

Anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation in Hungary

Evolution, actors, networks

Full report



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Executive Summary

- **The political mobilisation against gender and LGBTQI in Hungary can be divided into two phases.**¹
 - In the **first phase, from 2008 until 2017**, the issue rarely appeared in the mainstream media. Its main drivers were certain intellectuals, journalists, religious groups, marginal men's rights blogs and far-right actors.
 - In the **second phase, from 2017**, however, the leading actor has become the governing Fidesz party, which consciously and strategically instrumentalised the topic for its party-political goals. A systematic campaign has been created around gender and LGBTQI issues, which included the orchestrated use of various actors, each playing different roles.
- **Anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation perfectly fit the government's increasingly radical right-wing populist narrative**, based on invented scapegoats and enemies, inciting and exploiting anxieties, black and white thinking, illiberalism and nationalism.
- **In terms of policies, there are two clear categories.**²
 - On the one hand, the government initiated **preventive legislative acts** to prevent 'unwanted' social and legal developments in Hungary in light of certain tendencies in Western countries.
 - On the other hand, **legislation has been passed to curb acquired rights** or set up new barriers to exercising rights.
- Regarding domestic actors, **the government and government-organised actors have become the primary disseminator of anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI narratives**. Based on the broad network of actors playing different roles and serving other goals, it seems like a "parallel institutional system" concerning the topic has been built by the government. **The main actors are government and Fidesz representatives, government-organised NGOs (GONGOs), think tanks and media, semi-independent family and anti-abortion organisations, and far-right organisations**. While Fidesz has overtaken the far-right as the centre of influence on the topic, it still plays an active role and significantly impacts government policies by pushing Fidesz more and more to the right.
- Despite the prolific number of anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI domestic actors, **only a few are involved in the international network**. **The main drivers of international networking are government/state officials** (e.g., Katalin Novák) and **government-organised NGOs (GONGOs) and think tanks** (e.g., Centre for Fundamental Rights, Matthias Corvinus Collegium). Nevertheless, some (semi-) independent actors (e.g., Edit Frivaldszky, Imre Téglásy) are also well embedded in the international network.

¹ Findings regarding the timeline of the mobilisation in Hungary, especially the classification into two phases (before and after 2017) is based on the following work: Kováts, Eszter (2021) *Ellenségkép, hegemonia és reflexió. A gender fogalmának tartalma és funkciója az Orbán-rezsim és a német radikális jobboldal politikájában*. Doctoral thesis. Budapest: Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Állam- és Jogtudományi Kar Politikatudományi Doktori Iskola

² The classification of Hungarian legislative acts into two categories, preventive and rights-limiting legislation, is based on the following work: Kováts 2021

- **The leading networking platforms are international events** (e.g., World Congress of Families), but the **Hungarian branches of international organisations** also play an important role (e.g., CitizenGo, Political Network for Values). However, **domestic events, translation and publication of books by foreign authors and fellowship opportunities for foreign intellectuals and scholars play a more and more important role in increasing Orbán’s political leverage** among radical conservative and far-right actors internationally.
- **Foreign actors and networks provide the Hungarian government with international recognition and support**, which Fidesz can sell to its domestic audience. In return, foreign actors refer to Hungary’s stance and policies at home and present these as exemplary goals and Hungary as a legitimising ally.
- **The Hungarian government has strategically and systematically established connections to US actors** to influence its perception in the USA, boost its image internationally and present its international ‘fame’ to the domestic audience in Hungary. Mathias Corvinus Collegium and the Centre for Fundamental Rights are the main Hungarian actors building and facilitating connections to US actors. Bringing the Conservative Political Action Conference to Hungary in May 2022 clearly shows close relations with and respect by US conservative circles.
- **The similarities between the Russian and Hungarian anti-LGBTQI stances are striking, including both narratives and policies.** Russian media depicts PM Orbán as a brave warrior and protector of Hungarian values, following Putin’s model. Hungary’s anti-LGBTQI stance is overwhelmingly approved by the Russian media, which portrays the EU related to conflicts with Hungary as despotic, irrational, harmful, weak and divided simultaneously.
 - The so-called LGBTQI propaganda law passed in June 2021 shows clear signs of influence by the Russian ‘gay-propaganda law’. Both bills use the pretext of child protection to curb LGBTQI rights, but the Hungarian law goes further by directly connecting homosexuality to paedophilia. While both bills ban any information that presents and promotes LGBTQI issues to minors, the Hungarian law has not been enforced practically as of March 2022.
 - While direct Russian state connections and influence were remarkably prominent a few years ago, especially concerning the Hungarian far right and the governing Fidesz party and its proxies, these ties seem to have decreased in terms of their scale and significance, probably also due to the increase of relations with Western actors. Nevertheless, collaboration has been increasing between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Hungarian government.
- **There are vivid connections among the German and Hungarian anti-gender actors³** regarding ideological influence and personal exchange. The leading Hungarian actors are the House of Terror Museum and the XXI Century Institute. Nevertheless, German relations play a less significant role than US connections, likely because the anti-gender discourse and actors have not become part of the mainstream in Germany. Since gender is one of the focuses of the new German government, the relevance and impact of the anti-gender discourse can increase in the coming years.

