



**RESIST**

Fostering Queer Feminist Intersectional Resistances against Transnational Anti-Gender Politics

# The RESIST project: European Parliament Case Study Findings



UNIVERSITÉ DE FRIBOURG  
UNIVERSITÄT FREIBURG



Lucerne University of  
Applied Sciences and Arts

**HOCHSCHULE  
LUZERN**



**Funded by  
the European Union**

Funded by the European Union under Project ID 101060749 .

EU Horizon Europe (EU partners); UK Government Horizon Europe Guarantee Scheme (UK partner);  
Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (Swiss partners)

Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or British and Swiss funding authorities. Neither the European Union nor the granting authorities can be held responsible for them.

<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Context: The Radical Right in the European Parliament</b>	<b>4</b>
Figure EP1: Illustrating shrinkage of left parties (red) and proportionate shift to right and centre right MEPs 1989-2022.	6
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>7</b>
Plenary debates study	8
Table EP2: Coding Categories for EP Debates	10
Table EP3: Coded Content in EP Debate Analysis	10
<b>Plenary debates on the Istanbul Convention</b>	<b>12</b>
Introduction	12
Opposition to the Istanbul Convention (IC): an initial overview	13
EP debates on the Istanbul Convention	15
Table EP4: List of Debates on the Istanbul Convention	15
Data presentation	16
Table EP5: Istanbul Convention Debate Contributions	16
Definition of 'gender' as a problem	16
Consequences of 'gender' as a problem	22
Actors held responsible for this problem	25
Proposed responses or solutions to the problem	25
The 'real' problem(s) gender distracts from	26
The 'real' threats to women and feminism in Europe	27
Anti anti-gender arguments	30
Findings	33
<b>Plenary Debates on Gender Mainstreaming</b>	<b>34</b>
Table EP6: List of Plenary Debates pertaining to Gender Mainstreaming	36
Debate Coding for Gender Mainstreaming	36
Table EP7: Gender Mainstreaming Debate Contributions	36
Definition of gender as a problem	36
Consequences of gender as a problem	49
Actors held responsible	50
Proposed responses and solutions	51
The real problem gender distracts from	51
The real threats to women and feminism	53
Anti anti-gender arguments	55
Findings	59
<b>Plenary Debates on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)</b>	<b>60</b>
Table EP8: Plenary Debates relating to SRHR and Sexual Education	61
Debate Coding for SRHR	61
Table EP9: Code Descriptions for Plenary Debates relating to SRHR and	

Sexual Education	62
Definition of gender as a problem	62
Consequences of gender as a problem	70
Actors held responsible	70
Proposed responses and solutions	71
The real problem gender distracts from	72
The real threats to women and feminism	73
Anti anti-gender arguments	73
<b>LGBTIQ and Hate Speech Debates in the European Parliament</b>	<b>78</b>
Table EP10: Plenary Debates relating to LGBTIQ and Hate Speech	78
Definition of gender as a problem	78
Consequences of gender as a problem	82
Actors held responsible	84
Table EP11: Actors held responsible for 'LGBT agenda'	84
The real problem gender distracts from	84
The real threats to women and feminism	88
Anti anti-gender arguments	88
<b>Written parliamentary questions from RRP actors</b>	<b>91</b>
Findings	91
Questions pertaining to surrogacy, reproductive technologies and adoption of children by the same-sex couples	92
Questions pertaining to the sovereignty of nation-state's legal systems and the infringement of the EU upon the national value systems	92
Questions pertaining to specific 'disputed concepts'	92
Questions pertaining to freedom of expression and freedom of religion	93
Questions pertaining to transgender people	93
Questions involving children	93
Questions combining anti-gender and anti-immigration politics	94
Table EP12: European Parliamentary Questions articulating Anti-Gender Content	112

## Introduction

This report presents a study of anti-gender politics in the European Parliament, conducted between 14.11 and 20.12.2022.

The European Parliament (EP) 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 with regard to EU legislation, and to have an oversight of the democratic functioning of the EU institutions. While it does not have the right to propose new bills, it can amend, and decide whether to accept or reject legislation.

Within the parliament, MEPs are organised into officially recognized cross-national political groupings. In the current, and 9<sup>th</sup> legislature (2019-2024) there are seven groups. The historically most established and dominant are the European People's Party (EPP) and the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D). The other groups are Renew Europe (Renew); Identity and Democracy (ID), Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA); European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR); and the Left group (GUE/NGL). Over the last years, anti-gender politics has proven to be central to antagonisms between the political groupings, and of importance in understanding the increased standing and influence of radical right groups within the parliament. 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.

These parties and actors organise and strategise their EP interventions in relation to topical issues, transnational controversies, and ideas and discourses circulated and translated between political contexts. This concerted action is of direct relevance to the aims of RESIST Work Package 1, which seeks to map the circulation of anti-gender discourses targeting fundamental rights and democratic freedoms in political and media spaces, including parliaments; and to understand the tactics, arguments and narratives enacted in political debate. Thus, the EP is of relevance not only because of the historically unprecedented presence of radical rights actors, and their mobilisation around these issues, but also because it provides an opportunity to examine how these ideas and narratives circulate at supranational and transnational scale.

The report is presented as follows. The next section examines radical right actors in the EP to situate the subsequent analysis of anti-gender discourse. Following an explanation of the methodology, the report presents a thematic analysis of plenary debates (N=58) on the Istanbul Convention, Gender Mainstreaming, and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. The raw but thematized data from the coding of LGBTIQ-related debates is also included. Following this, an analysis of radical right parliamentarians' written questions on gender-related issues is presented.

## Context: The Radical Right in the European Parliament

The study of the radical right in the EP has increased in recent years. This is in part because of the relative increase in their presence and impact, and because this interaction-at-proximity within the groupings allows for analysis of how a network of often diverse parties engage ideologically and politically (Forchtner & Lubarda 2022). What Enzo Traverso has referred to as Europe's 'post-fascist constellation' is complex, and this produces significant taxonomical debate as to how to describe these actors. For the purposes of this report, this is somewhat simplified by the grouping process in the EP. That is, while whole political groupings in the EP can be meaningfully characterised as 'radical nationalist right', there are significant differences between them on their proximity to 'far-right', 'fascist-autocratic' right positions, ideologies and tendencies. This study brackets these definitional debates by primarily focusing on the two main groupings in the 2019-2024 parliament, and mapping these back to related groups in the 2014-2019 term. This is not to deny the importance of a nuanced approach to radical right parties, but rather to note that categorical debates have limited relevance to this report's research objectives. The two groups in focus here are the European Conservative and Reformists (ECR) group, which has 63 MEPs from 19 parties and 15 countries, and the Identity and Democracy (ID) group, which has 64 MEPs from 10 countries.

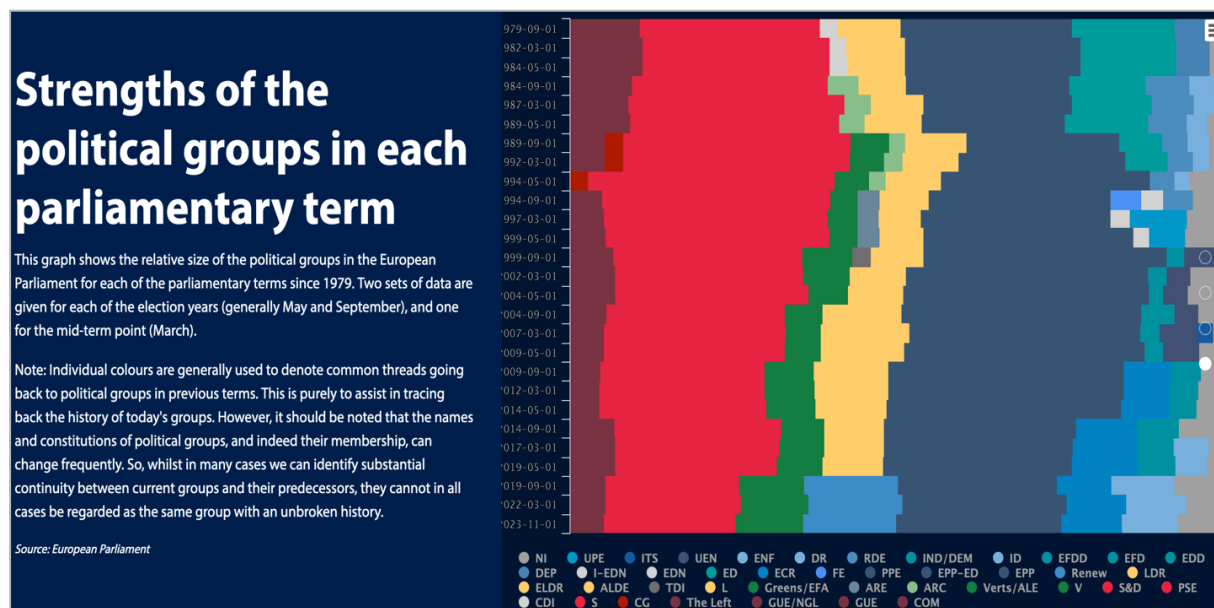
The ECR self-describes as a centre-right political grouping. Founded in 2009 primarily through the work of the British Conservative Party, PiS (Poland) and the Czech Civic Democratic (ODS) party, it positioned its shared Euroscepticism as a form of 'respectable radicalism' (McDonnell & Werner 2018). However, recent studies note that the departure of the British Tories, the proportional importance of PiS (with 27 of the 63 MEPs) and the electoral surge of Fratelli d'Italia and Vox (Spain) in the 2019 election account for what Gaweda, Siddi and Miller describe as the increased influence of "members with a post-fascist or radical right background" and an "...ongoing ultra-conservative, nationalist and anti-gender equality shift in the ECR..." (2022).

The Identity and Democracy group was founded after the May 2019 elections and became the fifth largest group in the EP on the strength of these results. It is comprised of parties with well-established track records of radical nationalist and far-right politics, such as Lega (Italy), Perussuomalaiset (True Finns), AfD (Germany), Rassemblement National (previously the FN, France) and the Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People's Party). The significance of this twin grouping in the EP is described by Kantola and Miller:

"...EP's political groups have no direct equivalents in national parliaments. Formally, political groups need to be made up of at least 23 MEPs from seven member states that share 'political affinities'. In the 8th EP the electoral performance of radical right populists was unprecedentedly successful and particular radical right populist delegations were also willing to collaborate to form political groups. Previously their

political differences had prevented such cooperation (McDonnell and Werner, 2019: 15; Mudde, 2019). Though radical right populists' electoral success in 2019 was less than had been anticipated, collaboration made the Identity and Democracy (ID) group, the fourth largest group in the EP.” (2021: 784)

The infographic below, from the European Parliament, illustrates the expansion on the right in the composition of MEP group affiliation:



**Figure EP1:** Illustrating shrinkage of left parties (red) and proportionate shift to right and centre right MEPs 1989-2022.<sup>1</sup>

The successful formation of EP groupings allows MEPs access to parliamentary speaking time, resources, important committee positions and ultimately to “...have more changes to influence the internal life of the EP...” (Servent 2019). In the case of radical right groups, other parliamentary groups have maintained a cordon sanitaire on forms of cooperation, though this is widely regarded as a porous and strained, if important, principle and practice (ibid.). In the case of radical right groups, it underlines the need to examine both parliamentary proceedings, and other routes through which radical right actors can prosecute anti-gender politics. As Kantola and Miller note, political groups in the EP have traditionally been studied through roll call votes and the quantitative study of political behaviours. However, to engage the tactical dimensions of RRP (Radical Right Populist) activity requires examining a wider range of formal and informal practices shaped by specific parliamentary opportunities. They give the example of the ‘blue card’:

<sup>1</sup> Source: European Parliaments Trends: <https://facts-and-figures.europarl.europa.eu/trends>

“The impact of RRP extended to other parliamentary practices, such as blue cards. An MEP can raise a blue card to ask to make a comment on another MEPs’ speech. It is up to the MEP speaking to decide whether they accept the blue card, listen to the comment and respond. Blue cards thereby give members an opportunity to express directly opposing views in the plenary (Corbett et al., 2016: 67; 232). It was felt that blue cards were harnessed by radical right populist MEPs in the plenary to enact ‘bad manners’ (Moffitt, 2016: 41–5) to distance themselves from the politically correct ‘establishment’ European politics.” (2021: 789)

In summary, therefore, the EP study design was required to find ways of engaging with an expanded radical right parliamentary presence in what is widely described as a more polarised and antagonistic EP. To do this clearly requires examining a number of different modes of activity in the EP setting. And, at the same time, this institutional and actor-led approach must be reconciled with the need to examine these practices as integrated to a transnational ‘strange assemblage’ of anti- gender politics, that is, to remain aware of how anti-gender politics is not the sole preserve of the radical right.

## Methodology

The European Parliament differs significantly in its composition and processes from national parliaments, most notably in the extent of its multilingualism, and the organisation of politicians from national parties into political groups within the parliament. The former issue is further complicated by the absence of monolingual, official transcripts, the latter by the patterns of re-composition in political groups which took place between the two parliamentary terms being researched, 2014-19 and 2019-2024.

This methodology chapter describes the issues considered and decisions made in designing a study that, in translating the project aims and research questions to this specific research focus, could engage the multiple ways in which anti-gender discourse is articulated, inserted, circulated and reproduced within interrelated European Parliament fora and processes.

The objectives in mapping and explaining anti-gender discourses and policies are supported by research question RQ1: *What are the political manifestations of anti-gender, how are they formed and articulated transnationally, and how are they informed by intersecting categories of inequality?* In pursuing these questions, focus is on “the production and circulation of gender-equality repressive strategies and discourses by political and media actors and in public debate”. In the proposal, the European Parliament was chosen in order to explore how ‘anti-gender discourse’ circulates at ‘supranational and transnational scales’. Given this, the first stage in the process of research involved developing adapted RQs):

RQ1: How do MEPs associated with radical right parties and blocs attempt to articulate anti-gender politics through their contributions to plenary debates and related documentation, and how do they publicise these articulations to relevant movements or networks, and seek to capitalise politically on them in public debate?

RQ2: To what extent and in what ways do issues and motions pertaining to gender and sexual equality in the EP provide an opportunity for the articulation of anti-gender politics, and what evidence of discursive and political strategies do these contributions provide? In addition, how do issues and motions pertaining to migration, racism, interculturalism and diversity provide an opportunity for the articulation of more overtly intersectional forms of anti-gender politics?

At the same time, further guidelines for the research were developed from an initial pilot analysis of sample plenary transcripts, and the literature review addressing radical right actors in the EP. These were (a) to pay attention to the specific modes of speaking and participation facilitated by the plenary agenda of the EP and assess the possibilities and limitations of these modes for the articulation of anti-gender politics, and (b) to pay attention to the occurrence and meaning of contemporary ‘trigger issues’ for anti-gender politics, documenting their projected significance and effects, and assess their relevance to strategic interventions in plenary debates – ‘gender studies’, ‘feminism’, ‘gender ideology’, ‘intersectionality’, ‘trans ideology’. Methodologically, it was decided to condense these elements into a two-part study.

*Part 1* conducts coding and content analysis on a corpus of EP plenary debates, focusing on how anti-gender discourse is articulated in this context, and how patterns of consistency, development and change over time can reveal tactical approaches. This content analysis can be developed in the future through discourse analysis.

*Part 2* maps actors’ articulation of anti-gender from the EP plenary to other parliamentary and extra-parliamentary platforms. The methodology for this ‘actor mapping’ is outlined at the start of that study.

## **Plenary debates study**

The EP plenary study is guided by the objective of *examining how specific issues and motions related to gender and sexual equality and freedom in the parliament provide an opportunity for the articulation of anti-gender politics and assessing the extent and significance of this opportunity.*

The first step in this study design tested different kinds of keyword searches in the *EuroParl* plenary debate archive. The archive allows for searches in the title of debates, and within the text of debates. For relevance and efficiency of selection, the corpus building was restricted to keyword searches that appeared in the title of plenary debates. The keyword



search was expansive, both as an exploratory exercise and to try and find the forms of language more/less likely to appear in debate titles and official EP documentation. On this basis, we grouped debates into thematic categories which were refined also during the process of coding. The categories selected were:

Debates on the *Istanbul Convention (IC)* / Debates on *LGBTIQ+ rights*<sup>2</sup> / Debates on *sexual and reproductive health and education (SRHE)* / Debates on *gender mainstreaming (GM)* Debates on *racism and migration (RM)*

The final debate selection was partly purposive, in large part because when a random sample was tested it featured debates including the keyword but which were thematically irrelevant (e.g. many debates on gender mainstreaming were highly technical considerations of legal instruments for pay parity and were not relevant to code). The project design proposed a research time frame of 2015-2022, and this time frame was used to sample across the two parliamentary periods.

Across these thematic categories, a total of **58 debates** were selected for analysis, of which the following 51 occur in the main categories:

Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRHE): 10 / Gender Mainstreaming (GM): 13 / Istanbul Convention (IC): 7 / LGBTIQ+: 8 / *racism and migration (RM)*: 13

Within these debates, a total of **1183 speeches** were analysed for coding:

SRHE: 290 / GM: 315 / IC: 240 / LGBTIQ+: 338

These debate/speech sample sizes compare favourably with other EP studies of the same scale – Forchtner and Lubarda’s (2022) study of climate change communication by the far-right in the EP has a corpus of 792 plenary speeches, Berthet’s (2022) study of debates about the IC and gender equality in the EP has 533. The next phase consisted in developing a series of coding questions: How is ‘gender’ articulated (as a problem)? / What are the consequences of the problem? / Who is held responsible for this problem? / What is the proposed response or solution to the problem?

Two random debates were selected for an *initial inductive coding analysis* where the unit of an analysis is an argument articulated in a series of consecutive sentences. Inductive coding is a ground-up approach where you derive your codes from the data while being guided by the research objectives. Coding was conducted by the researchers simultaneously in real-time through test-coding (batches of 4), comparison and consolidation, and code

---

<sup>2</sup> to which debates on *hate speech*, a previously separate category, were merged, because the impetus for the vast majority of these debates involved forms of discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people

finalisation. On this basis, the coding questions were refined as categories, code colours were assigned, and extra categories were added:

Coding categories
Definition of Gender as a problem Consequences of gender as a problem Actors held responsible for this problem Proposed solutions or responses to the problem The “real” problem(s) gender distracts from [deflection] The “real” threats to women and feminism in Europe Anti anti-gender arguments

**Table EP2:** Coding Categories for EP Debates

The categories added were two further ‘tactics’ categories that became apparent in the test reading and that opened up the analytical space to further examine the ‘intersectional’ dimensions of anti-gender rhetoric. At the same time, it became evident that a record needed to be added of ‘anti anti-gender’ arguments that demonstrate over time the specific ways in which MEPs have drawn attention to, preempted and responded to anti-gender discourse.

Through a process of AI transcription, translation checking and manual coding, from 58 debates and 1183 speeches **409 items of coded content** were gathered and categorised:

Category	N=
Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRHE):	92
Gender Mainstreaming (GM):	129
Istanbul Convention (IC):	60
LGBTIQ	128
<b>Total:</b>	<b>409</b>

**Table EP3:** Coded Content in EP Debate Analysis

Given their ‘intersectional’ relation to the main coding categories, it proved counter-productive to code the ‘racism and migration’ debates according to the same schema. Instead, these were set aside to be analysed qualitatively at a later point in the project, for the intersection of anti-gender with arguments about race, racism and migration.

Some code categories proved to be quite unambiguous, such as anti anti-gender, whereas others produced many instances of coding ambiguity, most prominently the relationship

between ‘definition of gender as a problem’ and ‘consequences of gender as a problem’. The reason for this is somewhat obvious, in that most speakers tend to articulate the problem and its consequences together. In these instances, the coders checked with each other to ensure that the instance was included in the most relevant category.

A note on translation strategy is necessary. MEPs may speak in an ‘official language of choice’ in the EP, which usually means their national language(s), or in English/French. The EP translation and interpretation service produces an initial transcript of a plenary debate, which is followed sometime later by the upload of an official transcript which has been approved by the language services of the national representations. However, at no point is a monolingual transcript of plenary proceedings published.

This fact was overlooked at the project design phase and developing and implementing a translation strategy for a corpus this big proved to be a significant extra step in the research design and implementation. To define the approach, a review of how comparable studies approached the question of corpus translation was carried out. Forchtner and Lubarda, for example, took the following approach:

“The two authors and a research assistant coded both basic stances and specific arguments separately; differences were discussed before a decision was made. At times, problems arose regarding the language of these texts: while most of them were available in languages covered by the authors, the latter relied on their networks to obtain translations whenever this was not the case (2022: 14).

This approach appears to be representative of a lack of sustained attention to the question of translation in the field (primarily political science). For this reason, an approach that involves several steps in translation and checking was devised:

1. To obtain a basic monolingual transcript, the interpretation streams of the plenary debates were run through Speak AI transcription software. This laborious process involved requesting the videos; downloading and storing them; time-stamping the videos to ensure that only relevant content was transcribed (many of the videos issued by the Commission’s media centre were unedited live streams, often 13+ hours long) and to minimise the problems created for the software by longer videos;
2. Transcripts were reviewed to minimally ‘clean’ them and to insert speakers’ names when checked against the roll call of speakers in each debate; and
3. Extracted material chosen for coding was fully cleaned by comparing the transcription of the AI interpretation with that published on the Parliament’s website and where required, matched against a machine translation (Google translate) of the quotation plus a check with consortium members according to language competencies (a three-cycle quality review process).

The actor mapping study did not raise similar translation issues, as the ‘questions for written answer’ must be submitted in either English or French.

In what follows an analysis of four thematic studies is presented.

## Plenary debates on the Istanbul Convention

### Introduction

Writing in July 2022, the *Deutsche Welle* journalist Stephanie Burnett<sup>3</sup> asked the following question: “The Istanbul Convention seeks to end violence against women – but in recent years it has become increasingly politicized. Turkey has withdrawn from the treaty, and other countries may follow suit. But why?”

The Council of Europe ‘Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence’ was ratified by its Committee of Ministers on 7 April 2011, and opened for signature by member states on 11 May 2011 in Istanbul, Turkey. It has consequently become known as and is consistently referred to in press and political discussion, as the Istanbul Convention (henceforth IC).

Though sometimes confused with the European Council of the European Union, The Council of Europe is a separate 46-member international organisation primarily focused on ‘upholding human rights and democracy’. As of 2022, 34 out of these 46 member states have ratified the convention, which entails that “...they must adopt measures to fulfill their commitment to preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence...”<sup>4</sup> based on four policy pillars: prevention, protection, prosecution and coordinated policies.<sup>5</sup> The IC is the first legally binding international instrument of its type, committing states to a framework of legal and policy measures and monitoring and reporting duties.

At the time of writing, the IC has been signed by all EU member states and ratified by 21 (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia have not ratified it). In parallel, the EU has instigated a ratification and accession procedure, which is legally complex, and which provides the framework for understanding the rapid process of overt politicisation mentioned above. In 2014 the European Parliament took the lead in asking the European Commission to launch the process of EU treaty accession. Consequently, the IC has been debated sporadically within the EU Parliament, and these debates provide the corpus for this study. In 2017 the EU signed the convention as a first step towards accession, and in 2019 the parliament sought legal opinion from the European Court of Justice to ascertain

---

<sup>3</sup><https://www.dw.com/en/istanbul-convention-how-a-european-treaty-against-womens-violence-became-politicized/a-56953987>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/key-facts>

<sup>5</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/coe-istanbulconvention-infographic-en-r04-v01/1680a06d0d>

the legal basis of accession. The court ruling in 2021 identified these bases while also noting the need for ‘additional time to achieve political support among member states’.<sup>6</sup>

## **Opposition to the Istanbul Convention (IC): an initial overview**

This reference to ‘additional time’ is an oblique reference to the accelerated and multi-faceted politicisation of the IC in recent years. Ostensibly, opposition to the IC hinges on the inclusion of ‘gender’ in the language of the treaty, and specifically the following articles.

*Article 3b* provides a definition of gender as deployed in the IC and it is the emphasis on social construction, assumed to be a direct contradiction to ‘biological fact’, which consistently recurs in oppositional discourse: “gender shall mean the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men.” Relatedly, *Article 6* makes reference to the need to include a ‘gender perspective’ in the “implementation and evaluation of the impacts of this Convention.” On its official IC website<sup>7</sup> the Council of Europe recognises the ways in which the very mention of gender has become the focal point for significant ideological reaction:

“Under the convention, the use of the term “gender” aims to acknowledge how harmful attitudes and perceptions about roles and behaviour expected of women in society play a role in perpetuating violence against women. Such terminology does not replace the biological definition of “sex”, nor those of “women” and “men”, but aims to stress how much inequalities, stereotypes and violence do not originate from biological differences, but from harmful preconceptions about women’s attributes or roles that limit their agency. Hence, the convention frames the eradication of violence against women and domestic violence in the advancement of equality between women and men.”

