

FIERCE
POLICY BRIEF



FIERCE

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1. INTRODUCTION



Who is the Policy Brief For?

As the European parliamentary elections took place this summer 2024 and as a brown wave swept through the Chamber, welcoming an unprecedented number of far-right MEPs, the rights of women, gender minorities and the most marginalised populations seem to be under threat more than ever. Yet every time gender equality takes a step backwards, democracy takes a step backwards!

This policy brief is aimed at elected and newly elected members of the European Parliament, the European Commission and its subcommittees, who are committed to defending and promoting the values of freedom, equality and democracy within the European Union and beyond.

It is now your role to act as a shield against attacks and the pushbacks, and to support feminist movements and organisations that are on the front line fighting for greater economic, social, environmental and sexual and reproductive justice. The aim of our FIERCE project, Feminist Movements Revitalizing Democracy in Europe, is precisely to strengthen these organisations by providing sound knowledge and practical tools for revitalising alliances between the feminist movement, civil society and political decision-makers, in the face of the strengthening of the anti-gender actors and rhetoric of the populist radical right and in a context of war, growing social inequality, climate crisis and political disaffection.

What is the FIERCE project?

By merging **academic and action-based research** conducted by national and transnational research laboratories (composed by researchers and feminist groups), in the 8 European countries of the project (**France, Italy, Greece, Slovenia, Turkey, Denmark, Poland, Spain**); FIERCE develops **in-depth understanding and draws up a clear inventory of anti-gender movements and governments and their impact** on the institutional arena on five key areas:

1. Labour market
2. Health and reproductive rights
3. LGBTQI+ rights
4. Migration
5. Gender-based violence

**THESE DATA ARE
CRUCIAL FOR
EFFECTIVE
ACTION!**

FIERCE also studies strategies demands and political influence of feminist movements. Based on the results of its research and on a strong alliance with feminist and civil society organizations, Fierce develops and implements innovative pilot actions and projects that can reinvigorate democratic practices.



Members of the FIERCE research team, 2021



2. ANTI-GENDER, ANTI-FEMINIST: WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

Key definitions

GENDER

In the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence, also known as “the Istanbul Convention”, adopted on 7 April 2011, the Council of Europe explains that the term ‘gender’ ‘refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes which a given society considers appropriate for women and men’. For the purposes of the Convention, gender refers to a system of social norms and roles attributed to individuals on the basis of the binary vision of biological sexes. This concept highlights the distinction between biological characteristics and cultural and social constructions of roles, behaviour and identities. It is an analytical tool for understanding the relations of power and domination that exist between men and women. Gender is a social construct that perpetuates structural inequalities between the sexes. It is important to note, however, that identities go beyond the binary distinction of female and male, but also beyond the distinction between sex and gender (such as social class, sociological race, etc.).¹

GENDER EQUALITY

It is a fundamental principle that aims to ensure that individuals, regardless of their sex or gender identity, enjoy the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities in all spheres of life, free from violence and coercion. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), gender equality is essential for a sustainable, peaceful, prosperous and healthy world in which no one is left behind.²

From a feminist perspective, gender equality implies a profound transformation of the social, economic and political structures that perpetuate unequal power relations. It aims to deconstruct imposed gender roles and norms, to value the contributions of women and gender minorities, and to promote equal participation in decision-making at all levels.

What are: anti-gender and anti-feminist movements?

According to the mapping of key actors that we conducted in Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, and Turkey, which has been published [here](#) as part of the FIERCE project, we were able to see that **anti-feminist and anti-gender movements are interconnected ideological and political forces opposing gender equality**, LGBTQI+ rights, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Anti-feminist and anti-gender movements reject feminism’s core principles, particularly its advocacy for equality, challenging feminist gains by asserting that traditional gender roles are “natural” and claiming that women’s rights undermine men’s societal status. These actors include religious groups, anti-abortion movements which proclaim themselves “pro-life” organizations, and men’s rights movements, which historically targeted feminism directly. In recent years, many of these older groups have aligned with or adopted the rhetoric of anti-gender movements, amplifying their ideas and expanding their influence.