³ The presentation of the connections between Hungarian and German anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI actors and the lessons drawn from it are based on Eszter Kováts’s dissertation: Kováts 2021

- **Poland is Hungary's closest ally concerning the anti-gender mobilisation**, with increasing cooperation among Polish and Hungarian actors. The main actors are the Centre for Fundamental Rights and Ordo Iuris. While Poland and Hungary are clear pioneers concerning anti-gender policies in the region, draft laws following the Hungarian 'LGBTQI propaganda law' have been submitted to the parliament in Romania and Slovakia, although without legislative success.
 - Compared with Poland, Hungary's policies seem to be more pragmatic, even if the tendency to curb LGBTQI rights is similar. While in Hungary, the civil union of same-sex couples is legal, and abortion rules are softer than in Poland, adoption by same-sex couples, legal recognition of gender change and providing education on LGBTQI to minors are practically banned in Hungary, whereas they are still legal in Poland, although complicated and limited.
- **While Poland and Hungary are clear pioneers of anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI policies in the region, some political actors in other countries are open to following suit.** For instance, some MPs in Romania and Slovakia have unsuccessfully attempted to get their parliaments to pass similar "LGBTQI propaganda" laws so far.

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1. Methodology and acknowledgements

The research aimed to reconstruct the evolution of anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation in Hungary and reveal the main domestic actors involved in the mobilisation and their international networks. Through the research, we wanted to understand how the Hungarian anti-gender political agenda came to be and how it was instrumentalised to project power in the domestic and international arena.

For the research, we used qualitative research methodologies. First, we processed the already existing materials (such as articles, studies, etc., including non-public materials) on the Hungarian actors of anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation, their activities and their local and international connections. In parallel, we reconstructed the timeline of the mobilisation in Hungary from 2015 until April 2022 by processing all the gender and LGBTQI-labelled contents of a government-organised media outlet. Moreover, we investigated the main anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI actors and events individually. We collected the data into a database that helped identify the main points and actors, such as their connections. In addition, we conducted three interviews to understand personal perspectives and experiences on the topic. Two interviews were conducted with LGBTQI activists, and the third one with a former government representative.

Throughout the work, we closely cooperated with two external experts. An expert on Russia helped us study the Russian-language media and identify Russian-Hungarian connections. At the same time, an investigative journalist supported the research by looking into less transparent ties and actors. Moreover, Milosz Hodun from Projekt:Polska Foundation helped us compare the Polish and Hungarian legal environments.

We owe a debt of gratitude to all our interviewees and partners who supported us throughout the research. However, we especially want to thank three persons (in alphabetical order of their family names): Kata Bálint, an analyst at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue; Eszter Kováts, an academic focusing on anti-gender politics; and Márton Sarkadi Nagy, a journalist at the Hungarian investigative portal Átlátszó. We learned a lot from their works about the Hungarian actors of the mobilisation, their domestic connections and international networks. Moreover, the classification of the anti-gender mobilisation into two phases (before and after 2017) and the categorisation of Hungarian legislative acts into preventive and rights-limiting legislation are from Eszter Kováts's recent PhD dissertation referenced throughout our study. We also heavily relied on her findings regarding the timeline of the mobilisation. Therefore, we owe special thanks to Eszter for giving us access to her yet unpublished work.

In the entire report, references appear as links embedded in the text, except for materials not available online.