Irrespective of such clarificatory attempts, the claim that ratification of the IC involves some form of legal commitment to a ‘theory of gender’, and that this commitment constitutes a breach of sovereignty – understood, as evident below, in multiple interlocking political/cultural/gendered/racialised ways – forms the political and discursive basis for manifold attacks on, and campaigns against, the IC. As a recent investigative report by The Advocates for Human Rights Group, *A Rollback for Human Rights: The Istanbul Convention Under Attack* notes, the coherence and vehemence of the repetition of this message across media and public platforms has had significant, high-level effects: “...for example, in 2018, Bulgaria’s Constitutional Court declared ratification of the convention unconstitutional based

---

<sup>6</sup>

<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-a-new-push-for-european-democracy/file-eu-accession-to-the-istanbul-convention>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/key-facts>

on a faulty determination that it would require recognition of ‘gender’ as a social construct, which the Istanbul Convention does not.’ (2021: 6)

There is very recent literature on the politics of the IC’s politicisation and rejection (e.g. Kriszán and Roggeband 2021), and on its treatment in the European Parliament (Berthet 2022). As a point of orientation for this data presentation, we draw here on the functional framework provided by the Advocates for Human Rights Group report, which consistently underlines the ‘speed of influence’ of the network of campaigning movements which has succeeded in gaining significant political traction. Noting the extent to which US-based and other European ‘far-right religious organisations’ have funded and supported campaigns against the IC, the report underlines the coordinated and mutually reinforcing strategies employed across national contexts and through international networks. To quote from their summary of ‘opposition positions’:

“Research and interviews reveal that ‘gender ideology’ propaganda is one of the primary factors fueling the backlash to the Istanbul Convention. The ‘gender ideology’ fiction is an umbrella concept used to oppose women’s equality, LGBTI rights, and SRR. The opposition seeks to brand different human rights initiatives as promoting a threatening ‘gender ideology’ that will destroy traditional values... This threat must be recognised for what it is: a transnational socio-political movement that exploits people’s stereotypes, fears, religious beliefs, concerns over migration, and nationalism.... In particular the opposition often uses the well-being of children to foster unfounded hysteria of the harms of ‘gender ideology’ and specific human rights. The opposition derides the human rights framework as reflecting a ‘gender ideology’ that will undermine the traditional family, erode fundamental cultural values, and erase national identity.” (2021: 3-4)

This report’s conclusion that there have been coordinated ‘disinformation’ campaigns about the IC, is seconded by Hillary Margolis of Human Rights Watch, who observes that:

“The main thing we’re seeing is a disinformation campaign about the convention and what it represents and what is intended. In a lot of ways this convention has become a victim of this broader attempt to be used for political gains; to demonise women’s rights and LGBT rights. It’s distorting the convention to create a panic around the idea that families are under attack and values and national systems are under attack, when of course that is entirely untrue.” (Burnett op.cit)

The results of this accelerated politicisation are stark and wide-ranging. In May 2020 the Hungarian Parliament rejected ratification<sup>8</sup> of the IC, explicitly refusing the reference to gender as an ‘ideological approach’ and to the convention’s obligations to receive refugees

---

8

[https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/05/hungarys-parliament-blocks-domestic-violence-treaty?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/05/hungarys-parliament-blocks-domestic-violence-treaty?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

who are persecuted because of gender or sexual orientation, which may ‘speed up or simplify immigration to Europe’. In July of the same year, the Polish government began the procedure to withdraw from the treaty. In July 2021, Turkey withdrew from the IC, a move which generated significant domestic protest and international news coverage. In its report on the withdrawal, Amnesty International<sup>9</sup> noted that “The Turkish government and its supporters have said the Convention threatens ‘family values’ and ‘normalises homosexuality’, claims which have been echoed by several governments, including Poland and Hungary to justify their attempts to roll back rights.”

This context informs our choice of Istanbul Convention debates as a thematic focus, as given the extent and intensity of this recent mobilisation it clearly offers an opportunity to articulate anti-gender politics, and it does so over the time span defined for this research.

## EP debates on the Istanbul Convention

The distribution of plenary debates in our corpus reflects, to some extent, the relatively accelerated ‘politicisation’ of the IC referred to in the previous section. Our corpus samples all debates that featured the IC as a key term in the plenary debate title, and this search returned two 2 debates in the 2014-19 EP, and already five to date in the 2019-2024 EP. The following debates were analysed:

Date	List of debates on the Istanbul Convention
23.11.2016	EU accession to the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women
12.03.2018	The fight against violence against women and girls and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by EU member states
25.01.2019	EU accession to the Istanbul Convention and other measures to combat gender-based violence
25.11.2020	The Istanbul Convention and violence against women
25.11.2021	The International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women and the state of play of the ratification of the Istanbul Convention
19.10.2022	Fighting sexualised violence – The importance of the Istanbul Convention and a comprehensive proposal for a directive against gender-based violence
23.11.2022	Eliminating violence against women

**Table EP4:** *List of Debates on the Istanbul Convention*

The debates until 2020 are primarily driven by the ratification process, the debates after this point are predominantly held, for symbolic and political reasons, on the 25.11 and can be

<sup>9</sup>

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/07/turkeys-withdrawal-from-the-istanbul-convention-rallies-the-fight-for-womens-rights-across-the-world-2/>

understood as attempts by convention-supporting MEPs to mark a lack of progress on the accession process.

## Data presentation

The data for this analysis is drawn from 240 speakers, 45 of whom were from RRP groups (radical right groups), constituting 18.75% of all speakers. From this 64 contributions were categorised as follows:

Contribution Count	Debate coding category
11	Definition of Gender as a problem
14	Consequences of gender as a problem
3	Actors held responsible for this problem
2	Proposed responses or solutions to the problem
6	The "real" problem(s) gender distracts from [deflection]
10	The "real" threats to women and feminism in Europe
18	Anti anti-Gender Arguments
<b>Total: 64</b>	

**Table EP5:** *Istanbul Convention Debate Contributions*

A debate-by-debate analysis of anti-gender discourse is presented under each of the code categories below and the detailed Table can be consulted in [Appendix A: Table AA2 \(EP2\) – ‘Istanbul Convention coded debates’](#). In what follows, a debate-by-debate analysis of anti-gender discourse is presented under each of the code categories. It is immediately evident from this that anti anti-gender contributions are most consistently articulated within and across debates, averaging 2.6 per debate, and at least 1 per debate.

### **Definition of ‘gender’ as a problem**

*23.11.2016: EU accession to the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women*

Given the wider context, it is perhaps surprising that the most extensive expression in this category is encountered in the very first debate coded. It is also the most widely distributed instance, with contributions from non-ratifying/rejecting countries (2 Polish MEPs, Marek Jurek and Jadwiga Wiśniewska, both ECR, and the Slovak Branislav Škripek ) supported by Daniela Aiuto (a one-term Italian MEP from the now-defunct EFDD) and Beatrix von Storch (also EFDD).



For Aiuto, the problem is that the treaty introduces "...for the first time in an international treaty the social definition of gender, which becomes binding on states that ratify the Convention."

Aiuto's contribution is in a form that recurs across the corpus, where an MEP from a ratifying country expresses support for non-ratifying colleagues less through overt ideological affinity than by expressing support for subsidiarity or some form of sovereignty. While this lays claim to a clearly democratic principle – within EU discourse – it does so here by repeating the conspiratorial notion, expressly contradicted by the CoE, that a 'social definition of gender' becomes legally binding on acceded states. In Von Storch's contribution the significance of the 'social definition' is also to the fore, and she continues to articulate an explicit 'biological' and common sense counterpoint which oscillates between scientific and religious points of reference:

"The Istanbul Convention wants to establish that the gender of a person is a social construct. So, sex comes about through man himself, through education and training, through the tides, through the sun, moon and stars. Man makes himself God."

Von Storch continues to reproduce the conspiratorial claim advanced by Aiuto, while also demonstrating how the purported imposition of 'gender' through the IC can be linked to any issue in which a notion of gender is implicated:

"The Istanbul Convention wants all national legislation to be based on this gender-gaga-crap. No sane person can agree with that. Gender mainstreaming, that is the plague of this century. This is affluent waste that belongs to the rubbish heap of history."

The first explicit mention of ideology comes from Jadwiga Wiśniewska, who is one of the most active MEPs on this issue across the span of both parliamentary terms, and who introduces two further key motifs that occur throughout the debates:

"Gender ideology is at play here. This gender ideology says that any gender has some sort of cultural background, and the violence against women is allegedly a result of a patriarchal society and this needs to be changed and replaced by some leftist ideas. This is clearly visible in some western European countries where violence reigns."

Gender ideology is held to advance an analysis of the causes of violence which not only rejects the given state of the social order, but which does so for expressly hegemonic purposes. This contribution is the first glimpse of a *patterned imaginative geography of imposition*, with a hint of the association of gender ideology with communism/new totalitarianism which is commonplace in interventions from Polish and other south/eastern European MEPs. While this MEP is rarely racialising in her analysis, the implication here in the context of the borders crisis of 2015-16 cannot be read in isolation from the explicit

articulation in other code categories - that western Europe's 'migration policy' has increased violence against women.

The final two contributions in this debate explicitly reduce gender to 'gender ideology' – According to Branislav Škripek: "It (the convention) introduces gender and gender ideology..."; and Marek Jurek echoes his co-patriot Wiśniewska's contribution in more compressed form: "This is a Marxist ideology document which is against the family which is considered a space for violence..."

Jurek here articulates a position that will become consistently articulated in Polish arguments for treaty withdrawal – that any suggestion that violence takes place within family relations is not about preventing violence against women, but about ideologically weakening the status of the family (Wilczek 2020).

*12.03.2018: The fight against violence against women and girls and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by EU member states.*

The second debate in this theme is notable for the comparative lack of articulations of 'gender as a problem' arguments, and while references to 'gender ideology' occur in other categories (see below), it is noticeable that the contributor total in this debate is restricted to two, the consistent contributor Wiśniewska, and the two-term Bulgarian MEP Angel Dzhambazki (also ECR, see 'consequences' code category).

Wiśniewska contributed twice on this question, firstly, and early in the debate, setting out some now-familiar elements, fashioned to a point that is also widely, and strategically repeated across the corpus, namely that opposition to the IC is solely about the inclusion of gender (ideology), and that thus it is this ideological insistence which is solely responsible for delays in ratification:

"What we're talking about here is the implementation of a left-wing ideology. The targets set here are preventing violence, protecting victims, making sure that perpetrators are prosecuted. We're not questioning any of that. Of course not. But all of this is embedded in an ideological context. It seems to me that this is a gender vision of society, if you like. Where gender is socially defined, it's a concept. It's not actually a biological fact, it's a concept."

In common with other such contentions, the status of a 'biological fact' does not require further explanation, and the underlining of concept/construction serves not just to emphasise the artificial nature of gender, but also the problem of its imposition, as it is, Wiśniewska continues in a later contribution,

"...ideological baggage.... [is part of] an attempt being made to put forward a certain definition that doesn't seem to share broad support amongst the populations..."

Here the imposition is not just one of West on East, but an international(ist) elite project that is straightforwardly ‘unpopular’ among populations, thus drawing on the well-documented right-populist appropriation of the *volonté générale* (Taggart 2000).

*25.01.2019: EU accession to the Istanbul Convention and other measures to combat gender-based violence*

The 2019 debate occurs in the year where the EU process of accession becomes mired in legal as well as political considerations, and where organised and high-level opposition commands marked public attention. Given this, it is notable that there is less articulation of ‘gender ideology’—related discourse at this point, however the occurring instances are from Slovak and Bulgarian MEPs who speak directly from a position of national relevance and involvement. It is also noticeable that both of these contributions are more openly prejudiced, and targeted in their prejudice, than the preceding material.

Milan Uhrík is a non-aligned MEP who at the time of this debate belonged to the far-right Slovak party Kotleba - People’s Party Our Slovakia, and he at first rehearsed the ‘if it weren’t for the gender theory’ performance of reluctant opposition:

“The Istanbul Convention is good in many ways, but it abuses the topic of women’s protection to promote a perverted gender ideology, because in this convention, a woman is not defined biologically, but as a role and a pattern of behaviour created by society. This means that according to this convention transvestites will already be officially considered women and society and other people will have to pretend they are blind and treat these transvestites the same as normal women. Commissioners, where do you want to take Europe?”

Uhrík’s intervention is not just the first instance of a transphobic argument in this thematic corpus, but also evidence of the ways in which the imposition of ‘gender ideology’ can be related to, instanced through, and held responsible for any issue of pertaining to gender and sexuality – it is ‘perverted’, and thus produces perversions.

The Bulgarian MEP Angel Dzhambazki, with a background in the national conservative Bulgarian National Movement, is a two-term MEP but one who only begins to appear in these debates in the post-2019 parliament, after which point he is, like Wiśniewska, a near-constant contributor across the debate corpus. In the following, he underlines the sex/biology duality, while articulating two discursive dimensions that also become more frequent over time.

The first is the rhetorical notion of LGBTIQ+ as an ‘alphabet soup’ of gender options, and the second is an argument that gains in traction over the debate timeline, which is that the IC has not diminished or eliminated gender-based violence in ratifying states, and that

therefore this failure not only renders the IC useless, but proves that its primary intent is ideological imposition:

“I heard all these numbers that you are quoting today (referring to gender-based and domestic violence statistics quoted previously in the debate) but these are numbers from countries that have ratified the convention. How does the convention help? Why doesn’t it work? Because it has another goal, another task. Here we have two topics mixed in, violence against women and the absurd LGBT etcetera etcetera abbreviations and the change in the role of gender. But sex is not gender. Sex is biology. Maybe you’ll be surprised but there are still states in Europe that believe that family is a union between a woman and a man, and we are not prepared to change it.”

#### *25.11.20: The Istanbul Convention and violence against women*

This debate is the second to be held on the symbolic date of 25.11, and the first to be held as a marker of a lack of progress in the accession process. There is only one coded contribution here, again from Angel Dzhambazki, who reiterates a by now-familiar narrative of what gender ideology means and what it seeks to enact, while also intensifying the tactic of equating social construction with a fanciful proliferation of genders and sexual identities, and labouring this point through what is assumed to be absurdist exaggeration:

“The Istanbul Convention does not protect women from domestic violence, it is a cover for imposing the new gender ideology, according to which gender is not a biological but a social characteristic. For me there are only two genders – male and female. I cannot in any way agree that there is a third, fifth or tenth gender and that these are social constructs. Our children need to know what is normal and what are the true roles of man and woman, and that the family is made up of a man and a woman.”

While reprising the idea that the IC and gender are a threat to children and normality, Dzhambazki also continues to reproduce a trope that can be traced across not just parliamentary debates, but also to wider political and campaign:

“...The Istanbul Convention is a Trojan horse that, under the guise of fighting violence against women, promotes dangerous feminist ideas...”

Here, the smuggled contents of the horse are *feminist*, in other instances, it is the imported, foreign provenance of the ideas, or their ‘Marxist’ character. However, what is of note here is that this is the first usage of a metaphor that – according to time-bound Google searches – has been associated with the IC for many years, before beginning to circulate more insistently amongst anti-abortion and pro-family activist networks.

A study of Latvian press coverage of the IC from 2016 identifies the ‘Trojan horse’ frame as one of the most prevalent employed by what are described as ‘nationalist anti-gender voices’ (Zitmane 2017); a notable early consistency given that while Latvia is a non-ratifying state, Latvian MEPs do not feature at all in the corpus. The EU policy news website *Euractiv*, covering the 2018 decision of the Bulgarian constitutional court (referenced above), summarises that: “In several EU member states, notably in Bulgaria and Slovakia, the convention’s critics claim that the Council of Europe document is a Trojan horse aimed at introducing a ‘third sex’ and ‘same-sex marriage.’” From this point on, but particularly after 2020, the metaphor is transnationally widespread in activism – from the slogan of the “Stop Gender Stand for Family” campaign of the International Youth Coalition – and in wider political rhetoric, with one Polish government minister greeting the 2020 announcement of the intention to withdraw by describing the IC as a “left-wing gender Trojan horse (in) our system, and it’s high time for withdrawal.”

A more structured research process would be required to ascertain the ways in which this metaphor has been circulated and translated, however as an interim assessment it clearly represents the high-level reproduction of a profoundly conspiratorial notion that is also malleable – the content and consequences of what is being smuggled can vary, and be adapted.

#### *23.11.2022: Eliminating violence against women*

The final articulation of ‘gender as a problem’ occurs in the most recent debate, and is a statement from the ECR MEP Margarita de la Pisa Carrión. A member of the far-right Spanish party Vox, she was elected in 2019 but only took her place as an MEP after Brexit in 2020. Given the importance Vox have placed on forms of anti-gender politics in Spain (*Euractiv* 2023),<sup>10</sup> it could have been expected to see a parallel engagement in the EP by the clutch of first-time Vox MEPs who occupy a relatively powerful position within the EP, however this sustained transfer of mobilisation has not as yet materialised.

The exception is de la Pisa Carrión, who from 2020 appears regularly in this corpus. She is also the chairperson of an ECR policy working group on “Family and Life” launched in March 2020. Here, she compares the IC to campaigns on domestic violence laws in Spain, and articulates an argument which recurs across the corpus, which is that it is solely *the act of introducing the concept of gender* that creates division between women and men:

“This is part of a mentality where we try to be very hard with men in general, but very soft when it comes to those criminals who are most dangerous for women. This isn’t the first time that we’ve suffered the unjust consequences of ideological laws. If

---

<sup>10</sup> Fernando Heller ‘PP uncomfortable but compliant with VOXs gender violence negationism: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/pp-uncomfortable-but-compliant-with-voxs-gender-violence-negationism/>

they want to protect us, they need to ensure that the real aggressors are kept away from their victims. I would call all the political groups who promote gender ideology, I'll call them to wake up and recognise the perversity of this whole concept of gender violence...let's not create an opposition between men and women."

### ***Consequences of 'gender' as a problem***

*23.11.2016: EU accession to the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women*

As noted in the methodological discussion, the coding line between 'gender as a problem' and the 'consequences of gender as a problem' is often ambiguous, for the obvious reason that many actors articulate both together, and through a consequential logic. Take, for example, Von Storch's contention in the 2016 debate above, that "The Istanbul Convention wants all national legislation to be based on this gender-gaga-crap," which is coded in the former category but could as easily be coded under 'consequences'.

The reason for coding it in the first category is that it proved to be the first instance of a highly derogatory way of defining gender, whereas the point about legislative sovereignty that Von Storch makes is the dominant contribution in this category, as illustrated by the following straightforward argument made by Marek Jurek (ECR): "What we're talking about is to give the European Union another, yet another instrument to interfere with the political and legal systems of our member states."

A more developed version of this argument is provided by Branislav Škripek (ECR), who nuances the sovereignty in question to include that of 'parents' rights':

"...[the IC] encroaches in education and affects the rights of parents, and by ratifying the protocol, we would undermine the legal systems in the member states without solving the roots of violence, and this would weaken the trust of citizens in the European Union."

Anna Záborská, a Slovak Christian Union party member and member of the EPP group – included here because her invocation of sovereignty depends on repeating the conspiratorial idea that the IC requires a national-legal integration of the concept of gender – goes further, speculating on future 'identity policies' as a consequence:

"The Istanbul protocol would introduce the gender definition into our legal system, which is unknown to the Charter of Human Rights or international legislation. And this could be followed by the introduction of other policies based on identity. And I believe that this manner of thinking polarises the society because it allows us to distinguish between us and them."

This now-familiar trope, that it is the idea of gender that produces difference and division, is also rehearsed by Daniel Aiuto of the EFDD group: “It seems absurd that an instrument such as the convention which should be bringing us together is actually dividing us.”

*12.03.2018: The fight against violence against women and girls and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by EU member states.*

The one clear instance in this debate comes from the Bulgarian MEP Angel Dzhambazki, who is referring here to the then-ongoing political and legal deliberations about the treaty in Bulgaria:

“The Bulgarian position is due to what we have just heard in this room. What you said proves these positions are purely political. I understand that some of you want to play the political left or the political right, but you haven’t lived under communism. Of course we want to fight against violence against women. But the convention contains some gender ideology elements and we do not agree with them. It’s not only Bulgaria that doesn’t agree. The United Kingdom doesn’t agree either. So please, you have to show respect to the internal order of every society.”

Dzhambazki rehearses the equation of ‘gender ideology’ with communism as a new form of totalitarianism, before adding an integralist dimension to sovereignty as not only the legal standing of states in the international order, but as an organic property of the nation.

*25.01.2019: EU accession to the Istanbul Convention and other measures to combat gender-based violence*

In this debate Andżelika Możdżanowska (ECR) repeats the opposition between the imposition of artifice and organic, traditional values:

“The Istanbul convention goes far beyond its declared scope. And I want to believe that the convention is not a purposeful indoctrination aimed at eradicating our traditional values in order to replace them with some grand vision of a new man. We need to respect our differences, this is one of the European values.”

The French ID group MEP Annika Bruna reprises the argument that the only issue which divides proponents and opponents of the IC is the inclusion of gender theory:

“...this just case [of combating violence against women] is misguided in imposing the Istanbul Convention which addresses, certainly, violence against women, but which equally intends to oppose a harmful ideology. In effect, this convention intends to place gender theory in study programmes at all levels of instruction, thus imposing hazy ideas unrelated to women’s rights.”

*25.11.2021: The International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women and the state of play of the ratification of the Istanbul Convention*

Livia Járóka (NI) asserts that once again it is only the imposition of ideology that creates political problems:

“Violence against women must be removed, that's above and beyond politics, the Istanbul Convention is important. As an anthropologist, it's important that the binding nature must be acknowledged as creating ideological components that are not acceptable to Christian communities. Symbolically, it cannot create European unity, as it does not provide a consensus-oriented solution, but ideologically, you also understand and feel that it creates a very big fight.”

Angel Dzhambazki returns to familiar refrains as to ideological imposition and gender propaganda, while adding a form of racialised justification which occurs more frequently in subsequent coding categories, and which extends the imaginary of elite imposition to include migration (multiculturalism as an experiment):

“This is propaganda in which ideology was introduced under the legitimate sign of fighting against violence against women. You know this very well. An ideology that is part of the triad along with climate hysteria and the utopian ‘greenism’ of some idea of a new world order you are trying to impose. An ideology that will be swept away, of course, by your new friends, the poor refugees. It will happen and it is inevitable. Now, if you doubt about the propaganda in the Istanbul Convention, please tell me a little bit more about the statistics concerning violence in Islamic neighbourhoods in France. Now if you really want to combat violence, you should do this through the penal codes of the member states, not through crazy propaganda and crazy attempts to change our societies through what is known as gender ideology.”

*19.10.2022: Fighting sexualised violence – The importance of the Istanbul Convention and a comprehensive proposal for a directive against gender-based violence*

In this debate Margarita de la Pisa Carrión returns to a theme she has articulated previously, that gender theory is unfair to men and therefore a form of anti-equality:

“Faced with the drama of violence let's analyse the causes: alcoholism, addictions, affective disorders, hedonism, radical cultural ideas that denigrate women. To foster respect we have to educate in virtues, build healthy ties, not hypersexualise society or objectify people. Gender ideology stigmatises and criminalises men in a general way. It is an unfair topic that destroys real equality between men and women and causes fear and mistrust.”

It is possible that her reference to ‘radical cultural ideas that denigrate women’ is a reference to trans issues, which are overtly referred to as an extreme instance of gender theory in action in this subsequent contribution by Angel Dzhambazki:



“There is an ideology in the Istanbul Convention which is unacceptable to some of us, and that is why we oppose this document, and at the same time we tell you not to take the just cause of protecting women’s rights as a hostage for ideological changes aimed at family and tradition....how do you claim to support women’s rights, yet encourage an athlete who was born male to compete in a women’s league, in swimming, in boxing, in wrestling, or whatever.”

### ***Actors held responsible for this problem***

This coding category yields relatively little in this thematic study, but not because it proved to be irrelevant. Rather it is because within the discourse of ‘gender ideology’ the responsible actors are either implied or, as in multiple cases in the previous two sections, bluntly stated but without elaboration. In a relation where something is being imposed, there is always an agent of imposition. Those held generally responsible are ‘the left’; gender is a result of ‘left-wing ideology’; and across this theme this is exaggerated on two occasions to include ‘Marxism’ and in further instances to extend to ‘communism’.

This coding category will provide fuller results when examined across the thematic corpus as a whole, as it will also then allow nuance as to who is considered part of this ‘left’ in these instances. It is also worth noting here the near-exclusive blame apportioned to ‘the left’, whereas ‘feminism’ is rarely articulated as responsible for ‘the problem’.

### ***Proposed responses or solutions to the problem***

This category also yields little discrete material, primarily for the reasons that:

- a. Opposition to the IC focuses on criticising it and blocking it; there is no pressing political need to propose an alternative when the problem is artificial imposition on otherwise internally ordered and coherent societies. This is emphasised in this code in the debate of 12.3.18, where Angel Dzhambazki extends the argument to the “need to respect Christian family values”;
- b. The affirmation of sovereignty/subsidiarity is considered to be an inherent solution, as it re-states established powers and procedures. This is developed by Jadwiga Wiśniewska on the 23.11.2022, where she argues that the IC debates should shift to ‘exchange of good practices’ and that, for all the criticism levelled at it, Poland has “...an obligation to separate the perpetrator from the victim, and this has to be done immediately after a crime, and I think that this Polish practice should be used in all member states.”

Much more typical is a kind of composite statement, here from Branislav Škripek on 23.11.2016, who reiterates the key dimensions of ‘mandatory introduction’ and sovereign interference, before urging unspecified ‘other approaches’:

“The convention forces the 14 member states that have not yet ratified it to agree to the mandatory introduction of the term ‘gender’ as a social construct and to the promotion of gender ideology... with interference in education, including the rights of parents... therefore I urge you to support other methods of stopping violence in our society but not by pushing this controversial convention.”

***The ‘real’ problem(s) gender distracts from***

This coding category - and the subsequent one on ‘real problems’ - demonstrates the ways in which racialising deflection and feminist appropriation are pronounced if not significant dimensions of anti-gender politics in this corpus.

*23.11.2016: EU accession to the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women*

A lengthy intervention is made by the UKIP MEP Janice Atkinson (ENF) who targets ‘Muslim migrants’ as a way to conflate anti-migration politics with a more generalised Islamophobia. Her reference to ‘Rotherham’ is coherent with a pattern apparent across codes, where reference to an event in one location – heavily mythicised and poorly represented – is used as evidence of what lies in store elsewhere unless steps are taken to ‘drain the swamp’:

“Madam President, you are not addressing the silent agenda, and I do not call on anyone in here to do anything, because you cover up the fact that young migrants, often of Muslim backgrounds, are over-represented in the violence against women statistics – which, by the way, is not the same as claiming that all Muslim migrants are prone to this type of behaviour. Their crimes against women, each year, in my country: female genital mutilation, 5,700 reported cases; honour killings, around a dozen; polygamy, around 20,000 illegal marriages; false marriage, 1,200 reported each year; child marriages, 5,000 to 8,000; and all this is done in the shadow of Sharia law. It took years before the Rotherham child abuse case was brought to light in the UK, out of fear of being labelled racist. In the UK we still have a parallel society of Sharia courts operating right under our noses. In fact all over Europe we see the same pattern. Those claiming to champion women’s rights are in denial and attempt to sweep this problem under the carpet. No amount of EU law or funds will make a difference until this is addressed. The truth is that by letting millions of young migrant men with Muslim backgrounds into our countries, we have submitted our women to these attacks. It is a form of terrorism. No more cover-ups, no more mitigating circumstances, no more political correctness. Like President-elect Trump, I would like more scrutiny of those you are letting in, but in the EU that won’t happen, so in order to protect our women, we need to drain the EU swamp and then make Europe great again.”

