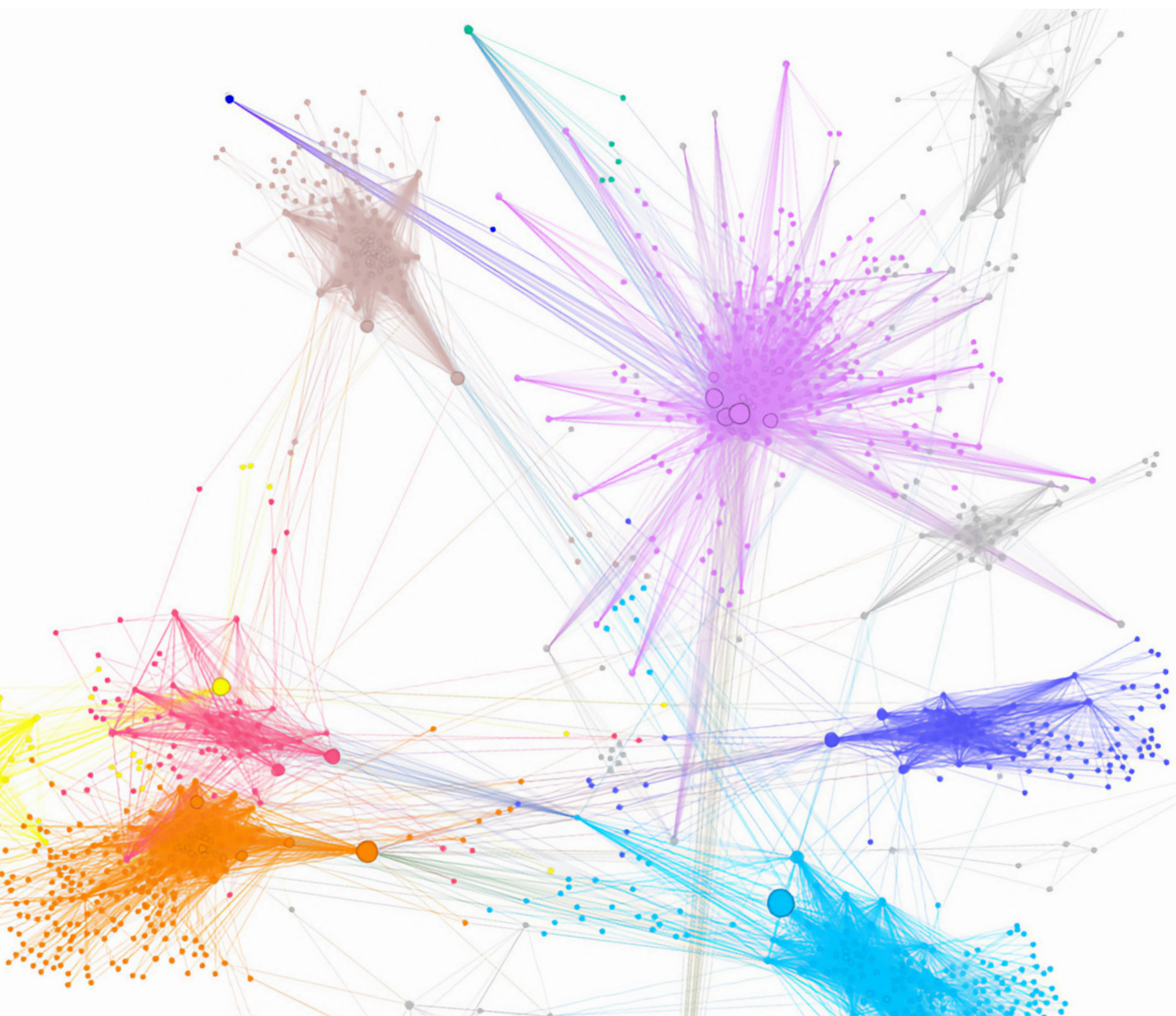
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INTRODUCTION

Over the last years, anti-gender politics has made its presence felt in many areas of social and political life, in schools and educational initiatives, sports and cultural programmes, healthcare and social services, public spaces and media debates. In contemporary Europe, anti-gender actors present themselves as benign forces, as protectors of traditional values, the family, and 'common sense'. However, the findings presented here illustrate the damage this politics does to civil liberties, women's equality, LGBTIQ+ rights, and the future of an inclusive and democratic Europe.

The term 'anti-gender' refers to concerted efforts to undermine policy and legal provisions for reproductive rights - including access to safe and legal abortion services - gender-affirming care, sexuality and relationships education, and LGBTIQ+ rights. Ideologically, it refers to movements and actors that see gender equality and diversity, sexual freedom, and feminism as threats to the sanctity of the family and the moral order of the nation.

The term 'anti-gender movement' is now frequently used to describe the transnational networks of actors working to maintain the heteropatriarchal sex and gender power hierarchy in all areas of social, political, economic, and cultural life.

Anti-gender politics is a global phenomenon, involving transnational networks of politicians, writers, think tanks, religious groups and media outlets with overlapping motivations and interests. This research examines its targets, ideas, and tactics at a particular moment in Europe. From late 2022 to the end of 2023, the RESIST project mapped how anti-gender is produced and expressed in Hungary, Poland, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the European Parliament.

This mapping exercise is the first stage in a project which will also examine the consequences of anti-gender politics, and forms of resistance to it.

We analysed almost 200 parliamentary debates, thousands of articles from 87 media sources, and encountered the ideas and interventions of thousands of political and cultural actors.

In the following sections, we firstly present transnational findings that explore tactical and ideological patterns that emerge from a comparison of the case studies. The report then presents selected findings from the case studies.

TRANSNATIONAL FINDINGS

WHAT DO RESIST'S FINDINGS REVEAL ABOUT ANTI-GENDER POLITICS IN EUROPE TODAY?

ANTI-GENDER POLITICS CONTINUES TO THREATEN WOMEN'S RIGHTS.

Anti-gender politics in Europe is an amalgam of established causes and new preoccupations. A depressingly familiar issue that emerges in our data is the continued attack on women's reproductive rights and access to healthcare. In Hungary and Poland, and among conservative and nationalist politicians in the European Parliament, limiting access to safe and legal abortion remains a key objective.

The justifications offered for this are well-established, primarily challenging women's rights in the name of Christian and national values. In these debates, cis women's bodies are framed in contradictory terms. They are presented as having too much freedom and agency in terms of the choice to terminate a pregnancy. But they are also framed as needing paternalistic forms of protection (for example, in the promise that postpartum support and child welfare will follow if they do not terminate the pregnancy).

ANTI-GENDER POLITICS PIVOTS ON ATTACKING GENDER AS A CONCEPT.

Anti-gender politics is characterised by an obsession with the very idea of gender itself. While this might sound a bit abstract, it provides a powerful way of connecting different issues and endlessly constructing new problems and enemies. Understanding the political utility of this focus is critical to grasping the political tactics currently in play. This focus on the idea of gender has two key dimensions.

The first is to frame 'gender' as an ideology. In other words, it is not a starting point for thinking about the body, sexuality, identity, and social roles, but is presented as a form of political dogma. As such, it is often characterised as 'aggressive' - an ideology that does not tolerate contradiction or dissent.

The second dimension stems directly from this characterisation. 'Gender ideology' is presented as being imposed on unwilling populations. This relationship between dogma and imposition is very important for understanding the ways in which anti-gender politics often adopts a position of victimhood and can stray into conspiratorial ideas (this is discussed further below).

The key tactic here is one of reversal. By collapsing all discussion of gender into the idea of an imposed gender ideology, gender diversity in society is denied legitimacy as a different way of thinking and being. Instead, the very idea of gender is regarded as instigating a zero-sum game of gains and losses, where there can only be one 'winner'. If actors succeed in convincing the public that certain identities are entitled to protections and others are mere ideas, marginalised groups are at risk.

THE IDEA OF GENDER IS FRAMED AS A FOREIGN IMPORT SMUGGLED INTO THE NATION.