¹The explanatory report Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as “the Istanbul Convention” (2011) <https://rm.coe.int/1680a48903>

²World Health Organization, “Gender equality makes everyone healthier: WHO”, march 2017, <https://www.who.int/west-ernpacific/news/item/05-03-2017-gender-equality-makes-everyone-healthier-who>

2. ANTI-GENDER, ANTI-FEMINIST: WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?



Feminazi Stop, Poland, 2010

Several anti-gender and anti-feminist personalities present in the earlier Parliament have been (re)elected for a new mandate: Italian, French, Spanish, Dutch, Greek and Polish MEPs who have used their power to spread hateful messages and to oppose gender equality. While one does not find “traditional” anti-feminist discourse, such as, for instance “a woman’s job is in the kitchen”, some of them disagree on basics facts, such as the fact that in Europe there is – still – a problem of gender inequalities and gender-based violence. In fact, this delicate and important theme is oftentimes treated by anti-gender actors by ignoring the structural problem of patriarchy and blaming external factors and actors, especially migrants.

Since the 2010s, the anti-gender movements emerged in a coordinated opposition to what they term “gender ideology.”

This term, an intentionally vague and alarmist construct, encompasses a wide range of social and legal advancements, including marriage equality, sex education, reproductive rights, and gender fluidity. Sometimes **framed as a conspiracy theory, “gender ideology” is portrayed as a radical effort by feminists and LGBTQ+ activists to destabilize society by rejecting biological essentialism and promoting social engineering.** This framing allows disparate groups – such as **religious institutions, nationalist parties, conservative politicians, media figures, femonationalist³ organization, masculinists and online com-**

munities –to unite under a shared opposition to perceived threats to traditional values.

These movements are highly organized and well-funded, forming extensive local and international networks. Notable examples include the spread of initiatives like France’s “Manif pour tous” to Italy or the expansion of Polish think-tank Ordo Iuris into other countries. They also influence state policies in certain regions, such as Poland, where anti-gender ideology is integrated into official politics. The actors involved range from grassroots “concerned citizens” groups to influential religious and political organizations, demonstrating the breadth and adaptability of their coalitions.

What is the « backlash » ?

The concept of “backlash,” as articulated by Susan Faludi in 199⁴, describes the resistance and opposition that arise in response to significant progress in gender equality and feminist policies. This reactionary pushback often portrays advances in women’s rights as excessive or harmful, leveraging claims that equality has already been achieved to justify halting further reforms. **Backlash aims to roll back feminist achievements** by fostering societal doubt about their necessity, framing them as threats to traditional values and stability. Feminists and LGBTQI+ activists are therefore turned into scapegoats responsible for all the social, political and economic challenges.

³Femonationalists or femonationalism is a concept coined by the researcher Sara R. Farris to refer to the use of feminist discourse by the far right, nationalists and neo-liberals for electoral, racist and xenophobic purposes. Sara R. Farris, « Femonationalism and the “Reserve” Army of Labor Called Migrant Women », *History of the Present*, vol. 2, no 2, 2012, p. 184-199.

⁴S. Faludi, (1991) « Backlash The Undeclared War Against American Women, Crown Publishing Group » 552 pages

2. ANTI-GENDER, ANTI-FEMINIST: WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?



La Manif pour Tous, France, 2013



Campaign by Hobus, Spain, 2019

In contemporary Europe, **this backlash manifests through significant cultural and legal assaults on the rights of women and LGBTQI+ individuals.** This has led to **tangible setbacks**, particularly concerning **bodily autonomy** and **reproductive freedoms**, and in other areas.

Scholars like David Paternotte⁵ argue that this backlash should be viewed not merely as a response to feminist activism but as part of a broader conservative movement and agenda that threatens the rule of law, democratic norms and values.