*25.11.2020: The Istanbul Convention and violence against women*

The Lega MEP Silvia Sardone (ID) articulates a trope which is both familiar from wider political discourse and pronounced in this corpus, that the liberal/left politics of women's rights is hypocritical because it is characterised by silences and taboos as to the prevalence of specifically 'Islamic' abuses:

"Words are no longer enough to counter the submission of women, which occurs with female circumcision and the obligatory Islamic veil, all things for which, too often, the same political party is silent. Words are no longer enough to denounce the ridiculous penalties for rape in too many countries. We need more tools to report, we need more certainty of the penalty. In a nutshell, I would say, less pro-68 feminist propaganda and more facts."

Similarly, the ID member Guido Reil focuses on 'Islamic migration' while making a stronger claim as to the unassimilable nature of the 'migrants' in question, an argument that carries clear echoes of the differentialism characteristic of 'new right' racism and which is a feature of AfD discourse:

"Certain taboos should be broken on the issue of increasing violence against women (which is) primarily related to immigration from certain countries and regions of origin... research in Beirut pointed to the link between violence against women and societal factors such as women's lack of political and economic participation, discriminatory legal systems and impunity for violence against women and girls. In some Middle eastern countries, 70% of women are victims of sexual violence. This makes social progress impossible. A survey conducted in Morocco in 2019 by the Ministry of Social Affairs found that around 54% of all women experience violence. As I said, immigration from these countries and regions inevitably leads to increasing violence against women in Europe."

*25.11.2021: The International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women and the state of play of the ratification of the Istanbul Convention*

Further evidencing the prevalence of contributions from ID members in this category, Gunnar Beck warns against the 'mission creep' of gender ideology and the lack of equality inherent in not equally focusing on violence against men:

"Of course women should be protected against violence. However, why only women? Men are as likely to suffer domestic violence as women. Why don't they merit protection? Second, some states subject to ratification, because they fear the courts, may interpret the Convention too broadly and apply it to gender matters unrelated to domestic violence."

## ***The 'real' threats to women and feminism in Europe***

*23.11.2016: EU accession to the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women*

This debate featured two contributions from RN (FN) MEPs, then members of the parliamentary group ENF, that draw on a specifically French appropriation of republicanism=equality=feminism. Firstly Steev Briois, who also references 'Cologne', which in this period has come to stand for the threat of hyper-sexualised, 'mass migration', while also activating a prevalent French discourse of Islamic 'communitarianism' resulting in the establishment of parallel societies:

"You have allowed Islamic fundamentalism to prosper in Europe and they are supporting polygamy and forced marriage and Sharia law. You were the people who organised the migratory flows to the European Union through relocating migrants with, as a consequence, an explosion in sexual aggression, such as in Cologne last year."

Sophie Montel also focuses on Islam as the main if not sole threat to women in Europe: "The status of women is falling back, Islamic fundamentalism is putting down roots, and attacks on the physical integrity of women are reaching tragically high levels."

*12.03.2018: The fight against violence against women and girls and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by EU member states.*

The Sweden Democrats MEP, then of EFDD and subsequently ECR, furthers the Islamophobic imaginary which dominates this category, with a further reference to the problem of 'taboos', while also drawing a contrast with 'women in Iran' which re-occurs topically throughout the corpus:

"Honour-related violence is also increasing, despite the fact that many politicians have long tried to deny that this type of violence exists. Today, women in Sweden and around Europe dress to an even greater extent in veils and burqas, while women in Iran throw away their veils in protest against oppression at the risk of their lives. Brave women, but where is Europe and what is the EU doing? All forms of violence and oppression against women is a brutal form of discrimination and a violation of human rights."

*25.11.2019: EU accession to the Istanbul Convention and other measures to combat gender-based violence*

Christine Anderson (ID) rehearses the argument that the problem is Islam, which does not belong in Europe:

“This is a phenomenon spreading throughout Europe, groups of men, and to test their manliness against the yardstick of the violence with which they defend their honour. Let's get rid of these symbolic expressions of concern that doesn't get rid of violence. It's this macho culture that is wrong, that doesn't belong in Europe. Islam, ladies and gentlemen, should, should simply not be here in Europe.”

Jadwiga Wiśniewska makes a similar argument of deflection while not reproducing the overtly Islamophobic discourse dominant in this category:

“Europe is a very important centre for human trafficking and over 10,000 forced marriages are marriages of girls under 15, and this is paedophilia. So human trafficking, paedophilia, physical and mental violence, all this is happening in Europe, although it is legally prohibited. So I do not believe that more regulations will end these terrible, brutal issues. The Convention is not the solution.”

#### *25.11.2020: The Istanbul Convention and violence against women*

In this extract, Christine Anderson rehearses an argument more commonly associated with MEPs from non-ratifying states, that the continuing realities of gender-based violence in accession states goes to show that the Convention itself is a distraction:

“Interestingly, and apart from the little pinches of ‘gender’ ideology proposed by Article 3(b) of the Convention, studies are showing that it falls short of attaining its goals. For instance: Just in Sweden, the National Council on Crime Prevention reported that the number of people killed in domestic violence doubled between 2017 and 2018. Belgian Interior Minister Pieter De Crem also denounced an increase in domestic violence during the same period, in other words before victims were locked in with their abusive partners because of confinement measures. Sweden and Belgium have ratified the Istanbul Convention, as well as Turkey, the country where it was adopted and where the rate of femicide is skyrocketing! This makes me want to ask you the following question: is there really an added value to this instrument?”

#### *25.11.2021: The International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women and the state of play of the ratification of the Istanbul Convention*

This lengthy intervention by Jorge Buxadé Villalba, of Vox and the ECR group, reprises the argument as to the practical uselessness of the IC, while reproducing the ‘real threat’ of ‘Islamic immigration’ – with another reference to ‘Cologne’ – and the problem of how gender theory sets men and women against each other:

“The European Union allocates billions of euros a year to promote equality —or so it says. We have women's observatories, equality commissions, non-governmental organisations, government organisations, ministers, counsellors, commissioners and even chairs at universities, but it is impossible to find an official figure of what is

happening. We don't know if violence against women is increasing or decreasing, but listening to you, it seems to be increasing, which means that your gender policies are useless. In fact, reality tells us the opposite: in 2015, when massive Islamic immigration was allowed into Germany, there was a drastic increase in violence against women. We are clear about it: violence against women is combated with border control, support for families and severe penalties against criminals and abusers. You do the opposite: you pit men against women, talk about "toxic masculinity" and consider all men, in general, potential rapists."

Jadwiga Wiśniewska returns to the idea that there is a widespread denial of other crimes against women and girls:

"We must speak out about violence and help break the silence of its victims. Every third woman in the world has experienced physical, psychological, economic or sexual abuse. Unfortunately, women and girls in Europe also continue to experience the very special and cruel violence of genital mutilation, and underage girls marry adult men in the European Union as well. I would like to express my regret that this issue was not raised either in the Commissioner's speech or in the position of the European Commission. Are you pretending that these cruel crimes do not exist?"

#### *23.11.2022: Eliminating violence against women*

Guido Reil (ID) interjects the now-familiar argument that stopping migration from 'certain countries' will essentially solve the problem:

"We have mass migration of young men from numerous different countries which are totally anti-feminine, anti-women countries, we have to stop this type of migration...(in response to a blue card question)... it has to be accepted that this is a part of the culture where these people come from, Iraq, Nigeria, Somalia and Syria and numerous different countries of that particular nature."

#### ***Anti anti-gender arguments***

As noted, this category was added to ensure that while the focus is on the discursive tactics of anti-gender politics, that this focus does not cause results to be taken out of the overall contexts of debates and the 'balance of forces', and thus be exaggerated for power and impact. Equally importantly, what this category demonstrates over time is reflexivity in response to anti-gender discourse, a process of tactical and also principled refutation and opposition that also contributes to an analysis of how anti-gender arguments work. The arguments in this category fall into pre-emptive discourse (where the speaker previews and refutes a common anti-gender tactic prior to its articulation) and responsive discourse (where the speaker sets out to actively refute a contention).

Due to the scale of data, for this report an illustrative sample of the material is presented.

*23.11.2016: EU accession to the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women*

Angelika Mlinar, (ALDE): “We are not gender ideologists, we are human rights defenders.”

Anna Maria Corazza Bildt (PPE):

“I note with regret that our extreme right colleagues from France, the populists, are using women who have fallen victim to violence as a campaigning tool, which is a scandal. And I would like to ask the following question: what do you say to the thousands, the millions of women, white or not white, who have fallen victim to violence?”

*12.03.2018: The fight against violence against women and girls and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by EU member states*

Andrus Ansip, Vice-President of the Commission:

“The Convention has generated very intense public debates where there have been misconceptions and misleading arguments. For example, these concern the use and translation of the term gender. Let me be very clear on this. This is about preventing and combating violence against women without other hidden purposes. It is not an instrument for shaping gender perceptions or ideologies.”

Christine Revault d’Allonnes Bonnefoy, (S&D):

“You've got countries saying no, we're not going to ratify it. It's actually the best instrument available to us. And so they have to come up with excuses. They say, oh, this is about gender ideology. They start inventing consequences of ratification, but they're pure inventions. It's not about ideology, ladies and gentlemen. It's about defending human rights.”

Terry Reintke, (Verts/ALE): “Gender as a notion is not a hidden ideology but enabled.”

Malin Björk (GUE/NGL):

“Colleagues, let's face it. We are experiencing a major backlash on women's rights in the European Union and those who are attacking women's rights have now chosen the Istanbul Convention to be one of the battlefields in this discussion. And they are doing that for purely ideological reasons. They are not doing that on any scientific or any real arguments. They are doing that because they want to push forward their ideology, taking away our rights.”

“The Istanbul Convention is not an ideological battle, other than the one to end violence against women and girls, and that is perhaps political and ideological

enough. It does not give rights to LGBTI people either. I must say that I am appalled by the homophobia that I have heard. Those who attack the Istanbul Convention are attacking women's rights and LGBTI rights. They attack all of us. But it will not work because we will stand up to you. We will make the world a safe place for women, girls and LGBTI people."

*25.11.2020: The Istanbul Convention and violence against women*

Arba Kokalari (PPE Group):

"But unfortunately the convention and the fight against violence against women is under attack by a great deal of unfair disinformation. Some say that, oh, the convention supports destructive gender ideology. Some others say, ooh, the convention will introduce the third sex."

*25.11.2021: The International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women and the state of play of the ratification of the Istanbul Convention*

Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield (Verts/Ale):

"When an increasing number of countries decide to attack the Istanbul Convention and to use disinformation in order to undermine the protection of women and LGBTI people, the EU and its institutions must more than ever be exemplary and ambitious, not only by reaffirming our shared values on equality and fundamental rights but also by using the tools that we have to reach when they are under attack...in May 2020 the Hungarian Parliament has rejected the ratification of the Istanbul Convention under the pretext that it promotes destructive gender ideologies and illegal migration. At the same moment, civil society organisations reported an alarming increase in reports of domestic violence during the first Covid-19 lockdown.

Today it is not even possible to understand the extent of gender-based violence in Hungary as the government simply does not collect data on this issue. Instead of properly funding services for victims of gender-based violence and enacting adequate legislation to eradicate gender-based violence the Hungarian government spends its energy in rejecting any international text in excluding the word gender. Every time they want to protect some women but not others, every time they avoid the word gender, the word intersectionality, the word minorities, they do not really want to act, they are just using this. And every time they use also the word ideology, they're just using the combat of women for their own purpose and they're not doing anything."

*23.11.2022: Eliminating violence against women*



Terry Reintke (Verts/Ale): “Even in moments of absolute vulnerability, they will not help us because our lives do not matter enough. They will actually let us die because the fundamentalist ideology matters more than our lives.”

Karen Melchior (Renew) [blue card question for Guido Reil (ID)]:

“Thank you very much for your intervention. I think it’s important that we look at the facts, and the European Agency for Fundamental Rights had a 2012 survey that showed that 33% of all women have experienced violence against them based on their gender. Do you claim that this is only from refugees, or should we look at where the violence against women comes from – that it is an integral part, unfortunately, of all parts of our society?”

Malin Björk (The Left):

“We have countries here like Poland, where we have an abortion ban and where women can die even when they are in hospital, like Izabela Sajbor. And we have Malta, which also has a total abortion ban. And in both countries, of course, those who help women to get access, to get the right to decide over their bodies, those people that help, they are persecuted and criminalised. Shame on you! Shame on you, patriarchal, inhuman politicians that persecute those who help.”

Bartosz Arłukowicz (PPE):

“I regret that in Poland the government is considering withdrawing from this international agreement. This is another proof that the government ignores the expectations of Polish citizens.”

## Findings

- Debates on the IC are a consistent site of anti-gender arguments, and the disputed references to gender in the convention facilitate a wide range of tactical interventions as to the projected ideological intentions of this inclusion. Thus, arguments about imposition, which vary from the conspiratorial (‘trojan horse’) to the defence of sovereignty, remain consistent across this thematic corpus.
- The convention’s references to gender are nearly always associated with the idea of ‘gender ideology’ in this corpus. The prevalence of ‘gender ideology’ as a point of reference in the EP is noted in Berthet’s study, where it is argued that “...the most illustrative attack against gender equality is through the rhetoric of gender ideology, used by anti-gender actors to depict the norm as a foreign ideology...” (2022: 681). What emerges through these coding categories is the relationship between this pronounced rhetoric of the imposition of a foreign ideology with the fluid

associations made with it – a vast range of issues and references can be made evidence of the influence of gender ideology;

- While anti-gender discourse remains generally consistent across the time period of these debates, there is no evidence of significantly extended mobilisation on the IC in the EP over time, the wider political context and the increased electoral share of the RRP groupings notwithstanding. Nonetheless, this pattern must be interpreted in relation to the political tendency of RRP MEPs to remain ‘non-attached’ (Servent 2019), that is, to signal their distance overtly or tacitly from the EU through non-attendance. The pattern of attendance is very time-consuming to calculate and is not a priority for this study, however it is discernible in several transcripts where the pointed absence of RRP MEPs – either from the start of a debate, or following a mass exit – is referred to by other speakers.
- The debates gathered here all proceed from motions supportive of the IC. However, the preponderance of debates take place in the context of high-level governmental and international opposition to and action on the IC. This arguably bolsters the legitimacy felt by IC opponents in voicing their EP engagements. This accounts for the noticeable level of participation from RRP MEPs in non-ratifying/rejecting nation-states. Nonetheless, the European geography of IC acceptance/ rejection does not map neatly onto MEPs nationalities, as domestic supporters of the IC in non-ratifying/rejecting nation-states regard the EP as an important venue for articulating this support. Similarly, RRP MEPs from ratifying states are equally exercised in support of their group colleagues from Poland, Bulgaria, etc.
- While incorporating resistance was not previewed in the research objectives, tracking the extent of it became crucial to this data presentation. It is not just in keeping with RESIST’s project aims, but crucial for understanding the extent and impact of anti-gender discourse in context. For example, in their study of the radical right and gender in the EP, Kantola and Lombardo propose to analyse ‘framing strategies’ through qualitative sampling, “...not aimed at determining incidence or prevalence” but “interpretative dimensions” (2021: 569). While this approach allows for a fine-grained analysis of radical right discourse, it (a) runs the risk of exceptionalising and indeed amplifying the radical right by extracting them from contexts and political relations where they are fiercely opposed, and (b) considers anti-gender rhetoric outside of the dialogic and antagonistic relations through which it is produced and reproduced, that is, it is shaped over time through interaction with anti anti-gender discourse.

## **Plenary Debates on Gender Mainstreaming**

What is gender mainstreaming? As defined by the European Commission in 1996, it means “not restricting efforts to promote equality to the implementation of specific measures to help women, but mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality.” Gender mainstreaming as a political strategy aims to tackle structural inequality and gendered institutional practices by considering gender in all aspects and phases of policy making, and requiring all actors to promote gender equality (Ahrens 2022). Gender mainstreaming is not just about women, but about ensuring that women's as well as men's experiences and concerns are built into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policy, legislation and spending programmes, and that both individual rights and structural inequalities are addressed.

The EP's gender mainstreaming strategy was formally launched in a resolution adopted in 2003. When the European Union endorsed 'gender mainstreaming' as its official policy approach to gender equality, there was much hope that it would accelerate progress in the area of gender equality. Two decades on, concerns remain about fragmented implementation across policy areas and institutions at EU and national levels. Despite diverse party positions and the intensification of gender problematising, gender mainstreaming is well institutionalised in the EP, at least compared to many national parliaments (Ahrens 2022: 325). The European Parliament regularly assesses its own progress in this area, and the FEMM (*Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality*) committee reports on gender mainstreaming in Parliament regularly.

For this section of the study 13 plenary debates pertaining to Gender Mainstreaming between 2015 and 2022 were analysed:

Date	Plenary Debates pertaining to Gender Mainstreaming
07.10.2015	Renewal of the EU Plan of action on Gender equality and Women's empowerment in development
02.02.2016	New Strategy for gender equality and women's rights post-2015
01.03.2017	Gender pay gap
30.05.2018	Gender equality and women's empowerment: transforming the lives of girls and women through EU external relations 2016-2020
14.01.2019	Gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament
22.10.2022	Gender Equality in EU's foreign and security policy
16.12.2020	The need for a dedicated Council configuration on gender equality
21.01.2021	The gender perspective in the COVID-19 crisis and post-crisis period - The EU Strategy for Gender Equality - Closing the digital gender gap: women's participation in the digital economy

09.06.2021	Promoting gender equality in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and careers
15.09.2021	Identifying gender-based violence as a new area of crime listed in Article 83(1) TFEU
13.12.2021	Combating gender-based violence: cyberviolence
08.03.2022	EU Gender Action Plan III
08.03.2022	Gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament – annual report 2020

**Table EP6:** List of Plenary Debates pertaining to Gender Mainstreaming

## Debate Coding for Gender Mainstreaming

In summary, five debates from the 2015-19 parliament were examined, and eight in the current 2019-2024 sitting. This involved 325 speakers, of whom 76 were from RRP groups, comprising 23.3% of the total. This is 4.5% higher than the Istanbul Convention debates (18.75% of speakers). The average number of speakers across the sample is 25 with the RRP contributing 5.5, so just under a quarter of all speakers in these debates on average are from the RR. From this, 123 coded contributions were examined with the following distribution across codes:

Count	Code Description
52	Definition of Gender as a problem
10	Consequences of gender as a problem
11	Actors held responsible for this problem
5	Proposed responses or solutions to the problem
15	The "real" problem(s) gender distracts from [deflection]
7	The "real" threats to women and feminism in Europe
23	Anti anti-Gender Arguments
<b>123</b>	<b>Total</b>

**Table EP7:** Gender Mainstreaming Debate Contributions

**Note:** N=123

### **Definition of gender as a problem**

*07.10.2015: Renewal of the EU Plan of action on Gender equality and Women's empowerment in development*

Mentions of 'gender ideology' are present in this first debate, expressing a concern that it is being exported to developing countries, for example from Branislav Škripek, (ECR):

“We impose on these countries gender ideology and the culture of death, and it is important to listen to Pope Francis who recently said that the population of the poorest countries of the Third World need to provide for basic needs and security. Home, work, land and freedom. They do not need all kinds of quota or fight against stereotypes. We have to respect the law, history, culture and traditions in third countries. We cannot impose our ideology on them and various anomalies and models of styles.”

And Mylène Troszczynski, (ENF):

“...in this report, you also call for specific actions to uphold the rights of sexual minorities, such as LGBTI people. Do you believe these developing countries really need this and how far will you go in your imperialist fantasies?”

The following quote by Beatrix von Storch (ECR), in writing reveals a common argument that ‘equality’ has come to mean ‘minority’ issues being prioritised over heteronormativity:

“The institutional control of values and norms through instruments of development aid is a specialty of the EU. After the Noichl and Tarabella reports, the report on the "Renewal of the EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation" is another example of nonsense on which the EU spends the money of the citizens of the Member States. The report not only supports gender manipulation by the information offices of the “EU Foreign Ministry”, but also propagates the depiction of marriage and motherhood as facts of discrimination. This is not just nonsense, this is total nonsense! Once again, the FEMM Committee not only violated the principle of subsidiarity, but also proved that this House has special rights for migrant women, women living with the HIV virus, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women (LGBTI) and women with Advocates disabilities - but unfortunately has no tolerance for straight people and families. The plenary followed the committee's view. Of course, I did not vote for the report.”

#### *02.02.2016: New Strategy for gender equality and women's rights post-2015*

Here also any initiative aimed at equality is configured as a zero-sum game that disenfranchises given majorities in favour of ideological preferences for ‘minority issues’. Jadwiga Wiśniewska asserts that:

“The left wants to promote ideological gender questions. To make children sexual beings to promote LGBTI. To change the definition of gender and the family, you have led to a situation in which traditional families may feel discriminated against because we Always hear that they're not modern enough. But they're not European enough, they're obsolete. The number of Regulations in terms of anti discriminative measures adopted by the European Parliament is huge, so there is no need to adopt any new

ones. My group is against the resolution of the Left. We propose a different approach, a more rational one Ladies and gentlemen, it's time to get back to our roots To base ourselves on the values on which the European Union has been constructed, let's not be ashamed of our Christian heritage. It's a source of wisdom and strength."

This zero-sum rationale is taken further by Arne Gericke (ECR) who insists on prescribing the 'gender equality project' as exceeding the boundaries of 'real' equality:

"...but we're not really working on genuine equality. The definition is wrong. We're not into facilitating gender issues. If we have sex education in primary schools and promotion of abortion, it doesn't mean that you can chop and change your own gender. What we want is equality between men and women, nothing more."

#### *01.03.2017: Gender pay gap*

This statement, from Janusz Korwin-Mikke (NI) and posed as a blue-card question, received media attention at the time:

"Do you know which was the place in the Polish theoretical physics Olympiad, the first place of women, of girls? I can tell you: 800th. Do you know how many women are in the first 100 chess players? I can tell you: not one. Of course women must earn less than men because they are weaker, they are smaller, they are less intelligent, and they must earn less. That's all."

#### *30.05.2018: Gender equality and women's empowerment: transforming the lives of girls and women through EU external relations 2016-2020*

Jadwiga Wiśniewska makes a connection between the ideology of the IC, the narrative of excessive attention being paid to 'sexual minorities', and her opposition to abortion:

"I think that the report is very ideologically couched. It talks about the Istanbul convention, talks about sexual minorities as well in almost every paragraph. The previous speaker spoke about the introduction of reproductive rules as a condition for equality. What are we talking about? About the fact that abortion should be available at any time? Ladies, do you really think that the basic condition for equality is the introduction of access to abortion? It is not in this direction and not through the prism of gender ideology that we, as the Union, should support gender equality and women's empowerment. Women really need real support, they need to be heard and be able to act in this way to support them through education, change their fate, but certainly not through a systemic change of approach to gender issues."

The insistence on 'bringing ideology in' is also made in this debate by a series of PPE members – so not RRP - including Bogdan Brunon Wenta (PPE):

“So anytime we speak about reproductive health, we speak about ending pregnancy, performed upon a request by woman's reproductive health is mentioned in both proposals. Of resolutions, the committee proposal mentions it nine times and the alternative five times. Both texts work on the protection of LGBT persons. However, the resolution should be focusing on improving the position of girls and women, regardless of their sexual preference. Both texts contain ideological paragraphs which go beyond the theme they should be on. Therefore I won't be able to support.”

And Michaela Šojdrová (PPE):

“In the draft report I see more ideological issues than specific proposals. How to help women's societies that do not respect women's rights where lack of education prevails, others where we have to promote human rights and secure safety. So everybody must support first of all where violence is a part of everyday life like Sudan, Libya, Syria. Well, in this country support for abortion is not a solution.... It's not really about the report, it's more about ideology. And I don't think that this is the right forum or right place for that kind of discussion nevertheless.”

#### *14.01.2019: Gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament*

A common trope in these debates is to collapse equality into homogeneity, as Arne Gericke (ECR) queries:

“Where is the diversity when women and men are made identical? We should celebrate the differences that make us men and women. Let's let everyone decide personally which profession he or she would like to pursue. It could also lead to more men on the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality.”

Mylène Troszczynski, (ENF), in vehemently opposing gender quotas, makes a related argument by arguing that women are demeaned by attempts to combat gender stereotyping:

“Are you so blinded by your party ideology not to see this reality? It is however obvious that our credibility as women is violently called into question with such [quota] measures... Another rubbish in this text, the importance, according to you, of deconstructing gender stereotypes in our communication, no longer using masculine or feminine but degendered and inclusive language so as not to stigmatise anyone and especially not LGBT people.”

Bruno Gollnisch (NI) demonstrates how these themes can be brought together, using exaggerated scenarios to disparage the presumed excesses of gender and its impact on natural, given sex categories:

"It condenses the characteristics of so-called "political correctness" in this matter. It stems from the idea that the roles of men and women, naturally complementary, must be in everything, always, everywhere, absolutely identical. The only thing that matters to you is that there are absolutely as many men as women everywhere, whatever the vocations, tastes, aptitudes, sensibilities of each other. Parity everywhere, but then, how to count the third, fourth, fifth sexes, and what place for these LGBTI, whose mouths are also full of you, if I dare say? The result is a guilt and infantilization of all deputies and, of course, of men."