Anti-gender actors fashion themselves as defending the nation against the supposed threat of 'gender ideology'. This ideology is held to be imposed on the population by LGBTIQ+ activism, often stereotyped as a 'lobby'. This allows actors to treat the LGBTIQ+ community as separate from and different to the nation. 'Gender ideology' is

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presented as an attempt to undermine otherwise coherent national values.

This move allows anti-gender activists to frame queer families as counter to nationalist interests. In the European Parliament for example, LGBTIQ+ families are presented by anti-gender politicians as posing a threat to the right of individual member states to make sovereign decisions for 'their own people'. Similarly, LGBTIQ+ inclusive curricula can be attacked as foreign material seeking to damage the national community.

ANTI-GENDER POLITICS PRESENTS ITSELF AS A DEFENCE OF DEMOCRACY.

In this political rationale, the defence of the nation necessitates defending democracy against manifestations of 'gender ideology'. By closely associating 'gender ideology' with activism, NGOs and civil society activity can be delegitimised by being presented as elite and unrepresentative. LGBTIQ+ initiatives are framed as pushing motivated agendas that have no popular support. They are attacked for refusing to accept that equality has already been achieved in the nation. And, because the nation is always presented as tolerant, LGBTIQ+ activism is stereotyped as excessive in its ideological demands. Thus, it is framed as a threat to democracy.

THE PROJECT OF FRAMING GENDER AS A THREAT POSITIONS FEMINISM AND LGBTIQ+ RIGHTS AND IDENTITIES AS PROBLEMS IN THEMSELVES.

Because 'gender ideology' is projected as an attempt to transform traditional norms of society and the nation, any manifestation of 'gender' that questions the status quo can be presented as evidence of this 'takeover'. Therefore, gender diversity is not granted legitimacy as a different way of thinking and its existence as a legitimate point of difference in a pluralist public. In fact, it is delegitimised as a political imposition and externalised as an artificial construct (compared to the implied 'naturalness' of national and religious traditions).

Any manifestation of queer and feminist identities and politics can be framed as an explicit threat to the heteronormative nuclear family, sex-based roles and identities, and 'traditional values'. By making this move, prevailing social and political power relations are inverted. Consequently, those deemed at the fringes of the heteronormative spectrum are targeted most frequently and most viciously.

ANTI-GENDER MOBILISATIONS ARE INTENSIFYING THE MARGINALISATION AND MISTREATMENT OF TRANS PEOPLE.

A key example of this power inversion is the hostile hypervisibility of trans people. They are rendered the subject of a relentless 'debate' about the legitimacy of their lives and rights, while rarely, in our data, being invited to speak about their own existence.

Sometimes this hyper-focus is a consequence of heated debates about legislative changes in different countries. However, in our study, to a significant extent it is a product of concerted political and media efforts to position transgender identities as an urgent problem requiring public scrutiny and political intervention.

This sensationalist media and political focus on trans people has only taken shape over the last few years. The relative newness of this mobilisation is important to underline, as it draws attention to the extent to which this has been produced by concerted and organised tactical action.

Trans people's decisions about their bodies are framed as not to be believed or trusted, regarded as a product of trends or indoctrination. As a consequence, their gender affirming care and health services are targeted as ideological agents.

ANTI-GENDER INSISTENCE ON THE 'PROBLEM' OF TRANSGENDER IDENTITIES ALSO DRIVES AN INTENSIFIED ATTACK ON LGBTIQ+ ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY ORGANISING.

The legitimacy of transgender identity is undermined by asserting that it is a product of ideological influence or manipulation. This tactic clearly erases the agency of trans people. It also furthers the transnationally pronounced attack on gender-related activism as a source of so-called 'ideological corruption'.

For example, education on gender identity is accused of advancing 'transgender ideology' as a dimension of 'gender ideology', which has the aim of 'sexualising' children and young people. This mutual reinforcement is important to understanding how activism becomes framed, in many contexts, as a threat to democracy.

Activism, in the anti-gender framework, is a loosely attributed accusation and includes areas such as the provision of health services, educational resources,

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community support, human rights protection, policy initiatives, and support services.

The moral panic about transgender rights and identities allows for multiple issues to be linked to each other and interchangeably mobilised in political rhetoric and media discourse. This provides a way of further undermining queer identities, intersectional feminism, bodily autonomy, and freedom of movement.

CLAIMING TO DEFEND CHILDREN AGAINST THE EXCESSES OF 'GENDER IDEOLOGY' IS A KEY WAY OF FOMENTING SUSPICION OF LGBTIQ+ PEOPLE.

Anti-gender politics promotes an image of the child as beset from all sides by attempts to 'sexualise' or convert them through ideological indoctrination. This cultivation of sex and gender panic frequently presents sex and relationships education as a danger to children. Even more acutely it can be mobilised to imply or directly conflate paedophilia and child abuse with LGBTIQ+ existence and public visibility.

This is a renewed fixation and is important in: (1) the accelerated production of a moral panic around gender and sexual diversity; and (2) increased attempts to delegitimise civil society activism as a threat in schools and education, public spaces and institutions, and social and political organisation.

Acting in defence of children makes it legitimate to assault the visibility and viability of LGBTIQ+ lives, and political activism and civil organisation that seeks to act for sexual and gender equalities, including trans inclusions.

OPPRESSIVE IDEAS AND ACTIONS ARE JUSTIFIED BY APPEALING TO LIBERAL IDEAS AND PRACTICES.

Despite the hostility of anti-gender politics to individual autonomy and minority rights, actors regularly draw on rights discourse and liberal ideas. New categories of rights are produced through campaign mobilisations - while they do not have any relevant status in law, the tactic is to act as if they do. Therefore cisgender women's 'sex-based rights' are used to justify anti-trans politics; a rhetoric of 'parental rights' is used to bolster interventions in sex and relationships education, and the idea of children's rights is broadened to include the right to heterosexual parents as the basis of the family.

There is also a widespread practice of anchoring anti-gender discourse through appeals to freedom of speech. Anti-gender actors consistently represent themselves and their viewpoints as being silenced by opponents who cannot legitimately refute their opinions. In both the UK and Hungary, for example, parliament and media actors justify anti-trans measures with reference to the established tolerance of the nation. This 'tolerance' is framed as being tested by 'gender ideologists' lack of respect for the freedom of speech of anti-gender actors.

WHO IS PROMOTING ANTI-GENDER POLITICS?

THE RESEARCH IN THIS MAPPING PROJECT EXAMINED KEY ACTORS INVOLVED IN REPRODUCING THE DISCOURSE AND PRACTICES OF ANTI-GENDER POLITICS. ACROSS ALL FIVE CASE STUDIES ACTOR MAPPING REVEALS BROADER PATTERNS AS TO WHO IS PROPAGATING ANTI-GENDER POLITICS.

HOSTILITY TO GENDER, FEMINISM AND LGBTIQ+ RIGHTS AND IDENTITIES IS PRIMARILY ASSOCIATED WITH MEN IN THE CONSERVATIVE AND RADICAL RIGHT IN EUROPE.

In every national parliament studied, cis men are overwhelmingly responsible for the articulation of anti-gender discourse. Predominantly, but not exclusively, these men are members of radical right parties. However, they are also vocal in right-wing conservative parties that have increasingly converged 'rightward' with their counterparts. The exception to this cis male dominance of anti-gender discourse is in the European Parliament, where a broad repertoire of anti-gender arguments is equally mobilised by male and female MEPs from both radical right party groups, Identity and Democracy (ID), and European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR).

WHEN VIEWED FROM BEYOND PARLIAMENTS TO WIDER MEDIA DISCOURSE AND ACTIVISM, THE POLITICAL 'CENTRE' IS ALSO ACTIVE IN THE CREATION OF ANTI-GENDER POLITICS.

Despite the dominance of the conservative and radical right, it is important to note that these political dynamics do not always conform to a straightforward left/right divide. In Hungary for example, 'gender critical' media coverage of trans issues crossed the media spectrum, in contrast to an otherwise pronounced left/right antagonism on anti-gender politics. In the UK, where most parliamentary discourse opposing transgender rights emanates from the Conservative Party, the wider opposition to these rights is actively maintained by activist networks that present themselves as left-wing on other forms of gendered inequalities.