Studying anti-gender mobilization is not limited to identifying the characteristics, actors, and strategies of this new movement that has developed over the last decade but touches on broader issues such as the decline of the public sphere and democratic norms (e.g., erosion of democratic argumentative debate, appropriation of public spheres by right-wing populist elites, crisis of trust in science, increasing individualization, etc.). **The anti-gender movement contributes to contemporary authoritarian processes of de-democratization that target not only gender and equality but also the concept and practice of democracy.** For this reason, as highlighted by Eszter Kováts, the anti-gender movement should not be understood primarily as a mobilization against equality but rather as a symptom of a larger systemic crisis of progressive politics and its complicity with neo-liberal ideology.

LGBTQI+ rights, especially when regarding parenting rights of same sex couples, are attacked every day by anti-gender actors. They believe that the only possible kind of family is the so-called natural one, that is, the one in which a man and a woman get married and have kids. This ignores the factual reality that the family is developing in forms and combinations that cannot be reduced to heterosexual couples with children.

Read what the anti-gender actors say:

“Since the dawn of time and throughout the ages, having a family requires a man and a woman. [...] It is clear that the planned blow to the family as the fundamental nucleus of society hides other things behind it. We persist until the end. Children need a mother and a father. The normal family is irreplaceable. We say a firm NO to having children by same-sex couples.”

Emmanouil (Fragkoulis)
Fragkos, Greece, EL
ECR, substitute

The current backlash is steered by political leaders throughout the World: The strengthening of a reactionary international. Everywhere, on every continent, conservative, populist and anti-gender movements/governments are gaining ground and organising around a common agenda to erode hard-won human rights, threatening lives and decades of progress.

In Argentina, populist President Javier Milei has abolished the Ministry of Gender Equality and the National Institute against Discrimination (INADI). He denies scientific evidence on climate change and wants to abolish the right to abortion.

⁵D. Paternotte, (2021). “Backlash : une mise en récit fallacieuse”, La Revue Nouvelle, 6, 11-15. <https://doi.org/10.3917/rn.216.0011>



2. ANTI-GENDER, ANTI-FEMINIST: WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

In Hungary, where Viktor Orbán has tightened legislation in 2022 by forcing women to listen to the heartbeat of the fetus before an abortion.

Donald Trump's recent victory in the United States will have a devastating impact far beyond US borders, with consequences for gender equality on sexual and reproductive health rights⁶, and on both the national and international stage. His first election in 2016 has had a major impact on the rights of women and gender minorities.

As soon as Donald Trump was elected, he had already revoked two executive orders (one concerning racial equity in disadvantaged communities and the other combating discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation), adopted numerous others aimed at restricting the rights of migrants and transgender people, and had all references and resources relating to LGBTQIA+ rights, as well as those on HIV and abortion, removed from the official White House website.

He has also reinstated the Global Gag Rule (thus suspending USA funding), for gender equality and access to healthcare (such as abortion care and for the fight against HIV) and wants to withdraw the USA from the Paris Climate Agreement and the WHO.

These actions are just the beginning of what is to come as he may implement 'Project 2025'[2], an ultra-conservative plan to strengthen anti-gender laws and undermine sexual and reproductive rights. Written under the auspices of the highly influential ultra-conservative think-tank, the Heritage Foundation, the plan's aims include promoting an anti-choice and anti-LGBTQ+ agenda in international bodies such as the UN, and attempting to redefine human rights by deviating from

previously established international standards.

With the rise of the far right in Europe, there is a risk that Project 2025 will serve as a model for far-right groups in the European Parliament and in the countries themselves. The European Union was founded on the values of peace and equality, especially between men and women. In many respects, it is one of the most advanced regions in the world in terms of gender equality. At UN level, the European voice has helped to advance several international conventions in favour of gender equality and individual freedoms. Through its various prerogatives, the European Union has an impact on women's rights in all spheres of society, both within its Member States and internationally, through European diplomacy and its development aid policy.