Anna Záborská further projects this, in focusing on gender neutral language, as a form of cultural imposition (PPE):

"According to the submitted text, I should address you gender neutrally. However, in my native language I have no choice: I have to decide whether to address you as women or as men. And neither the members of this parliament, nor its leadership, nor its interpreters have the right to change the language, which has been naturally developed for hundreds, maybe thousands of years, by political orders."

Udo Voigt (NI) equates gender with a presumptively neoliberal politics of individualisation, thus further extending the ways through which 'gender' is being artificially imposed:

"Luckily, more and more voices are being raised that, like me, reject your twisted denial of natural sexes and the associated negation of the differences in every human being and also dare to say so openly. Yes, for me a family consists of a man, a woman and children. Europe will only have a future if we finally reverse the abnormal politics of hyper-individualization and recognize that genders are more than social constructs."

The solution to this artificiality is, according to Michaela Šojdrová (PPE), to protect women's natural position:

"I think our goal really has to be equality between women and men. Protecting women in their natural role – and that is the role of mother. Let's support women so that they can develop their professional careers, let's support women in their dignified lives, in their maternal role, so that they can properly care for their families."

Eleftherios Synadinos (NI), who until the year before this debate was a member of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party, blends Greek cultural patrimony with Biblical scriptural argument:

"God created man and woman in the image and likeness. We did not expect foreigners to preach to us the equality that ancient Greek literature and Greek



Orthodox Christianity have been teaching for millennia. It is an oxymoron that the bureaucrats of Brussels, who are so keen on diversity, try to convince for the absolute equalisation and elimination of every normal difference. ...Yes to equality, no annihilation or abolition of the two sexes. Yes to equal opportunities, no to institutional discrimination and codified acceptance of racism and sexism. Yes to meritocracy, no extra favouritism in favour of a select few.”

#### *22.10.2020: Gender Equality in EU's foreign and security policy*

Guido Reil (ID) commences the debate with a joke that seems to relativise the seriousness of climate change by linking it to the ‘ideological nonsense’ of gender equality:

“And apparently, climate change is particularly bad for women. Particularly for women and girls when we look at the Fridays for the Future. There are a lot of girls who are active in this? I'm not sure why it is that women and girls are so affected and so affected by climate change. So, I am making a small joke here, of course, but this whole thing is just intolerable. We're talking about creating these posts specifically for women, and we have to stop with this ideological Nonsense.”

Charlie Weimers (ECR) produces the first mention of ‘woke’ in the corpus, and his mentions of ‘radical feminism’ and ‘intersectionality’ evidence the appearance of a practised, transnational repertoire of dismissal:

“Mr President, we used to think that sex should not be an obstacle, nor a factor, in recruitment. Not anymore. This report on gender in foreign policy obsesses over individuals’ sex. It calls for binding quotas for management positions, it references gender mainstreaming, also known as radical feminism, 24 times, and intersectional analysis, a.k.a. Balkanisation, seven times. It calls for increased funding and staff to implement gender ideology, with a full-time gender adviser in each EEAS Directorate. I suppose the title ‘political gender commissar’ was already taken. The irony is, of course, that you can’t have your woke, gender mainstreaming cake and eat it too. What’s the point of quotas anyway if gender is a fluid concept? If you, like I do, believe that merit, not identity politics, should be at the heart of recruitment policy, then vote against this report.”

Virginie Joron (ID) draws on another line of imagined imposition, this time from Europe to the rest of the world:

“I think that Europe must first put its own house in order and protect all its daughters before wanting to impose its egalitarian ideology on the other side of the world.”

Margarita de la Pisa Carrión (ECR) explicitly links this process to ‘gender theory’, and holds it accountable for the creation of conflicts through its insidious ideological work:

“Mr. President, gender ideology is an assault on sanity, a virus that tries to get into all areas, infecting laws and institutions, misconfiguring reality itself and creating a culture of victimisation without sense or hope, as is the case in this report. , which mixes very important and serious issues, such as aspects that affect human rights—the sex slave trade, female genital mutilation, the marriage of girls—, with gender theories at the service of other power interests, manipulating consciences , and is presented as a wolf in sheep's clothing. In this way, instead of inspiring, we export outside our borders philosophies and models that confront and polarise relations between men and women, provoking conflict, hatred and resentment. We only offer abortion as a source of progress. We want our foreign and security policy to reflect the principles and values that gave rise to the European project, without falling into false fashion theories that cloud human consciousness, preventing a culture from releasing its best expression.”

Elżbieta Kruk (ECR) explicitly links these developments to ‘leftist feminism’ and positions an attention to gender as a form of sexism in and of itself:

“This report is an emanation of this never-ending willingness to segregate people into different categories with so-called positive discrimination is applied here for the purposes of the leftist feminism. We see declarations that someone's gender is of significance. This is discrimination. Very pure and. Strict so everyone should be given the same chance to you, to their competence and favouritism of certain groups is in direct contrast with common decency. So we see this alleged care. For women, this is stricter power play here by the left.”

#### *16.12.2020: The need for a dedicated Council configuration on gender equality*

It is a feature of exaggerated discourse in these debates that it makes connections across, and slips between, targets in the anti-gender spectrum. Here, Nicolaus Fest (ID) takes the idea of gender's social construction as licence for a wide-ranging mockery:

“It will make you happy: I am speaking to you today as a woman. When it came to shaving, I felt like changing gender and extending the shave to my legs – you have to be flexible. If gender is – as gender activists claim – a mere social construct, then the demand for equality is a contradiction in terms. Because you don't have to be gender equal, you can just do it. Dear women, lesbians, transsexuals or whatever: just become men or whatever you want. It's up to you - just do it. Then - according to your own ideology - all equality issues are solved immediately. Since they are resolved, there is no need for a permanent forum of the Council for Gender Equality.”

Margarita de la Pisa Carrión (ECR) echoes Fest's sarcasm in returning to the theme of artificial imposition on otherwise natural categories and identities:

“It's unusual how people are trying to impose a range of things like that, any scientific basis, and that they will fail because they go out against nature. And yes, you recognise yourself because the efforts are setting up ministries or councils dedicated. The ideology of gender equality will not have the outcomes you're trying to achieve. But we don't even know whether actually trying to get to the aim is to manipulate, to confuse. So that people cannot understand their own lives, you know, for you, women are a cultural product there. They can be built by social engineering, but we're not puppets that can be removed for women and today to do not feel as though they identify the new gender roles. Look, we need to respect people's identities. Respect femininity. Respect maternity. This has been done in civilizations for years and years. Let's focus on real problems. Let's allow people to be people, not just products of your imagination.”

21.01.2021: *The gender perspective in the COVID-19 crisis and post-crisis period - The EU Strategy for Gender Equality - Closing the digital gender gap: women's participation in the digital economy*

Annika Bruna (ID) characterises the imposition of gender ideology as an authoritarian move that takes no regard of merit:

“Your strategy of gender equality is much more about differentiation than legitimate equality between the two genders. For you, any difference between men and women are simply stereotypes that need to be corrected. Your ideology is becoming authoritative. The nations or NGO's who do not share your objectives on intersectionality are denounced. You even want to impose quotas, a policy that's against meritocracy and which denies legitimacy of what it's trying to remove.”

Filip De Man (ID)'s metaphor-laden intervention is explicitly civilizationist in configuring gender as a threat from within:

“It seems that maybe even a game of cards is gonna become the object of this gender issue, because the king is worth more the King's Guard now. And maybe the issue of fraternity versus sorority. I think that we are really missing the point when the Ottomans are at our doorstep, there's the issue of cultural wars, where capitalists and the left really want to undermine the civilization, this really unique civilization, and they're trying to undermine it through this nonsense, through this gender nonsense. But I'm going to make one concession, ladies and gentlemen. I'm going to say a man and a woman.”

Margarita de la Pisa Carrión (ECR) returns to a theme she has previously articulated, framing feminism and gender as confusions that create antagonistic difference in society:

“What does gender equality mean in connection with gender ideology and gender perspectives? Well, no one knows because it's not coherent. Now, sometimes we use the concept of gender to refer to women, yes, as a victim, others to split the biological sex from the person, inventing many different categories and also ways of feeling. This is an emotive theory with no scientific basis and it's against nature. We are talking about an ideology that seeks to promote equality, but then it only flags up differences. It creates an abyss of difference, pitting women against men, leading to solitude and despair. Let's admire the beauty of our complementarity, relationships of trust.”

Benjuma Benjuma (PPE) also implies that ‘we’ are at risk of manipulation, an intensification of the imposition narrative:

“Why don't we listen to people's desires with respect to our natural identity? Let us praise femininity, maternity, let's protect life. All civilisations have done that. We're not gonna be manipulated. We're not products of genetic engineering. Since I arrived in this Parliament, there's never been a single session when we haven't debated or voted on some report connected to gender equality, and I'm wondering whether this saturation might not end up devaluing such an important issue such as freedom and equal opportunities, and instead giving a false perception that in Europe women are victims and for that reason we need special protection. No, in Europe, women we're not born victims because in Europe we have liberal democracy and its freedoms and rights.”

Continuing the critique of ‘special protection’, Christine Anderson (ID) sees also in education a push to institutionalise gender ideology:

“The portion of articles suggests to combat cyber violence through ‘comprehensive sexual and relationship education’. This is yet again a way of pushing for more ‘gender ideology’ under the guise of protecting women, and ultimately putting the needs of the digital labour market above women’s choice of career.”

*09.06.2021: Promoting gender equality in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and careers*

Christine Anderson, (ID) argues that descriptions of systemic socio-economic disadvantage is to patronise women as victims and perpetuates stereotypes:

“It often talks about external factors that women have no influence over. So then politics and politicians have to act. I think this gives a really negative image of women as being completely helpless and unable to affect their own futures. This report, 20 pages long, just portrays women as helpless. That's not tackling stereotypes, that's strengthening them. The fact that women themselves aren't even being asked for

their opinion here, I think, is very clear that this isn't actually aimed at women. What this is about is creating a gender balanced CO2 neutral nonsense for the future where women don't really have a say. So stop pushing your ideology on people. Let people just be people.”

Vincenzo Sofo, (ECR) uses his intervention to ridicule gender recognition legislation as it applies to gender quotas, employing a rhetorical tactic of stretching the logic of an opponent to its limits so that it appears absurd and indefensible. He positions Queer people as a transient, ‘made-up’ entity that ultimately harms women, a category siloed from queerness in this argument:

“Thank you, colleagues. In this report, it's asked basically quotas to be imposed, particularly for LGBT people, Roma people, for businesses and universities and so forth. I don't want to talk about the instrumentalization of women in STEM in order to placate feminist and LGBTQ lobbies. However, I do want to say that we have to accept that men and women exist. According to some people, it seems that whether you're management isn't our own choice. So tomorrow if I say that I feel like a woman, does that mean I'm going to have the right to be included in these female quotas. And then if I say I could be a man the next day and then a female the day after that, I could be transgender, pangender or a million other made-up labels. We have. I'm going to have an ad hoc made-up quota for all of them. It's going to be more quotas than jobs by the end of it. Then there's going to be this grotesque circuit and then women are the one who will actually be affected by this in the end anyway.”

*15.09.2021: Identifying gender-based violence as a new area of crime listed in Article 83(1) TFEU*

Jadwiga Wiśniewska (ECR) advances a tactic that treats gender analysis not only as an artificial imposition, but as an obstacle to properly dealing with pressing issues:

“But I also want to make it clear that I am against an instrumental approach to such a serious problem. The fight against violence against women must not become a tool of ideological struggle, and this is unfortunately an ideological project. Please note that the concept of gender is not a treaty concept, nor are concepts such as patriarchy or LGBT. As a result, there can be many inaccuracies in the application of the law, and the lack of clarity in criminal law creates uncertainty and potential for abuse. Need for protection from violence. This is a very important challenge. Too serious to impose an ideology under its pretext. The implementation of such concepts is not only not conducive to the prevention of violence, but may even be an obstacle to the implementation of effective solutions. Thus, it will have the opposite effect to that declared.”

Margarita de la Pisa Carrión (ECR) follows with a claim that gender ideology undermines the family:

“After achieving recognition of gender equality, we are adopting proposals that destroy this. National law covers all types of attack on any kind of person. It is just the ideology of gender that is now going to actually bring about a backward step inequality. It's not really protecting women. No, the intention is to show such suspicion between men and women to undermine the family. To show children the relationship between their parents as a power struggle, it will end up dividing agencies of children between parents. Interference in rights and freedoms, particularly the freedom of expression, quite apart from freedom of conscience, which is one of the foundations of human rights themselves.”

Simona Baldassarre (ID) frames feminism as a dangerous ideology, turning the culpability back around and claiming this work is more dangerous than protective to women:

“We too are convinced that protecting women from violence is crucial, therefore it is inconceivable that the left should exploit such a delicate issue to carry on their ideological battles, which have nothing to do with the protection of women. ...Let's say it clearly: today the aim is to introduce discrimination based on gender identity as a minimum standard in national penal codes. So if I say that every child needs a mom and dad am I discriminating? If I believe that surrogacy is an aberrant practice, should I be charged? ...There is even an attempt to use education as a picklock to impose an ideology on the new generations. I'm sorry to disappoint you, but in Lazio, where I come from, we have already blocked guidelines for schools that had the same objective. Colleagues, if we want to talk seriously about violence against women and discrimination, we are at the forefront, but if the only intention is to impose ideological dictates, don't count on our support.”

Of note is the “picklock” metaphor, echoing the “Trojan horse” metaphor used to describe the Istanbul Convention. This combative framing of feminist policy seeks to position it as not only malevolent but also duplicitous, surreptitious and always at odds with and in opposition to the imagined rational, natural, heteronormative European legal person, and the familial communities they produce.

#### *13.12.2021: Combating gender-based violence: cyberviolence (debate)*

Nicolaus Fest (ID) appeals to “rational opposition” in pleading for feminist actors not to ask for too much and that current national law is more than sufficient in protecting against cyberviolence:

“The author Karl Kraus of Austria said ‘You can go too far in search of the ideal’, and that's what's happening in this report. It uses a term like cyber violence, but I'm not

clear what it means at all. By way of an explanation, there's reference to another favourite term 'hate speech' and ultimately it's all about unfavourable or unlike opinions being excluded. Any kind of criticism based on gender or abortion is covered by cyber violence first and foremost. And Mrs Spirek, your statement more or less confirmed that and secondly is still not clear what this. Rule will mean on a cross-border basis in different countries in the catalogue. Of the cases in Article 83, you would usually expect serious crime or drug crime to be covered. Perhaps Mrs Dalli can tell us how many cases do we have of people in Denmark, women in Denmark or people in Portugal insulted by people in Poland. I don't think you could provide an answer to that even today, because there are very few cases where this happens. I think the national rules are sufficient. National criminal law and the national protection of women suffice, and this arrangement provided here is superfluous and highly dangerous for freedom of speech."

Jadwiga Wiśniewska (ECR) asserts that Gender Based Violence clouds the clarity needed to prosecute and fully protect women and girls:

"I'm against all violence, but we need to respect the powers under the European treaties and we can't make this into an ideological thing as far as this report is concerned. He doesn't talk...about violence against women and children, it uses the words 'gender based' and that might give rise to problems when it comes to implementing this. And we need... we might not get the requisite guarantees and legal safe security because this term is not clear, it's not being clearly defined today. For me personally, it is sad that once again such an important topic as violence against women and girls has been spoiled with unnecessary ideological intrusions."

Livia Járóka (NI) intensifies this line by positioning any discussion of gender-based violence as divisive:

"Unlawfully attacking member states, filling them with ideological phrases, making accusations that actual agreement is impossible, and starting a division between the member states of the Union, which is very sad, because our countries, including Hungary, are also committed to the fight against gender-based online violence. The protection of our children and families is the most important thing in the online space as well."

An almost exact replication of argument used by non-ratifying member states for the Istanbul Convention is articulated by Isabella Tovaglieri (ID):

"But we can't agree that the progressive majority in this House is correct in using this as an opportunity to try to advance its own political agenda putting forward at European level. Legislation which has been rejected out of hand in the Italian Parliament in a very similar form and is not supported by these 15 Member States

because they don't like the definition of gender in the report...We are not afraid to agree on various aspects of this dossier, in particular on the need for transnational management against cyber violence. But only if we abandon an ideological approach to adopt a pragmatic and shared vision will we be able to achieve the goals we all aim for.”

*08.03.2022: EU Gender Action Plan III (debate)*

Questioning the language of the treaties, and therefore the legal standing of this policy, is advanced by Beata Kempa (ECR):

“The term gender does not appear in any treaties at all, it has no legal explanation, it is vague when it comes to conceptual issues, and is not primarily binding on Member States and European institutions. But of course it is worth talking about, above all, to ensure equality.”

Guido Reil (ID) returns to the theme of gender-based analysis involving ideological intervention: “As usual, you mix everything up and fight against phantom enemy images. As a right-wing party, we are naturally in favour of equality between men and women.”

Christine Anderson here demonstrates a by-now clear tactic of associating gender with elite ideological intervention that backfires on what it purports to support:

“Mr President, dear colleagues, the Gender Action Plan III report is full of big concepts and ideas, but we could break it down to the real and biggest issue: submitting the bodies of millions of poor women across the world to surrogacy, using their vulnerability to blackmail them into selling themselves off to the desires of clients from the most privileged parts of the world and then having the audacity to call it 'sexual rights'.....You claim you want to fight gender stereotypes, yet you are reinforcing those stereotypes by repeatedly referring to women as a vulnerable group. Please spare the women your hypocritical pity. Instead of empowering women to be strong and self-confident, you degrade them into helpless beings in dire need of the administration's help. Surely you couldn't be any more misogynistic than that. And here, too, for the record, out of the 705 Members of this House, only 17 are currently present. That is a shame in and of itself.”

Margarita de la Pisa Carrión, on behalf of the ECR Group, states this with even more clarity, adding that the problem with gender is that it corrupts both heritage and the given order of society:

“Mr President, the external action of the European Union in the fight against inequality cannot be based on ideological theories that undermine human identity: gender ideology is perverse, degrades women, pits us against men and destroys the family and society. Third countries that need our support have the right to be



respected in their identity and not be contaminated with atrocities such as the promotion of abortion. It is manipulation, blackmail: exporting these theories corrupts their culture and traditions, as is happening here in Europe. We are in favour of promoting economic and social rights, equality, guaranteeing the autonomy of women and girls, but always respecting their essence and their greatness, never in opposition to men or in a permanent conflict between the sexes: We achieve progress together, man and woman, complementing each other. We denounce practices that denigrate the dignity of women, that affect her freedom. This action plan does not show this concern. Let us transmit all the good that our European cultural heritage has left us, let us not deprive them of enriching themselves with the wisdom of our roots in Christian humanism. This text, however, seems to me ideological and raises questions. In effect, they are the main objective of imposing that 85% of all the new actions abroad of the European Union are not gender equality as the main or important objective.”

### ***Consequences of gender as a problem***

*09.06.2021: Promoting gender equality in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and careers (debate)*

Vincenzo Sofo (ECR) makes reference here to a familiar trope, that gender fluidity is essentially superficial and ‘made up’:

“And then if I say I could be a man the next day and then a female the day after that, I could be transgender, pangender or a million other made-up labels... I'm going to have an ad hoc made-up quota for all of them. It's going to be more quotas than jobs by the end of it. Then there's going to be this grotesque circuit and then women are the one who will actually be affected by this in the end anyway.”

*15.09.2021: Identifying gender-based violence as a new area of crime listed in Article 83(1) TFEU (continuation of debate)*

Dorien Rookmaker (ECR) asserts that the focus on gender is counter-productive in violence prevention:

“This proposal seems to expand the powers of the EU. In doing that, the victims become part of the political game. Because I don't believe in the necessity of an EU wide approach and that this form of violence is not a Europe cross-border issue. I'm going to vote against this. Gender Based Violence doesn't need to be included in Article 83, of course. Improvements can be made nevertheless sharing best practice, more transparency in the Member States on the progress made here. It has to be clear to one and all, but living safely, working safely should be the norm.”

Nicolaus Fest (ID) associates this with the promotion of ‘buzzwords’ that detract from the efficacy of the legislation:

“If we reject this bill, it is for substantive reasons alone: firstly, Article 83 covers serious criminal offences such as terrorism, organised crime, drugs and human trafficking. Gender-based violence doesn't really fit in there. Secondly, the offences under Article 83 must have a transnational dimension. Here you have never explained how and why this should be the case here. And there must also be a special need for a European regulation. I can't see them here either. In short, there is no reason – no reasonable reason – to include gender-based violence in the Article 83 catalogue...In addition, it is not clear what gender-based violence actually is. The report names patriarchal structures, male dominance and even psychological violence. These are buzzwords, but not clear legal terms. And criminal law needs very clear legal terms. This is even a constitutional requirement, because criminal law norms must be defined.”

*13.12.2021: Combating gender-based violence: cyberviolence (debate)*

Ladislav Ilčić (ECR) associates ‘gender ideology’ with what he sees as the over-sexualisation of society:

“Violence begins when women are viewed as sexual objects and a good part of the political spectrum promotes sexual desire whereas it diminishes the value of true marital love. This culture begets sexual violence and in response to this violence, the same ideologies offer the deepening of this ultra-liberal culture through the Istanbul Convention and gender ideology which endanger human dignity and identity. This is not the right path. Let us promote human dignity for all.”

*08.03.2022: EU Gender Action Plan III (debate)*

Christine Anderson (ID Group) advances the theme of gender ideology as a form of colonial exploitation that breaches (cultural) sovereignty:

“Under the threat of taking away humanitarian aid, Members of this House are ready to mould Third World countries into a copy of what they fantasise Europe to be, without any regard for the right to self-determination, especially the one of women they claim to defend. While insisting to be the home of human rights, embracing diversity – lifting it as a banner just to show the world how great we are – we are about to vote in favor of enslaving women from all over the world under the pretense of saving them from sexual violence. Yes indeed, we have lost all sense of shame.”

### ***Actors held responsible***

The range of actors held responsible for the problem of gender in this theme are on a familiar spectrum from (07.10.2015) 'Islamic fundamentalism'; (02.02.2016) 'the Left'; (14.01.2019) 'far-left populism'; (22.10.2020) 'radical feminism and intersectional analysis'; 'Balkanisation'; (14.01.2019) 'Feminism is a disgrace to women'; (21.01.2021) 'both capitalism and the Left'; (09.06.2021) 'Feminist and LGBT Lobbies'; (15.09.2021) 'The Left'; (13.12.2021) 'The progressive majority'; and (08.03.2022) 'Radical Islam'.

### ***Proposed responses and solutions***

It is notable that the category of alternative solutions is almost non-existent in this data, except for a normative statement on 21.01.2021 from Annika Bruna (ID): "We are attached to equality between men and women, their differences and their complementarity."

### ***The real problem gender distracts from***

#### *01.03.2017: Gender pay gap (debate)*

Jadwiga Wiśniewska (ECR) points out that international concern over the situation in Poland distracts from news of real advances in equality:

"For many months now, European institutions are enjoying a witch hunt against my country and also some clichés about the situation in Poland are circulating. Same applies to the political situation. These are only innuendos, and the recent report of PricewaterhouseCoopers is a clear case in point. And this clearly says that Poland is in the avant-garde of Countries of the pay gap of only 7% now the PwC clearly states that if we maintain this trend of changes, the pay gap will be removed as soon as 2021."

#### *30.05.2018: Gender equality and women's empowerment: transforming the lives of girls and women through EU external relations 2016-2020 (debate)*

In a blue card question Michaela Šojdřová (PPE) conflates the right to abortion with the prevention of sexual violence:

"You have also called for giving women abortions or the right to abortions as a solution. Do you really think that abortion is the best solution that will prevent further rapes or more rapes? Aren't there better solutions that would prevent this from happening?"

#### *14.01.2019: Gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament (debate)*

Mylène Troszczynski (ENFA) suggests that attention to gender is a distraction from more pressing threats:

“At a time when Europe is no longer able to protect its citizens because of borders that millions of migrants easily cross, at a time when Mr Juncker, through his free trade treaties, is [causing] unemployment of millions of Europeans, at a time when communitarianism and Islamism are poisoning our countries and threatening the lives of our citizens, your priority for the upcoming elections is the deconstruction of gender stereotypes in the name of inclusion.”

The tactic of comparing gender mainstreaming to more pressing issues is rich vein of contribution in this coding theme, as it is a very common tactic of relativisation:

Jadwiga Wiśniewska (ECR): “If we really were to focus on gender-related problems, then one of the main, if not the main topic, would be the issue of combining work and family life - this is a problem that women face.”

Anna Záborská (PPE):

“What is worse, they also overshadow meaningful initiatives, for example to improve the position of women in the working environment, zero tolerance for sexual harassment or valuing the work of women and men regardless of gender. My fourteen years of experience in European politics clearly show that we repeat this theme every election period, and at the same time show that the use of terms that people do not understand harms women in particular.”

*21.01.2021: The gender perspective in the COVID-19 crisis and post-crisis period - The EU Strategy for Gender Equality - Closing the digital gender gap: women’s participation in the digital economy (debate)*

Dorien Rookmaker (ECR):

“Let's concentrate on the important issues discrimination of women on the labor market, the housing market, the health service, education, and above all, discrimination by Member State governments. Let's focus on these five important battlegrounds and stop with searching for new topics.”

*08.03.2022: EU Gender Action Plan III (debate)*

Christine Anderson (ID):

“The FEMM committee, euphemistically called the "high-level group" in the report, wants to once again enforce gender parity in politics and elsewhere, but of course only in the boardrooms, but never in road construction, garbage collection or among sewer workers.”

Sara Skyttedal (PPE):

“There is a war in Europe, but it is not a war of the sexes, as one might think when reading the report on gender mainstreaming. I hope that Parliament can choose to focus on the real equality issues instead.”