2. Evolution of the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation in Hungary⁴

While the term “gender” first gained traction in public discourse in Hungary in 2008, due to the [publication](#) of Gabriele Kuby’s book “*Gender Revolution*”, the political mobilisation against gender and LGBTQI substantially accelerated around 2017.⁵

2.1 First phase of the mobilisation: 2008-2017⁶

In this period, the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI discourse were not strategic. The issue rarely appeared in the mainstream media in connection with particular events. Its main drivers were certain intellectuals, journalists, religious groups, marginal men’s rights blogs and far-right actors.⁷ Nevertheless, these events indicated that Hungary was already embedded in international networks and Hungarian actors followed the international discourse.⁸ This phase was mainly characterised by a ‘dual’ understanding (and use) of the term ‘gender’ and ‘preventive’ legislation⁹. Even though many labelled ‘gender’ as ‘ideology’ already, the “original meaning” of the term (i.e. the social equality between men and women) was distinct from “recent political claims” related to it (i.e. abolition of sex). While Fidesz MPs and government representatives expressed their acceptance and support of the first understanding, they rejected the second one.¹⁰

The main reasons for the low-intensity anti-gender discourse in this phase were two-fold. First, the lack of requirements by the EU and international human rights organisations concerning gender mainstreaming (e.g., implementing policies advancing gender equality, integrating gender aspects into policy-making processes) and second, the fact that the conservative Fidesz government, in power since 2010, did not initiate any pro-gender or pro-LGBTQI policies.¹¹ Hence, the perceived need for counter-mobilisation by conservative and traditionalist actors was lacking. To maintain this situation, the Fidesz-dominated parliament passed ‘preventive’ legislation to combat possible future changes in the international legal environment in reaction to developments in Western countries.¹² The most striking example was the 4th amendment to the Fundamental Law (the Hungarian constitution) in March 2013. The amended version defined marriage as “the union of a man and a woman” and family as

⁴ Unless additional reference provided, this chapter, including references, quotations and the classification of the mobilisation’s evolution and the legislation is based on the respective chapters of Eszter Kováts’s yet unpublished PhD dissertation: Kováts, Eszter (2021) *Ellenségkép, hegemonia és reflexió. A gender fogalmának tartalma és funkciója az Orbán-rezsim és a német radikális jobboldal politikájában*. Doctoral thesis. Budapest: Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem Állam- és Jogtudományi Kar Politikatudományi Doktori Iskola.

⁵ Kováts 2021

⁶ Findings regarding the timeline of the mobilisation in Hungary, especially the classification into two phases (before and after 2017) is based on the following work: Kováts 2021

⁷ Kováts 2021

⁸ E.g., translation and publication of books by Gabriele Kuby (in 2008 and 2013), Dominik Klenk (in 2009) and Andreas Laun (in 2014); translation and publication of “*Lexicon: Ambiguous and Debatable Terms Regarding Family Life and Ethical Questions*” by the Pontifical Council for the Family in 2012; Kuby’s participation at a conference in Budapest organised by Danube Institute in 2014. (Kováts 2021: 156)

⁹ The classification of Hungarian legislative acts into two categories, i.e. preventive and rights-limiting legislation, is based on the following work: Kováts 2021

¹⁰ E.g., Fidesz MP Ilona Ékes’s interview with the pro-Fidesz daily *Magyar Nemzet* in 2009 (Kováts 2021: 119); Parliamentary Secretary of State of the Ministry of Human Resources Bence Rétvári’s answer to written question of Jobbik MPs in 2016 (Kováts 2021: 127); Minister of Human Resources Zoltán Balog’s distinction between gender and changing social roles in March 2017 (Kováts 2021: 130).

¹¹ Kováts 2021: 128

¹² Kováts 2021: 125; 148

“based on marriage and the relationship between parents and children.” Hence, same-sex couples, among others, were excluded from the institution of the family. With this legislation, the government practically anchored anti-gender discourse in the constitution without using the term itself.¹³ This approach to prevention and maintaining the status quo is reflected in a [comment](#) of PM Viktor Orbán in 2015 when he warned the Hungarian LGBTQI community not to behave provocatively as they do in many Western European countries because it would backfire on them. Other examples showing that the Fidesz government at that time did not intentionally and strategically apply anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI topics for political mobilisation include the accreditation of the gender studies university master's degree, approved by Minister of Human Resources Zoltán Balog in 2016.¹⁴ Furthermore, Fidesz MEPs Lívía Járóka and József Szájer voted for the European Parliament Resolution on the EU Roadmap against homophobia and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity (the so-called ‘Lunacek Report’) in 2014¹⁵ despite MEP László Surján from Fidesz’s sister party, the Christian Democrat People’s Party (KDNP) and deputy PM and KDNP President Zsolt Semjén criticising the report. Furthermore, CitizenGo, an [ultra-Catholic organisation](#) and petition [hub](#), collected 130,000 signatures for its petition against the report in Hungary.¹⁶