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RIGHT-WING MEDIA DISCOURSE CONSISTENTLY PUSHES THE IDEA OF 'GENDER IDEOLOGY' AND PRESENTS IT AS A SELF-EVIDENT TERM.

This idea is a deeply partisan and ideological one. However, it is widely present in opinion and editorial material, and used as a point of reference in news stories. This prevalence across genres demonstrates the extent to which it has become partially normalised through circulation. In contrast, the contested and controversial nature of the idea is widely recognised in liberal and left-wing journalism.

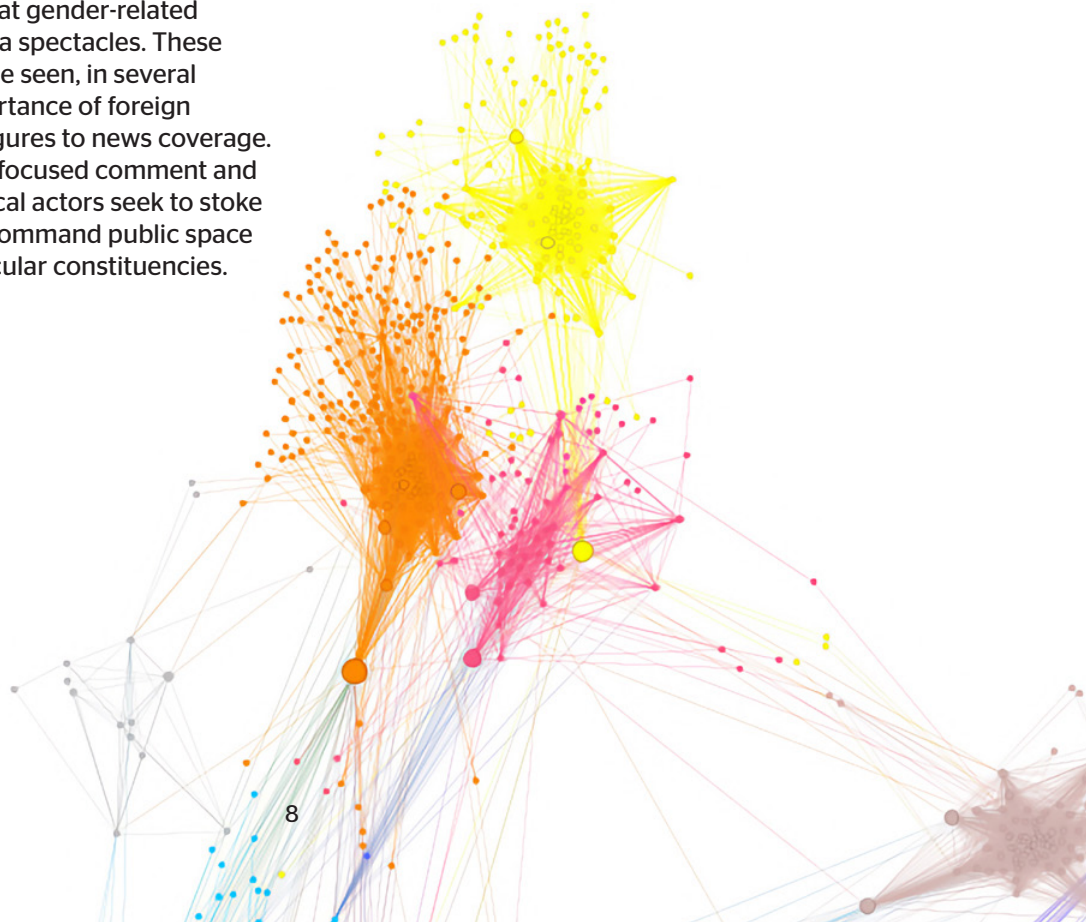
MEDIA ACTIVITY CREATES A CONSISTENT PLATFORM FOR ANTI-GENDER ACTORS, WHERE THEIR TALKING POINTS ARE REPRESENTED AND CIRCULATED IN PUBLIC CULTURE. THIS POSITIONS THE TARGETS OF THESE POLITICS AS SUBJECT TO CONTINUOUS DEBATE AND CONTROVERSY. THIS CONTRIBUTES TO THE 'HYPERVISIBILITY' OF THOSE TARGETED.

Contemporary media systems are highly competitive and fast moving, and attention-grabbing and sensational content is profitable. This media environment gives a significant advantage to anti-gender politics.

The contested status of gender-related issues in the societies in question means that gender-related controversies easily become media spectacles. These have commercial value. This can be seen, in several of the media contexts, in the importance of foreign controversies and controversial figures to news coverage. These then fuel more anti-gender focused comment and opinion. In these conditions, political actors seek to stoke controversies that allow them to command public space and attention, and appeal to particular constituencies.

THE INTEREST OF KEY MEDIA AND POLITICAL PLAYERS IN ANTI-GENDER CONTENT HAS BEEN BENEFICIAL TO A RANGE OF HIGHLY MOBILISED CAMPAIGN AND ACTIVIST GROUPS. THERE ARE CLEAR INTERACTIONS BETWEEN POLITICAL PARTY AGENDAS, THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF ANTI-GENDER DEBATES, AND ANTI-GENDER ACTIVISTS.

Networks of established and new campaign groups, think tanks, political activists and social media-enabled entrepreneurs can be identified through the sources used in news stories. Despite the hostility of anti-gender politics to LGBTIQ+ activism, anti-gender groups are themselves highly active in civil society. However, this is valued as 'good activism' in part because of its close formal and informal relationships with governing parties and supportive media. 'Good activism' is presented as the work of 'concerned' citizens, parents, and spokespersons. They are often presented as reluctantly political, involved in campaigning because they must respond to the threats they face. This obscures how these are more often than not well-organised and resourced groups that are proactively, not reactively, campaigning.



HOW DOES ANTI-GENDER POLITICS FRAME FEMINISM AND LGBTIQ+ IDENTITIES AS A PROBLEM OR THREAT?

WHAT 'GENDER IDEOLOGY' MEANS IS ADAPTABLE, AND IT CHANGES BY CONTEXT AND OVER TIME. THESE MUTATIONS ARE KEY TO ADVANCING ANTI-GENDER POLITICS.

In some contexts, 'gender ideology' is used with relative consistency. For example, in the UK data it is almost always associated with anti-trans discourse. In others, the use of 'gender ideology' is designed to conflate different issues and allows for rapidly changing focus between them. For example, in Poland and Hungary, this conflation can involve shifting attacks between reproductive rights, sexual orientation and gender identities, LGBTIQ+ rights

and advocacy, and gender and sexuality education. This shifting is partly tactical, as it is difficult to respond to. It is also ideological, creating an image of 'gender ideology' as the grand plan at work in multiple struggles.

THE 'IMPOSITION' OF 'GENDER IDEOLOGY' IS PORTRAYED AS EMANATING FROM OUTSIDE THE NATION AND IMPORTED THROUGH A VARIETY OF NON-REPRESENTATIVE AGENCIES.

The claim that 'gender ideology' is being imposed from outside is a key political rhetoric. It gives energy to the nationalist defence of the nation and 'national values'.



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It allows for conspiratorial ideas to circulate as part of a project of fearmongering.

In Hungarian parliamentary and media discourse, the Istanbul Convention is described as a 'Trojan horse' for 'gender ideology' (a trope also popular in the European Parliament). This specific accusation is part of a wider charge that 'the West' threatens Hungary's status as a 'bastion of conservatism'. In one Hungarian publication 'gender ideology' has been compared to immigration to Hungary as an expression of 'globalist world power', thus also drawing on 'great replacement theory' conspiracies.

Comparable rhetoric is common in Polish media and parliamentary discourse. Brussels and/or the European Union function as both a specific reference and as a more general imaginary, interchangeable with 'the West'.