In this context of far-right and anti-gender movement rising around the world, it is more than crucial that progressive voices join forces in a common front. In recent years, the European Union, like the rest of the world, has witnessed feminist and LGBTQIA+ mobilizations

The rise of the right and the far-right in the European Parliament is also the consequence of a public debate more and more divided on the issue of migration. The urgency of an answer to what is perceived as an enormous problem allows for anti-gender actors even to be explicitly racist with migrants, especially Muslims. Islamophobia is used to change the discourse on gender equality.

This discourse is linked to the conspiracy theory of the ethnic substitution, which argues that a so-called invasion of migrants has the sole objective of substituting the European community, robbing it of its culture and identity.

Read what the anti-gender actors say:

"Mr President, dear colleagues, for decades now, so-called anti-racism has become a real religion, designed to make Europeans feel guilty and to make them accept what no other people accepts anywhere on the planet, that is to say, massive, anarchic immigration, the flows of which are increasing and against which it is now forbidden to speak out. [...] While certain ethnic, sexual or religious minorities are entitled to all the attention, while their demands, including those most incompatible with the general interest, are promoted and valued, there is a category which has no right to anything, apart from the right to be made to feel guilty, to self-flagellate: it is the European, white, Christian and heterosexual man."

Nicolas Bay, France,
Reconquete ECR

Racial justice, non-discrimination and anti-racism
in the EU, debate, 10/11/2022

⁶The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU), Malayah Harper, (2024) "GLOBAL IMPACTS OF PROJECT 2025 - How the blueprint for the next Republican administration may impact US foreign and development policy on SRHR and gender equality" <https://www.rfsu.se/globalassets/pdf/project-2025/global-impacts-of-project-2025.pdf>



CASE STUDY 1 / Anti-gender mobilization in Denmark



While there is no clearly unified conservative alliance in Denmark, the last few years have seen the growing influence of mobilisations by so called ‘men’s rights activists’ (masculinists) and anti-trans mobilisations which have greatly contributed to the spread of anti-feminist and anti-gender discourses.

Since the #MeToo movement, men’s rights activists have become increasingly vocal and hostile in their opposition to feminist activists and organisations.

On 17 June 2022, The Danish Men’s Council, along with three other controversial NGOs, organised a debate entitled ‘Is feminism an ideology of hate?’ at the major political festival The People’s Meeting. This highly provocative initiative attracted a lot of attention and was picked up by many mainstream media outlets.

Anti-trans mobilisations have also been on the rise in Denmark in recent years. Probably one of the most symptomatic events was a protest against a drag show for children in a public library in Copenhagen on 17 March 2023. The show was accused by the protest organisers (from the conspiracy movement) of sexualizing and grooming children.

They developed mainly in reaction to a proposal to introduce gender-recognition legislation for minors and public debates on transwomen’s access to public facilities such as changing rooms. It is interesting to note that these two types of mobilisation have benefited from the support and, to some extent, the active participation of far-right political parties, in particular the Danish People’s Party.

CASE STUDY 2 / Anti-gender mobilization in Italy



The Italian case shows significant anti-gender mobilization against LGBTQ+ rights and gender education (2013–2023). Regarding LGBTQ+ rights, anti-gender activists, including organizations like Pro Vita & Famiglia and political actors such as the Lega party, opposed laws such as the Cirinnà bill on same-sex unions and efforts like the Zan bill targeting homotransphobia, citing threats to freedom of expression. These campaigns often relied on extensive misinformation campaigns, including public rallies and media narratives framing such laws as infringing on traditional family values and free speech. The opposition to the Zan bill in particular saw significant backlash, with far-right politicians and religious groups claiming it would “criminalize opinions,” ultimately leading to its rejection in the Senate in 2021. Additionally, the rights of children of same-sex couples have become increasingly threatened, with municipalities such as Milan suspending the recognition of children born to same-sex couples due to pressure from national-level politics.

