

A comparison of the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation in Hungary and Poland



The project is supported by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom.

The Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom is not responsible for the content of this project, or for any use that may be made of it. The views expressed herein are those of the speaker(s) alone. These views do not necessarily reflect those of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom.



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
FOUNDATION** For Freedom.

Central Europe and the Baltic States

<u>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</u>	3
<u>1. SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT</u>	5
<u>2. EVOLVEMENT OF THE ANTI-GENDER AND ANTI-LGBTIQ MOBILISATION</u>	6
<u>2.1 HUNGARY</u>	6
<u>2.2 POLAND</u>	7
<u>3. LEGAL CONTEXT</u>	8
<u>4. NARRATIVES</u>	10
<u>4.1 PROTECTING THE CHILDREN</u>	10
<u>4.2 PROTECTING THE FAMILIES</u>	11
<u>4.3 THE ATTACK OF THE WEST/BRUSSELS/LIBERALS/LEFT ON HUNGARIAN/POLISH/CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS AND VALUES AND AGAINST 'NORMALITY'</u>	12
<u>4.4 GYÖRGY SOROS</u>	13
<u>4.5 GENDER AND THE COMMUNISTS</u>	13
<u>5. MAIN ACTORS OF THE ANTI-GENDER AND ANTI-LGBTIQ MOBILISATION CAMPAIGN</u>	13
<u>5.1 THE GOVERNMENT AND THE GOVERNING PARTIES</u>	14
<u>5.2 GOVERNMENT-ORGANISED NGOs (GONGOS) AND THINK TANKS</u>	14
<u>5.3 MEDIA</u>	15
<u>5.4 FAR-RIGHT ACTORS</u>	16
<u>5.5 RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS</u>	16
<u>5.6 INTELLECTUALS AND PSEUDO THINK TANKS PROVIDING 'SCIENTIFIC'/IDEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND</u>	17
<u>5.7 FAMILY, YOUTH AND ANTI-ABORTION ORGANISATIONS</u>	17
<u>6. INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS & COALITION-BUILDING</u>	17
<u>6.1 HUNGARIAN-POLISH CONNECTIONS</u>	18
<u>6.2 HUNGARY</u>	18
<u>6.3 POLAND</u>	20

Executive Summary

The research focuses on the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation in Hungary and Poland. It aims to reveal the milestones, narratives and main actors of the mobilisation, and provide a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences in the respective countries. Its main focuses are the political, social and legal context of the countries, the milestones and narratives of the mobilisation, and the main domestic actors participating in it and their international networks.

While the social context regarding anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation is somewhat different in the two countries, the political context is quite similar. Hungarian society is largely unreligious, individualistic and objects to the state's interference in private matters such as strict abortion rules, Polish society, in contrast, is much more religious with the Catholic Church having a significant influence on social issues and values. Nevertheless, in both countries, the governing parties, Fidesz in Hungary and Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) in Poland, have the same strategy for gaining and keeping political power: they constantly picture their country as being under attack by some enemy, and, with some time difference, both have picked the alleged 'gender- and LGBTQI ideology/propaganda' as a key enemy.

In both countries, the main actors of the mobilisation are the governing parties. In Hungary, Fidesz has been the central actor since at least 2017. It supports in some way almost all the other actors and drives the prevalence of the topic by providing funds, organising events, shaping the public discourse, enacting policies, building partnerships, and founding new organisations. In Poland, although PiS can be claimed to be the main actor as it has the most extensive resources for the mobilisation, it is strongly influenced by independent actors, such as the Catholic Church, which has a great influence on both public attitudes and policy-making in Poland, and the conservative think-tank, Ordo Iuris.

The timeline of the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation has been quite similar as well in the two countries. 2015 was a turning point in both of them, in Hungary, with Fidesz taking a far-right turn, and in Poland, with PiS winning a majority in both chambers of the parliament and its candidate becoming the president of the republic.

Regarding LGBTQI rights, we can observe similar developments in Hungary and Poland, with Hungary being more restrictive in some respects and Poland in others. The two countries are equally restrictive regarding policies intended to limit same-sex adoption and the legal recognition of gender change. Poland has been more restrictive regarding civil same-sex union, which has been legal in Hungary since 2009, and the introduction of so-called 'LGBT-free zones' in certain municipalities. Hungary has been more restrictive with regards to LGBTQI-related content and education for minors, which is a topic that has been put on ice in Poland since Russia's aggression against Ukraine started.

Basically, the same narratives can be observed in the mobilisation in Hungary and Poland. The main narratives in both countries picture the alleged 'gender and LGBTQI ideology/propaganda' as something that is attacking 'normality', conservative values, children

and families. The alleged 'ideology/propaganda' in these narratives is mostly spread by the left, liberal elites, West/Brussels and the opposition of the governing party.

Having connections with actors of international mobilisation has greater importance for the Hungarian government than for the Polish. It plays a central role in legitimising the Fidesz government's policies both domestically and internationally. In Poland, international connections and coalition-building do not play such an important role in the mobilisation. It is mainly independent actors that are embedded in the international network. Nevertheless, they mainly focus on building their own networks in Central-Eastern Europe.

1. Social and political context

The social context regarding the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation showed some differences in Hungary and Poland. The Hungarian society, which has been fairly unreligious and individualistic, was characterised by a more accepting attitude toward the LGBTQI communities from the early 1990s. While until the middle of the 2010s the attitudes remained more or less the same, around 2017 the refusal of this group started to increase, and although it decreased a bit after, it remained higher than before. Polish society, which has been much more religious than the Hungarian, has become highly influenced by conservative and ultra-conservative values promoted by religious hierarchs since the 1990s. They actively shaped public opinion and directly created policies of subsequent governments, being aware of their political power. Although there were no political initiatives for strengthening LGBTQI rights, due to the activities of NGOs the society was slowly changing, and the support for equal rights including a civil partnership for same-sex couples was growing in society, until the mid-2010s. Based on these social circumstances, the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation in Poland is much more ideology-driven than in Hungary, where it is mainly based on pragmatic and cynical political considerations. The Catholic Church, which has played a key role in mobilising against gender and LGBTQI internationally already since the 2000s, has much more influence on the country than any church in Hungary.