ANTI-GENDER POLITICS PRESENTS LGBTIQ+ MOVEMENTS AS DOGMATIC AND AT TIMES AUTHORITARIAN. THIS IS ALSO ADVANCED BY PRESENTING THEM AS IMPOSING 'GENDER IDEOLOGY' ON UNWILLING POPULATIONS.

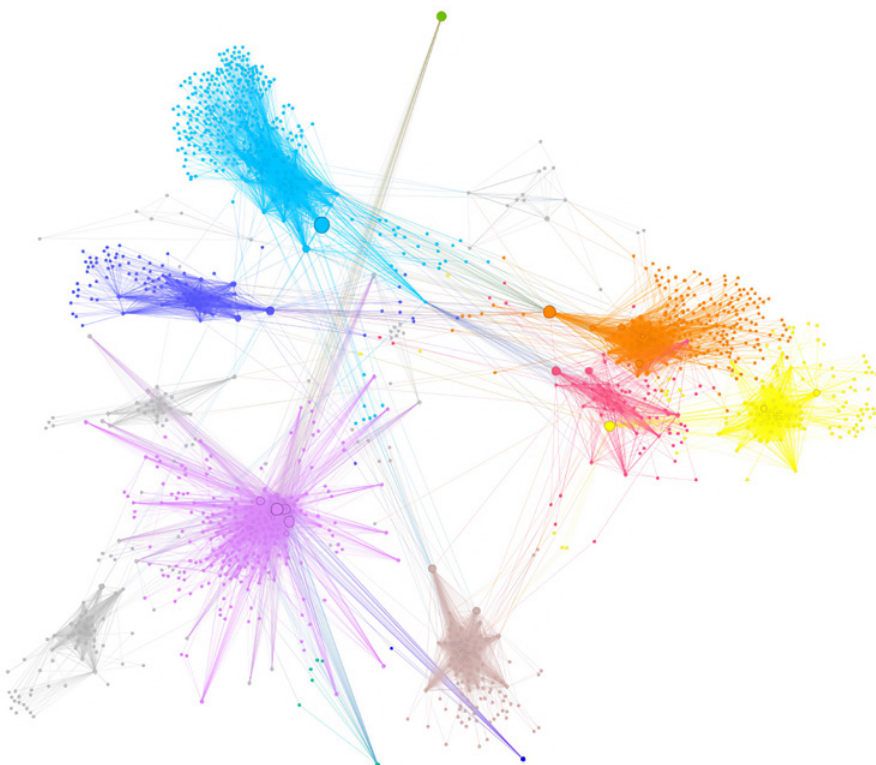
The rhetoric of imposition is used to shape attacks on domestic 'activists' as representatives of outside influences. This furthers the attack on them as 'undemocratic' as ideology is being imposed on populations who didn't 'vote for' or 'ask for' it.

This produces an image of powerful and doctrinal movements of, for example, 'LGBT ideology' in Hungary and Poland, or the 'Trans lobby' in the UK. Across contexts, and regardless of the secular or religious basis of anti-gender activism, this tactic allows the ideas and activities of those it opposes to be dismissed as 'activist' and thus non-scientific. These frequently vague formulations of master ideologies and shadowy lobbies are used as a basis to target specific organisations politically and in media attacks.

ANTI-GENDER POLITICS FREQUENTLY CLAIMS THAT ANTI-GENDER ACTORS ARE BEING SILENCED. THIS CLAIM IS KEY TO FRAMING FEMINISM AND LGBTIQ+ GROUPS AS UNREPRESENTATIVE AND IDEOLOGICAL.

Claims of being silenced are common in contemporary politics as a way of claiming attention in a fast-paced media environment. It's also frequently used to position powerful actors as 'victims' in ways that obscure their social and political dominance.

In terms of anti-gender politics, the claim also has a specific reference to the idea of 'silent majorities' who are having 'gender ideology' imposed on them. This claim relies on the assertion that those who oppose them cannot win the argument democratically and so must silence anti-gender actors. Being silenced, or unable to speak what is claimed as the truth is then understood as driving a duty to 'speak out' for democracy, or the nation, or children.



CASE STUDIES: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

THE RESIST PROJECT RESEARCHED ANTI-GENDER
MOBILISATIONS ACROSS FIVE CASE STUDIES: SWITZERLAND,
HUNGARY, POLAND, THE UK, AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT.

Data was collected from parliamentary records, media outlets and by tracking key controversies, predominantly in the period of 2017-2022. The aim was to develop a robust empirical base to examine how anti-gender politics is mobilised in political and media discourse and practices.

The analysis comprised quantitative and qualitative analysis and proceeded through three approaches in each case study: parliamentary debates, media analysis, and controversy mapping. What follows is a case-by-case overview of the main findings by context.



HUNGARY

THE HUNGARIAN GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-GENDER POLITICS HAS ATTRACTED SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL AND ACADEMIC ATTENTION IN RECENT YEARS. ALTHOUGH THE RIGHT-WING CONSERVATIVE FIDESZ PARTY HAS BEEN IN POWER SINCE 2010, THE INTENSIFICATION OF ANTI-GENDER POLITICS REALLY BEGINS WITH THE PARTY AND GOVERNMENT'S OPPOSITION TO THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION, AND THE DE-ACCREDITATION OF GENDER STUDIES MA PROGRAMS IN 2017.



This intensification of anti-gender discourse was a conscious decision by Fidesz, aimed at strengthening its political position. Most recently, the Hungarian government passed several restrictive laws in the realm of gender equality. In December 2020, it banned the adoption of children by same-sex couples, and in March 2020 it sought to limit transgender rights by banning legal gender reassignment. In June 2021, the controversial Child Protection Law came into force, prohibiting the 'exposure of minors' to LGBTQ+ related content.

The data for this study was drawn from debates obtained from the records of the Hungarian Parliamentary library (2017-2023). The Hungarian media sample (2020-23) consisted of three news outlets positioned differently on the political spectrum. *Magyar Hírlap* was chosen as a right-wing outlet, strongly attached to the Fidesz political party. *Válasz Online* was selected as a reliably centrist media outlet, *Telex.hu* was included as a liberal-progressive media source, being one of the most-read opposition-aligned outlets. *Válasz Online* was selected as a reliably centrist media outlet, which publishes limited but lengthy feature articles, interviews and opinion pieces.

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PARLIAMENT

IT IS A CONSISTENT FEATURE OF ANTI-GENDER DISCOURSE THAT THOSE ADVOCATING FOR LGBTIQ+ RIGHTS ARE CAST BY THE GOVERNMENT AS 'A DANGER TO SOCIETY' BECAUSE THEY PROMOTE PARTICULAR POLICIES.

Rights advocates are regularly held to supposedly 'threaten' children, heteronormative families and the values of the nation through 'indoctrination'. This is particularly evident in considerations of the Child Protection Law (2022), that introduced measures aimed at 'protecting' children from content that authorities deemed to be 'promoting' homosexuality or gender reassignment. This law stirred up significant public debate both nationally and transnationally. Given the importance of civic activism in opposing the law, the data shows a significant effort to delegitimise civil society in parliamentary debates.

LGBTIQ+ AND TRANS INDIVIDUALS AND ACTIVISTS ARE DELEGITIMISED THROUGH A PURPOSEFUL CONFLATION OF ISSUES AND ARGUMENTS.

Hungarian conservative MPs frequently conflate LGBTIQ+ issues with the topic of paedophilia. This is both a general conflation aimed at denigrating LGBTIQ+ people, and also a key way of attacking civil society activity.

IT IS A REGULAR FEATURE OF PARLIAMENTARY DISCOURSE THAT MPS FROM FIDESZ SEEK TO PRESENT THEIR ARGUMENTS THROUGH THE LANGUAGE OF 'RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS'.

This presents the exclusion of civil society as a question of protecting rights and democracy. The exclusion of NGOs, including LGBTIQ+ groups, from collaborating with schools on educational programs, and the prohibition of sex education in schools, is framed as a parental right. This is held to mean that parents have the right to educate their children on sexuality the way they want and is related to a particular idea of children's rights, where the child has the right to their gender identity based on birth sex.