This tactic is complemented by focusing how any attention to gender mainstreaming could deflect attention from men’s issues:

Isabel Benjumea Benjumea (PPE):

“We are experiencing a war in which there are men, mainly men, although there are also many women, but mainly men, fighting for our freedoms, and we are here lamenting the representation of quotas within the European institutions”.

Guido Reil (ID): “When female politicians experience insults, disparagement and threats, it is appalling, but it affects many politicians – regardless of gender.”

### ***The real threats to women and feminism***

*07.10.2015: Renewal of the EU Plan of action on Gender equality and Women's empowerment in development (debate)*

In this coding theme, the danger of Islam and Islamism is the key real threat which is consistently articulated across time and debates.

Mylène Troszczynski (ENF):

“A lot of this violence does start in cultures which are characterised by Islamic fundamentalism and is also found in Europe in the mosque. Words of one of the imams were reported in the newspapers. If a woman goes out without her honour, that's the Islamic veil, it shouldn't be surprising that the men abuse her. It couldn't be much clearer than that. So, this utopian ideal of equality to men and women is not to be found in those countries where there's forced marriage, there's forced sterilisation.”

*02.02.2016: New Strategy for gender equality and women's rights post-2015 (debate)*

Louise Bours (EFDD):

“Do I feel more empowered and safer than ever before? No, in fact I would argue the reverse is true. I am sure many of those women in Cologne, Sweden and elsewhere feel exactly the same. What did you think was going to happen when the EU opened the door to millions of people from countries and cultures where women are treated as second class citizens and LGBTI people are treated even worse?

The wilful cover-up at the facts surrounding Cologne and elsewhere by politicians, the authorities and the press shows you that European politicians care more about

political correctness than actually protecting the safety and rights of women. The EU is clearly trying to deny that this kind of violence even exists.

What about trafficking? A UK Government report says that free movement within the EU is extensively exploited by organised criminals to bring human trafficking victims to the UK. Europol says free movement makes it more difficult to detect these operations. It is the perfect environment for the criminal gangs to act with impunity. The current EU gender strategy is, and will continue to be, an absolute failure. Whilst the UK remains in the EU, women, LGBTI people and the rest of society are less safe and less secure.”

*22.10.2020: Gender Equality in EU's foreign and security policy (debate)*

This focus on Islam and Muslims in Europe intersects with references to the real threat of FGM, and the wider threat of immigration.

Margarita de la Pisa Carrión (ECR): “...very important and serious issues, such as aspects that affect human rights —the sex slave trade, female genital mutilation, the marriage of girls.”

*21.01.2021: The International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women and the State of play on the ratification of the Istanbul Convention (debate)*

Jadwiga Wiśniewska (ECR): “In the UK 500,000 women have undergone mutilation. Some girls are sexually abused. It is here in the UK that women's rights are not being respected and we should take care of that.”

*15.09.2021: Identifying gender-based violence as a new area of crime listed in Article 83(1) TFEU*

Virginie Joron (ID):

“On the other hand, the burned women, the acid attacks, the gang rapes in the cellars, I have never read it in the novels of Flaubert or the theater of Molière. From now on, in Sweden, in Austria, in France, our girls are afraid to go out alone in skirts at night. Why two out of three sexual assaults in transport in Île-de-France are the work of foreigners? Why in Germany, half of the suspects of gang rapes are foreigners, Afghans in particular? Why are these crimes rarer in Eastern Europe, while these countries are poorer? Do we have the right to talk about this explosive report from the Swedish Ministry of Justice which reveals that foreigners born in Africa or the Maghreb are three to five times more involved in rape? Do we have the right to say that enough is enough? Read the horrifying tale of Shaina's ordeal. This 15-year-old girl was the victim for years of multiple rapes and violence committed by young people in a Parisian housing estate. The one who gave him the finishing blow was called Driss. After impregnating this teenager, he stabbed and burned her alive.

Because for him, he did not want his mother to learn that he had made a "bitch" pregnant, because he was a Muslim. Let us first think of these crimes, of these women far removed from any ideology."

*08.03.2022: EU Gender Action Plan III (debate)*

These debates focused on arguing that real gender inequality is in the countries Europe has 'mass immigration' from.

Guido Reil (ID):

"If you really want to fight for women's rights, then travel to the countries from which the EU has seen so much immigration in recent years. Gender inequality is still very real there. You would have my full support immediately. Instead, you convince young women that any setbacks they experience are due to their gender. This is narcissistic and prevents personality development and growing up."

### ***Anti anti-gender arguments***

*01.03.2017: Gender pay gap (debate)*

Iratxe García Pérez (S&D):

"Well, according to what you're saying and according to your theory, I wouldn't have the right to be here as a Member of Parliament, and I know that you're very upset and very concerned about the fact that we women can represent citizens on an equal footing with you. Now I think I need to defend European women against men like you?"

Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (ALDE):

"Now today's debate is very telling. Only four men have participated, one of them to insult us. So people need to change their attitudes. It's everyone's problem. It's a social problem for men and women."

*30.05.2018: Gender equality and women's empowerment: transforming the lives of girls and women through EU external relations 2016-2020 (debate)*

Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea (ALDE): "We have to combat injustice suffered by women around the world, and that is what this report is about it's not about ideology."

Liliana Rodrigues (S&D):

"We will see the DPP minority blocking this on an ideological basis consistently and the conservative spirit. In this context, it is turning into a tool to be used against LGBT

people, against women, against others, including the case of abortion in cases of rape. Gender equality is not about ideology. It's about justice. Thank you."

*14.01.2019: Gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament (debate)*

Blue card to Sośnierz from Izaskun Bilbao Barandica (ALDE):

"You have just used a stereotype of the situation of women...Women are absolutely prepared for all kinds of jobs and responsibilities. And, precisely, what we are denouncing here is that we do not have the same opportunities....For this we are also working in the European institutions, so that there are fewer accidents on the roads. Surely, if there were more women driving, the situation would be better."

Eleonora Forenza (GUE/NGL), domanda "cartellino blu" [blue card]:

"Onorevole Troszczyński, we still have an enormous gender pay gap at the level of the European Union and of the Member States. How do we deal with this, not to mention gender stereotypes? Third question, you were talking about a recruiter first. Here, I don't want to be a share of a male recruiter, I want to change the recruiter and ensure that the recruiters are men and women, this is done, I hope it is convenient, precisely by changing gender stereotypes and overcoming them."

Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz (PPE):

"I am a bit surprised that the importance of something like breaking gender stereotypes is being questioned in this House. If 100 years ago the first suffragettes had not broken gender stereotypes, the President would not be chairing these debates, the Commissioner would not be representing the Commission, and we, the Members, would not be speaking in this House, simply because there would be no women here at all."

Evelyn Regner (S&D), Frage nach dem Verfahren der blauen Karte [blue card]:

"Ms Wiśniewska, a quick question for you: are you aware that the title of the report is 'Gender Mainstreaming in the European Parliament' and not 'Reconciliation of work and family life' or some other x—random topic?"

*16.12.2020: The need for a dedicated Council configuration on gender equality (debate)*

Eugenia Rodríguez Palop (GUE/NGL):

"We need firm responses to the far right and to the religious conservatives groups who use the idea of the ideology, ideology of gender equality to violate women's rights. We need a. A coordinated strategy, or we will be the generation



which lives worse than our predecessors, will take ourselves back to the 18th century.”

Karen Melchior (Renew):

“Black, Muslim and trans women, we are all women. And we demand that our governments remember women. Good intentions must be transformed into action, so fuck the patriarchy.”

Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska (PPE): “Are all initiatives aimed at equalising opportunities and protecting the discriminated gender denied under the guise of fighting ideology? Yes.”

Marc Angel (S&D):

“Madam President, a dedicated Council configuration on gender equality and equality was never more needed than today. The COVID—19 crisis has shown us again that too many inequalities exist between women and men. Too much discrimination subsists for, amongst others, people with disabilities, people of colour and LGBTI persons. The most vulnerable people are often victims of intersectional discrimination. So let me also clearly also state that gender is not an ideology, as the very right—wing benches of this hemicycle always want to make us believe. No, it is about identity.

The S&D Group will stand against those who want to ban this word in European documents, and the same goes for intersectionality. Yes, multiple discrimination also exists in our Union, and we Socialists and Democrats appreciate that Commissioner Dalli insists that all equality strategies and policies from the Commission must talk to each other.”

*21.01.2021: The gender perspective in the COVID-19 crisis and post-crisis period - The EU Strategy for Gender Equality - Closing the digital gender gap: women’s participation in the digital economy (debate)*

Eugenia Rodríguez Palop, (GUE/NGL):

“Member States such as Poland and Hungary have used the pandemic as an opportunity to introduce new measures. To limit access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, attacking on transgender and intersex people's rights and to roll back on important work to combat gender-based violence. They use the Istanbul Convention as a scarecrow. And they eliminate the word gender from official policies as if there was a new witch hunt. And women and their rights are the hostages. I don't understand why so many politicians want to overlook questions of gender and they close their eyes and don't want to see. That there are also people that have other

sexual preferences and they think that if we remove the word gender from. Our documents and laws. We will somehow solve all the problem.”

*15.09.2021: Identifying gender-based violence as a new area of crime listed in Article 83(1) TFEU (continuation of debate)*

Malin Björk (GUE):

“Some people think it's OK to restrict our lives in this way. Sometimes they give pretext to this, but basically they don't believe that. This is sufficiently important, but they're not gonna win. Every piece of progress has been a fight for organisations for our own survival. They're the ones who pushed this on, together with parliamentarians, people who are allied to our cause, and that is the same today. I'd like to thank all those feminists who have ceaselessly fought the good fights to make sure that there's been action within the parliaments as well.”

*13.12.2021: Combating gender-based violence: cyberviolence (debate)*

Maria Noichl (S&D):

“To deal with this topic, which is like a cancer throughout Europe, and to deal with violence against women on the Internet, because freedom of speech on the Internet in Parliament, freedom of speech at home, in the family or in the workplace, is for men and women alike, and they should be able to exercise it without being attacked on the Internet.”

*08.03.2022: Gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament – annual report 2020 (debate)*

Danuta Maria Hübner (PPE):

“What was a largely supported achievement 10 years ago, the Istanbul Convention, is questioned today in some political parties, in particular in central European countries, where ruling parties reject even the word ‘gender’, and we heard it tonight. This anti—gender attitude means that gender equality is rejected as a recognition of human rights for women. We should include these issues in our dialogue with national parliaments.”

Vera Tax (S&D):

“Chairman, ‘Vera, why do you keep worrying about women's rights? There is a war going on in Europe. Where are your priorities?’ I get this question more and more often and actually always when it comes to gender equality. Right now, European women and men in Ukraine are fighting for their country, trying to save and bring their children to safety. Some women are even forced to deliver their baby on the

subway. In any crisis, be it war or a pandemic, it is women who are hardest hit. Every time again. The numbers speak for themselves.”

*08.03.2022: EU Gender Action Plan III (debate)*

Eugenia Rodríguez Palop, on behalf of The Left Group:

“Mr. President, today is March 8 and we have to stop to think, once again, about the challenges that women face: ending violence against women, guaranteeing sexual and reproductive rights, promoting women's leadership and investing in for humanitarian action with a gender perspective, for example. And we are going to work on it, even though the far-right forces, who also sit in this Parliament, are determined to prevent it. I say this because the Action Plan, of which we are reporting today, has been vetoed by four governments in the Council, which say they reject the term "gender": centuries of reflection and feminist struggle aired with a stroke of the pen.”

## Findings

- Anti-gender arguments are a consistent presence in this thematic corpus of debates, however there is no straightforward evidence here of increased articulation of gender as a problem from 2015 to 2022. The average number of coded interventions for these debates is four, the largest total, ten, was recorded when “Gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament” was tabled as a debate;
- The invocations of gender as an ideology or imposition remain consistent in this corpus, which allows the regular reproduction of similar arguments as to its conspiratorial or undemocratic character. It is presented interchangeably as superficial and a distraction, and as a serious threat to culture, society, and sovereignty;
- Anti anti-gender (refutations of misogynist intervention from RRP) are also double the average at that time (up to four in contrast to usual two interventions.) Thus, there is a strong correlation between the number of RRP (Radical Right Populist) speakers present and the number of counterarguments, i.e. “anti anti-gender interventions”. It is unsurprising that the Left and Centre Left along with the Commission’s Rapporteurs on Equality Strategy would organise to strategically counter anti-gender narrative, but it is still insightful to quantify this correlation across a sample of Gender Mainstreaming debates spanning seven years. Interestingly, anti-gender interventions average at four per debate (this is when only counting “Gender as a problem” coded material so it is likely higher) whereas anti anti-gender interventions average at two leading to the question if counter tactics

are losing quid pro quo against the volume of anti-gender interventions in the European Parliament. More research is needed to ascertain whether the Anti anti-gender strategy is to focus on countering each actor with a counter argument rather than contest each overtly anti-gender intervention. Another plausible reason for the AAG actors having half as many counterpoints is that refusing to engage is noted as a strategic choice (Kantola and Miller: 2021; Cullen 2020) along with coalition building and rulemaking.

## Plenary Debates on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

SRHR is a project and product of reproductive justice, a critical feminist framework catalysed by a resistance to patriarchal reproductive politics. The three core values of reproductive justice are the right to have a child, the right to not have a child, and the right to parent a child or children in safe and healthy environments. The framework moves women's reproductive rights past a legal and political debate to incorporate the economic, social, and health factors that impact women's reproductive choices and decision-making ability. The United Nations defines SRHR as:

“Taken together, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) can be understood as the right for all, whether young or old, women, men or transgender, straight, gay, lesbian or bisexual, HIV positive or negative, to make choices regarding their own sexuality and reproduction, providing they respect the rights of others to bodily integrity. This definition also includes the right to access information and services needed to support these choices and optimise health.” (UN Women 2020: 4)

The European Commission has been trying to standardise access to reproductive healthcare since 2016 with notable backtracking from countries such as Hungary and Poland, culminating in disruptive protests during plenary sessions (e.g. 05.10.2016) from Polish Women's Rights Activists. The Commission's current position can be read in a press release issued by the FEMM Committee in June 2021 entitled 'EU countries should ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health':

“With 378 votes in favour, 255 against and 42 abstentions, plenary states that the right to health, in particular sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), is a fundamental pillar of women's rights and gender equality that cannot in any way be watered down or withdrawn.

Parliament declares that violations of women's SRHR are a form of violence against women and girls and hinder progress towards gender equality. It thus calls on EU countries to ensure women are offered high quality, comprehensive and accessible SRHR, and to remove all barriers impeding them from using these services....” (FEMM Committee 2021: 5)

Rapporteur Predrag Matić (S&D, HR) said:

“This vote marks a new era in the European Union and the first real resistance to a regressive agenda that has trampled on women's rights in Europe for years. A majority of MEPs have made their position clear to member states and called

on them to ensure access to safe and legal abortion and a range of other sexual and reproductive health services.”

RRP actors cite freedom of religion/conscience to refuse reproductive medical treatment, on a spectrum from refusing or restricting access to contraception to banning access to safe abortions on a state level. We analysed ten debates: eight about SRHR and two pertaining to banning sexual education (15.06.2017 and 21.10.2019). They are listed chronologically below:

Date	Plenary Debates relating to SRHR and sexual education
10.09.2015	The gender dimension of trafficking in human beings (debate)
05.10.2016	Women’s rights in Poland
15.06.2017	Observance of the International Day of the Family: promoting the role of parents in safeguarding
12.02.2019	Experiencing backlash in women’s rights and gender equality in the EU
21.10.2019	Criminalisation of sexual education in Poland
23.06.2021	Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU, in the frame of women’s health
20.10.2021	The first anniversary of the de facto abortion ban in Poland
15.12.2021	Plans to undermine further fundamental rights in Poland, in particular regarding the standards of the European Convention of Human Rights and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
20.01.2022	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the European Union
04.07.2022	US Supreme Court decision to overturn abortion rights in the United States and the need to safeguard abortion rights and Women’s health in the EU

**Table EP8:** *Plenary Debates relating to SRHR and Sexual Education*

## Debate Coding for SRHR

Consult **Table AA4** (EP4) – ‘SRHR coded debates’ for the detailed data.

Count	Code Description
31	Definition of Gender as a problem
5	Consequences of gender as a problem
9	Actors held responsible for this problem
7	Proposed responses or solutions to the problem

8	The "real" problem(s) gender distracts from [deflection]
6	The "real" threats to women and feminism in Europe
27	Anti Anti-Gender Arguments
<b>79</b>	<b>Total</b>

**Table EP9:** Code Descriptions for Plenary Debates relating to SRHR and Sexual Education

**Note:** Total=79

In summary, five debates were examined from the 2015-19 Parliament, and five in the current Parliament, from a total of 290 speakers; 72 from RRP groups, comprising 25% of total. In the total of 79 coded contributions, there is a doubling of anti-gender interventions from 2016 onwards, peaking at six in 2021. There is a consistent level of deflection throughout the ten-debate sample i.e. “this is not really about sexual reproductive rights, this is about protecting the most vulnerable person, the unborn child/young school children...”. Anti anti-gender interventions are consistent throughout with a notable peak in debates clearly tabled by the left and centre left and explicitly feminist MEPs e.g. ‘The gender dimension of trafficking in human beings,’ and ‘Experiencing backlash in women’s rights and gender equality in the EU’.

### ***Definition of gender as a problem***

This first debate in this category commences with a tacit rejection of sex disaggregation, a theme evident throughout the corpus.

#### ***10.09.2015: The gender dimension of trafficking in human beings (debate)***

Louise Bours, on behalf of the EFDD Group:

“Eurostat says that 68% of people trafficked are women, and this is indeed a shocking percentage. However, surely the aim should be to end trafficking altogether, not worry about what gender specific measures the Commission should take from the movement rules makes trafficking easier for those who deal in human exploitation.”

#### ***05.10.2016: Women’s rights in Poland (debate)***

Michał Marusik, (ENF) advocates for national autonomy on abortion rights, decrying the Commission's lack of respect for individual member’s judicial processes. This is a theme and line of argument that appears across the corpus and is one of the key points of contention when trying to get reproductive justice legislation through the European Parliament.

“You do not respect those principles whereby the rights of life is an inherent part of life in a country with this rule of law. We have applied constitutional law in Poland and [...] for you Women's rights, it is the same as access to abortion.

For me, it isn't.

There are 50 million abortions, which I find a shocking figure. If you look back to the Second World War, far fewer people died in a World War over a period of six years. So this annual figure, it amounts to a number even greater than the population of Poland or Spain. Anyway, this is genocide. People are saying that the Islamists are preparing to invade us at the moment. And there we for our sort are defying the word of God. God said go forth and multiply, and we're doing the opposite through abortion. And we're trying to kill our own civilization through things like abortion.

This gender equality doesn't mean that there cannot be positive discrimination. So we could apply the principle positive discrimination to the unborn fetus. For those fetuses that haven't seen the light of day, they might be women. So maybe we should stop female fetuses from being killed. Maybe that's a way of protecting women ...And since both parents have the same rights after birth, they should have the same rights before the birth, because the baby doesn't belong to the mother, it also belongs to the father.

However, there is a huge moral and legal problem all around the world. This is linked to abortion. However, everyone's freedom ends where the freedom of others begins, a woman's right to choice ends where a child's right to life begins. “

*15.06.2017: Observance of the International Day of the Family: promoting the role of parents in safeguarding good-quality education for their children*

Vocalising transnational alliances, Beatrix von Storch (ECR) is explicit in her support of the Orbán government and vision of a heteronormative family and voices a strategic move away from the “path” that the Commission sets out in the Noichl report:

“You notice that this is the exact opposite of what seems to be religion here in this house. The European Union prefers to support day nurseries like those in the Eastern Bloc and the GDR. Mothers shouldn't worry about their small children, but they should realise themselves at the workbench, because only that is true achievement and career. And in the Noichl report we actually decided that marriage – of course only traditional marriage and not gay marriage – and the role as father and mother are dangerous to health. That is probably also the reason why the responsible Commissioner Jourová is not sitting here today, but the Commissioner for Health. family health risk. The EU simply does not want to recognize the importance of the family and the role of father and mother...



...But there are Member States that are on the right track. Hungary, for example, recently held a demographics summit under the Orbán government. They had previously launched a series of family policies that do just that - empowering fathers and mothers to care for their children and for early childhood education. So there are these Member States that have taken the right path, and I wish for Germany and also for the European Union, but especially for my country Germany, that we take this Hungarian path in matters of family policy. And that means that we have to move completely away from the path that is being followed here in this House and turn towards the path that the United Nations is describing: The most important things in life for a child are father and mother and families and not the state as supreme authority; that's the belief here, that's fundamentally wrong."

*12.02.2019 Experiencing backlash in women's rights and gender equality in the EU (debate)*

Jadwiga Wiśniewska, (ECR):

"I do not agree with the main assumptions and the key elements of this resolution, first of all because it aims at restricting the freedom of speech by appealing to criticise the same Istanbul Convention, it also condemns the family policy and maternity policy. I do not agree with the assumption in this resolution saying that the abortion or the rights of sexual minorities could be understood as a deterioration of women's rights.

At the same time, we have to make sure that we don't cross any lines, because you have strong feminists, of course. People approach things in their own way, take things into their own hands. Of course the right to life is extremely important. The life of an unborn child's most vulnerable group in the world may can't fight for their own rights, and reproductive and sexual rights are not a right, but rights of the Unborn child, the retrograde movement, it's not something that I can agree with, as the authors say. Because we have to make sure that it's not down to ideology and just a question of time. These are timeless issues and of course subsidiarity is something needs to be recognised...

...It is unfortunate that this was abused to criticise conservative policies. As a member of Christian Democratic Party, I say this protects women's unborn children. It protects all life, which is why in the interest of life, we should be in favour of policies that protect maternity and parents."

Marek Jurek (ECR) appeals to the canon of traditional European curricula in maintaining the status quo:

"Article 14 of the Convention says that the schools will be used to promote non typical sexual roles, while the parents' rights are to say no to such treatment.

Article 14 says that. Schools are to eradicate tradition and customs which promotes stereotypical roles of women. Perhaps the *Odyssey* will have to be banned because Penelope waited for her husband for too long. How can you say that countries which did not approve the Convention tolerate the aggression? It's not your country, it's in Germany rather than in the Czech Republic that we have forced marriages."

#### *21.10.2019 Criminalisation of sexual education in Poland (debate)*

This debate is the most overt conflation of sex education with paedophilia, highlighting the widespread mobilisation of parent's groups and radical parties in Spain, Poland and Hungary in particular, to ban SRH education in schools.

Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska, (PPEI) says:

"I'm also surprised that we are conducting a debate here in this Parliament on sex education in Poland, so that Polish children have the opportunity to defend themselves against paedophilia and against unwanted pregnancies. Pope Francis said: "Sex is a gift from God. Sex education must be taught in schools." He said this out of concern for the young generation, and unfortunately, I have the impression that school sex education in Poland today under the rule of PiS has become a very suspicious thing. In fact, some say that the lack of sex education protects against paedophilia.

The fact is, the people of Poland seem to have a government which is taking the education of its children seriously and it wants to protect them against this perverse left-wing ideology. Members of Parliament who have used their power to bring this onto the gender of the European Partnership is ashamed of themselves. Be ashamed of yourself. (2) So this is about breaking barriers towards victims, and this is the ideology you promote so that victims cannot protect themselves."

#### *23.06.2021 Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU, in the frame of women's health (debate)*

An example of tactics from opponents to SRHR is apparent in the below quotations:

Predrag Fred Matić, Commission's Rapporteur: "We've received hundreds of mails, messages and letters. They even sent me some bizarre dolls. They've even called me Hitler. And those are the same people who talk a lot about goodness, peace, love and mercy."

Simona Baldassarre, (ID) asserts her authority as a medical doctor in rejecting sexual education:

“Today we are talking about an ideological divisive report, the shadows. Amazed that not even 60% of the ID amendments have been taken into consideration[...]This text proposed unthinkable things, that gender has to come into all schools in Europe. As a doctor as well as a politician, I think it's absolutely absurd. The Italian Constitution protects the right to conscientious objection. [...]The right to life is being placed under attack and we have a responsibility to shoulder here our future, our culture, our identity, our at stake. There is nothing more serious than the defence of life. “

Milan Uhrík (NI) ensures to consistently address the parliament as the binary and question the public spending of money for ‘sex change operations’:

“Ladies and gentlemen. This motion appeals to us to support the LGBTI community and that we should do this as a primary school. There are recommendations here to recommend Sex change operations, that this should be paid for out of the public purse. In this report, it says that there can be men who fall pregnant. They want the European Union to find money to fund campaigns about abortion, but no money for women who don't need abortion. On the other hand, campaigns which will convince women not to have an abortion, are deemed to be extreme or extremist. With all due respect, I think I've never seen such a wrongheaded report in my life. This is not a report that should be found in the legislative it should be found in the bin.”

Rosa Estaràs Ferragut (PPE) uses the interesting phrase ‘ideologizing human rights’:

“Do you really think that this strengthens Europe and democracy? Look, distributing letters of rights, being addicted to being right, sending those who don't think like you to the galleys, imposing and winning instead of convincing and agreeing, or ideologizing human rights do not help Europe or democracy anymore.”

Miroslav Radačovský (NI):

“The report of Mr. Matić is the result of liberal extremism and that's why we can't support it or accept it. I believe that women's rights are very important as are LGBTI rights, but above all our children's rights and the rights to life. The right to have their natural mothers and fathers.

Children's rights are inalienable. Brussels can't decide on their health, and this is something that should be decided on by Member States and by individuals. Colleagues, members of the European Parliament, children are not a thing, they are human beings.”

Gilles Lebreton (ID):

“Given the threat of Islamism, the Matić report could have used the opportunity to reaffirm this without causing controversy, and yet it doesn't. Under the pretext of saying that women have rights, it interferes in Member States' competency by trying to impose on them a rather arguable concept of family based on an intersectional approach, without respecting the rights of each Member State to freely legislate on abortion.”