The political context in the two countries regarding mobilisation is quite similar. In both countries, the governing parties, Fidesz in Hungary and Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) in Poland, have played a central role since the mid-2010s. Although PiS has a far more conservative and ideological worldview than Fidesz, both parties use the same radical populist strategy for gaining and keeping political power. They continuously picture their country as being under attack by enemies, such as the alleged 'gender and LGBTQI ideology/propaganda'. 2015 was a turning point in both countries, in Hungary with Fidesz taking a far-right turn, and in Poland with PiS winning a majority in both chambers of the parliament, and its candidate becoming the president of the republic. From 2015, Fidesz's politics had centred around immigration, with refugees, migrants and those who allegedly support immigration (e.g., NGOs, Brussels) becoming the main enemy. When the issue lost some of its popular appeal in the second half of 2016, Fidesz singled out a new enemy: the philanthropist George Soros, who advocated for open borders and was accused of organising

immigration to the EU and Hungary to weaken European nations based on traditional and Christian values. The framing of the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI discourse perfectly fit the government's anti-liberal, anti-West, anti-EU, pro-East, pro-tradition, anti-immigration and anti-Soros narratives. Thus, targeting gender around 2017 as the new enemy and starting a symbolic war was a logical continuation.

In Poland, PiS has created electoral strategies also built on exclusion and polarisation. New enemies of the party were hand-picked and presented to the public as new enemies of the nation and the state. The party won the election in 2015 partially because of the anti-refugee outcry, but to keep their hands on power new enemies were needed. Since 2015 PiS has run campaigns against women, NGO activists, young doctors, independent lawyers, and journalists. In 2019 PiS started to attack LGBTQI people, with an unprecedented force.

In both countries, the governing parties use the narrative to stigmatise their opposition, by accusing them of spreading the 'anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI ideologies/propaganda'.

2. Evolvement of the anti-gender and anti-LGBTIQ mobilisation

In Hungary and Poland, the mobilisation has evolved quite similarly so far. As mentioned above, 2015 was an important point for both governing parties, as Fidesz took a far-right position and PiS won the elections. While anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI narratives were not very prevalent in the two countries before, they have become widespread and mainstream since, due to the massive mobilisation organised by the two governing parties.

2.1 Hungary

In Hungary, the political mobilisation against gender and LGBTQI substantially accelerated around 2017. Before, from around 2008, anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI discourse was not strategic. It was primarily driven by individual intellectuals, journalists, religious groups, marginal men's rights blogs and far-right actors. The topic found its way into the mainstream media only seldom.

The turning point in anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation came in 2017 when the topic became a key focus of the government and the governing Fidesz party, government-organised NGOs (GONGOs) and Fidesz-close media. The government's anti-gender campaign started with attacks against the Central European University (CEU). These fit in the government's war against the philanthropist George Soros, who has been the founder and funder of the university. The guise of criticism against the CEU was its newly accredited gender studies programme. The course's accreditation was soon [withdrawn](#), and the term 'gender' was removed from the curriculum for all school subjects.

Another major target of the mobilisation since February 2017 was the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) under the pretext that it is a Trojan horse: seemingly it is about

violence against women, its actual goal, however, is the abolition of the traditional family. Following a campaign by GONGOs against the convention, Fidesz officials announced that the government would never ratify it. The most striking facet of the political mobilisation against gender and LGBTQI has been the connection between these topics and the protection of children and paedophilia. In May 2019 National Assembly Speaker László Kövér [called](#) gender reassignment an everyday practice in Western Europe and compared LGBTQI adoption to paedophilia. In June 2021 the parliament passed the so-called Child Protection Law, which originally aimed at safeguarding children's wellbeing and fighting paedophilia. However, due to last-moment amendments to the text by Fidesz MPs, the law was [transformed](#) into an anti-LGBTQI act, prohibiting the portrayal of homosexuality and gender reassignment in content addressed to minors, such as school education material and television programmes. A month later, PM Orbán [announced](#) a 'child protection referendum' on issues that had already been regulated by the so-called 'Child Protection Law'. This law was the last in a line of discriminatory and rights-limiting legislation, which has been an important aspect of the second phase of the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation in Hungary. In May 2020, an amendment (Article 33) [abolished](#) the legal recognition of transgender persons' gender. In December 2020, the parliament practically [banned](#) same-sex couples from adopting children by only allowing adoption for married couples. On the same day, the parliament approved the ninth amendment to the constitution, adding that "the mother is a woman, the father a man", and providing children with the right "to identify with their birth gender". According to the government, the amendments were needed to "protect children against possible ideological or biological interference" in light of "new ideological processes in the West".

The most important characteristic of the mobilisation has been the intentional and strategic campaign that has been created around gender and LGBTQI issues since 2017. The campaign included the orchestrated and systemic use of different actors (e.g., government and Fidesz politicians, GONGOs, government-orchestrated media, government-close NGOs), with each of them playing an important role in framing the issue and influencing public opinion. Whenever there was no particular case related to gender and LGBTQI issues in Hungary, the government-organised media reported on events concerning trans and queer issues from Western Europe and North America in a dubious, 'tabloid' and inciting way to provoke indignation, anger and anxiety. Both these media outlets and Fidesz politicians presented individual, often outlying events as wide-spread, common cases to shock their audience.