The field of education has also been central to debates about gender and sexuality in schools. Anti-gender actors, like CitizenGO and certain Catholic associations, have fiercely objected to reforms promoting gender equality, including the “Good School” law and the draft bill Law Fedeli. A notable example of this resistance involved campaigns against “alias career” policies for trans students, which allow students to use their chosen name in educational contexts. This policy faced strong opposition from anti-gender groups who argued it undermines parental rights and promotes gender ideology. Such opposition has fostered a climate of fear and hesitation among schools, stalling the implementation of inclusive policies and reinforcing a narrative that frames gender education as a threat to children and parental authority.



The EU Legal Framework On Gender Equality

At European level, several fundamental texts enshrine the principle of gender equality. Article 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union states that ‘equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay’. Similarly, Article 157 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) guarantees equal pay for men and women workers for equal work or work of equal value. In addition, Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) prohibits any discrimination, including on the grounds of sex, in the enjoyment of the rights guaranteed by the Convention, thus consolidating the European commitment to equal treatment. These legal texts provide a legal framework for the promotion and protection of gender equality within the Member States of the European Union.

The EU has been particularly active on these issues in recent years, adopting and implementing a number of measures and instruments to promote gender equality, in both its internal and external policies.

A key example is the entry into force for the European Union of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence or Istanbul Convention on 1 October 2023. The Istanbul Convention is a legally binding treaty which imposes on its parties minimum standards and actions to be taken in the prevention, protection and prosecution of such violence.

The Union has also adopted the Directive 2006/54/EC aiming to strengthen equal treatment between men and women in the field of employment and occupation. It establishes clear obligations to prevent discrimination and promote real equality in access to employment, working conditions and career opportunities.

In 2020, the Commission adopted a new EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in External Action 2021-2025 (GAP III), which renews the EU’s external action in favour of gender equality through an intersectional, gender-transformative and human rights-based approach. In particular, GAP III commits the EU to strengthening collaboration with civil society organisations, increasing funding for women’s rights organisations and women’s movements, and ensuring that 85% of all its new external relations actions contribute to gender equality and women’s empowerment by 2025.

Finally, noting the increase in LGBTQIA+phobic discrimination and acts and the disparity in the protection of LGBTQIA+ people between Member States, in November 2020 the Commission launched the first EU Strategy for Equality of LGBTQIA+ People 2020-2025, hailed by part of LGBTQIA+ civil society as a strong signal and a turning point^{10/11}. Among other things, this strategy mentions making EU funding to Member States conditional on compliance with European law, particularly in terms of equality and non-discrimination.



3. WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES AND IMPACT OF ANTI-GENDER MOVEMENTS?

Actors of the backlash have turned feminists and LGBTQI+ activists into their scapegoat, holding them responsible for all current social, political and economic issues. This has resulted in actual setbacks in rights and a global endangerment of previous achievements, especially when it comes to bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

Back in 2017 already, the Council of Europe warned that women's sexual and reproductive rights were under threat, as several of its members sought to restrict legislation on access to abortion and contraception.

Since then, many European countries have reported attempts to overturn existing laws on sexual and reproductive health and rights, including abortion rights, comprehensive sexuality education, assisted reproductive technologies and equal rights for members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

In 2020, **Poland drastically restricts the right to abortion** (already very restrictive). Poland has one of Europe's most restrictive abortion laws. Together with Malta, it is one of only two European Union Member States that has not legalized abortion on request or broad social grounds. In Poland, abortion was only

permitted in situations of risk to the life or health of a pregnant woman, or if a pregnancy resulted from rape. On 22 October 2020, Poland's Constitutional Tribunal ruled that even abortion on grounds of "severe and irreversible fetal defect or incurable illness that threatens the fetus' life" was unconstitutional.

In February 2024, **Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni introduced a law making the use of a surrogate mother abroad a "universal crime"** (although GPA was already banned), and in April 2024, she pushed through a law allowing anti-abortion activists access to public consultation clinics through which women must pass to access abortion.

Violence against women and sexual and gender minorities has increased steadily over the past five years⁷, according to the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).

In Hungary, the conservative and nationalist Prime Minister Victor Orban passed a **law in June 2021 to ban "propaganda" of homosexuality or gender reassignment among minors**. On July 1, 2021, **Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention**.