2.2 Second phase of the mobilisation: 2017-present

The turning point in anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation happened in 2017 when the governing Fidesz party and the government led by PM Orbán started instrumentalising these issues for their political purposes consciously and strategically. Since then, the topic has risen to the top of the government’s political agenda and become a key focus of leading Fidesz politicians, government officials, government-organised NGOs (GONGOs), think tanks and media. The new phase was introduced by PM Orbán’s [statement](#) in December 2016, forecasting that 2017 “will be about him [George Soros]: about his marginalisation, and marginalisation of the forces he represents”.¹⁷ The government waged a symbolic war against George Soros since 2015/2016 because of his alleged role in supporting and organising migration to the EU from Muslim countries. In this war, the Hungarian government opened a new front in early 2017 when it started attacking the Central European University (CEU), founded and funded by George Soros, among others, because it allegedly spread ‘gender ideology’. Thus, the topic of gender was used as a pretext to discredit and attack the CEU and, ultimately, Soros. The newly accredited gender studies master’s course at ELTE, Hungary’s largest university, also became the government’s target. The intensive campaign against gender studies resulted in the [withdrawal](#) of the course’s accreditation in October 2018. Moreover, the systemic campaign against (or a full-scale war on) ‘gender’ was reflected in the [amendment](#) to the framework curricula for school subjects in October 2017. Consequently, the term ‘gender’ was removed from the curriculum for all school subjects (e.g., civic orientation, biology) and every opportunity for students to learn about non-traditional sexual orientations and gender identities.

Another primary target of the mobilisation since February 2017 was the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic

¹³ Kováts 2021: 124

¹⁴ Kováts 2021: 126

¹⁵ Kováts 2021: 125

¹⁶ Kováts 2021: 123-124

¹⁷ Kováts 2021: 129

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 traditional family and the introduction of countless genders.¹⁸ After the government submitted to the parliament a motion to ratify the convention in February 2017, government-close NGOs and GONGOs started a perhaps orchestrated campaign against the convention and its ratification. The Human Dignity Centre, led by Edit Frivaldszky, a key actor in the Hungarian mobilisation, issued a statement against the convention, CitizenGo, also directed by Frivaldszky, launched a petition and later, the Centre for Fundamental Rights, a Hungarian GONGO, also published a statement titled 'No to the Gender Convention'. Subsequently, in November 2017, Fidesz's deputy president Szilárd Németh announced that the Fidesz government would never ratify the convention.¹⁹ In May 2020, the parliament passed a resolution urging the government not to proceed with the ratification process.

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 Autumn 2020, the far-right Mi Hazánk (Our Homeland) party launched a campaign against a children's book called 'A Fairy Tale for Everyone', which reimagines traditional fairy tales with characters from diverse backgrounds. Our Homeland's Deputy President and MP Dóra Dúró shredded the book, which triggered a chain reaction. Far-right organisations demonstrated against the book, Hungarian authorities launched investigations against it, and Government Spokesman Gergely Gulyás referred to it as "homosexual propaganda". Ultimately PM Orbán [stated](#): "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." Following this line of argumentation, in June 2021 the parliament passed the Children Protection Act, which initially 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 so-called 'child protection referendum' on legislation limiting teaching about and portraying homosexuality and transgender issues. PM Orbán explained the need for the referendum by saying "the future of our children is at stake" due to Brussels' attack against "Hungary over its child protection law".

The so-called 'child protection law' was the last in a line of discriminatory and rights-limiting legislation, which has been a vital feature 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 passed legislation dictating that only married couples are allowed to adopt children. The regulation practically [banned](#) same-sex couples from adopting. Moreover, on the same day, the parliament amended the constitution for the ninth time, 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 necessary to "protect children against possible ideological or biological interference" in light of "new ideological processes in the West".

¹⁸ Kováts 2021: 132; 158

¹⁹ Kováts 2021: 136

Another essential characteristic of this phase of the mobilisation was the change in how the term gender was used and understood by the mobilising actors compared to the first phase. In this stage, the term gender appeared in the political discourse mostly as a foggy reference, without being explained or defined. If a definition was provided, it concerned transgender issues²⁰, like in the examples above.