2.2 Poland

In Poland, the mobilisation started after the victory of PiS in 2015, and it turned into a more intensive phase in 2019. However, already since 1993, Poland has had one of the most restrictive abortion laws in Europe. Many parties used the topic of abortion as a smoke screen: they started the discussion about liberalizing or restricting it always when they needed to cover some other topics/scandals. Catholic Church has been supporting all campaigns which

could restrict women's rights, and was opposing even the smallest attempts of liberalizing reproductive rights in Poland. In 21st century they gain one more powerful ally, namely notoriously fundamentalist organizations that used modern tools, e.g. strategic litigation and political marketing, to stop what they called the 'gender ideology'.

In 2015 the mobilisation started immediately after the victory of PiS, with Duda's first [veto](#), which was against the Gender Accordance Act, which would have made the legal recognition procedure of gender change easier and more accessible. In the following years, the dominant topic was mainly abortion, influenced by the Catholic Church, and women's reproductive rights, against which the government took legal actions. In 2017, access to morning-after pills was restricted, and in 2020, a state-funded in vitro fertilisation (IVF) programme was terminated. As in Hungary and many other countries, Polish right-wing populists wanted to protect traditional families also by attacking the Istanbul Convention. In June 2018, former Prime Minister Beata Szydło [applauded](#) the authorities of Zakopane for their refusal to establish a multi-agency team for combating domestic violence, as required per the national domestic violence act.

The systemic mobilisation against LGBTQI people entered a new phase in 2019. The turning point and pretext were Warsaw's '[LGBT+ Declaration](#)', signed on February 18 by the mayor Rafał Trzaskowski. The document named areas which, according to the LGBTQI community, required action. The most important of these included: safety, anti-discrimination and anti-violence education at schools, artistic freedom and establishing an interventional hostel for people in crisis. Populist right-wing actors, supported by the Catholic Church and ultra-conservative organizations, focused their attention on one of the points of the document, namely on the introduction of "anti-discrimination and sex education in every school, which will factor in the notions of psychosexual and gender identity in line with the standards and guidelines of the World Health Organization (WHO)". The fact that education was mentioned in a document on the LGBTQI community enabled PiS to combine the two topics in a new fear and hate campaign. The main narrative used against LGBTQI people was built on the message about 'sexualization of children' and 'protection of traditional families'.

3. Legal context

In general, Poland's gender, LGBTQI, and reproductive policies have been more restrictive due to the governing party's strong conservatism and the important role of the Catholic Church in Polish society, particularly in relation to abortion and IVF. Nevertheless, when it comes to LGBTQI rights, we can observe similar developments in Hungary and Poland, with Hungary being more restrictive in some respects and Poland in others. The two countries are equally restrictive when it comes to policies intended to limit [same-sex adoption](#) and the [legal recognition of gender change](#). Poland has been more restrictive with regards to [civil same-sex unions](#) which have been legal in Hungary since 2009, and the introduction of so-called '[LGBT-free zones](#)' in certain regions and municipalities. Hungary has been more

restrictive with regards to LGBTQI-related content and education for minors, which is a topic that has largely been put on ice in Poland since Russia invaded Ukraine.

In Hungary, since coming to power in 2010, the Fidesz-led government has initiated many changes in the legal environment to the disadvantage of gender-based and LGBTQI rights. Two categories of legislation can be differentiated. The first category includes preventive legislative acts, which, in light of certain tendencies in Western countries, are aimed at preventing 'unwanted' social and legal developments in Hungary. The fourth (2013) and the ninth (2020) amendments to the Fundamental Law belong here. The former defined marriage and family in an exclusionary way, while the latter defined the mother as a woman, the father as a man, and prescribed children's right "to identify with their birth gender". The second category belongs to legislation that curbs acquired rights or sets up new barriers to exercise rights, such as: (1) [changing](#) the curriculum for kindergarten education right after Fidesz's election victory in 2010 by removing the provision to "consciously avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes and foster the reduction of stereotypes about gender equality"; (2) anchoring the protection of the foetus from conception onward in the new constitution, the Fundamental Law, which entered into force on 1 January 2012; (3) the abolishment of the legal recognition of transgender persons' gender in May 2020; (4) the practical ban on adoption by same-sex couples in December 2020; (5) prohibiting the presentation and promotion of homosexuality and gender change to minors through the so-called 'Child Protection Law' passed in June 2021. This law shares significant similarities with [Russia's infamous 'gay propaganda law'](#). Both laws [use](#) the pretext of protecting children and traditional family values to ban essentially all types of LGBTQI-related content and information based on [vague phrasing](#), which allows for arbitrary enforcement and encourages self-censorship. However, unlike the 2013 Russian law, Hungarian legislation explicitly connects homosexuality to paedophilia by banning LGBTQI-related education and media content through a law originally intended to prevent child abuse. As such, Hungarian government officials [claim](#) that the prohibition does not extend to consenting adults.

In Poland, no legal changes regarding gender and LGBTQI were made between 1989 and 2015, except for the [1993 abortion law](#), which was one of the most oppressive laws for women in Europe, influenced by the Catholic Church. President Andrzej Duda, in his first term in 2015, [vetoed](#) the Gender Accordance Act that would have made gender transition easier, which is currently legal but difficult due to the requirement of a medical diagnosis and a court trial against one's parents.

The most visible attack on equality and diversity in Poland was the [education reform](#) implemented by PiS between 2015 and 2019. It made amendments to the school curricula, significantly limiting natural sciences, civil education, critical thinking, and soft skills development while promoting traditional values, Christian thinking and nationalism. The law eliminated all forms of science-based sexuality education from schools and limited access of NGOs to schools. While theoretically all NGOs have been affected, in practice, the change was directed at LGBTQI and human rights organisations. The control over schools has been centralised and principals and teachers were subjected to checks – mostly from the ideological angle – by the ministry and government-appointed superintendents. In January 2022, the

Sejm [approved](#) a bill that was supposed to increase the government's control over schools by granting additional powers to education superintendents. These appointees would be able to hire and remove school principals and prevent external organisations from operating in schools. Officially, the bill's goal was to "protect children from moral corruption", which in practical terms means that superintendents should prevent any deviations from the conservative curriculum approved by the PiS government. After the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, President Andrzej Duda [vetoed](#) the bill, putting a temporary hold on it, and sent it back to the Sejm for review, stressing that Polish society needs unity now and the bill was very divisive.