Cristian Terheş (ECR):

“To report also in this claim that men can give birth and they should, and I quote, ‘benefit from measures of pregnancy and birth-related care’, period. Making such a claim makes the EU a laughing stock across the world. We need therefore to respect and safeguard the fundamental rights and freedoms of everybody to protect and promote the actual European values, and vote therefore against this report.”

*20.10.2021: The first anniversary of the de facto abortion ban in Poland (debate)*

Jadwiga Wiśniewska (ECR):

“Abortion can't possibly ever be a positive thing, and so it's not a human right, it's not a fundamental right, it's not something you should be fighting for. It's something which people suffer around. Therefore, a fetus and a newborn are entitled to protection? The right to life is sacrosanct, as indeed the Polish Constitutional Court has stated and ruled.”

Balázs Hidvéghi (NI): “You should finally accept that not every idea that you may have or come up with becomes automatically a human right.”

Beata Mazurek (ECR):

“During the debate on Poland, you mentioned [Pope]John Paul second. Allow me to refer to something he said, the protection of life. because the protection of life was a key element of his teachings...He's also man and woman, and Jesus Christ identified himself with the weakest. So how can we not see Jesus Christ's presence in the unborn child, which is the smallest, most fragile and incapable of protecting himself or herself against the violation of his or her rights?”

Izabela-Helena Kloc (ECR): “In Poland I understand that in your Death culture that you celebrate needs to play this game. But a conceived child and the rights of that conception do not seem to be taken into account. We can just assassinate them.”

*15.12.2021: Plans to undermine further fundamental rights in Poland, in particular regarding the standards of the European Convention of Human Rights and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (debate)*

Jadwiga Wiśniewska, (ECR) explicitly demarcates what is in the remit of the Commission and what violates subsidiarity and asks for more evidence, denying and attempting to delegitimize the claim that Poland is flouting fundamental human rights:

“This is not a European Union competence...Indeed, treaty, treaties, this can't be a pretext. I'm very sad. I was very sad listening to what you said in your speech, because it was full of manipulations and lies. I would like to protest. I don't know what to say when the EU Commissioner wants to spread fake news and lies. You had talked about the free zones for LGBTQ+. Can you give us actual addresses please? Some specifics? Where are these so-called Free zones supposed to be where there is no access for these people. You should really apologise to the local authorities. Every week. It's time to find new instruments and legal instruments and so on to try and force a certain people to accept your globalist agenda.”

*20.01.2022: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the European Union (topical debate)*

Jadwiga Wiśniewska (ECR) doubles down on the separation of human rights and sexual and reproductive rights:

“...now people are saying that abortion is a human right. Well, that's not the case. There is no law in Europe about that. On the contrary, there is a convention on the rights of the child under the edges of the United Nations, where it says that an immature individual has to be cared for before and after the birth.”

Joachim KUHS (ID); Germany Alternative für Deutschland:

“Macron made it very clear what was behind his speech, it involved abortion, the killing of human lives. Now we celebrate this issue and its inclusion in the fund human rights? We should cry. Because this is a terrible violent act. ....we are undermining the very roots of Europe as well and I am convinced that if abortion is included in the FHR then Poland and Hungary will never be included in this particular group. It is quite clear that life is a right and it is not a case of exclusive privileges for an elite or for migrants. In Western Europe we find ourselves in a position where Judeo-Christian values are being undermined and destroyed and the very cornerstones of our values are being chipped away at and we need to be very very clear what it is that links us and brings us together for the future of Europe. Abortion undermines this future so we want life with

our children with our children's children in an atmosphere of freedom, respect and as a father of children I can't emphasise this enough these are the values that will glue Europe."

Guido Reil (ID) Alternative für Deutschland (Germany) contrasts the apparent laissez-faire approach to abortion with an apparent rush to 'force' people to accept Covid-19 vaccines:

"You talk about reproductive health and it sounds like a hygiene spray, like a fruit acid peeling or like a mole being lasered away. A routine procedure that is quickly forgotten. But actually you mean abortion. They act like it's a trifle, something you treat yourself to when you need it - a lifestyle product. In fact, you even pretend that having an abortion is an act of resistance to old white men. In reality, you are unscrupulously conducting propaganda and belittling a serious intervention that for many people is murder. In reality, you lure young, impressionable women into making the decision to have an abortion carelessly and far too quickly, only to realise 20 years later what they did. In reality, women across Europe pay a high price to bask in your ideological infatuation. All this is not surprising. They've been doing this for decades. Only your euphemisms have become even more shameless. The only thing that is surprising is that on the one hand you are demanding 'my stomach belongs to me', but on the other hand you want to mandate the upper arm. Your belly is your private affair and can be scraped out as you wish, but all of our upper arms have to be socialised and 'poked' – whether we want it or not. That's schizophrenic."

*04.07.2022: US Supreme Court decision to overturn abortion rights in the United States and the need to safeguard abortion rights and Women's health in the EU (debate)*

Margarita de la Pisa Carrión (ECR): "Now we have the opportunity to look at abortion face to face without beautiful worlds and without ideologies which distort the reality of love and motherhood in pregnancy."

Miroslav Radačovský (NI):

"It's a question of conscience, a woman's character. It's a question of how he decides. A gardener who owns a garden can step on a seed that will grow into a beautiful flower. He can do it, it's his garden. It's his right, but it's actually barbaric, so that's all I have to say..."

And in response to a blue card: "As a human being, as a father of a family, and as a grandfather, I found it difficult to comprehend. And how? How can something be removed from our body when it is living?"

Patryk Jaki (ECR): "Someone has to protect the lives of the weakest. And we will do it to the end, because we are for the civilization of life, not for the civilization of death."

Ladislav Ilčić (ECR): “The right to abortion is not a fundamental right. This is well known today, but our colleagues would like to deprive us of our freedom of speech.”

### ***Consequences of gender as a problem***

The RRP articulate the consequences for advocating for SRHR as violating member state autonomy, pulling Europe away from its Christian roots and towards a ‘culture of death’ and child sexual abuse.

#### *21.10.2019: Criminalisation of sexual education in Poland (debate)*

Patryk Jaki (ECR):

“If you don't agree that the paedophilia promotion should be sanctioned and this is a crime in most of the Member States, well, you are shouting at me because you know that I'm telling the truth. So, do you know people? People are nervous when they hear uncomfortable truths, and this is what you're doing. And this is, well, one more piece of fake news is that it's not a piece of legislation initiated by the government, but it's a civic project and so simply under law, it cannot be rejected before the first reading.”

Beata Kempa (ECR):

“And this is a civic project, let me repeat, and not a government one. So, Mr Biedron, are you here to promote paedophilia? Because this is about a ban on promotion of paedophilia in Poland. This is the subject matter of this draft law.”

#### *23.06.2021: Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU, in the frame of women's health (debate)*

Christine Anderson (ID):

“But everybody who votes for this report will be voting in favour of a violation of human rights. Please come to your senses and prevent this from becoming a black day in the European Parliament's history. A dark day.”

### ***Actors held responsible***

The actors are named more explicitly in these debates, for example, Commissioner Helena Dalli, and the Commission. Specific political genealogies are also invoked that seek to align advocacy of SRHR as the latest instance of a malignant history, e.g. abortion was invented by the Soviet Union, and used in insidious ways by the Nazis.

#### *20.01.2022: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the European Union (topical debate)*

Jadwiga Wiśniewska (ECR):

“The first country in the world that introduced the possibility of abortion was the Soviet Union. Back in 1933, in fact, abortion became a right in Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union having introduced this in 1932. And this was something that then spread throughout the East.”

*20.10.2022: The first anniversary of the de facto abortion ban in Poland (debate)*

Balázs Hidvéghi (NI):

“...Today's debate is yet another example of the European Parliament's leftist and liberal forces interfering in the matters of a sovereign Member State. Yesterday you were attacking the decision of the Constitutional Court of Poland in a more than 4-hour long debate, but you fail to realise that the Polish Court decision was a direct consequence of your own harmful policies. You, the leftists in this House, are the greatest danger to European cooperation, exactly because you refuse to accept that there can be other views and opinions than your own, thank you.”

### ***Proposed responses and solutions***

*12.02.2019: Experiencing backlash in women's rights and gender equality in the EU (debate)*

Jadwiga Wiśniewska, (ECR): “That is why I propose an alternative draft resolution where I underline the need to fill in the pay gap and pension gap.”

*23.06.2021: Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU, in the frame of women's health (debate)*

Simona Baldassarre (ID) frames procreation as an invigorator of the European Project:

“Stripping women of their role as bringers of life simply relegates them to a cold world. Let us remedy this situation, let us correct things and vote in favour of life and see that with each childhood is born, we can once again renew our trust and belief in the European project. So, I plead with you to support ECR's resolution, the right to live is the competence of the Member States.”

*04.07.2022: US Supreme Court decision to overturn abortion rights in the United States and the need to safeguard abortion rights and Women's health in the EU (debate)*

Bert-Jan Ruissen (ECR):

“The trick now is to conduct the necessary debate in a dignified manner here in Europe as well. We do not do this by banning organisations from Parliament, as some advocate here. Those are tactics they use in dictatorships like China and North Korea.”



***The real problem gender distracts from***

*23.06.2021: Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU, in the frame of women's health (debate)*

Simona Baldassarre (ID):

"What does the EU do for young mothers or for families with difficulties to protect them from needing an abortion. If you really want to protect women, you have to create the conditions."

*20.10.2021: The first anniversary of the de facto abortion ban in Poland (debate)*

Nicolaus Fest (ID) uses this as an opportunity to deflect the debate to the real issue of 'Islamic extremism':

"I have a few anniversaries that I would like to debate with you. For example, the anniversary of the attack on the Bataclan theatre by Muslim migrants, the anniversary of the attack in Berlin by a Muslim migrant, the anniversary of the New Year's Eve where thousands of women were abused by, yes, Muslim men. The anniversary of the attack on *Charlie Hebdo*. The murder of Mr Paty, the attacks on London, Amsterdam, Brussels, Hamburg, Dresden, Nice, Vienna, Stockholm, etc. Etc."

*04.07.2022: US Supreme Court decision to overturn abortion rights in the United States and the need to safeguard abortion rights and Women's health in the EU (debate)*

Patryk Jaki (ECR):

"Moreover, you want to teach morality to America, which you hate so much. But what have you really done to protect the lives of children in Ukraine? And let me remind you that Ukraine is the border of the EU, not the United States."

*10.09.2015: The gender dimension of trafficking in human beings (debate)*

Louise Bours (EFDD):

"Freedom of movement between countries that is enabling and encouraging this criminality, whether it's perpetrated against men, women, boys or girls, having no possibility of any checks at any border, obviously makes it easier than ever for people to be trafficked across our continent [...] Our citizens are looking to us to do but we must have avoid illegal migrants leaving their countries in the first place. We need to help refugees from war, but we can't take everyone in."

## ***The real threats to women and feminism***

*12.02.2019: Experiencing backlash in women's rights and gender equality in the EU (debate)*

Jadwiga Wiśniewska (ECR): "...the need to fight against violence against women, genital mutilation, forced marriages. I point out that women should be more active in political life."

*05.10.2016: Women's rights in Poland (debate)*

Jadwiga Wiśniewska (ECR):

"In this debate I think we should be concentrating on migration, the security and economic crisis. Why don't we debate the women's situation in Germany? Remember what happened on New Year's Eve a year or two ago in Germany? What happened at the Oktoberfest in Germany? Perhaps your left-wing conscience could be brought to bear. And when you think about what is happening to women in Germany, no, you seem to prefer to look at the situation in Poland. Back then we were talking about what happened in Germany on New Year's Eve. We talked about the fact that women had been attacked and even raped. Hundreds of women had been victims of violence."

*20.01.2022: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the European Union (topical debate)*

Silvia Sardone (ID):

"On New Year's Eve in Milan in my city, 12 young women were attacked, sexually abused. Saman Abbas, a Pakistani woman killed in our country because her family didn't want her to go out on the street without her veil and she wanted to flee an arranged marriage. Think of those women who are attacked in their own home just because they want to lead a Western lifestyle. Mothers, women who are not able to enjoy the lives all those well-meaning people on the Left believe they should because of immigration and the way the Islamic world looks at them. So, if we're talking about really defending women and women's rights we should forget about gender-based language."

Assita Kanko (ECR): "Muslim women. Women from my background who mostly cannot even choose if and when they want to have sex, or if and when they even want to be married."

## ***Anti anti-gender arguments***

The clarity and cohesiveness of anti anti-gender interventions is quite strong in the debates under the SRHR theme. It is the only example in the entire corpus that has an active protest register in the transcripts, when Polish women's rights activists stormed the building and entered the gallery with signs and cries of "Support Polish Women" on

05.10.2016.

*12.02.2019: Experiencing backlash in women's rights and gender equality in the EU (debate)*

Věra Jourová, Member of the Commission:

“Europe is confronted with increased populist and extremist trends which also manifest themselves in sexist and racist hate speech and in backward trends regarding women's and girls' rights.”

Iratxe García Perez (S&D):

“Bulgaria's not ratifying the Istanbul Convention and do you know what the Ultra Conservatives are now going to do? The PP in Spain has decided that in order to guarantee sustainability of pensions, women have to give birth. [...] This is not just an issue for women, this is a fight for a feminist Europe which moves forward, which doesn't give up and which works. “

Angelika Mlinar (ALDE):

“Ultraconservative, anti-feminist and religious groups systematically called gender equality into question and use religion, tradition, or culture to legitimate violations of women's rights.”

Malin Björk (GUE/NGL):

“There are Democratic moves toward a backtracking that the neoconservative extremists and Christian fundamentalists are enacting this, this hatred also against LGBTI and other minorities and it isn't only without ideas, but in particular with money.”

Terry Reintke (Verts/ALE-Fraktion): “There are controls everywhere, and the state is looking suspiciously at anything which is called feminism or gender.”

Julie Ward (S&D):

“Mr. President, it's important that the European Parliament addresses the current backlash against women's rights and gender equality in Europe, particularly because some of the forces driving this backlash are represented in this House. Conservative forces are becoming stronger. They're well organised and they have managed to convince more and more people that they're on the right side of history. This is very dangerous. Attacks against sexual and reproductive health rights are becoming more frequent in Europe, with some countries even restricting access to contraceptives. Anti-gender campaigns push against the rights of LGBTIQ+ people. The ratification of the Istanbul

Convention is slow and painful despite it being the best legal tool we have to fight against gender-based violence. Meanwhile, domestic violence continues to be widespread and normalised.”

*05.10.2016 Women’s rights in Poland (debate)*

This debate started with a protest of women chanting, ‘Support Polish Women’.

Ángela Vallina (GUE/NGL):

“A government should not be able to legislate under the pressure of any particular religion, governments are guaranteed the rights of everybody and not just apply the law under the pressure of a given set of religious beliefs.”

Julie Ward (S&D), addressing the protestors, said:

“But faced with the worst kind of misogyny, depression and violation, you have found your voices and here in the European Parliament you have found a place to amplify that voice. You are now empowered and you must take courage and continue to occupy public space with your powerful, beautiful creative actions because the women that come after you and the women and girls in other countries who are also depending who are also under attack from the right wing repressive policies. They are also depending on you to lead the way. So thank you, continue to speak up, together we can be strong.”

*15.12.2021: Plans to undermine further fundamental rights in Poland, in particular regarding the standards of the European Convention of Human Rights and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (debate)*

Margaritis Schinas (European Commission):

“The Commission considers there is a clear risk of a serious breach of the rule of law in Poland... it launched an infringement procedure against Poland in relation to the so-called LGBTIQ-ideology free resolutions adopted by several Polish regions, counties and municipalities, on the basis of a lack of sincere cooperation on this topic. Let me be very clear, LGBTIQ free zones have no place in our Union. This is not our model of society. This is not our Europe. We now witness the introduction of a new national pregnancy database and an Institute for Family and Democracy and it is a new attempt to gain control over women's bodies, to reduce their autonomy and to interfere in personal family. But the European Commission has been silent for too long. We can no longer hide behind a false argument of Member States’ competence.”

*23.06.2021: Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU, in the frame of women’s health (debate)*

Heléne Fritzon (S&D):

“The right-wing nationalists here in the Parliament, they are the ones who have been listening and encouraging these people, but they want to stop the right of abortion, stop the right to sexual education, the right to contraception and they must not win. Around the world and here in Europe, and indeed in this very Chamber, we see a very strong resistance against this. There are some who are against sexual education. There are some who are against the right to safe and legal abortions. And there are those who are against equal rights for LGBTQ people, equal equality and human rights. But we Socialists and Democrats are not among those. We are with you, Fred Matić.”

*20.01.2022: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in the European Union (topical debate)*

Nathalie Colin-Oesterlé (European People's Party; Christian Democrats):

“Freedom to women and what they do with their body. Poland, 2020 the only member state to increase restriction to contraception in the past four years, and urgent contraception is deemed an abortion”.

*20.10.2021: The first anniversary of the de facto abortion ban in Poland (debate)*

Karen Melchior (Renew):

“Minorities and women are the other canaries in the coal mine of democracy. But are you listening? Have we heard that they've stopped singing? The right to abortion should not be a political battle. The fundamentalist orthodoxy, akin to the Taliban, won't stop there. There's another bill currently going through the Polish Parliament. That bill says that inciting someone to termination or terminating would be tantamount to murder or killing.”

*04.07.2022: US Supreme Court decision to overturn abortion rights in the United States and the need to safeguard abortion rights and Women's health in the EU (debate)*

Blue card speech directed to Miroslav Radačovský (NI) by Karen Melchior (Renew):

“I was a little bit surprised when I was listening to you speak and comparing women as human beings to gardens and gardeners. My body is what propels me into the world and what is the basis of my actions into the world, and it is crucial that we as human people are able to decide over our own lives and our own bodies. And I would like to hear you explain how you can compare women's bodies and their possibility to decide over their own lives to a gardener and a garden and a seed in the ground.”

Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield (Verts/ALE):

“If a government introduces legislation to restrict access to abortion, it is never a matter of chance. It is because there is an authoritarian or ideological government which is calling for control of women's bodies to control the population. “

*10.09.2015: The gender dimension of trafficking in human beings (debate)*

Inês Cristina Zuber (GUE):

“The large majority are the victims of sexual exploitation, 96% being women. The UN Convention on the Suppression of Trafficking establishes a direct link between public community and the exploitation of women. I see that some honourable Members of this Parliament use every opportunity to attack what constitutes a great, maybe the greater achievement of the European Union, the freedom of movement in a Europe without internal borders. I will repeat that Schengán is a part of the solution, it's not the problem.”

The following example of anti anti-gender comes from an ECR member, a group that has contributed to copious amounts of anti-gender discourse in this data.

Assita Kanko (ECR):

“Frankly speaking, on the day when men will be able to give birth, on the day when men will be able to be pregnant and become mothers, then, on that day only, will they have the right to tell me what to do with my body. They will have the right on that day to tell my daughter what to do with her body. But today that is not the case. So please live with that. Women have the right to decide for themselves.”

## LGBTIQ and Hate Speech Debates in the European Parliament

Note: this is the collated and categorised data, no initial analysis has as yet been conducted. The interchangeable use of 'LGBTI' and 'LGBTIQ' is due to accurate quoting of the terms used in the debate database.

Debates analysed:

Sitting Date	Plenary Debates relating to LGBTIQ and Hate Speech
01.12.2016	Combatting racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance
05.04.2017	Hate speech, populism, and fake news on social media: towards an EU response
26.11.2019	Public discrimination and hate speech against LGBTI people, including LGBTI free zones
14.09.2020	Determination of a clear risk of a serious breach by the Republic of Poland of the rule of law – LGBTI-free zones in Poland
25.11.2020	The new LGBTIQ Equality Strategy
10.03.2021	Declaration of the EU as an LGBTIQ Freedom Zone
18.10.2022	Growing hate crimes against LGBTIQ people across Europe in light of the recent homophobic murder in Slovakia
23.11.2022	Legal protection for rainbow families

**Table EP10:** *Plenary Debates relating to LGBTIQ and Hate Speech*

See [Appendix A: Table AA5 \(EP5\) – 'LGBTIQ and Hate Speech coded debates'](#) for the detailed data table for this section.

### **Definition of gender as a problem**

*01.12.2016: Combatting racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance*

Beatrix von Storch (EFDD): "The Fundamental Rights Agency must be abolished. It is an outsourced arm of the EU Commission. This LGBT lobby tool promotes gender ideology."

*14.09.2020: Determination of a clear risk of a serious breach by the Republic of Poland of the rule of law – LGBTI-free zones in Poland*

Patryk Jaki (ECR):

"I need to tell you something: we in Poland know this kind of ideology. In the past, the Communists used the language of 'I tell you...'. The Communists called

censorship 'the principles of freedom': the restriction of religious practice, the freedom of conscience. And today you call a left-wing bandit beating a man a child who has been arrested for his beliefs, and supporting the traditional family you call an 'attack on tolerance'. I tell you something, and I want to underline something: I am not surprised that the new monument in Germany of Lenin – a murderer, a tyrant – does not bother you. But the maintenance of family values in Poland does. Shame on you, shame on you!"

Maximilian Krah (ID):

"I can only applaud the Polish people to have a policy which is focused on families with daddy, mummy and children, and not on different minorities. Opposing the gender theory does not mean to suppress gay and LGBTI people, it just means that we don't want those theories taught in schools and universities and made the principle of politics. Poland and Hungary have decided to follow a conservative line, which is a sovereign decision of the people, and so do people have the right to follow that policy, and it is not an oppression of the treaties. I can only address my Polish friends: follow your way, you are right."

Hermann Tertsch (ECR):

"Enough of this persecution of Poland. Enough of the persecution of Hungary and any free European nation that dares to defy all the ideological mantras of this progressive consensus. This is not a debate on the rule of law. This, what it is, is the same as always: a lynching and an attempt to publicly humiliate a Parliament, a sovereign country that refuses to be pushed towards that social democratic consensus that they want to impose from here."

Joachim Stanisław Brudziński (ECR):

"It is impossible not to notice that politicians from a country where new ideologies are starting to resemble totalitarianism are trying to teach democracy to Poland. Children have masturbation lessons in schools and are encouraged to 'denounce their parents if they commit homophobic crimes.' It was already in the totalitarian USSR, where Pawka Morozov became a hero, handing over his parents to Stalin's henchmen only because they had different views than the communist authorities."

*25.11.2020: The new LGBTIQ Equality Strategy*

Simona Baldassarre (ID):

"So, it seems strange that we are trying to protect one category rather than the other. This is almost reverse discrimination. We want a Parliament that protects all citizens without distinctions of sex, gender, health, political or religious opinions. We need to remember that every child has a right to a family, a mother



and a father, and anything else is an inhuman practice, and that our children should not be subjected to gender ideology”.

Nicola Procaccini (ECR):

“...is it a racist statement? I think it is actually racist to divide people up in line with an infinite series of categories and subcategories, as this report does. LGBTI QRP. OK if you want to update the list. We've got now 9 initials there. And that's nine if you forget the old categories of male and female. So it seems a bit ridiculous and maybe a bit suspect...If I read page 20 of this report, it states that local organisations should

### *10.3.2021: Declaration of the EU as an LGBTIQ Freedom Zone*

Ryszard Antoni Legutko (ECR): “Well, I must say that this whole debate is absolutely absurd. It's simply showing that the Parliament's only interested in its ideology.”

Annika Bruna (ID):

“This weekend, a man was killed due to his sexual orientation and this is not going to be a problem that's solved because you think about an LGBTI freedom zone. And neither will it solve the problem of the expansion of radical Islam in Europe. Instead of condemning this, which your resolutions spare no word for, you instrumentalise this subject to push forward the political agenda you want to impose. The right for same-sex couples to have their children recognised across Europe. Every child is born of a mother and a father. That's a biological reality that is unquestionable. We will vote against your resolution and put forward a text that defends the rights and security of people as well as the sovereignty of the nations.”

Patryk Jaki (ECR):

“Of course, in Poland there are no such things as LGBTQ free zones. But I did enter an amendment. We want the EU to be a freedom zone for everyone, for people of every religion, every colour of skin. But it seems you're against that. You don't want tolerance. What you want is to try to undermine traditional values. You have a colonial way of thinking. You think that your traditions are better than our traditions. In Poland there are fewer hate crimes against homosexuals than here in Belgium or in the Netherlands. In Poland there's never been any penalties for homosexuality, but that was the case historically in Western Europe. So. Maybe your traditional record is worse. You now want to teach Poland your new culture, but our culture didn't produce any form of fascism.”

Angel Dzhambazki (ECR):

“– (start of speech off-mic) ... debates an issue which essentially does not exist. After numerous debates on so-called LGBTI-free zones in Poland, we saw that a lie repeated often enough became the truth. Using this lie, the liberal elites, which are represented by the narrow majority in this House, are now on the offensive. We are aware that you want to destroy the family as a unit of our societies. We know that you want to impose unnatural and dangerous ideas like the scientific fact that there are only two genders. We know that you want to erase all traces of traditional European and Christian values. What you should know is that we will not allow it. We do not need to proclaim the EU as an LGBTI Freedom Zone because the European Union is already the safest place on earth for LGBTI people.

What we do need, however, is the European Charter of Family Rights, which will strengthen the legal protection for traditional families and uphold the simple truth: a family consists of a mother, father and their children. You must know the deviant sexual practices and LGBTIQ ideology can and will open the door to child abuse and paedophilia, and we shall not allow it. Our peoples will stand for traditional European values and will be ready to hold them.”

Ryszard Antoni Legutko (ECR):

“You want to use this resolution to attack the Polish people because they don't vote the way you would like them to. Well, that's it in a nutshell. Do you think the progress is to create new categories and subcategories of sexual orientations that now it's called we have to tell fairy tales about princesses kissing other princesses and there's promoting surrogate parenthood and things like that? You think it's modern to turn every desire into a right?”