ATTACKING GENDER STUDIES AS A DISCIPLINE NO LONGER EMERGES AS A CENTRAL TACTIC IN HUNGARIAN POLITICS.

Given that the two Gender Studies departments that existed in Hungary were shut down in 2018, discrediting Gender Studies departments is less relevant. The critique of theoretical work on gender remains, however, a viable tactic, where it is routinely discredited as 'ideologically-based pseudo-science' or as serving political agendas.

MENTIONS OF TRANS PEOPLE IN THE SAMPLE OF PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES OCCUR ONLY AFTER 2020.

This can be explained by the fact that prior to 2020 there was never an official ruling on gender recognition in Hungary. In 2020, the Hungarian Parliament passed a law that eliminated the possibility for trans, non-binary and intersex individuals to undergo legal gender reassignment. The new law requires individuals to be identified according to the 'sex assigned at birth'. After 2021, trans people - aside from occasional solidarity expressed by the opposition - appear in parliamentary discourse in association with the dangers of 'sex education' and wanting to 'corrupt Hungarian children'. The intensification of this narrative in 2021 occurred with the introduction of the Child Protection Law which prompted resistance from the EU and within Hungarian civil society.

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THE 'THREAT' FROM GEORGE SOROS AND FOREIGN-FUNDED NGOS REMAINS A COMMON NARRATIVE, RELATING TO A WIDER PRESENTATION OF THE EU AND THE WEST AS COLONISING FORCES THREATENING HUNGARIAN VALUES.

There are multiple instances in the data where politicians express critical views of George Soros and his organisations. They are accused of meddling in Hungary's internal affairs and using financial resources to influence Hungarian politics. The government has criticised Soros for his support of civil society organisations and NGOs promoting democracy and human rights, including LGBTIQ+ rights. The EU/West is manifested in anti-gender parliamentary rhetoric as a threat, mostly in response to the EU's criticism of Hungary's approach to democratic values.



MEDIA

THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT ALIGNMENT BETWEEN ANTI-GENDER DISCOURSES IN THE PARLIAMENT AND THE GOVERNMENT MEDIA.

The media in Hungary is heavily politicised. *Magyar Hírlap* is a pro-government media channel and amplifies the views of the government, for example by allocating front pages to politicians campaigning on anti-gender issues. It is openly hostile and actively campaigning on many gender and sexuality-related issues, including LGBTIQ+ rights, gender quotas, sex education, feminist or LGBTIQ+ inclusive children's books or film adaptations, and progressive (LGBTIQ+ inclusive) Christian congregations.

MAGYAR HÍRLAP, AS A PRO-GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER, IS OPENLY HOSTILE TOWARDS TRANS PEOPLE.

This is evident in their use of transphobic language, the recycling of transphobic news, and the provision of platforms to trans-exclusionary campaigners. Occasionally, limited empathy is expressed concerning trans people's experiences of discrimination. A similar pattern can be observed in relation to homosexuality, where 'the good homosexual' is someone whose sexuality is a 'silent or invisible' experience, confined within the privacy of their home.

THE IDEA OF 'GENDER IDEOLOGY' IS CONSISTENTLY INVOKED AS A THREAT TO NATIONAL VALUES, BUT ITS EMPHASIS SHIFTS.

Magyar Hírlap content offers many definitions of the idea. This contrasts with comparable newspapers elsewhere that seek to reproduce the term as a matter of fact. Given its continued circulation in media discourse in Hungary since 2010, the consistent use of definitions is designed to remind readers about the threats associated with the term. Some of those definitions compare 'gender ideology' to immigration as one of the most serious threats to European unity, whilst others present it as an 'extremist ideology', or a tool of 'globalist world power'.



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POLAND

THE RESEARCH PERIOD (2015-2023) WITNESSED NUMEROUS HIGHLY PUBLICISED EVENTS CONCERNING GENDER AND SEXUALITY, AND SEVERAL LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES.

IN 2016-2017 THE GRASSROOTS 'BLACK PROTESTS' AND 'ALL-POLAND WOMEN'S STRIKE' GAINED NATIONAL AND GLOBAL MEDIA ATTENTION. THEY REPRESENTED A WAVE OF QUEER-FEMINIST RESISTANCE AGAINST THE RESTRICTION OF REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS AND CIVIL RIGHTS MORE GENERALLY.



In 2020, another highly publicised wave of 'All-Poland Women's Strike' protests was seen in response to anti-abortion legislation. In 2019-2021 the 'LGBT-Free zones' controversy became hotly debated and widely reported in national and international media. The research period also encompassed significant political debate about education, legitimacy of critical studies disciplines, sexual education in school, and LGBTIQ+ minorities' rights.

The parliamentary data is drawn from the Sejm (Lower Chamber of the Parliament) during its last two terms of office (VIII: 2015-2019; IX: 2019-2023)

and specifically the parliamentary debates which prominently featured topics of gender and sexualities. The media data is drawn from four popular media outlets: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, and *Rzeczpospolita* and supplemented with *Super Express* and *Do Rzeczy*. The first two titles are country-wide broadsheets, the third is a tabloid, and the last one a far-right magazine.

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PARLIAMENT

BOTH CENTRE AND RIGHT-WING PARTIES PRODUCE AND BOOST ANTI-GENDER IDEAS AND DISCOURSE.

While Law and Justice, the largest party in the parliament, contribute the most to the data, politicians from across all political groups on the centre to right spectrum have voiced anti-gender strategies. A small number of key actors drive anti-gender political rhetoric and emerge as spokespersons for their political parties. They claim that they speak for broader groups of people that they assert identify with them. The distribution of actors by gender shows the predominance of cis men: the majority of parliamentary actors deploying discursive anti-gender strategies were cis men (68%), followed by cis women at 32%, with no actors self-declaring other gender/sex identities.

HARD-WON WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE DEBATED IN A PARLIAMENT THAT LARGELY DOES NOT INCLUDE OR SPEAK FOR THEM.

In the debates on gender and sexuality, Polish parliamentary space is not one that is welcoming to a diversity of voices, especially those belonging to social groups whose fate is being discussed. This was observed across a range of debates, from the right to safe abortion and inclusive healthcare, to young adults' rights to reliable and informed sex education, to non-heterosexual peoples' right to not be discriminated against or prosecuted on the basis of their sexual orientation.

THE USE OF ESSENTIALIST BIOLOGICAL PRESCRIPTIONS TO MARGINALISE THE IDEA OF GENDER FEATURE REGULARLY.

There was a regular appeal in debates to the authority of 'scientific' arguments as supposedly irrefutable 'evidence', rhetorically calling upon 'biology', 'nature', and 'science' to exclude LGBTIQ+ people from civil protections.

DELEGITIMISING LGBTIQ+ LIVES BY REDUCING PEOPLE TO AN 'IDEOLOGY', IS A WIDELY OBSERVED PRACTICE AMONG ACTORS WHO ARE HOSTILE TO LGBTIQ+ RIGHTS.

This is often accompanied by ridicule, misgendering, and deliberate use of odd linguistic forms of address, exploiting a rigid system of Polish gendered grammar.

ANTI-GENDER DISCOURSES REGULARLY SHIFT FOCUS BETWEEN TARGETS AND ISSUES AS A TACTIC.

For instance, the idea of 'sexualisation' is used in debates to attack trans people's rights to bodily autonomy and self-determination, feminist critiques of gendered social roles in education, LGBTIQ+ activism, sexual education, and women's rights. This tactical flexibility allows anti-gender actors to espouse anti-gender narratives where and when needed.



MEDIA

THE RIGHT AND FAR RIGHT HAVE DIRECT INFLUENCE IN THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE IN POLAND AND PRODUCE ANTI-GENDER CONTENT FOR A WIDE VARIETY OF READERSHIPS.

Do Rzeczy is one of the main actors anti-gender media actors, an active platform for giving voice to outspokenly anti-gender media narratives. The outlet recycles a plethora of transphobic, homophobic, and anti-feminist discourses and activities that build the core of anti-gender tactics in the Polish context.

