



RESIST

Fostering Queer Feminist Intersectional Resistances against Transnational Anti-Gender Politics

The RESIST Project: Irish Press Release

FINDINGS FROM THE 2nd STAGE OF THE PROJECT RELEASED

Headline: New research highlights fears of troubling rise in anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and violence across Ireland

Lead: Its increase is having negative effects that are documented through the experiences of trans and queer people and organisations.

Attacks against LGBTQIA+ communities are increasing in Ireland according to a new report from RESIST, a Horizon Europe funded and UCD-lead research project which addresses ‘anti-gender’ politics in contemporary Europe.

“The overriding finding from our research,” according to project coordinator and Ireland lead Professor Kath Browne, “is the significant increases in attacks which are happening both on and off line, with online activity generally a precursor to offline aggression.”

When Ireland legalised same-sex marriage in May 2015, it was seen as evidence of a seismic shift in public opinion towards LGBTQIA+ individuals and groups. Nearly a decade on, however, hostilities and rhetoric against these communities have increased significantly.

Carried out by an international team of experts in gender and sexualities research from across a range of disciplines including sociology, human geography, anthropology, and political sciences, the project has analysed hundreds of parliamentary debates and thousands of media articles, and conducted hundreds of interviews with members of the LGBTQIA+ community, as well as activists, academics and the general public across Europe.

In Ireland, and also across the eight European countries that were studied - Spain, Belarus, France, Switzerland, Poland, Germany and Greece - there were frequent and often increasing experiences of verbal and physical attacks, as well as systemic discrimination and political violence. Among the main targets for this ‘anti-gender’ rhetoric were feminists and LGBTQIA+ people, as well as cisgender heterosexual women.

As Professor Browne summarises, “Our research indicates organised anti-trans and anti-LGBT attacks on groups and people across Ireland. This might be a surprise for some who believed that the 2015 same sex referendum meant that Ireland has changed. Research participants interviewed as part of

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this report have indicated an emboldening of anti-LGBT groups. Participants described being targeted on social media and this was then seen in protests outside libraries and the targeting of



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LGBT organisations,” she continued. Public spaces were found to be common areas for these attacks, with disruptions of events, counter-protests, and threats in public settings frequently reported.

Irish participants who are public figures, particularly trans people, reported continuous harassment with some receiving warnings from the Garda Síochána about their safety, or letters sent to their partners’ work to indicate knowledge of personal circumstances.

They, and others, also experienced direct threats to their homes and families, including death threats delivered to home addresses, and partners being named in letters to their work to indicate knowledge of personal circumstances.

Threats to employment from ‘concerned members of the public’ and work colleagues too were cited by participants as a regular feature of daily life for LGBTQIA+ people, and allies, whose identities/positions are well known.

Social media is now routinely expected to be a space where attacks and harassment occur, with much of it organised and targeted by specific accounts.

Where previously such abuse was ‘occasionally’ directed at those who are public figures and/or post on areas such as gender/sexuality/feminism/migration/sex work, they are now daily, personalised, and trained on individuals who simply identify as trans or LGBTQIA+.

Such attacks sustained through social media can morph into new forms. The report notes that while the uptick in anti-trans rhetoric in Ireland is significant, it did not coincide with the passing of the Gender Recognition Act in 2015.

“The research shows the significant effect of these attacks on people and organisations who were either marginalised or who supported some of the most vulnerable LGBT people in Ireland,” Professor Browne commented. “Many reported that they felt more scared, vulnerable and insecure than in past years, with everyday life consequences such as fear, burnout, and anxiety being common.”

Many participants continue to see Ireland as a place where the state and politicians are supportive of LGBT organisations and not engaging in anti-trans rhetorics. They saw family, friends and work colleagues as willing to engage in genuine discussions. These were key to challenging what they heard on the media and on social media. Key issues could be explained, questions asked, mistakes made and the implications of things like trans rights for people discussed,” she continued.

Info on RESIST:

The RESIST project is co-ordinated by University College Dublin in collaboration with Edinburgh Napier University, European University Viadrina, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Université de Lausanne, Université de Fribourg, Universitat



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Pompeu Fabra, and Feminist Autonomous Centre for research, Maynooth University.

RESIST is a four-year study supported by the research councils and funding bodies of the European Union, UK and Switzerland. More information about the project on its website:

<https://theresistproject.eu>

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