In 2019 and 2020, around 100 cities and regions ruled by PiS and its allies [declared](#) themselves 'LGBT-free' in "opposition to LGBT ideology". In 2021, however, many regional authorities [repealed](#) the declarations after the European Union had threatened to withdraw funding from the regions. As county and municipal authorities do not receive direct funding from the EU, these have kept the declarations in force. In [2019](#) and then in [2020](#) again, after collecting 250,000 signatures, the Stop Paedophilia civic initiative was brought before the Polish parliament. It proposed legislative change, banning sex education and criminalising the "promotion of underage sexual activity" under the pretext of banning the 'demoralisation and sexualisation of children' and the slogan "fight against child abuse". Since then, the notion has been put aside, but the speaker of the Sejm can bring it back for discussion at any time. In 2022, an [amendment to the Passport Act](#) made it more difficult for same-sex parents to get passports for their children.

4. Narratives

Several anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI narratives are present in Hungary and Poland. In almost all narratives a similar frame can be observed: 'gender and LGBTQI ideology/propaganda' is attacking 'normality'. In this regard, as the listed narratives will show in detail, 'normality' can refer to various things (e.g., Christianity, traditional values etc.). While most of the narratives are present with slight differences and to varying extent in both countries, there are some that are present only in one of them.

4.1 Protecting the children

One of the most important narratives in both countries is the need to protect children from 'gender ideology' and 'LGBTQI propaganda'. The narrative also connects homosexuality with paedophilia. In both countries, the opposition is attacked by the government for promoting 'gender and LGBTQI ideology' for children.

In Hungary, for instance, National Assembly Speaker László Kövér [compared](#) LGBTQI adoption to paedophilia in 2019, stating that from a moral perspective there would be no difference between them. In June 2021, the Hungarian parliament passed the so-called Child Protection Law, which originally aimed at safeguarding children's well-being and fighting

paedophilia, but with last-moment amendments, it was [transformed](#) into an anti-LGBTQI act. The pretext for connecting the protection of children with fighting against 'LGBTQI propaganda' and 'gender ideology' was a children's book called 'A Fairy Tale for Everyone', which reimagines traditional fairy tales with characters from diverse backgrounds. Following an outcry by the far-right against the book, authorities launched investigations into the book, government Spokesman Gergely Gulyás referred to the book as 'homosexual propaganda' and ultimately PM Orbán [stated](#) in his weekly radio interview: "Hungary is a patient, tolerant country as regards [to] homosexuality. But there is a red line that cannot be crossed, and this is how I would sum up my opinion: Leave our children alone". Simultaneously to the 2022 general elections, the government organised a 'child protection' referendum, allegedly to legitimise in retrospect the so-called 'Child Protection Law' passed in 2021. Although the referendum was not valid, it played a significant role in mobilising people to vote for Fidesz.

In Poland, the main narrative used against LGBTQI people is built on a message about the 'sexualization of children' and 'protection of traditional families'. Key politicians of the right-wing have been spreading the belief that homosexuality and paedophilia are linked phenomena. Right-wing journalists kept repeating that those in favour of LGBTQI wanted to teach 4-year-old kids how to masturbate. "This is an attack on the family, and an attack conducted in the worst possible way because it's essentially an attack on children. We will say no to the attack on children. Polish parents have the right to raise their own children. We will not be intimidated. We will defend the Polish family [said](#) PiS leader, Jarosław Kaczyński during a campaign rally in 2019. He also [warned](#) voters that by supporting the opposition, they would allow nefarious forces to influence the upbringing of their children.

4.2 Protecting the families

Protecting the traditional family model from 'gender- and LGBTQI-propaganda' is another key narrative in both countries.

The Hungarian government has built a support system for families, which is one of its main selling points both nationally and internationally. In the Hungarian narrative, 'LGBTQI lobby' and 'gender propaganda' oppose the protection of families as, on the one hand, homosexuals cannot have biological children (and adoption for them is prohibited by law), and on the other hand, they embody the decadent individualism. In the [words of](#) PM Orbán: "Hungary is defending itself because the Western left is attacking. The Western left is attacking the traditional family model by relativizing the concept of family in the first place. The tools for this are the LGBTQ lobby and gender propaganda". Moreover, in Hungary, next to and in many cases connected to the 'gender and LGBTQI ideology/propaganda', migration is also a threat to families. Hence, according to this narrative, Western pro-gender and pro-migration countries are attacking the traditional family model.

In Poland, the narrative is fairly the same: 'gender and LGBTQI ideology/propaganda' is a threat to the traditional family model, which is a fundamental part of conservative and catholic values. By constantly repeating this message, PiS managed to mobilise its voters en

masse, and, to some extent, demobilise the opposition voters, divided along with LGBTQI rights). This narrative played a key role in the victory of PiS and its candidates in both the 2019 general and the 2020 presidential elections with most voters casting their ballots to protect the traditional family model and 'Polish catholic values'.

4.3 The attack of the West/Brussels/Liberals/Left on Hungarian/Polish/Christian traditions and values and against 'normality'

This narrative is connected to the previous narrative in both countries.