The most important characteristic of this phase has been the intentional and strategic campaign that has been created around gender and LGBTQI issues. 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. How the media reported on the subject has been clear evidence of the strategic and intentional nature of the campaign and Fidesz and the government using the issue for political mobilisation. Applying the same approach they used when [reporting about refugees and migrants](#), the government-organised media presented 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 widespread, common cases to shock their audience.²¹

3. The role of anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation in Hungarian politics

As outlined above, gender and LGBTQI-related topics did not play a crucial role in the politics of Fidesz and the government until 2017. Still, the issue came up periodically, and the government initiated anti-gender policies and campaigns (e.g., an anti-abortion campaign in 2011 and the fourth amendment to the Fundamental Law in 2013). The fact that the government meaningfully picked up the topic only in 2017 and used it for coordinated political mobilisation fits Fidesz's behaviour and strategy pattern. After taking a conservative turn in the mid-'90s, the former liberal Fidesz party became more and more populist during the 2000s. Moreover, under the pretext of the 'one camp, one flag' strategy, it has increasingly taken over issues, messages and tactics from the far-right since the late 2000s and again in the early 2010s to cover the political right as widely as possible. Since coming to power with a two-thirds majority in the parliament in 2010, Fidesz has built its politics on the intentional polarisation of society, inventing enemies, inciting and exploiting anxiety, the (populist) framing of 'Us' vs 'Them', People vs Elites, defending national sovereignty and the traditional (hence secure) way of life against both internal (e.g., liberals, leftists, NGOs) and external (e.g., Brussels liberal elites) enemies.²²

The [gradual metamorphosis](#) into a populist radical right party became evident in 2015, when Fidesz adopted, in a somewhat softer tone, the anti-immigration narrative of the far-right, depicting refugees and migrants as Muslim invaders who threaten the (white) Christian Western civilisation. From 2015, Fidesz's politics had centred around immigration, with refugees, migrants and those who allegedly support immigration (e.g., NGOs, Brussels)

²⁰ Kováts 2021: 162

²¹ Kováts 2021: 136

²² Kováts 2021: 140; 221; Juhász, Attila (2017) Az átrendeződés éve – A populista jobb és a szélsőjobb a mai Magyarországon, Political Capital, https://www.politicalcapital.hu/pc-admin/source/media/Boell_Szelsojobb_HUN_171220.pdf

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 baselessly 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](#) as the new enemy and starting a symbolic war was a logical continuation.²³

In line with the political aims of this mobilisation, gender has mainly been presented as a symptom of crisis and a [threat](#) to 1) values, traditions, and culture; 2) the family and children; 3) the persistence of the white, Christian race/civilisation; 4) freedom; 5) the interests of the majority; and 6) the natural order. Moreover, gender, which is imposed on 'us', the people, by the West, the EU, the USA, the liberals, the left etc., also represents repression, an authoritarian and totalitarian worldview, the limitation of political liberties and the minority's rule over the majority.²⁴

4. Legal environment 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 legislation²⁵ can be differentiated. First, preventive legislative acts aimed at preventing 'unwanted' social and legal developments in Hungary, compared to certain tendencies in Western countries. 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 contains legislation that curbs acquired rights or establishes new barriers to exercising rights. Right after winning the elections in 2010, among the very first measures introduced by the new government [changed](#) the curriculum for kindergarten education and rewrote language according to which kindergartens "consciously avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes and foster the reduction of stereotypes about gender equality". The new wording, approved by then State Secretary of the Ministry of National Resources Rózsa Hoffmann, dictated that kindergarten "does not provide space for the unfolding of stereotypes, neither in the sense of social, nor gender, nor any other".²⁶ Another example of this category of legislation is the new constitution, the Fundamental Law, which entered into force on 1 January 2012 and grants protection to the foetus from conception onward. However, abortion rules have not been tightened since. Further examples are the abolishment of the legal recognition of transgender persons' gender in May 2020 and the practical ban on adoption by same-sex couples in December 2020.

The last element is the so-called 'child protection law' passed in June 2021, prohibiting the presentation and promotion of homosexuality and gender change to minors. As of March 2022, the law has not been enforced practically because the implementation regulation has not been issued yet. However, access to schools has already been reduced for NGOs

²³ Kováts 2021

²⁴ Kováts 2021: 221

²⁵ The classification of Hungarian legislative acts into two categories (preventive and rights-limiting legislation) is based on the following work: Kováts 2021

²⁶ Kováts 2021: 122

providing anti-discrimination and tolerance education and education on LGBTQI issues due to the self-censorship of school principals. Moreover, it is widely expected that a Fidesz-led government would enforce the law after the 2022 general elections.