The **FIERCE project** points out that many other areas are under threat, for example in the workplace. **According to the 2023 Pay Transparency Directive, the gender pay gap will average around 13% in the EU in 2020⁸**, meaning that women will earn on average 13% less per hour than men. The pay gap has a long-term impact on women's quality of life, their risk of falling into poverty and the persistent retirement pension gap of around 30% in the EU (2018 data).

Even the most progressive countries with proclaimed feminist diplomacy are backtracking, with Sweden dropping out and other governments, such as the Netherlands, withdrawing.

These attacks have a direct impact on activists and organizations.

Feminist actors, such as female politicians and researchers, have suffered personal attacks that hinder their participation in democratic processes.

Digital tools have been the site of much violence: cyber-harassment, cybersexism, masculinist attacks, etc., which seek to discredit the voices of women and gender minorities.

This conclusion is shared by the latest Gender Equality Index (2023), which states that *"persistent gender gaps demonstrate the need for policy objectives that take a broader view of gender equality in different spheres of life, while designing policy actions to tackle gender inequalities in a specific area"*.

In the face of this "backlash", it is important to remain mobilized, strengthen feminist and progressive movements and continue to demand profound changes in our societies.

⁷European union agency for Fundamental Rights (2024) EU lgbtqi survey III, "LGBTIQ at a crossroads: progress and challenges" https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2024-lgbtiq-equality_en.pdf

⁸The Council of Europe (2023) Infographics on pay transparency "Why pay transparency can help reduce the EU's gender pay gap" <https://www.consiliium.europa.eu/en/infographics/pay-transparency/>



4. WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR THE UPCOMING MANDATE?

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

The EU institution has championed women's rights and SRHR and this must continue. As an MEP, you can take many actions across a wide range of policy areas within EU competences, to advance gender equality in the next five years.

FIERCE asks you to:

- **Support European Feminist Networks that promote human rights**

Most feminist organizations do not have sufficient resources to carry out their actions and are operating on a voluntary basis. They need you to:

- **AMPLIFY FEMINIST VOICES IN THE EU INSTITUTIONS** and build a strong front at the European Parliament that systematically supports and empowers. Only 0.5% of European union official development assistance funding focused on equality went to women's rights organisations or gender equality institutions (OECD, 2023)
- **GUARANTEE CONSTANT, SUSTAINABLE AND LONG-TERM CORE FUNDING** (not exclusively project-based) for feminist activists and rights advocacy organisations, movements, and networks to secure their actions and move beyond the uncertainty of volunteering. Only 0.5% of European Union official development assistance funding focused on equality (cad 1 and 2) went to women's rights organisations or gender equality institutions (OECD, 2023). Comparatively, from 2009 to 2018, nearly 700 million dollars went to anti-gender campaigns in Europe and 437 million dollars from the European Union were spent by anti-gender/anti-choice movements on anti-gender/anti-choice movements between 2009 and 2018. (EPF, 2021)¹⁰

- **Better identifying and combating Anti-gender movements**

To gain a better understanding of the political support available to anti-gender movements, it is essential to: **Track and monitor their funding from the EU institutions**. The European Union shall efficiently prevail its finances to support effectively the Goals and Values it intends to defend.

Prevent the spread of anti-gender discourses and narratives and systematically **denounce hate speech** against women, LGBTIQ+ people, racialized groups within the European bodies but also in the policies.

- **Confront online democracy threats such as disinformation and hate**

437 million dollars from the European Union were spent by anti-gender/anti-choice movements on anti-gender/anti-choice movements between 2009 and 2018. (EPF, 2021)

Anti-gender and antifeminist discourse is responsible for on-line and offline violence of many people:

- Document and expose gender and racist biases in technology AI and social media algorithms. Promote using tools and systems that foster algorithmic justice.
- Regulate digital platforms' criteria for identifying non-democratic threats and guarantee that the algorithm-building process respects European values, using fair and transparent algorithm management tools.