In Hungary, this narrative is present in more aspects. The first is picturing the West as a decadent part of Europe, [where](#) "the expansion of the LGBTQ lobby at all sizes of society has been astounding", for instance, with children changing their gender in kindergarten without needing permission from parents. The West, especially the Western left and the Liberals, are also accused of attacking 'us' and 'our values', as stated by PM Orbán in his speech quoted in the previous section. The other aspect is about the relationship between Hungary and the European Union, with the EU criticising Hungary for the state of the rule of law and corruption in the country. As the EU is genuinely committed to the rights of sexual minorities and the equality of women, it has been easy for the Hungarian government to dismiss the EU's criticism as ideology-driven, due to Hungary's anti-migration and anti-gender approach. In the [words](#) of PM Viktor Orbán: "Globalisation versus Christian foundations, Brussels bureaucracy versus national pride, immigration versus family support, gender policy or child protection".

According to the Polish version of this narrative, the West/Brussels is attacking Polish families with these ideologies. Both 'gender' and 'LGBTQI' terms have been dehumanised and depersonalised and were called a hostile ideology. PiS – similarly to Russian authorities – described LGBTQI as something Western and destructive, a factor that is alien to Polish tradition and culture. For example, President Duda [said](#) at a rally: "Ladies and gentlemen, they're trying to make us believe that these are people. But it's just an ideology." Education minister Przemysław Czarnek [said](#) in a TV studio: "Let's end the discussion about these disgusting LGBT things, homosexuality, bisexuality, pride parades. [...] Let's protect families from this kind of corruption, depravity, and absolutely immoral conduct, let's protect ourselves from LGBT ideology and let's stop listening to this idiocy about some human rights or some equality. These people aren't equal with normal people, and let's end this discussion."

A version centred around the contrast between liberal and Christian values is also present in both countries. Anti-liberalism has been a key element of PM Orbán's narrative for a long time (i.e., referring to 'illiberal Hungary' as opposed to the liberal West in 2014), as liberalism is accused of being responsible for the West's decline. Hence, the term 'liberal' is widely used as a stigma. According to this narrative, the 'gender and LGBTQI ideology' is a weapon of the liberals against Christian Hungary. As Miklós Szánthó, director of the GONGO Center for Fundamental Rights [said](#): "We are talking about the conflict of values of Christianity versus postmodern liberalism. We face very principled and everyday problems such as the

legal environment for abortion, the legal environment for passive and active euthanasia, drug liberalization, gender 'culture', homosexual marriage, etc.”

The narrative about the Christian values being under attack is also present and even more important in Poland, as the Polish society is far more religious than the Hungarian. While in Hungary, reference to Christianity is rather symbolic, given the unreligious nature of society, it is an everyday practice for many in Poland. Hence, Christians equal to Polish people in the narrative, while Liberals/the West/Brussels are attacking the values of Christians/ the Polish people with the 'gender and LGBTQI ideology'.

4.4 György Soros

This narrative is only present in Hungary. According to it, György Soros is funding organisations, the so-called 'Soros organisations' that are spreading the 'gender and LGBTQI ideology' in Hungary. As a government-organised online medium [wrote](#): “To protect children, the government also launched a referendum, but it was attacked by several left-wing parties and a Soros organisation, proving they would allow LGBTQ propaganda into kindergartens and schools.” Moreover, as presented above, György Soros has played an important role in the government's anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation, which started with attacks against the CEU and its founder György Soros.

4.5 Gender and the communists

Although this narrative is present in Poland to some extent as well, it is more influential in Hungary. In Hungary the narrative claims that the anti-communist Fidesz stands against the communist gender ideology. Regarding the narrative 'gender fight' and gender ideology originates from the Marxist ideology, and its goal is to generate conflicts between different groups in the society. According to this narrative, cultural Marxists together with members of the LGBTQI community aim to ban opinions dissenting from the liberal mainstream and subvert the basics of the democratic civil society through undermining marriage, family and the “natural man and woman roles”.

5. Main actors of the anti-gender and anti-LGBTIQ mobilisation campaign

Both the Hungarian and the Polish governments have played a central role in the mobilisation in their respective countries. There is, however, a major difference between the situation in the two countries. In Hungary, the governing Fidesz party has been the main actor of the mobilisation. Only a few independent actors are present, but they are also connected to and influenced by the government. Hence, the Fidesz government has shaped and driven the narratives and activities of the mobilisation. In Poland, although PiS can be claimed as the main actor as it has the biggest resources for the mobilisation, it is strongly influenced by

strong independent actors, such as the Catholic Church, which has a great influence on both public attitudes and policy-making in Poland, and the conservative think-tanks, in particular Ordo Iuris.

Nevertheless, several actors are active in the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation in both countries. Below, we give a general overview of them, presenting the actors along categories, most of which exist in both countries.

5.1 The government and the governing parties

In Hungary, Fidesz has been the central actor and the key organiser of the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation since at least 2017, but it was engaged in the topic already previously. It supports in some way almost all the other actors and drives the prevalence of the topic by providing funds, organising events, shaping the public discourse, enacting policies, building partnerships, and founding new organisations. Within the government, the main actors are former Minister for Family Affairs (2020-2021) and current President of Hungary **Katalin Novák**, former Minister of Human Resources (2012-2018) and Calvinist bishop **Zoltán Balog**, and founding member of Fidesz and Speaker of the National Assembly **László Kövér**.

The Polish governing party is the patron of virtually all anti-LGBTQI campaigns in the country, hence there is less space for other significant players on the field since 2015. The PiS camp is not homogeneous in general and in regards to attitudes towards LGBTQI people. The so-called United Right, a conservative political alliance created by Jarosław Kaczyński, is composed of the PiS party and junior coalition partners, such as Solidarity Poland, which is the most radical one in relation to LGBTQI. Within PiS and the government, the main actors are President **Andrzej Duda**, Minister of Education (since 2020) **Przemysław Czarnek**, and the Minister of Justice (2005-2007, 2015-now), leader of Solidarity Poland, **Zbigniew Ziobro**, Commissioner for Children's Rights (since 2018) **Mikołaj Pawlak**.