*23.11.2022: Legal protection for rainbow families*

Angel Dzhambazki (ECR):

“to quote Article 46, one of the Bulgarian Constitution: Marriage is a voluntary union between a man and a woman. Civil union is legal. And further down, children born out of wedlock have the same rights as children born in wedlock. This is the only thing that matters here. Ladies and gentlemen, you deal in political propaganda. You may be surprised. That the Bulgarian Institute the Constitution recognizes. Heterosexual marriage, that is a marriage between a man and a woman, and the identification number of the child can always be issued to the mother. So there is no impediment, actually. What you're trying to do here is change our way of life, and we cannot go for this. We don't tell you how to organise your societies or your families. The only thing we insist upon: leave us alone and don't try to change us. Our marriage is between a man and a woman's parents are a man and a woman. This is our national will.”

Vincenzo Sofo (ECR):

“So we've got two women, one Bulgarian, one British woman who decided by artificial insemination to have a child and then they go to Bulgaria to try and register the birth. But the international system does not recognise the two women as the parents of the child, so they immediately had recourse to a right of freedom of movement, but. They have done so in order to try and circumvent national laws, and this is anti democratic. Now all Member States, of course, you know, have to take account of the LGBT agenda and believe that they can then use the Schengen area and can then trump. Lawmaking sovereignty, so this threatens the legal orders of our sovereign states. And why would this Parliament want to do that if it flies the flag for democracy?”

François-Xavier Bellamy (PPE):

“No treaty has given this responsibility to the EU institutions. To respect the rule of law is about respecting democracy. And this would mean that we would have to recognize. surrogacy as well, because behind all the lofty words is a whole industry that profits by exploiting the most vulnerable women. Is this really progressive? What's strange? Progressiveness, a human life that will be part of a business contract. Yes. Behind this there are children. And I'm all very surprised that you've talked about Sarah and her not having a passport and that you're sorry about that. I'm very sorry that Sarah doesn't have a father. That's what I'm sad about.”

### ***Consequences of gender as a problem***

*26.11.2019: Public discrimination and hate speech against LGBTI people, including LGBTI free zones*

Maximilian Krah (ID):

“I’m wondering that you speak about hate speech against gay people. But now I have the impression we speak about hate at Poland...we thank the Polish nation a lot. They brought us freedom against the Communists and they now give us a new hope in Europe for a conservative approach in government.”

Angel Dzhambazki (ECR):

“I see that over recent years Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria have been a thorn to you because they’re different, because we still think that family presupposes a union between a man and a woman. But the propaganda of the LGBTI community has gone too far. One in two of our reports seems to be dedicated to the LGBTI community or the Istanbul Convention. Look, we are against propaganda in our kindergartens, we do not support activities close to

paedophilia. Why do you think your opinions weighs more than ours in Poland or Hungary or Bulgaria? This is Bolshevism, you're behaving just like Chinese communists."

*14.09.2020: 'Determination of a clear risk of a serious breach by the Republic of Poland of the rule of law – LGBTI-free zones in Poland'*

Hélène Laporte (ID): "The initiation of the Article 7 procedure against Poland constitutes a humiliation, an inadmissible attack on its sovereignty."

Balázs Hidvéghi (PPE):

"For years, proceedings have been going on against Poland and Hungary by muddling the principles of a fair trial and impeachment, which are about ideological issues, serve only political purposes, and thus do not even meet the requirements of the rule of law. The rule of law cannot be held accountable by applying different standards to member states, by accepting accusatory reports ...The reality is that wherever a government with characteristic right-wing policies is formed, sooner or later accusations of the rule of law will emerge. This is the situation in relation to Hungary and Poland, but we have also seen this recently in the case of Slovenia and Bulgaria."

Hermann Tertsch (ECR):

"This report offends the sovereign Polish nation and is an exercise in infinite hypocrisy, since its rapporteur is a member of a party that today obscenely tramples on and has totally destroyed the division of powers in Spain, in alliance with the communists."

*25.11.2020: The new LGBTIQ Equality Strategy*

Joachim Kuhs (ID):

"In the German magazine Focus, Jan Fleischhauer asked how one could explain that Trump had gained voters among women and Latinos. And how it was possible that Trump this time round has received double the number of votes from the lesbian and gay community. Many people just want to be what they are, people like you and me, with all the rights that we have in our wonderful Europe, there is no need to bother them with our strategies."

*10.03.2021: Declaration of the EU as an LGBTIQ Freedom Zone*

Ryszard Antoni Legutko (ECR):

"In many Member States, marriage is defined as a union between a man and a woman. It's written in our Constitution. Regions are absolutely against these ideological officers who turn up in schools and tell them about absurd ideas,

about some kind of liquidity of genders. I mean, this is against the Constitution in Poland and it does not comply with the Charter of Fundamental Rights. It's our right to defend families. We cannot have this right. Infringed upon. This indoctrination cannot be allowed in schools. Well, what do they want? Do we want this kind of ideology to be brought to our schools against the wishes of parents? Well, this is simply illegal. What you're trying to do is to try and muzzle national debates, just like today's debate here. This is ideological madness. This does not [show] respect for people."

Angel Dzhambazki (ECR):

"We know that you want to erase all traces of traditional European and Christian values. You must know the deviant sexual practices and LGBTIQ ideology can and will open the door to child abuse and paedophilia, and we shall not allow it. Our peoples will stand for traditional European values and will be ready to hold them."

### ***Actors held responsible***

Overall, there is a compound 'left threat' held responsible for pushing a 'LGBT agenda'. Below is a list of the actors held responsible:

<b>Sitting Date</b>	<b>Debate Title</b>	<b>MEP</b>	<b>Actors held responsible</b>
<b>23.11.2022</b>	'Legal protection for rainbow families'	Vincenzo Sofo (ECR)	'LGBT agenda'
<b>10.03.2021</b>	'Declaration of the EU as an LGBTIQ Freedom Zone'	Ryszard Antoni Legutko (ECR)	'left-handed ideologists'
<b>14.09.2020</b>	'Determination of a clear risk of a serious breach by the Republic of Poland of the rule of law – LGBTI-free zones in Poland'	Beata Mazurek (ECR)	'LGBT-free zones are a lie spread by left-wing activists'
<b>26.11.2019</b>	'Public discrimination and hate speech against LGBTI people, including LGBTI free zone'	Angel Dzhambazki (ECR)	LGBT advocates are behaving like Chinese Communists and are the 'hard left leading the debate'.

**Table EP11:** *Actors held responsible for 'LGBT agenda'*

### ***The real problem gender distracts from***

*01.12.2016: Combatting racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance*

Vicky Maeijer (ENF-Fractie):

"There's no room for different opinions. You can only speak if you say something politically correct. But our freedoms were hard won. Anyone who disagrees with them is dubbed as racist or a phobic. This is a way of muzzling the opposition,

the Brussels elite continues to paint patriots as extremists [...] Double standards being applied. Elections in recent months have shown this, and upcoming elections will do so too. So, we're seeing censorship and a restriction in the expression of a freedom of expression. You consider those who do not agree with your dominant liberal ideology as racists, while every day you show what you mean by democracy."

*05.04.2017: 'Hate speech, populism, and fake news on social media: towards an EU response'*

Rolandas Paksas (EFDD):

"Gives rise to such discussions where an open and straightforward word is marked hate speech, where the representation of interests of the public rather than those of a handful, and indulging the policies serving that handful, are called populism."

Matteo Salvini (ENF):

"Actually, there are 20 million unemployed people in Europe. There's Islamist terrorism, there is immigration that has got out of control. And what are you dealing with here in the European Parliament? And by the way, it's deserted. It's Wednesday afternoon as anybody here you're talking about hoaxes on Facebook, fake news, for goodness sake."

Lampros Fountoulis (NI):

"We are in favour of freedom of expression, freedom of opinion. Coming on to populism? Populism is another term that has been created and generated by the political class to criticise those who seem to be closer to the needs of our citizens, the citizens are supporting us. Because of a populist reasons? No, I'm sorry, but you have no contact. You're out of touch with the people and the citizens."

Bruno Gollnisch (NI):

"And if news, news really is fake, what's stopping you? Simply refuting it. Hate speech. That's stuff which goes against the dogmas you've tried to impose on us all. In other words, goes against political correctness."

*26.11.2019: Public discrimination and hate speech against LGBTI people, including LGBTI free zones*

Beata Kempa (ECR):

"Let's talk about the facts. LGBTI militants use provocation. Like a weapon during their marches, many acts of discrimination took place who are also tax directed against the Christian symbols of millions of Christians. The sacred images of the

Holy Virgin were profaned. Surely these are hate attacks. We're talking about brutal attacks against Christians, against the clergy, and against symbols of Christianity.”

“I believe in mutual respect. We are all entitled to our dignity, but we cannot simply stand by in silence in the face of this violent and aggressive dogma of a group who attack anybody who doesn't agree with them.”

Jorge Buxadé Villalba (ECR):

“In Spain, the newspaper which I'm sure you've all heard of, El Pais, which has become a propaganda tool, carried an article which said that heterosexuality is dangerous. The author of this article said that women should start carrying arms to defend themselves against men. This is hate discourse as well. Why is it for you that you only talk about one form of hate and you turn a blind eye to other forms?”

“Has the left got anything to say about the criminalization of men in Europe? I agree that we need to fight against hate discourse.”

Patryk Jaki (ECR) [blue card]:

“You spoke very eloquently about values and I'm sure that we could all agree with you. However, we are, I think, serious politicians and as a result I'd like to ask you to provide us with some details. Could you give us any examples where activities of members of the Polish Government led to the suicide of anybody in Poland?”

*14.09.2020: Determination of a clear risk of a serious breach by the Republic of Poland of the rule of law – LGBTI-free zones in Poland*

Hélène Laporte (ID):

“The courage of the European Union would require not authority over Poland – we must first be able to verify – but a determination to stop all financing in favour of Turkey, which is violating Greek maritime zones and illegally occupying the north of Syria.”

Vladimír Bilčík (PPE):

“Mr President, this is a very emotional debate but the core issue is that Polish justice is European justice, and the safety, dignity and freedom of all citizens in Poland – regardless of their gender and sexual orientation – is also about essential respect for the rights of all Europeans.”

Joachim Stanisław Brudziński (ECR):

"It was in Spain that the parliament recently voted to murder people, i.e. euthanasia, which in fact had already been used before for the oldest patients with coronavirus who were selected for treatment not by doctors, but by employees of nursing homes. This brings associations with another totalitarianism - the German death camps of World War II, where those who could no longer work were sent to the death chambers. People from such countries are trying to teach Poland."

Elżbieta Kruk (ECR):

"Poland is accused of being intolerant when statistics show that it is in Western European countries that violence against national minorities resulting from anti-Semitism, Islamophobia or xenophobia is increasing. In Germany, for example, there are 5 racial attacks per day. Where are the equal standards?"

Beata Mazurek (ECR):

"Police brutally pacified demonstrations in Catalonia, not sparing women and the elderly. How does this relate to the right to assemble and peacefully manifest one's views? We could observe similar situations in France during the protests of workers and trade unions."

#### *10.03.2021: Declaration of the EU as an LGBTIQ Freedom Zone*

Ryszard Antoni Legutko (ECR):

"Are hate crimes really at such a high level? In which Member States are these numbers highest? The highest number of hate crimes is in Holland, owed more than 500 cases in Germany, more than 200 cases, 160 in Belgium. In Poland we had only 16 cases, in Lithuania, just two, so I think we should actually be talking about the Netherlands and Belgium here rather than the Eastern European countries. Western Europe is simply engaging in ideological propaganda right down to kindergarten age. You want to try and tell children ridiculous stories about gender. If you want to introduce censorship, you are the ones who are trying to change our language through political correctness. And what is the result of all this? Well, it's not a very good result. I think that we are seeing more hate crimes and attacks than ever."

Patryk Jaki (ECR):

"Of course, in Poland there are no such things as LGBTQ free zones. But I did enter an amendment. We want the EU to be a freedom zone for everyone, for people of every religion, every colour of skin. But it seems you're against that. You don't want tolerance."



Nicola Procaccini (ECR):

“Well, the title of this resolution, if it was the EU, was a freedom zone for everybody, whatever their sexual orientation, rather than saying LGBTIQ, well, we would have voted in favour of it. Because we're against any form of discrimination.”

### ***The real threats to women and feminism***

*01.12.2016 Combatting racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance*

Kristina Winberg (EFDD):

“Many accusations are often labelled Racism, xenophobia, populism. These are terms that have a very clear meaning in a different setting, but if people wish to express their clear views on immigration? Then those words lose their meaning. Is it racism to want checks on immigration? To want women and children to be safe? Is it racist to love one's country and culture? Our citizens have seen enough to warrant their concerns and that cannot be viewed as populism. The EU acts as if it is fighting intolerance and will welcome in millions of immigrants from intolerant cultures. How can you ask our citizens to be more tolerant in the face of intolerance?”

*05.04.2017: Hate speech, populism, and fake news on social media: towards an EU response*

Gilles Lebreton (ENF):

“Ladies and gentlemen, pro Europeans, if you've got any sense of honour, save your energy to tackle the real danger, Jihadists. Respect freedom of speech and expression, even for your political adversaries.”

*10.03.2021: Declaration of the EU as an LGBTIQ Freedom Zone*

Nicolaus Fest (ID):

“If you look at the situation in Berlin, Hamburg, Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam and elsewhere, homosexual couples no longer feel safe wandering through their streets holding hands. They're not under threat from Germans, Poles or Hungarians. They are coming under threat from Muslims but that's the elephant in the room. No one's daring to say it because that would be questioning migration, and it really would be the way to tackle the problem and make our societies more liberal.”

### ***Anti anti-gender arguments***

*25.11.2020: The new LGBTIQ Equality Strategy*

Marc Angel (S&D):

“This strategy comes at a very opportune moment because in several Member States of the European Union, for instance Poland and Hungary, the governments have organised a real witch- hunt against LGBTI people. This has even intensified during the pandemic because they want to divert attention from the failures in fighting the virus. This strategy, together with the EU Gender Equality Strategy and the intersectional approach is the best answer to counter the anti-gender movement – a movement made up of ultra-hard-core conservative politicians and their followers by religious fundamentalists, who stand for an outdated patriarchal society where women’s rights and LGBTI rights have no place. Let me finish by recalling that being an LGBTI person is not an ideology, it is not an identity, and it is not a choice – but being homo, bi, trans and inter-phobic is a choice.”

Sophia In’t Veld (Renew):

“Please, Commissioner, also think about LGBTI sex workers, people who are very marginalised, very vulnerable; think of transgender persons, who still in five countries undergo unnecessary sterilisation, and people who, thanks to Covid measures, are back in an unsafe situation.”

Terry Reintke (Verts/ALE):

“Let’s be honest, Europe’s LGBTI community has been attacked on many occasions in recent years but, importantly, this strategy is now a comprehensive plan to create a Union of equality for all of us. We have to make sure that LGBTI citizens are no longer treated as second-class citizens in the European Union.”

Silvia Modig (GUE/NGL):

“This is not an ideological question. It's not even a political question. It's about equality and inclusion. This LGBTIQ strategy is most welcome and we have waited for it for a long time. I'd like to thank the Commission.”

Rosa Estaràs Ferragut (PPE):

“If we accept discrimination, we'll be accepting the strengthening of intolerance before diversity will be accepting an attack on human dignity, will be accepting the normalisation of inequality, will be accepting a cancer against democracy.”

Evelyn Regner (S&D):

“Regions across Europe are trying to destroy our diverse society. It's particularly clearly happening where fundamental rights are under threat. And LGBTIQ people are the first to be affected in Poland. There's LGBTQ free zones in Hungary. The Constitution is set to be changed so that it takes away protections.

Huge proportions of LGBTIQ people are affected by violence. The LGBTQ community are faced by hatred and unpleasant political discourses. Nobody should have to live a life undercover and hide their identity.”

Pierre Karleskind (Renew):

“Elsewhere there are zones in Poland and more recently in Hungary they tried to erase ‘LGBT ideology’. But as President Van der Layden has said, we cannot tolerate this world to erase these identities because it's not an ideology. It's an identity that some would like to erase.”

Malin Björk (GUE/NGL):

“The EU's LGBTQ strategy is a clear signal that stands out against the homophobic winds blowing in Europe. It seems that the right is constantly trying to restrict people's rights such as Poland's LGBTIQ free zones which make life a living hell for thousands of people. It seems that we're moving towards an extreme and disgusting level of intolerance, but beautiful words on paper will not do anyone any good.”

Cyrus Engerer (S&D):

“As a gay man, together with my family, happened to live in Europe, we should have the same rights, the same liberties and the same protection enjoyed by any other European citizen and family. In this, my first speech in this Parliament, I wish to address my LGBTQ brothers in Poland and Hungary, and in any other country in the world that denies these fundamental rights to its citizens. Here are the European Parliament who know what you are going through and we will not abandon you.”

Liesje Schreinemacher (Renew):

“We have heard about the awful attacks on pride marches and have seen the growing number of LGBTI-free zones, and within Europe we still have these unimaginable treatments such as conversion therapy and barbaric forced sterilisation. And can anyone tell me how we can allow people losing their parental rights over their own child by crossing a border within the European Union? How do we rhyme the denial of parental rights of rainbow families with our European values?”

Monika Vana (Verts/ALE):

“Within Europe we still have these unimaginable treatments such as conversion therapy and barbaric forced sterilisation and can anyone tell me how we can allow people losing their parental rights over their own Childs by crossing a border within the European Union? How do we run the denial of parental rights

of rainbow families? With our European values we simply cannot allow for these practices to go on any longer.”

The above anti anti-gender comments show a concerted effort to contest anti-gender discourse in the European Parliament. This is achieved in part by the consistency of such efforts, resulting in every anti-gender statement being met with a refutation either by a blue card or response amidst the debate.

## **Written parliamentary questions from RRP actors**

In the EP procedures, Rule 138, Annex III, “Members can submit a specific number of questions to the President of the European Council, the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union, for written answer.”

The fact that a written question must be answered in writing constitutes a tactical opportunity, and this study was based on the hypothesis that this function allows Radical Right Populist (RRP) MEPs to raise anti-gender related questions and to insist on answers to key political and discursive concerns in ways that is more difficult in plenary debate.

The study of written questions was conducted by studying the questions of a sample of 30 MEPs, and cross-referencing this with keyword search in the question database. For this study, publicly available written questions posed by the sampled 30 MEPs were collected from the European Parliament website. The sampled 30 MEPs included (a) ten of the most active MEPs in the plenary corpus (b) ten of the most active on Twitter (c) a balancing sample of ten MEPs chosen to ensure national/party/bloc representation.

The questions posed in writing by the selected 30 MEPs within the current parliamentary term (2020-2022) were collected. All the questions relating to the plenary thematic debate categories were included. 65 entries were made to the database, the date, the name of the person posing the written question, an indication of whether the question was submitted by an individual or a group, and the key anti-gender statements from those questions. Keywords were then cross-referenced across all questions, which allowed dividing them into groups.

## **Findings**

Among the 30 MEPs sampled, 23 have used the option to submit a specific number of questions to the President of the European Council. For the remaining seven MEPs, including KRAH (ID), Bielan (ECR), Brudzinski (ECR), Krosnodebski (ECR), Rzonca (ECR), Nissinen (ECR), Dzhambazki (ECR), no anti-gender content was found within the given timeframe. The anti-gender issues raised in these questions can be grouped into the following major categories:

### ***Questions pertaining to surrogacy, reproductive technologies and adoption of children by the same-sex couples***

Questions pertaining to surrogacy, reproductive technology and the adoption of children by same- sex couples emerged most frequently in this search. Surrogacy emerges as an ‘unethical’ and ‘immoral’ practice exploiting women’s reproductive capacity, and ‘reproductive exploitation’ (Villalba, ECR) hindering women’s emancipation (Borchia, ID). The practice is depicted in terms such as ‘slavery’, or ‘human trafficking’ (Wisniewska (ECR) or the ‘sale of children’ (Kuhs, ID). Other procedures, such as in vitro fertilisation or artificial insemination are also questioned on the grounds of constituting ‘bioethical controversies’ (Wisniewska, ECR). Villalba (ECR) and Wisniewska (ECR) call for the concept of ‘parenthood’ to be clearly defined because “...it opens up a gap that could amount to ratifying the effects of reproductive exploitation in EU legislation.” Most of the surrogacy, reproductive technology and parenthood-related questions are submitted by groups.

### ***Questions pertaining to the sovereignty of nation-state’s legal systems and the infringement of the EU upon the national value systems***

Such questions as same-sex marriage, the adoption of children by same-sex couples, abortion and the ‘interference’ of the LGBTIQ+ communities in the upbringing of children were posed by multiple actors. Some MEPs, such as Patryk Jaki (ECR) Margarita De La Pisa Carrión (ECR) argue that these issues should be seen as an exclusive legislative competence of the Member States. Various MEPs used their questions to condemn the right of the EU to interfere in conviction-based issues, which are enshrined in the national constitutions.

### ***Questions pertaining to specific ‘disputed concepts’***

Multiple actors requested the commission to provide clarity regarding the definitions of certain concepts. Many of them were specifically linked to the EU-OACPS Association Agreement, which is the legal framework for EU relations with 79 other countries. Regarding the agreement, the commission was asked by Margarita de La Pisa (ECR) to propose a footnote to define terms such as:

“SRH, SRH services, SRHR and CSE and other reproduction-related issues, so that these are not interpreted in opposition to national sovereignty of the states in matters relating to regulating abortion, and national policies, strategies and curricula in the field of sex education and human sexuality.”

Several actors asked the Commission to define the scope and the definition of the term ‘parenthood’ in order “to mitigate the risk of reproductive exploitation”. Furthermore, one question was asked by Christine Anderson (ID) in relation to the term ‘racism’ and whether it should be extended to include “reference to human biological gender”. Villalba (ECR) asked the Commission to explain what it meant by ‘gender transformative education’, linking it once again with the contention that education policy should be a matter of the individual EU member states.

### ***Questions pertaining to freedom of expression and freedom of religion***

Multiple MEPs accused the EU of employing 'double standards' (Margarita de la Pisa, signed by group) when it comes to freedom of religion, freedom of thought and freedom of expression.

For instance, the European Commission was blamed for publicly singling out individuals and organisations which defend the right to life (Hermann Tertsch, ECR). The Commission was asked to comment on a report published by the Greens/EFA on anti-gender equality movements in Europe (2020), which according to Tertsch, contained "ideological finger pointing". Tertsch also criticised the public hearing organised by Parliament's FEMM and INGE Committees to discuss the funding of anti-abortion organisations in the EU (2021). Such instances, according to the above-mentioned MEPs, are undermining freedom of thought.

The commission was asked to justify its presumed reluctance to support Christian values and accused of double standards when it comes to religion. Dominik Tarczynski, ECR, asked the Commission to justify its intent to protect "the freedom of religion of the Islamic community, while being reluctant to support and protect Christians to the same extent".

### ***Questions pertaining to transgender people***

Questions about transgender people is another regularly recurring theme. For instance, Hermann Tertsch (ECR) asked the Commission to clarify its position regarding "the endangerment of women inmates by transgender women." He asked the Commission to comment on the actions it is ready to undertake in order to ensure "that women are protected from sexual violence at the hands of biological men who are allowed inside women's prisons on the basis of their self-proclaimed identity as transwomen?" Vincenzo Sofo (ECR) asked the Commission to comment on the discriminatory effect of the participation of transgender athletes in female sports competition on women's athletes. Sofo referred specifically to the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 published in November 2020. Christine Andersen (ID) questioned transgender identity as a reason for claiming asylum in the EU states.

### ***Questions involving children***

Concerns about children have been integral to a broad variety of anti-gender questions/statements of MEPs. For instance, Joachim Kuhs (ID) asked the Commission to explain whether the "sexualization of children" is a practice compatible with European values and traditions. He referred specifically to the event entitled 'Körper, Liebe, Doktorspiele – Wie Sexualerziehung im Kindergartenalter gelingen kann (The body, love, playing doctor – how sex education for nursery-age children can be successful), hosted by the Landratsamt Aschaffenburg. Patrick Jaki (ECR) argued that the right to the adoption of children for same-sex couples, and the upbringing of children, should remain the exclusive competency of nation states. Children were also regularly brought up in relation to various reproductive practices and techniques, including surrogacy, artificial insemination, IVF, abortion and

surrogacy as well as defence against pedophilia (Hermann Tertsch, ECR).

***Questions combining anti-gender and anti-immigration politics***

Several MEPs stressed the threats to gender equality and women's rights associated with immigration. For instance, Christine Andersen (ID) asked the Commission to address "... the link between the increase in honour-related violence against women and immigration from Muslim countries where there is no equality between men and women?" Guido Reil (ID) asks the Commission to address the increasing instances of child marriages in the EU he attributed to an increase in migration. Christine Andersen (ID) questioned the validity of assessment mechanisms for the Horizon 2020 budget given an award had been made to the Queer Muslim Asylum Spaces project. Anderson asks the Commission whether the project is capable of determining "who is really LGBTIQ and who is pretending in order to improve their chances of being granted asylum?" Simona Baldassare (ID) questioned whether the Islamic veil is compatible with the EU's aims on equal opportunities.

Actor	Question/date/ URL	Solo / Group	Key aspects/quotes
Patryk Jaki (ECR) (1)	9.12.2020 Child trafficking in the European Union  <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2020-006707_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2020-006707_EN.html</a>	Solo	“How can we accept the sale of children by their mothers in the EU in order to satisfy the need for third parties to possess children? This should not be happening – people should not be traded. This was one of the topics to which the recent two-day International Children’s Fair in Brussels was devoted. The media stated that the ‘Men Having Babies’ event was of an itinerant nature: it took place in Paris in September, in Taipei in October and in Tel Aviv in December. Human dignity should be a priority for the EU – the era of slavery and human trafficking is long past. We can only imagine the kind of trauma children will go through when they find out years later that they have been purchased. Will the Commission be taking decisive action on this matter?”
Patryk Jaki (ECR) (2)	4.03.2020 Rights of sexual minorities in Poland  <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-001308_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-001308_EN.html</a>	Solo	“The Commission claims that the rights of sexual minorities are being violated in Poland. In my opinion, this claim is based mainly on media reports and data from far-left organisations. <...> On the other hand, decisions on issues related to the adoption of children by same-sex couples are an exclusive competence of the Member State, and the EU has no right to interfere in conviction-based issues. However, marriage is an institution enshrined in Article 18 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, which is the supreme law in Poland. We also do not agree that LGBT communities should interfere in the upbringing of children, since, in accordance with the Constitution, the EU has no right to interfere in conviction-based issues.”