¹⁰European Parliamentary Forum, Neil Data (2021) report "Tip of the Iceberg: Religious Extremist Funders against Human Rights for Sexuality & Reproductive Health in Europe" <https://www.epfweb.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/Tip%20of%20the%20Iceberg%20August%202021%20Final.pdf>



4. WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR THE UPCOMING MANDATE? OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Protect legislation supporting women and gender rights and ensure its implementation**
- **PROMOTE AND GUARANTEE sexual health and rights, as well as reproductive justice, for all people living in Europe.** This means guaranteeing respect for bodily autonomy, freedom of choice in matters of contraception and procreation, guaranteeing the right to abortion, facilitating adoption and recognising the parental rights of LGBT families, facilitating access to childcare, facilitating the change of civil status for transgender people, banning conversion therapies, combating female genital mutilation (FGM), including of intersex people, and combating forced sterilization.

The EU must **mandate standardized, intersectional, and age-appropriate Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE)** across all educational institutions, from preschool to adult education centers. These vital rights must be accessible to racialised and minoritised women, women with disabilities, those affected by poverty, and any other inequalities. Ensure the follow-up of citizens' initiatives that defend those rights, such as the ECI MVMC.
- **RECOGNIZE AND STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND the EU Directive on Violence Against Women (VAW).** The EU must adopt a consent-based definition of rape and explicitly recognize intersex genital mutilation, coercive medicalization, and forced sterilization as forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). The directive must go beyond criminalization by prioritizing prevention, victim-centered policies, and comprehensive support systems, in line with the Victims' Rights Directive and the Istanbul Convention. To ensure effective implementation, national and local authorities must share best practices, cross-checked data, and legislative precedents, guaranteeing a uniform and accountable approach across member states.
- **CONSTITUTIONALISE** reproductive rights at the EU level and modify the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU), in line with the European Parliament proposals. Ensure the EU is up-to-date with the latest reproductive issues in the Member States (MS) and that legislation is modified accordingly.
- **DEVELOP a Europe that pursues a feminist foreign policy** that defends the SRHR in multilateral bodies and supports feminist organisations outside EU borders.

The impact of anti-gender movements will also be dismissed when and where more systemic protection of women's rights is ensured. Please consult the full list of FIERCE Policy Claims [available here](#) for our exhaustive policy demands on:

- Universal health coverage, access to sexual and reproductive health care services, gynecological and obstetric violence, training programmes for healthcare professionals on intersectionality and gender-sensitive treatment
- Care work as the Backbone of Society
- Ensuring Decent Work, Equal Pay, and Social Protection for All Women Workers

You will find all our recommendations on the Fierce campaign website :
<https://fierce-project.eu>
<https://euroalter.com/journal/five-fierce-claims-for-a-feminist-europe/>



4. WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR THE UPCOMING MANDATE? OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

CASE STUDY 3 | *Example of successful feminist resistance in Greece*



The feminist movement in Greece gather local groups, NGOs and organizations that intervene mainly on the streets, online, and on a community level. A new generation of grassroots, non-bureaucratic and non-hierarchical mobilization, made up of small radical groups dispersed across the country, critically grapple with gender power relations. Beyond a traditional repertoire of actions, these independent feminist groups focus on fostering alternative political imaginaries and create alternative political and care spaces that embody feminist values in practice, while civil society initiatives and NGOs provide services that compensate for the lack of state initiatives. Their strategies combine grassroots democratic politics with institutional interventions, promoting a feminist and democratic vision of the economy, centered on care, solidarity, and social equality. By advocating for public investment in welfare, social security, and education, they push for systemic transformations that challenge patriarchal and neoliberal economic structures. Concrete victories demonstrate their political impact and adaptability. Through coordinated social media campaigns and direct action, feminists successfully forced the ban of an anti-abortion poster campaign by the organisation “Let Me Live” in January 2020 in 2020 and led to the cancellation of the “1st Panhellenic Conference on Fertility and Reproductive Autonomy” scheduled in 2021 in Ioannina, Greece. the conference, organised by male gynaecologists and the Greek Association of Reproductive Medicine was state-backed and planned to included speeches by members of the ruling New Democracy Party and Orthodox priests. It presented low birth rates as a national crisis and blamed women for neglecting their reproductive “duties.” Their opposition exposed the misogynistic and pseudo-scientific nature of such events and set a precedent for continued resistance. Despite these successes, many issues remain unaddressed by the government, notably their call for legal recognition of femicide and comprehensive measures against gender-based violence have been largely ignored. Nevertheless, feminist groups continue to challenge regressive policies, proving their resilience and ability to shape public discourse on gender equality in Greece.