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GENDER FREEDOMS AND QUEER RIGHTS ARE FREQUENTLY FRAMED AND PRESENTED THROUGH ANTI-GENDER IDEAS AND TALKING POINTS.

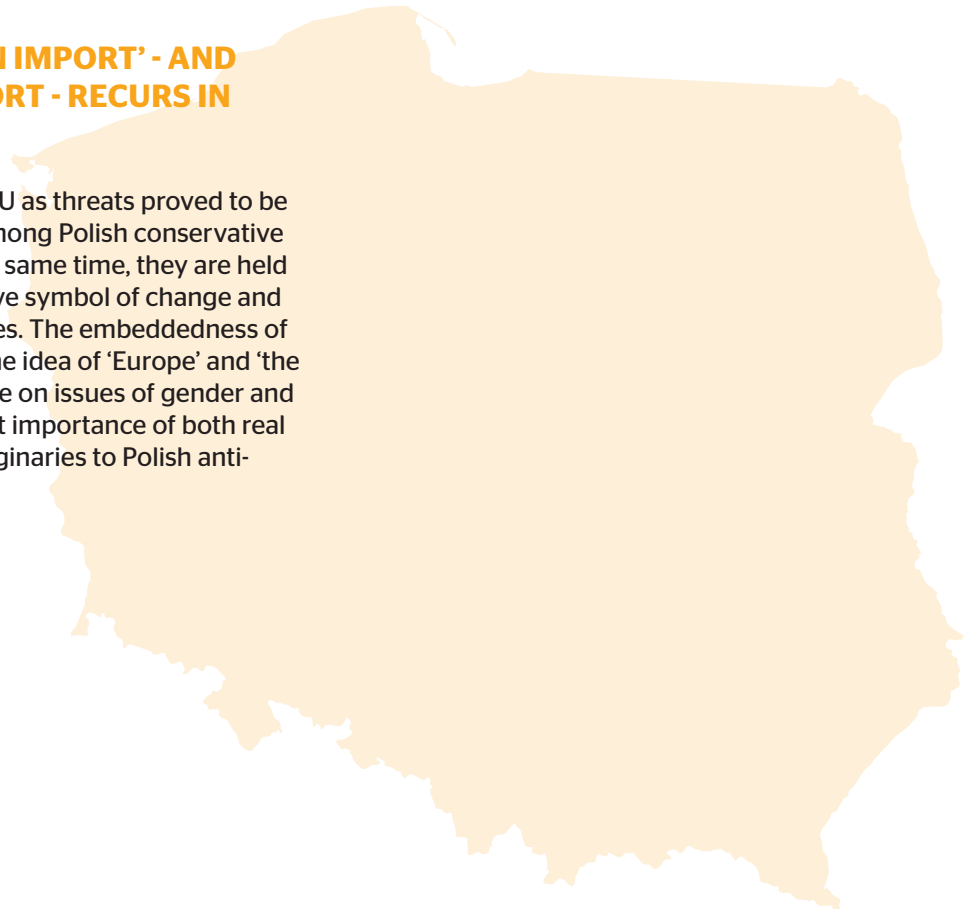
‘Gender ideology’ and ‘LGBT ideology’ are used interchangeably and without quotation marks in most of the media data. This is due to the longstanding presence of ‘gender ideology’ debates in Poland. It creates a ‘taken for granted’ effect around some of the terms and perpetuates debate about LGBTIQ+ people’s lives.

THE TRANSNATIONAL CONNECTIONS OF ANTI-GENDER NETWORKS IN POLAND ARE PRONOUNCED IN MEDIA COVERAGE.

Foreign politicians were often presented as figures of authority and admiration due to their outspoken position on gender, sexuality, migration, the EU, and minorities. The list consists of actors such as Vladimir Putin, Viktor Orbán, Marine Le Pen, Donald Trump, and Giorgia Meloni. Despite the evidence that anti-gender politics is a global network of specific actors, the defence of ‘traditional values’ is often presented as a nationalist, anti-globalist front against so-called ‘globalist liberal elites’.

GENDER AS A ‘FOREIGN IMPORT’ - AND SPECIFICALLY EU IMPORT - RECURS IN MEDIA DISCOURSE.

Mentions of the West and/or EU as threats proved to be a popular discursive theme among Polish conservative and far-right politicians. At the same time, they are held up by liberal actors as a positive symbol of change and pro-LGBTIQ+/feminist initiatives. The embeddedness of the EU, and more broadly of the idea of ‘Europe’ and ‘the West’ in Polish media discourse on issues of gender and sexuality, shows the consistent importance of both real and idealised geopolitical imaginaries to Polish anti-gender mobilisations.



SWITZERLAND

THE PERIOD INCLUDED IN THIS STUDY IS CHARACTERISED BY SEVERAL IMPORTANT LEGISLATIVE CHANGES IN THE REALM OF GENDER EQUALITY IN SWITZERLAND. IN DECEMBER 2018, THE ANTI-RACISM ARTICLE IN THE CRIMINAL CODE WAS EXTENDED TO INCLUDE A BAN ON DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION (ARTICLE 261 BIS) AFTER AN OPTIONAL REFERENDUM TRIGGERED A POPULAR VOTE IN 2020.



In December 2020, the Swiss federal government and parliament approved the opening of civil marriage and adoption rights for same-sex couples. After an optional referendum triggered a popular vote in 2021, the Swiss electorate voted with a large margin (by a nearly two-thirds majority) in favour of amending the marriage laws.

Since January 2021, trans people or 'persons with a gender variance' (Swiss government term) can change their official gender record and first name quickly and without bureaucratic complications. In December 2022, however, the Swiss government contested the

introduction of a third gender option or no-gender option for official records.

The data for this study was drawn from Swiss parliamentary debates spanning 2018 to 2023. The newspapers studied in German were *Die Weltwoche*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (NZZ) and *Die Wochenzeitung* (WOZ). Papers covered in the French-language sample (Romandie) include the national *Le Temps* and *La Tribune de Genève*. Additionally, *20 Minuten* and *20 Minutes Romandie* have been chosen for both French and German-language newspapers in Switzerland.

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PARLIAMENT

CONTESTATION OF GENDER AND SEXUAL EQUALITIES IS FREQUENTLY ARTICULATED THROUGH TECHNOCRATIC OR LEGALISTIC DISCOURSES.

The majority of contributions that oppose or criticise gender and sexual equalities are made by MPs of the Swiss People's Party (66%), followed by the Centre (26%), and EDU (8%). Despite this far-right dominance, openly hostile or inflammatory written and oral contributions are in the minority when compared to the use of procedural and other objections to LGBTIQ+ rights. This demonstrates that opposition to gender and sexual equalities does not have to come in the form of emotionally charged and pronounced ideological discourses.

THE FIGURE OF THE VULNERABLE CHILD THAT MUST BE PROTECTED AGAINST 'SEXUALISATION' IS DEPLOYED TO OPPOSE THE LEGITIMACY OF NON-NORMATIVE GENDER AND SEXUAL IDENTITIES.

For example, although the Swiss parliament does not deal with questions relating to school curricula as this falls under the responsibility of the cantons, sex education is a clear target of mobilisation in relation to publicly funded national sexual health and sex education campaigns.

GENDER-AFFIRMING CARE IS POSITIONED AS A THREAT TO MINORS AND THIS FURTHERS THE FOCUS ON THE FIGURE OF THE VULNERABLE CHILD.

This idea is advanced by MPs from the Centre and the SVP. These voices make reference to an 'exponential increase' in young people seeking medical gender reassignment. It is postulated that young people are animated to transition by the medical establishment irrespective of the 'proven' dangers of gender affirming care for minors. The Swiss government is framed as

lagging behind other countries that have already recognized 'the dangers' of gender affirming care and that have reacted appropriately with bans and mandatory psychotherapy in lieu of affirming services.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ARE MOBILISED TO JUSTIFY OPPOSITION TO LESBIAN COUPLES' ACCESS TO ASSISTED REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES (ART).