5.2 Government-organised NGOs (GONGOs) and think tanks

While GONGOs have been - directly or indirectly - set up, financed and controlled by the government, they present themselves as independent, autonomous organisations. They have a threefold role. First, they shape the public discourse, influence the public opinion and legitimise the activities of the government by spreading its narratives. Second, they influence policy-making; and third, they cooperate regularly with each other and other actors of the mobilisation and play a key role in building networks both domestically and internationally.

In Hungary, the main GONGOs are the **Center for Fundamental Rights** (CfFR, Alapjogokért Központ) which is one of the most important Hungarian actors both nationally and internationally; **Mathias Corvinus Collegium** (MCC), an education/mentoring centre that [aims](#) to build a Carpathian Basin network; the **Safe Society Foundation** (SSF, Védett Társadalom Alapítvány) which was founded as a counterpoint to George Soros' Open Society

Foundation, and **Szent István Institute** (Szent István Intézet), that aims to shape the public discourse based on Judeo-Christian social teachings.

In Poland, just like Fidesz in Hungary, PiS has cut funds for well-established human rights organisations and progressive NGOs, including organisations which run helplines for victims of violence. Instead, it started financing right-wing organisations, allegedly 'human rights' GONGOs, including ones recently established by people close to PiS or supporting their agenda. As these Polish GONGOs are primarily anti-abortion organisations, see them in detail below in section 5.7 *Family, youth and anti-abortion organisations*.

In Hungary, there are no independent think tanks that are engaged in anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation. In Poland, however, **Ordo Iuris**, an influential conservative think tank, has played a key role in the mobilisation and had significant impact on the public discourse and the law in the country. Founded in 2013, Ordo Iuris aims to "research the legal culture and spiritual heritage in which Polish culture is rooted, and to promote them in public life and the legal system". It has been behind most of the recent anti-abortion, anti-LGBTQI and anti-sexuality education initiatives in Poland. It has been given positions in important state institutions where they promote ultra-conservative agenda. Ordo Iuris has fenced itself with a network of other organisations, such as **PCh24.pl**, an online right-wing news and opinion portal; **Collegium Intermarium**, an ultra-conservative law school focused to promote Christian values and the idea of the Intermarium and Poland's leading role in Central and Eastern Europe; **Polish Non-Governmental Initiatives Confederacy** (Konfederacja Organizacji Pozarządowych RP, Fundacja Edukacja do Wartości) a platform of conservative and ultra-conservative organisations focused on promoting nationalism, sovereignty and traditional values; **Cegielski Center for Analysis** (Ośrodek Analiz Cegielskiego) a conservative think tank; and **Honest Public Debate Foundation** (Fundacja na rzecz Rzetelnej Debaty Publicznej).

5.3 Media

Hungarian government-organised and far-right media outlets serve as a key platform for the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI actors in the country. Government-organised media outlets have a particularly powerful impact on public attitudes, regularly publishing content that is intended to provoke indignation, anger, and anxiety. The main examples are **888.hu**, **vasárnap.hu**, **Pesti TV/Pesti Srácok**, **Origó**, **M5**, **Mandiner**, and **HírTV**.

In Poland, right-wing media outlets were a niche before 2015, but with PiS coming to power they became mainstream, or at least they are treated like that by the government and state-owned media. They are all personally, politically and financially connected to PiS. They can be divided into two groups: (1) Conservative outlets, like **Sieci**, **Do Rzeczy**, **GPC** and **Gazeta Polska**, which is known for producing 'LGBT-free Zone' stickers; (2) Religious outlets, like the media empire of Tadeusz Rydzyk, a priest, who manages, among others, **Radio Maryja**, **TV TRWAM**, **Nasz Dziennik** and **Academy of Social and Media Culture**, which are known for homophobic and anti-Semitic views.

5.4 Far-right actors

In Hungary, far-right activists and organisations have pioneered the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation since the early 2000s. They played an important role in building an awareness of these issues and have since consistently worked to create the '[social demand](#)' that legitimises government policies. They are also deeply embedded in both national and international anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI networks. The main actors of the category are **Imre Téglásy**, a religious fundamentalist and foetal protection, anti-abortion, and anti-LGBTQI activist, leader of **Alfa Alliance** (Alfa Szövetség); **Edda and György Budaházy**, who are best known for disrupting LGBTQI events and abortion efforts; **Tamás Gaudi-Nagy**, a lawyer, who plays an important role in providing legal assistance to other far-right activists; the **Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement** (Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom) and **Légio Hungária** that have been the main organisers of anti-Pride march protests, disrupted LGBTQI events, damaged posters, and publicised the names of school teachers who support LGBTQI rights; **Identity Generation** (Identitás Generáció), the Hungarian branch of the pan-European Identarian movement, focused on anti-LGBTQI provocation efforts; and **Our Homeland Movement** (Mi Hazánk Mozgalom), which is an offshoot of the ex-far-right Jobbik party.

Even though PiS is considered a far-right party, since 2018 it has had a competitor on the conservative and nationalistic corner of the political scene, **Confederation**. It is a block of radical right, nationalistic and ultra-conservative parties and organizations. Some of its leaders use offensive, hateful language. Others are directly connected with neo-fascist organisations known for organising events, such as the **Independence March**. It is the largest far-right event organised every year on November 11th, on Poland's Independence Day. It attracts nationalist groups from all over Europe and is known for violence and anti-Semitism. For many years participants of the march were burning down an installation of a rainbow on Warsaw's Saviour square. Another far-right actor is the **National Guard**, with the nickname "PiS militia"), a nationalistic organisation known for its violent actions against, for example, women protesting against the abortion ban.