Hermann TERTSCH (ECR) (1)	<p>5.03.2021 Pro-life individuals and groups singled out by political institutions</p> <p><a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-001279_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-001279_EN.html</a></p>	Group	<p>“We have noticed how individuals and organisations are increasingly being singled out by the EU institutions for defending the right to life.</p> <p>&lt;...&gt; In December 2020, the Greens/EFA Group published a report on anti-gender-equality movements in Europe, referring specifically to individuals and organisations. And to our surprise, on 25 March 2021 Parliament’s FEMM and INGE committees organised a joint public hearing to discuss the funding of anti-abortion organisations in the EU.</p> <p>In view of this ideological finger-pointing which undermines freedom of thought:</p> <p>Does the Commission agree that pro-life supporters, MEPs and associations should have to endure being publicly singled out by political institutions?</p>
Hermann TERTSCH (ECR) (2)	<p>19.02.2020 Prostitution of minors in the care of an EU-funded Majorcan Government body</p> <p><a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-000984_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-000984_EN.html</a></p>	Solo	<p>“Is the Commission aware that there is currently no independent assessment or scrutiny of the way European subsidies are used, with the result that cases of the prostitution, sexual exploitation and corruption of minors, such as the one referred to here, are proliferating and being ignored and covered up?</p> <p>Will the Commission take measures to tackle the fraudulent use of European funds intended for highly vulnerable groups (minors, unemployed people, etc.)?”</p>
Hermann TERTSCH (ECR) (3)	<p>25.12.2020 Stamping out new or resurgent paedophile content</p> <p><a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-007089_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-007089_EN.html</a></p>	Group	<p>“Combating paedophilia must be an absolute priority. In France, 165 000 children are believed to suffer rape and sexual violence every year. However, in many countries messages inciting paedophilia are becoming increasingly common.”</p>

	<a href="#">html</a>		
Christine ANDERSON (ID) (1)	2.12.2021 Definition of the term 'racism' <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-005384_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-005384_EN.html</a>	Solo	"In the Commission's view, can the definition of racism be extended, e.g. with reference to human biological gender?"
Christine ANDERSON (ID) (2)	16.11.2021 Male rapists in women's prisons – soon also in the EU? <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-005128_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-005128_EN.html</a>	Solo	"What is the Commission's position on the fact that this endangerment of women inmates is made possible by 'gender identity' laws, which exist in Europe as well as in America/ What is the Commission prepared to do to ensure that women are protected from sexual violence at the hands of biological men who are allowed inside women's prisons on the basis of their self-proclaimed identity as transwomen?"
Christine ANDERSON (ID) (3)	20.10.2021 Gendered language in the EU <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-004763_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-004763_EN.html</a>	Solo	"What is the Commission's view of gendered language and which form should be used and why?"
Christine ANDERSON (ID) (4)	30.06.2021 Violence against women in the name of honour – part 2 <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-003364_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-003364_EN.html</a>	Solo	"It draws attention to the following groups of women who are unable to break out of the confines of their very closed community and are at increased risk of honour-related violence: Muslims, Roma and migrants. This contradicts the Commission's statement. 1. Why does the Commission avoid clearly associating the problem of 'violence in the name of honour' with these

	<a href="#">html</a>		groups. 2.How can a problem be dealt with if its cause is hushed up?”
Christine ANDERSON (ID) (5)	28.05.2021 Possible inequality within the European Institute for Gender Equality <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-002834_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-002834_EN.html</a>	Solo	“According to the names on the list of staff members of EIGE, it would appear that a significant percentage of staff members are women. If that is true, it would indicate that while EIGE is outwardly in favour of gender equality, it fails to promote this principle internally”.
Christine ANDERSON (ID) (6)	8.03.2021 Honour-related violence against women <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-001308_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-001308_EN.html</a>	Solo	“In addition to recording details relating to victims, are efforts being made to record offender characteristics such as cultural and religious background?How is the Commission addressing the link between the increase in honour-related violence against women and immigration from Muslim countries where there is no equality between men and women?”
Christine ANDERSON (ID)(7) with Guido Reil (ID) (1)	24.09.2020 Immigration and violence against women <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-005214_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-005214_EN.html</a>	ID Group pair	“What is the Commission’s view of the statements by politicians and academics to the effect that in many Arab countries physical violence against women is deeply rooted and widely accepted?” “Does the Commission intend to keep a close eye on the issue of violence against women in the context of immigration?”
Christine ANDERSON	29.05.2020 Combating female genital mutilation	Solo	“Parliament recently adopted a resolution on combating female genital mutilation (FGM). However, in spite of the efforts made by the EU and Member States, FGM appears to be increasingly

N (ID) (8)	<a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2020-003284_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2020-003284_EN.html</a>		common in at least some Member States, such as Germany.”
Christine ANDERSON (ID) (9)	6.05.2020 EU financial support for queer Muslim asylum seekers <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-002788_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-002788_EN.html</a>	Annik a Bruna / Nicola us Fest	“It is, however, easy to claim to be bisexual, transsexual or queer for the purpose of getting asylum. How does this study determine who is really LGBTIQ and who is pretending in order to improve their chances of being granted asylum? Does the Commission intend to spend an equal or similar amount on understanding and tackling the challenges facing Christian asylum seekers, and if not, why.”
Christine ANDERSON (ID) (10)	15.10.2019 Gender Studies <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2019-003326_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2019-003326_EN.html</a>	Solo	“Does the Commission know how many universities or higher education institutes in the Member States have either full or part-time lecturers in Gender Studies on their staff? Can it provide a listing of these lecturers broken down into male, female or other gender”.
Christine ANDERSON (ID) (11)	15.10.2019 Increase in the number of ‘honour killings’ in the EU <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2019-003320_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2019-003320_EN.html</a>	Solo	“Is the Commission aware of how many so-called honour killings have taken place in the EU in the past five years? Please list according to country and number and by gender, origin and religion, and also by victims and perpetrators.”
Margarita DE LA PISA	3.02.2022 Sexual and reproductive health and	Solo	“What does the term ‘sexual and reproductive health and rights’ and the concepts relating to this in the new EU-OACPS

Carrión (ECR) (1)	rights in the new EU-OACPS Association Agreement <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-000481_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-000481_EN.html</a>		Association Agreement actually refer to; Is the Commission prepared to propose a footnote in the Agreement to define the terms SRH, SRH services, SRHR and CSE, and related issues, Margarita so that these are not interpreted in such a way as to undermine national sovereignty in matters relating to regulating abortion, and national policies, strategies and curricula in the field of sex education and human sexuality.”
Margarita DE LA PISA Carrión (ECR) (2)	9.12.2021 Mutual recognition of parenthood <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-005517_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-005517_EN.html</a>	Group	“How does the Commission intend to fight against reproductive exploitation? Can it clarify the definition and scope of the term ‘parenthood’? How can it guarantee that the ongoing work on the mutual recognition of ‘parenthood’ will include sufficient safeguards to ensure the proposal does not present any opportunity to facilitate reproductive exploitation?”
Margarita DE LA PISA Carrión (ECR) (3)	31.05.2021 Freedom of religion and double standards <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-002867_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-002867_EN.html</a>	Group	“The Prosecutor General in Finland has charged MP Päivi Räsänen (former chair of the Christian Democrat party and former Minister of the Interior of Finland) with hate speech against homosexuals. Does the Commission agree that freedom of expression is one of the fundamental rights that distinguish European states from authoritarian states, and that limiting the expression of mere opinions amounts to censorship?”
Margarita DE LA PISA Carrión (ECR) (4)	5.03.2021 Pro-life individuals and groups singled out by political institutions <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-002867_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-002867_EN.html</a>	Group	“Does the Commission agree that pro-life supporters, MEPs and associations should have to endure being publicly singled out by political institutions?”

	<a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-001279_EN.html">nt/E-9-2021-001279_EN.html</a>		
Joachim Kuhs (ID) (1)	<p>7.06.2022 The Landratsamt Aschaffenburg is hosting a disgusting event entitled 'Körper, Liebe, Doktorspiele – Wie Sexualerziehung im Kindergartenalter gelingen kann'</p> <p><a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-002060_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-002060_EN.html</a></p>	Solo	<p>"Does the Commission consider the sexualisation of children, especially children of nursery age, to be a practice that fits in with our European values and traditions?</p> <p>Does it consider these disgusting activities clearly involving 'exposure' of young children to sex to be a possible breach of their fundamental rights and bodily integrity? And if so, should the people involved be considered paedophiles?"</p>
Joachim Kuhs (ID) (2)	<p>30.01.2021 Measures to protect children on the internet</p> <p><a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-000597_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-000597_EN.html</a></p>	Group	<p>"The activities of the EU legislator do not, in fact, take into account all cases in which sexual abuse is directly consumed online, i.e. where child pornography is provided by the child following the establishment of a relationship of trust between &lt;...&gt; Will the Commission collect and study data on online paedophilia in order to promote a child- friendly use of the Web?"</p>
Joachim Kuhs (ID) (3)	<p>16.09.2021 Désir d'enfant</p> <p><a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-004271_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-004271_EN.html</a></p>	Group	<p>"There, as in other places, clinics promoted in vitro fertilisation, and especially the chance to choose a future child's characteristics, with the aim of creating a perfect embryo. &lt;...&gt;</p> <p>This practice consists of selling real babies and exploiting women and their reproductive capacity. Surrogacy is an aberrant practice and the practice of buying and selling children is disconcerting</p>

			<p>from both an ethical and moral point of view.”</p> <p>“Has it (EU commission) considered condemning these kinds of initiatives, since they do not fit with the idea of progress, guaranteed rights or women’s emancipation?”</p>
Guido Reil (ID) (2)	<p>24.05.2022 Combating child abuse</p> <p><a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2022-001936_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2022-001936_EN.html</a></p>	Solo	<p>“The German Child Protection Association, on the other hand, states that the majority of child abuse content is shared through platforms and in forums. Therefore, scanning private messages in messaging services or e-mails is neither proportionate nor useful. Moreover, the provisions are easy to circumvent. Chat Control is a monitoring tool introduced under the guise of combating child abuse.”</p>
Joachim Kuhs (ID)(3)	<p>18.05.2022 Child marriage</p> <p><a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-001858_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-001858_EN.html</a></p>	Solo	<p>“A few decades ago, child marriage was mainly an Asian and African phenomenon. Unfortunately, owing to the rise in migration, it is also becoming increasingly common in EU Member States.”</p>
Joachim Kuhs (ID)(4)	<p>18.05.2022 Forced marriages</p> <p><a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-001857_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-001857_EN.html</a></p>	Solo	<p>“Forced marriages affect all Member States. They often have a serious impact on the victims’ social, sexual and emotional lives and in many cases foster extreme violence, such as rape, mutilation, human trafficking and even murder.”</p>
Simona BALDASSA RRE (ID)	<p>22.09.22 The case of Mahsa Amini: the Iranian regime’s brutality against</p>	Group	<p>“The case has shone a spotlight on women’s rights in Iran, and has sparked a popular protest against the law on hijabs and against the Guidance Patrol.”</p>

(1)	women continues unabated <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-003157_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-003157_EN.html</a>		
Simona BALDASSA RRE (ID) (2)	27.04.2022 Gender equality panels in Ravenna for the 'Shaping fair cities' project <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-001596_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-001596_EN.html</a>	Group	"Does the Commission believe that the Islamic veil, as worn by one of the figures portrayed in these 10 panels, and which symbolises the oppression and submission of women, is really a gender equality model that respects the EU's aims on equal opportunities?"
Simona BALDASSA RRE (ID) (3)	15.03.2022 Wombs for rent and the war in Ukraine <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2022-001015_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2022-001015_EN.html</a>	Group	"Ukraine is one of the main international destinations for the purchase of children through 'wombs for rent'. Given the current conflict, some clinics such as Biotexcom have moved underground pending the arrival of commissioning parents. In addition, some surrogate mothers have apparently been put under pressure to continue their pregnancy in countries with a more flexible attitude towards wombs for rent."
Simona BALDASSA RRE (ID) (4)	9.03.2022 Surrogacy fair in Milan: treating human life as a mere commodity <a href="https://www.europarl.eu">https://www.europarl.eu</a>	Group	"According to press reports, a fair titled 'Un sogno chiamato bebè' ('Making the baby dream come true'), which has already been put on in other European cities over the last five years, will be held in Milan on 21-22 May. Past editions have promoted various ways of having children including those involving the



	<a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-000941_EN.html">ropa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-000941_EN.html</a>		latest artificial insemination techniques, such as the illegal practice of renting wombs. At the event in Paris, couples hoping to become parents were offered surrogacy services where they could even select their baby's eye colour, hair colour and sex, with prices ranging between EUR 49 000 and 100 000."
Simona BALDASSA RRE (ID) (5)	7.03.2022 Repeated violations of freedom of thought and opinion at Rome City Council  <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-000918_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-000918_EN.html</a>	Group	"Rome City Council has ordered the removal of some posters that the association Pro Vita & Famiglia had put up as part of a peaceful campaign for International Women's Day, aimed at promoting the right to life and condemning the deviant practices of sex-selective abortion around the world.  The posters show a baby in the womb, with the words, 'Power to women? First let them be born!'"
Gunnar BECK (ID) (1)	22.03.2022 The Conference on the Future of Europe and democratic principles  <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-001182_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-001182_EN.html</a>	Group	"Given the fact that participants are allegedly selected at random and that they are only representative in terms of geographic origin, gender, age and socio-economic background, but not political affiliation, how can political pluralism and political representivity be guaranteed, since these projects are characterised by self-selection bias?"
Gunnar BECK (ID) (2)	21.03.2022 Lack of diversity among the citizens selected to participate in the Conference on the Future of Europe	Solo	"Kantar supposedly performed an unbiased selection of participants, taking into account geographic location, gender, age and socioeconomic background. However, after an analysis of the participants' background, it seems diversity is not guaranteed in terms of migration background, sexual orientation, gender identity, education level and economic income. In particular, the

	<a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-001161_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-001161_EN.html</a>		Conference lacks the crucial input of ordinary day-to-day workers such as teachers, farmers or working-class labourers.”
Beata SZYDŁO (ECR) (1)	30.07.2020 Discrimination against local authorities defending family rights <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2020-004467_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2020-004467_EN.html</a>	Solo	“Meanwhile, six other town-twinning applications that were submitted with the involvement of Polish authorities which had adopted, according to Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli, resolutions on ‘LGBTI-free zones’ or ‘family rights’ were rejected for this reason. This Commission’s stance on this matter is unacceptable as it strikes at fundamental values, such as the ‘family rights’ referred to here, which should be afforded special protection in the EU.” “Is it because of the Family Charter that the Commission rejected six applications from Poland?”
Dominik TARCZYŃSKI (ECR) (1)	31.05.2021 Freedom of religion and double standards <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-002867_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-002867_EN.html</a>	Group	“The Prosecutor General in Finland has charged MP Päivi Räsänen (former chair of the Christian Democrat party and former Minister of the Interior of Finland) with hate speech against homosexuals. Why is the Commission intent on protecting the freedom of religion of the Islamic community, while being reluctant to support and protect Christians to the same extent?”
Jorge Buxade Villalba (ECR)	28.09.2022 Deletion of a tweet containing a girl wearing an Islamic headscarf <a href="https://www.europarl.eu">https://www.europarl.eu</a>	Solo	“This is not the first time that the Commission has normalised women’s submission in its communications. Does the Commission consider that forcing women and, in particular, girls to wear the Islamic headscarf is in line with

(1)	<a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-003222_EN.html">ropa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-003222_EN.html</a>		'European values?'
Jorge Buxade Villalba (ECR) (2)	28.09.2022 Press release on Transforming Education Summit  <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-003221_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-003221_EN.html</a>	Solo	Can the Commission explain what it means by 'gender transformative [...] education', also with reference to Sustainable Development Goal 4, which the Commission also mentions, and one of the aims of which is to build educational facilities that take gender differences into account?  With reference to the principle of conferral set out in Article 5 of the Treaty on European Union, can the Commission name a single provision within primary law that confers upon the EU competences pertaining to 'sexual and reproductive rights'?
Jorge Buxade Villalba (ECR) (3)	28.09.2022 Protests by the Iranian people against Islamic law  <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-003220_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-003220_EN.html</a>	Solo	"Following the torture and killing by Iran's police of the 22-year-old woman, Mahsa Amini, for failing to wear the Islamic veil correctly, thousands of Iranians have taken to the streets against the Muslim theocratic regime and impositions of Islamic law, such as the obligation to wear the hijab or the mere existence of a 'morality police'."  "Does the Commission believe that there is an urgent need to rethink EU campaigns that normalise the imposition of the Islamic veil and even identify it with the European youth?"
Jorge Buxade Villalba (ECR) (4)	13.07.2022 EU idiosyncrasy in promoting Islam as a fundamental European value  <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-003220_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-003220_EN.html</a>	Solo	"On what basis does the Commission believe that the submission of women is a 'European value'? What European values does the Commission believe forcing women to cover their hair promotes?"

	<a href="#">nt/E-9-2022-002576_EN.html</a>		
Jorge Buxade Villalba (ECR) (5)	9.12.2021 Mutual recognition of parenthood <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-005517_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-005517_EN.html</a>	Group	<p>“In 2020 and 2021, Parliament recognised reproductive exploitation as a violation of human rights and a form of trafficking in human beings, including for the purpose of surrogacy &lt;...&gt;.</p> <p>The vagueness of the legal language used by the Commission, which never speaks of ‘filiation’ and prefers the indeterminate concept of ‘parenthood’, opens up a gap that could amount to ratifying the effects of reproductive exploitation in EU legislation.”</p>
Jorge Buxade Villalba (ECR) (6)	23.09.2021 Time to address extreme left-wing violence in Europe <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-004370_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-004370_EN.html</a>	Group	<p>“In Greece, this form of violence has been murderous, even against minors and pregnant women.”</p>
Elżbieta RAFALSKA (ECR) (1)	3.08.2020 Intervention by Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli, on the rejection of the applications of six Polish local authorities for the Town Twinning programme	Group	<p>“These local authorities have adopted resolutions on the protection of the family which are in accordance with Polish law, whose observance is supervised by Poland’s governors and administrative courts.</p> <p>These resolutions do not contain any discriminatory provisions, but they protect the rights of parents to raise their children in accordance with their convictions, and they also protect teachers from the imposition of unprofessional standards of behaviour in educational work and businesses from interference in the</p>

	<a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-004484_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-004484_EN.html</a>		selection of employees or contractors.”
Charlie WEIMERS (ECR) (1)	27.08.2021 Swedish study confirms the connection between migration and criminality <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-003972_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-003972_EN.html</a>	Solo	“According to a report by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (BRÅ)[1], people born in Sweden of Swedish-born parents account for 42% of those suspected of the offence of gross violation of a woman’s integrity (domestic violence). According to the report, Swedes whose parents were born abroad are five times more likely to be suspected of murder and manslaughter than Swedes whose parents were born in Sweden.”
Charlie WEIMERS (ECR) (2)	9.1.2020 Islamist security threat <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-000121_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2020-000121_EN.html</a>		“How have the numbers of Salafists in the EU Member States changed in 2017, 2018 and 2019 and how those numbers can be broken down according to age, gender, education level, nationality and country of activity; How many Salafists can be classified as politically and/or violence-oriented?”
Vincenzo SOFO (ECR) (1)	9.06.2021 Participation of transgender athletes in female sports competitions <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-003044_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-003044_EN.html</a>	Group	“Given this premise and in view of the fact that, in the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 published in November 2020, the European Commission refers to sport as one of the powerful tools for challenging gender bias and other stereotypes, can the Commission state:  Whether the statement made in the aforementioned strategy can be taken as an implicit call to extend the participation of transgender athletes in female sports competitions?  Whether it does not feel that allowing more and more

			transgender athletes to participate in female sports competitions could have a discriminatory effect on women athletes and that this is therefore at odds with the European Union's pursuit of the full realisation of women's rights?"
Beata KEMPA (ECR) (1)	17.09.2021 Financial discrimination against Polish local authorities declaring their support for families <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2021-004289_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/P-9-2021-004289_EN.html</a>	Solo	"On what legal basis has the European Commission suspended financial support for projects carried out by cities and municipalities that have adopted resolutions on family rights?"
Jadwiga WIŚNIEWSKA (ECR) (1)	9.12.2021 Mutual recognition of parenthood <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-005517_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-005517_EN.html</a>	Group	"How does the Commission intend to fight against reproductive exploitation? Can it clarify the definition and scope of the term 'parenthood'?"
Jadwiga WIŚNIEWSKA (ECR) (2)	14.01.2021 Surrogacy in the EU <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-000209_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-000209_EN.html</a>	Group	"Surrogacy is a modern form of slavery, human trafficking, child trafficking and exploitation of women. Surrogacy also often involves other procedures, such as in vitro fertilisation, which raise bioethical controversies. It is money that determines the child's gender and the waiting time for the child. 2015 EP resolution condemned 'the practice of surrogacy, which undermines the human dignity of the woman since her body and its reproductive functions are used as a commodity ... [and] shall be prohibited and treated as a matter of urgency in human rights

			instruments’.”
Simona BALDASSA RRE (ID) (1)	27.04.2022 Gender equality panels in Ravenna for the ‘Shaping fair cities’ project  <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-001596_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-001596_EN.html</a>	Group	“The aim of this project is to promote a culture of gender equality and respect for it, raise awareness of equal opportunities and combat gender violence, in line with the fifth goal of the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Does the Commission believe that the Islamic veil, as worn by one of the figures portrayed in these 10 panels, and which symbolises the oppression and submission of women, is really a gender equality model that respects the EU’s aims on equal opportunities?”
Paolo BORCHIA (ID) (1)	7.03.2022 Repeated violations of freedom of thought and opinion at Rome City Council  <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-000918_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-000918_EN.html</a>	Group	“Rome City Council has ordered the removal of some posters that the association Pro Vita & Famiglia had put up as part of a peaceful campaign for International Women’s Day, aimed at promoting the right to life and condemning the deviant practices of sex-selective abortion around the world.  1.What can it do to prevent incidents such as these from reoccurring, thereby guaranteeing all citizens their right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the freedom to receive or pass on information, without being censored or discriminated against on ideological grounds?”
Paolo BORCHIA (ID) (2)	10.11.2021 ‘Men Having Babies’ surrogacy conference  <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-005063_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-005063_EN.html</a>	Group	“Surrogacy reduces procreation to a mere trade in newborns and to the exploitation of vulnerable young women who, often through necessity, offer themselves for this deviant form of slavery that reduces their bodies to a commodity. It is a matter of great concern that surrogacy conferences are permitted at the very heart of the EU.  Does the Commission intend to adopt a position on surrogacy as a serious violation of human rights?”

Paolo BORCHIA (ID) (3)	16.09.2021 Désir d'enfant <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-004271_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2021-004271_EN.html</a>	Group	"Surrogacy is an aberrant practice and the practice of buying and selling children is disconcerting from both an ethical and moral point of view. Therefore, we ask to the Commission, has it considered condemning these kinds of initiatives, since they do not fit with the idea of progress, guaranteed rights or women's emancipation?"
Nicolaus FEST (ID) (1)	16.07.2022 Under-representation of men in tertiary education: EU failing to achieve its goal of gender equality <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-002625_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-002625_EN.html</a>	Solo	"A Commission communication states the following: 'The promotion of equality between women and men is a task for the Union, in all its activities, required by the Treaties. Gender equality is a core value of the EU, a human and fundamental right and key principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights.' Is the over-representation of women in tertiary education possibly due to structural discrimination against men in this area?"
Nicolaus FEST (ID) (2)	16.07.2022 Breakdown of asylum seekers in the EU by country of origin, gender and age <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-002623_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-002623_EN.html</a>	Solo	"What is the gender breakdown of asylum seekers by country of origin? In other words, how many asylum seekers from Afghanistan (and each of the other countries of origin) are male and how many are female? What is the breakdown of asylum seekers by age in each country of origin?"
Virginie JORON (ID) (1)	10.01.2022 Joan of Arc: a woman and an example for Europe	Solo	"However, all the women selected were alive in the recent past. This practice reinforces the prejudiced view that women have always played a negligible role in history. Yet the most extraordinary heroic figure from history in Europe is a woman:



	<a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-000099_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-000099_EN.html</a>		Joan of Arc.”
Virginie JORON (ID) (2)	10.01.2022 Anti-Christian hatred: the Commission ignores burning churches <a href="https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-000098_EN.html">https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-000098_EN.html</a>	Solo	“The dozens of church fires in France, conflagrations in the Cathedrals of Paris and Nantes, the beheading of women in Nice, priests’ throats cut by two Islamists and a Rwandan applicant for refugee status who arrived illegally in 2012 and was not expelled tell a different story.”

**Table EP12:** European Parliamentary Questions articulating Anti-Gender Content

<sup>[1]</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-39152562>

---

EP Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Ross L, Roberts L, Roberts DE, Derkas E, Peoples W, Bridgewater PD (2017). Radical Reproductive Justice. New York, NY: Feminist Press. [ISBN 978-1-55861-437-6](#).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. N.d. "Gender Equality Glossary". UN Women.

<<https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=R&sortkey=&sortorder=>>. Accessed 20.12.22

<sup>3</sup><https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20210621IPR06637/eu-countries-should-ensure-universal-access-to-sexual-and-reproductive-health>

<sup>4</sup> "Comprehensive sexuality education: why is it important?" Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs Directorate-General for Internal Policies PE 719.998 - February 2022. This document was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM). [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/719998/IPOL\\_STU\(2022\)719998\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2022/719998/IPOL_STU(2022)719998_EN.pdf) accessed 21.12.22