CASE STUDY 4 | *Good feminist practices from Slovenia*



Despite constitutional protections for reproductive rights in Slovenia since the 1990s, these rights have faced ongoing challenges, with pressures intensifying over the past decade due to the rise of anti-gender mobilizations. These have pushed conservative policy proposals, such as removing abortion from health insurance coverage, introducing co-payments for contraception, and restricting artificial insemination for single and lesbian women. Recently, anti-gender efforts have shifted from policy advocacy to influencing public discourse through organizing public events such as “40 Days for Life” rallies and the annual “March for Life”. In response, feminist movement has actively resisted neoconservative mobilizations, primarily adopting a reactive stance to safeguard the existing rights. Advocating for the preservation of accessible and free reproductive rights, the movement has engaged in both institutional and informal arenas to advance its demands. One of the most recent feminist mobilizations occurred in 2023 after activists revealed a policy imposing additional abortion costs on individuals without supplementary health insurance, disproportionately affecting vulnerable women. This discovery spurred a successful campaign urging the Slovenian government to ensure full public health insurance coverage for abortion. Feminist advocacy extended further in 2024 with the launch of My Voice, My Choice campaign, a pan-European campaign initiated by the Slovenian feminist collective, the 8th of March Institute, advocating free abortion access for all women across the EU. As part of the European Citizens’ Initiative, this campaign utilizes a unique tool of participatory democracy, enabling EU citizens to directly influence policy-making at the European level. **This cross-border campaign highlights the Slovenian feminist movement’s shift from reactive to proactive strategies and its commitment to advancing reproductive rights not only nationally but across Europe. To date, their petition has reached 1,078,771 signatures.**

4. WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR THE UPCOMING MANDATE? OUR RECOMMENDATIONS



ABORTION RIGHTS ENSHRINED IN THE FRENCH CONSTITUTION: A HISTORIC VICTORY FOR WOMEN'S BODILY AUTONOMY

In 2024, France enshrined the right to abortion in its constitution, marking a historic victory for women's rights. This decision is the fruit of long-standing feminist campaigns and the commitment of members of parliament in both the National Assembly and the Senate. It is a good example of cross-party and multi-stakeholder work in the service of women's rights. It comes against a backdrop of global setbacks on reproductive rights, notably in the United States with the overturning of Roe Wade, which had just ended the federal right to abortion. By making abestablishing abortion as a constitutional right, France is sending out a strong message, reaffirming women's right control over their own bodies and countering conservative movements seeking to restrict it.

This constitutional protection provides a legal guarantee and is intended to protect the right to abortion against possible political reversals. However, its application will depend on legal interpretations and the political will to enforce it. Despite these uncertainties, the symbolic power of this decision is significant. It sets a precedent for the protection of reproductive rights and could inspire other countries to follow suit. It demonstrates the importance of constant vigilance and sustained advocacy to protect and advance these fundamental freedoms. By taking this bold step, France is reaffirming its commitment to gender equality and setting a precedent for the protection of reproductive rights worldwide.

Only 0.5% of European union official development assistance funding focused on equality went to women's rights organisations or gender equality institutions (OECD, 2023⁹).

⁹Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023) "Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment - DONOR CHARTS"

<https://web.archive.oecd.org/2023-03-07/634734-Aid-to-gender-equality-donor-charts.pdf>

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