5.5 Religious organisations

In Hungary, religious organisations connected to the Catholic Church played a major role in the mobilisation in its early stages (the late 2000s and early 2010s). Since then, however, their activity has decreased substantially due to Pope Francis' more moderate stance and the strength of the government's own aggressive campaign. Some Church officials and religious organisations that continue to be active in the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation are **Zoltán Osztie**, the **Hungarian Foundation for Christian Civilisation** (Magyar Alapítvány a Keresztény Civilizációért), **Daniel Fülep**, and the **Fraternity for a Sacred Hungary** (Pro Hungaria Sacra).

In Poland, religious actors play a major role in the mobilisation. The current leadership of the [Catholic Church](#) is one of the most influential actors that inspires the anti-LGBTQI measures of the government in Poland. PiS satisfies the episcopate's needs in the area of

redefining moral rules, as it knows that the electoral success depends on the support of the church. The church constantly delivers moral/philosophical underpinnings for the anti-LGBTQI state propaganda. One of the most conservative actors of Poland's episcopate is archbishop **Marek Jędraszewski**.

5.6 Intellectuals and pseudo think tanks providing 'scientific'/ideological background

Such actors play only a marginal role in Poland. In Hungary, in contrast, there are some intellectuals and pseudo think tanks (mainly GONOGs) that legitimise the mobilisation by providing a pseudo-scientific background through studies, books, articles, and 'expert' media appearances. The most prominent anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI intellectual is **Gergely Szilvay**, a journalist at the Fidesz-aligned news portal Mandiner and associate researcher at the [government-funded Rubicon Institute](#).

5.7 Family, youth and anti-abortion organisations

In Hungary, family, youth and anti-abortion organisations primarily represent the civic background of the mobilisation and play an important role in proliferating anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI messages under the guise of family protection. They are typically state-funded to some degree and many have ties to Hungary's newly elected president Katalin Novák, as well as one another. The main actors are the **Association of Hungarian Women** (Magyar Asszonyok Érdekszövetsége) founded by Ilona Ékes, a former Fidesz politician and vocal opponent of homosexuality and [Pride celebrations](#) particularly; the **Together for Life Association** (Együtt az Életért Egyesület) and the **Human Dignity Center** (Emberi Méltóság Központ), which are anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQI organisations founded and led by Edit Frivaldszky, who is active both domestically and internationally, particularly with regards to the issue of [gender identity](#); and the **Kopp Mária Institute for Demography and Families** (Kopp Mária Intézet a Népesedésért és a Családokért), which [was established](#) by the Hungarian government to support the work of the Minister of Families.

In Poland mainly anti-abortion organisations (primarily GONGOs) are present in this category. The main actors are **Foundation Pro – Right to Live** (Fundacja Pro, Życie i Rodzina) an anti-abortion organization led by the most well-known anti-abortion activist in Poland Kaja Godek, **Life and Family** (Życie i Rodzina) anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQI organization and main platform of Kaja Godek, and **March 4th Movement** (Ruch 4 marca), an anti-LGBTQI organisation.

6. International connections & coalition-building

Both Hungarian and Polish anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI actors are embedded in the international mobilisation network. Nevertheless, this is of greater importance for the

Hungarian government, which puts a huge emphasis on playing a decisive albeit controversial role internationally and uses this international network to legitimise Fidesz's activities and policies. In Poland, having connections to and building coalitions with the established international anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI network do not have such an important role in the mobilisation. Polish actors, such as Ordo Iuris and the Piotr Skarga Foundation (Polish branch of the international Tradition, Family and Property, one of the main international actors of the mobilisation) have their own international network in which they play a key role.

6.1 Hungarian-Polish connections

Hungarian and the Polish actors of the mobilisation have active and important ties with each other. Hungary's closest regional ally in the topic is Poland. The two countries cooperate most directly through the [partnership agreement](#) between the **Center for Fundamental Rights** and **Ordo Iuris**, which involves joint lobbying and advocacy against gender- and LGBTQI-related EU initiatives. Their first common action was the international "[petition against EU accession to the Istanbul Convention](#)" in 2020, joined by 20 like-minded organisations from Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, and the Human Dignity Center from Hungary. This action was followed by a joint petition "[Say no to redefining parenthood](#)," which was supported by pro-family communities from France, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Ukraine. In 2021, Ordo Iuris and the CfFR jointly organised the [Geneva Consensus Declaration Intermarium Regional Conference](#) to support the 2020 [anti-abortion declaration](#), which was signed by 30 largely illiberal or authoritarian governments, with core supporters like [Brazil, Egypt, Hungary, Indonesia, and Uganda](#), along with [Russia](#) and the [U.S.](#) (which later [withdrew](#)). In 2021, the two organisations jointly founded a [pan-European conservative think tank network](#), the [Alliance for the Common Good](#) (ACG), with conservative organisations from [Slovakia](#), the [Czech Republic](#), and [Italy](#). In 2021, Ordo Iuris established Collegium Intermarium (CI), a new university, which has [partnered](#) with Marion Marechal Le Pen's Institute of Social Sciences, Economics and Politics (ISSEP). Representatives of the Hungarian government, CfFR, MCC and the Danube Institute.

6.2 Hungary

The main Hungarian actors involved in international networking are GONGOs, certain government members, and some independent or semi-independent actors. These international connections and coalitions play a central role in legitimising government actions, with their presence being portrayed as a sign of international support behind the government's (sometimes widely criticised) policies. .

Hungarian actors started to build connections with the international anti-gender, anti-LGBTQI and anti-abortion network at the beginning of the 2010s. From the side of the government, Former Minister for Family Affairs (and current President of Hungary) **Katalin Novák**, as well as former Minister of Human Resources (and current Reformist Bishop) **Zoltán**

Balog used to be the most active in terms of international networking. Before becoming the country's president, Novák led the [Political Network for Values](#) (PNfV), an international umbrella organisation of anti-abortion, anti-LGBTQI, Christian, and pro-family NGOs and activists from the Spanish-speaking countries of Europe and the Americas. She was also active in organising and speaking at international anti-abortion and 'traditional family' events (e.g., Demographic Summits in Hungary and [conferences](#) of the international anti-abortion organisation One of Us). Both Novák and Balog spoke at numerous World Congress of Families events (see below).