Opponents use a rights-based discourse to suggest an inherent contradiction between lesbian parents' rights and their children's rights to a father and a mother. In lieu of a child's right to know its origins, it is insisted that children have a right to be raised by their biological parents. This argument suggests that (biological) filiation is necessary for desirable parenting and the wellbeing of children and that queer families deny children of this right.

AN ESSENTIALIST RHETORIC OF SEX AS A BIOLOGICAL CATEGORY IS A CONSISTENT REFERENCE POINT IN DEBATES.

This was particularly evident in the use of evidence from medical sciences by MPs from across the political spectrum. Polemic statements that made reference to 'gender ideology', served as frequent asides in debates and sought to call-out an 'unscientific' departure from naturalist understandings of gender and sexuality.

ANTI-IMMIGRATION SENTIMENT AND ISLAMOPHOBIA ARE EXPRESSED IN RELATION TO GENDER ISSUES IN THE SWISS PARLIAMENT.

The data demonstrates that gender inequalities are disproportionately associated with Muslim minorities. MPs from the Swiss People's Party and the Centre associated Muslim communities in Switzerland with increased domestic violence. MPs from the Swiss People's Party and the Centre sought to table debates about the 'child headscarf'. The Swiss People's Party also argued that asylum-seeking women are giving birth in order to manipulate the asylum process and that asylum seekers were transitioning in order to claim asylum based on their trans identity.

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MEDIA

THE PHRASE ‘GENDER-IDEOLOGY’ (IN ITS GERMAN AND FRENCH SPELLING VARIANTS) APPEARED SIGNIFICANTLY MORE FREQUENTLY IN THE SELECTED GERMAN LANGUAGE PRESS THAN IN THE FRENCH LANGUAGE PRESS.

Given its fairly wide circulation in the German-language press, the phrase ‘gender-ideology’ appears to have established itself as a recognizable and legitimatised concept in German-speaking Switzerland. In Swiss French media, the concept is used significantly less frequently and mostly as an explicitly polemical expression. ‘Théorie du genre’ is used to convey a similar, if less controversial meaning.

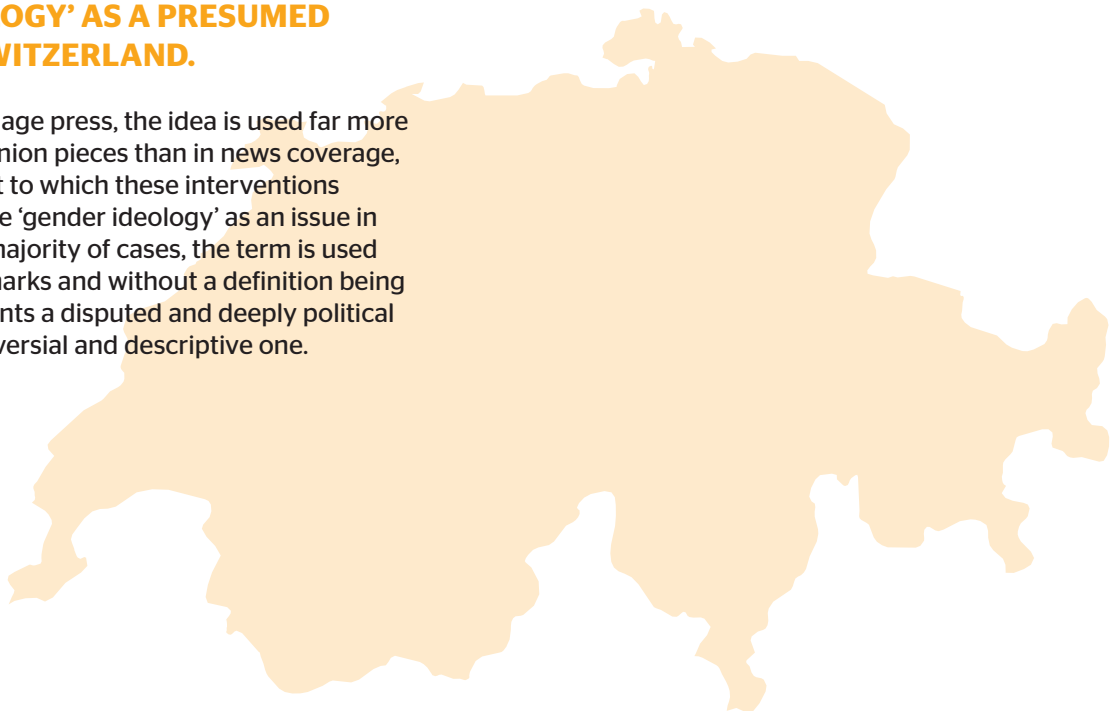
MEDIA DISCOURSE IS KEY TO SITUATING ‘GENDER IDEOLOGY’ AS A PRESUMED PROBLEM IN SWITZERLAND.

In the German language press, the idea is used far more in comment and opinion pieces than in news coverage, indicating the extent to which these interventions are seeking to situate ‘gender ideology’ as an issue in Switzerland. In the majority of cases, the term is used without quotation marks and without a definition being provided. This presents a disputed and deeply political idea as an uncontroversial and descriptive one.

IN THE RIGHT-WING PRESS, THE IDEA OF ‘GENDER IDEOLOGY’ IS PRESENTED AS A THREAT TO FREEDOM OF SPEECH.

The idea of ‘gender ideology’ is associated with ‘cancelling’ and ‘silencing’ in the context of trans and LGBTIQ+ activism. It is accused of shutting down debate about women’s rights and the status of biological sex. In contrast, in the left-wing press, the term is predominantly associated with far-right activism.

In the French-speaking part of the country, trans issues are frequently spoken about in terms of an activist minority determined to silence the majority. A significant proportion of 2022 newspaper articles in the sample about anti-gender politics in Romandie pertained to the controversy over anti-trans talks at the University of Geneva. In the mainstream and conservative press, protests over the talks were almost exclusively described as an importation of ‘cancel culture’ into Switzerland.



UNITED KINGDOM

IN ILGA-EUROPE'S WIDELY CITED 'RAINBOW INDEX' OF LGBTIQ+ RIGHTS, THE UK DROPPED FROM 1ST PLACE IN 2015 TO 14TH BY 2022. AS WELL AS DOCUMENTING HATE CRIMES AND LEGISLATIVE STAGNATION OR REGRESSION, THESE REPORTS CONSISTENTLY DRAW ATTENTION TO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HOSTILE MEDIA AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE. THE CURRENT PARLIAMENT HAS DEBATED THE STATUS AND NATURE OF GENDER FREEDOMS IN RELATION TO A RANGE OF PROPOSED LEGISLATIVE AND POLITICAL INITIATIVES.



The period in question is one in which several major global and geopolitical issues commanded significant attention, including Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic, Russian invasion of Ukraine, and inflation and the cost-of-living crisis. Nonetheless, debates in this period considered abortion and reproductive rights, sex and relationships education, and gay and trans conversion therapy. As the analysis below documents, issues relating to gender recognition and trans rights were the

predominant focus of interest in the period and came to dominate the agenda in late 2022 and early 2023.

The data is drawn from a study of the House of Commons (lower chamber of the UK Parliament) debates between 2018-2023, and from a study of *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian* (two nation-wide broadsheets) and *The Scotsman* (main Scottish daily newspaper).

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PARLIAMENT

A PRONOUNCED ANTI-TRANS POLITICS HAS TAKEN SHAPE DURING THE PERIOD OF THE CURRENT CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT.

There has been a marked shift from a discourse of relative concern for trans people around 2015 and 2016 to one of overt problematisation from at least 2021 onwards. The most significant contributors to this in the parliamentary data are white, male Conservative Party MPs, who often speak 'in defence of women', even when subjecting female opposition MPs to hostile questioning.