GONGOs, such as the **Center for Fundamental Rights (CfFR)** and **Mathias Corvinus Collegium (MCC)** have strong international networks as well. Both of them are active regionally and have strong ties with conservative US actors. The CfFR has [ties](#) to the Republican Party and the American Conservative Union, which is why CfFR could [host](#) the biggest Republican annual event, the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Budapest in May 2022. MCC grants generous fellowships and provides speaking invitations to international actors and has also built relationships with conservative educational institutions throughout Europe.

International actors who have a strong presence in Europe also have connections to Hungary. The **World Congress of Families (WCF)** is an umbrella organisation that advocates for restrictions on LGBTQI and women's reproductive rights under the guise of protecting the 'natural family'. **CitizenGo** is a Spanish [ultra-Catholic organisation](#) and a central hub for conservative activists from [more than 50 countries](#). It began as a project of the Spanish ultraconservative 'family values' organisation HazteOír and has regularly participated in organising and sponsoring international events like the World Congress of Families. The organisation has a Hungarian branch which is active in launching [petitions](#). **Tradition, Family and Property (TFP)** is a [traditionalist Catholic movement](#), founded in Brazil, that has campaigned against LGBTQI and reproductive rights since the 1960s. It has connections to both the US Republican Party and conservative organisations in Europe, including CitizenGo and Agenda Europe in Hungary and Ordo Iuris in Poland. TFP attempted to [establish a more permanent presence](#) in Hungary in 2015, when the Polish TFP subdivision Piotr Skara Association founded an organisation in Hungary, the Hungarian Foundation for Christian Civilisation. The foundation has collaborated with several Hungarian far-right actors, including the Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement. However, due to ideological competitors and financial disagreements with the Polish branch, TFP's Hungarian branch has been largely inactive since 2020.

The Hungarian government has some connections to Russian actors as well, for example through the World Congress of Families. Besides, the government has had connections with the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) at least since 2012. Since then, the Moscow Patriarchate has been very [vocal](#) in expressing its support for Hungary's effort to protect traditional family and moral values. Members of the Fidesz government have met with representatives of ROC several times. In 2019, PM Orbán [initiated talks](#) with church hierarchs

about the plight of Christians in the Middle East, an initiative that was also personally supported by Vladimir Putin.

6.3 Poland

In contrast to Fidesz, engagement in prominent international anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI networks seem to be less important for PiS. However, Polish actors play a vital role in regional coalition-building and know-how transfer. Polish ultra-conservative organisations are rich and politically successful. As a consequence, they have created their own international network and support homo- and transphobic efforts in other countries of the region. Human rights advocacy groups from Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn [claim](#) that ultra-conservative groups from the Baltic states go to Warsaw for training and funds; in this context, Ordo Iuris [plays a central role](#) as an Eastern European hub for ultra-conservative organisations. Right-wing populist parties copy-paste anti-gender Polish ideas into their local environment, like Association of Poles in Lithuania (AWPL) in Lithuania [that repeats](#) PiS's anti-LGBTQI ideas to attract local right-wing voters. Also, leaders of the New Conservative Party of Latvia are said to have received inspiration for their agenda built on 'healthy families – normal families' rhetoric from meetings with PiS in Warsaw. Liberal parties and NGOs from the Baltic States watch developments in Poland closely knowing that a successful PiS campaign will be adjusted and repeated in their countries. Political links of PiS, and the European Conservatives and Reformists Group (ECR), a Eurosceptic political group in the European Parliament, as such, are also used to share experience in this field. ECR has sponsored anti-gender events in Poland, like a two-day-long conference called '[Cultural War](#)' in 2020 and organised the ECR Group's Conference on the Future of Europe tour with 'gender ideology' as one of its [key topics](#).

As mentioned already, Ordo Iuris plays a special role in international coalition-building, as one of its strategies is to [coordinate the network](#) of like-minded organisations from Central and Eastern Europe. Polish actors linked to Ordo Iuris are also well connected to big international ultra-conservative organisations known for [fighting “the LGBT dictatorship”](#) from Europe and beyond, including the powerful Tradition, Family and Property (TFP). TFP has had its headquarters in Cracow since the late 1990s and due its successful fundraising efforts, it has expanded to neighbouring countries. Polish TFP spent millions to [set up foreign affiliates](#) in Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania and Slovakia. What is more, Ordo Iuris is present at the Civil Society for the Family lobbying platform created by the Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam), a U.S.-based anti-LGBTQI [group](#), in 2016. It also [belongs to](#) Agenda Europe, a [professional advocacy network](#) organising activities against sexual and reproductive rights of women and sexual minorities in Europe. Ordo Iuris [took steps to be involved](#) in international organisations crucial to its agenda: it has consultative status at the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), it is also active at the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). It participates in the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, and it is also active at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, it has official accreditation at the European Parliament.

Polish ultra-conservative [organisations](#) also have links to the World Congress of Families. The Piotr Skarga Institute, one of the founding organisations of Ordo Iuris, was among the sponsors of the WCF event in Warsaw (2007), and it was a partner in the next editions of the WCF, including the one in Moscow in 2014 (opened by Vladimir Putin). Although the links between Ordo Iuris and Russia are clear, the Polish organisation tries to keep the connection low so as not to be labelled as 'a Russian agent', something very damaging in the anti-Russian Polish society. Also, links between Polish far-right parties – in particular the ones that form the Confederation – and the Kremlin [are traceable, but hidden](#). It can be stated that Russian anti-LGBTQI propaganda infiltrates Poland but not in a direct way.