THE ASSERTION THAT 'SEX IS A BIOLOGICAL FACT' IS A KEY REFERENT IN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

Inflammatory rhetoric is largely absent from UK parliamentary debates. The relative absence of references to 'gender ideology', despite the prominence of this term in UK media discourse, is an indicator of this. The most common contention in the debate corpus is that 'sex is a biological fact', indicating the extent to which transgender rights are held up as inherently in conflict with cis women's rights. That is, trans rights put cis women's rights - or 'sex-based rights' - at risk.

TRANS LIVES ARE DELEGITIMISED AND FRAMED AS IN NEED OF PATERNALISTIC PROTECTION.

The most overt delegitimation of trans lives occurs by framing transgender identity as an ideology or lifestyle trend. This is closely related to the discursive production of imagined scenarios and anxious speculation. The use of 'what if' rhetorical scenarios - for example by seeing transness as an opportunistic way of accessing 'women's spaces' - reproduces the association of trans people (and especially transwomen) with predatory sexual behaviour and abuse.

TRANSNESS IS FRAMED AS ERASING ESTABLISHED FREEDOMS FOR BOTH STRAIGHT AND GAY PEOPLE.

In contra-distinction to arguments that position transgender identity as a problem for traditional commonsense, MPs that speak against trans rights as 'a feminist', 'lesbian' or 'gay man' posit it as a threat to historically achieved and hard-won political and sexual freedoms. This advances the gender binary as the only rational framework to operate within legally, socially and politically.



MEDIA

'TRANS PANIC' COVERAGE AND CAMPAIGNING HAS BECOME A KEY FEATURE OF RIGHT-WING MEDIA.

The comparative analysis between three broadsheet newspapers empirically demonstrates the extent to which coverage of trans issues has become a key pillar of right-wing media's creation of a 'culture war' in the UK. This involves a concerted and hostile focus on the lives of trans people themselves. It also positions a so-called 'trans debate' in a wider targeting of gender and sexuality issues, often collapsed into the idea of 'wokeness'.

THE IDEA OF 'GENDER IDEOLOGY' IS CONSISTENTLY PUSHED BY RIGHT-WING MEDIA.

While *The Guardian* endured internal upheaval in 2020, prompted by staff protest at 'anti-trans bias' in comment and opinion pieces, in RESIST's data the paper clearly treats the term 'gender ideology' as ideologically loaded, and as an exclusive property of the transnational far-right. In contrast, *The Telegraph* systematically

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naturalises the term through its reporting, in both news coverage and opinion pieces. *The Telegraph* exclusively reserves its usage of 'gender ideology' for UK domestic reporting. It consistently links it to transgender issues. This positions 'gender ideology' as an established political problem in education, social services and public spaces and institutions, and is key to pushing the 'problem of activism' in the UK context.

THE EXTENT OF SATURATION COVERAGE OF TRANSGENDER ISSUES CONSTITUTES A FORM OF MEDIA CAMPAIGNING.

The campaigning practice of *The Telegraph* is underlined by the network of actors and organisations that consistently provide the source or focus of its coverage. It is striking that half of the actors mentioned in stories that feature the term 'gender ideology' are self-described 'gender critical' actors who, in many cases, are actively involved in campaigns and organisations mobilised against transgender rights.

TRANS PEOPLE ARE PREDOMINANTLY WRITTEN ABOUT AND SPOKEN FOR IN UK MEDIA.

In a sample of 50 opinion pieces from 22 news sources commenting on the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill, only two were written by writers who identify as transgender. This is indicative of how trans issues get written about, and who speaks on trans issues. It is also the inverse of the repressive hypervisibility noted more generally in these findings. Even where there is broadly sympathetic coverage, trans people are significantly more likely to be spoken about than to be platformed in a 'debate' about their lives and rights.

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT IS AN IMPORTANT FORUM FOR POLITICAL DEBATE AND DECISION-MAKING IN THE EUROPEAN UNION. ITS MEMBERS ARE DIRECTLY ELECTED BY VOTERS IN ALL MEMBER STATES TO REPRESENT CITIZENS' INTERESTS REGARDING EU LEGISLATION AND TO OVERSEE THE DEMOCRATIC FUNCTIONING OF THE EU INSTITUTIONS.



Over the last years, anti-gender politics has proven to be very important to the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) and Identity and Democracy (ID) political groups. It has been widely noted that a focus on gender-related issues has provided an important point of collaboration for a 'populist nationalist politics' that takes direct aim at fundamental rights in the EP. In this stage of research, we studied plenary debates and written questions that related to sexual and reproductive health, gender mainstreaming, LGBTIQ+ issues, and women's rights.

THE VERY MENTION OF GENDER IS SUFFICIENT TO HAVE IT FRAMED AS A PROBLEM, AND 'IDEOLOGY'.

The mere appearance of the term gender in a debate title or motion is sufficient for it to be dismissed as an instance of 'gender ideology' being imposed. This allows actors to recycle arguments about its conspiratorial or undemocratic character regardless of the issue at hand. It is presented interchangeably as superficial and a distraction, and as a serious threat to culture, society, and sovereignty.

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ANTI-GENDER MEPS FREQUENTLY USE PLENARY DEBATES AS SPACES FOR OVERTLY MISOGYNISTIC, ANTI-LGBTIQ+ AND RACIST STATEMENTS DESIGNED TO COMMAND ATTENTION AND ELICIT POLITICAL RESPONSES.

In comparison to the results from national parliaments, the tone of contributions on gender-related issues is frequently openly derogatory and hostile. This is shaped by MEPs playing to 'home galleries' with their contributions, but also legitimised as an honest response to the absurdity and danger of 'gender ideology'.

OPPOSITION TO THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION REMAINS A SIGNIFICANT SITE OF ANTI-GENDER MOBILISING, INCLUDING CONSPIRATORIAL IDEAS ABOUT ITS 'IMPOSITION'.

Debates on the Istanbul Convention are a consistent site of anti-gender arguments. The disputed references to gender in the convention facilitate a wide range of tactical interventions. Arguments about its imposition range from conspiratorial notions that it is a 'Trojan horse' for gender ideology, to using the convention's 'imposition' as a way to call for the defence of sovereignty against the European Union.

AN IMAGINED GEOGRAPHY OF IMPOSITION FROM 'OUTSIDE' IS A KEY RHETORIC USED TO OPPOSE GENDER EQUALITY AND LGBTIQ+ RIGHTS.

The Istanbul Convention is only one instance of the widespread contention that foreign and dangerous ideas are being imposed on nations - a consistent rhetorical strategy for radical right MEPs. Gender ideology is imagined as a cocktail of 'feminism', 'LGBT theory', 'Marxism' and 'Imperialism' and that is designed to attack everything from families to national sovereignty to the 'Christian heritage' of Europe. Brussels, EU and sometimes 'the West' are imagined as the sites from which dangerous ideas emerge and circulate.

STATING A NEED TO DEFEND CHILDREN AGAINST THE EXCESSES AND THREATS OF 'GENDER IDEOLOGY' FOMENTS SUSPICION OF LGBTIQ+ PEOPLE.

Claiming to be acting to safeguard children from sexualisation is used as a way of conflating or suggesting links between LGBTIQ+ identities and 'sexual deviance', and thus paedophilia and forms of sexual abuse. While these conflationary arguments are made in a limited number of extreme contributions, it is worth noting because of the danger this kind of rhetoric poses. This anti-gender rhetoric goes beyond problematising the concept of gender into the territory of defaming queer lives.

SOME ANTI-GENDER ACTORS USE DEBATES ABOUT GENDER AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADVANCE RACIST DISCOURSES.

A common tactic by radical right MEPs is to argue that the real threat to women and LGBTIQ+ people comes from 'migrants and specifically Muslim migrants'. This tactic not only advances anti-immigration border politics but allows them to present the nation as a tolerant and equal space other than for the 'imported' threat.

You can follow the RESIST Project on our website here:
[**https://theresistproject.eu/**](https://theresistproject.eu/)



RESIST

Fostering Queer Feminist Intersectional Resistances against Transnational Anti-Gender Politics

ANTI-GENDER TACTICS IN EUROPE

The RESIST project: research findings

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