4.1 Comparison of the Hungarian and Russian ‘gay propaganda bills

It is popular to compare anti-LGBTQI laws with the infamous Russian ‘gay propaganda law’, which Putin signed in 2013 ([Federal Law](#) "for the Purpose of Protecting Children from Information Advocating for a Denial of Traditional Family Values"). Similarities to the Hungarian so-called ‘child protection law’ ([Act LXXIX of 2021](#) on “tougher action against paedophile offenders and amending certain laws to protect children”) are indeed striking. While the Hungarian law is more detailed regarding types of information and scope of activities prohibited, the effect is approximately the same. Regarding practical implications, however, the Russian law has had more far-reaching [consequences](#) and claimed far more [victims](#).

Both laws [use](#) the same pretext to curb LGBTQI rights: the protection of children and “traditional family values”. However, the Hungarian law goes a step further, as it connects homosexuality to paedophilia by banning LGBTQI-themed educational programmes and media content for minors through a law initially aimed at clamping down on paedophilia. This is a common approach by the far-right and has been reflected in PM Orbán’s statements too. Another similarity between the two laws is the consciously [vague phrasing](#) of what is prohibited, which provides room for arbitrariness and encourages self-censorship. Such effects have already become visible in Hungary.

In terms of scope, both the Russian and the Hungarian bills prohibit a wide range of information. The Russian bill forbids portraying and promoting “non-traditional” sexual relations with minors. The ban includes, but is not limited to, information provided via the press, television, radio, and the internet. Hence, it practically bans all forms of information that diverge from traditional family values. While the Hungarian law explicitly forbids two types of information sources, namely media content and educational programmes, it also bans content that presents and promotes LGBTQI issues being made available to minors. Together with the Fundamental Law’s clause on children’s right “to identify with their birth gender”, this allows for a wide range of measures against practically all types of LGBTQI-related content and information.

Concerning the ban on educational programmes, the Hungarian law prescribes that only individuals or organizations listed in an official register can offer sex and gender-related education classes in schools. However, the law authorises the minister responsible for education to prepare the register with no deadlines or oversight. Consequently, the implementation regulation is still not issued as of March 2022, nine months after passing the law. This has created legal uncertainty, which, combined with the public denunciation of non-complying teachers and school principals by Fidesz-organised and far-right media outlets, results in most teachers and school principals being afraid of inviting external actors to their schools.

The Hungarian law does ban not only the presentation and promotion of non-traditional sexual relations but also that of gender change and any gender identity different from the birth gender to minors. Hence, raising awareness about intersexuality, for instance, is also forbidden in Hungary. Nevertheless, the Russian law bans homosexual behaviour among minors too and [states](#) that gay and transgender people constitute a danger against which

protection by law is needed. The Hungarian bill does not go that far. Government officials keep [saying](#) that the law does not apply to adults and that “everyone above the age of 18 does what they want”.

4.2 Legal situation regarding LGBTQI in Hungary and Poland compared

As illustrated above, the anti-gender rights and anti-LGBTQI campaign started earlier and has been more powerful in Poland than in Hungary, thanks to the governing Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) party’s far more conservative and ideological worldview. Furthermore, Polish society is much more religious than Hungarian. Thus, the Catholic Church, which has played a crucial role in mobilising against gender and LGBTQI internationally since the 2000s already, has had a greater influence on public attitudes and policy-making in Poland. The emphasis on conservative ideology and religion is reflected in policies such as the almost complete abortion ban introduced in 2020, the termination of state-funded IVF in 2015, and the restricted access to the morning-after pill since 2017. Even though the Hungarian constitution protects the foetus from conception, abortion rules have not become stricter in tandem. Similarly, while officials of the Catholic Church demanded the ban of IVF in October 2020, then Minister for Family Affairs Katalin Novák [reinforced](#) the government’s commitment to these techniques to increase birth rates.

Nevertheless, regarding LGBTQI rights, we can observe similar developments in Hungary and Poland, with Hungary being more restrictive in some aspects and Poland in others. While the civil union of same-sex couples has been legal in Hungary since 2009, it is not legally recognised in [Poland](#). While adoption by same-sex couples is illegal in both countries, Hungary barred single parents from adopting in December 2020. In March 2021, the Polish government [announced](#) its plan to ban adoption for single persons should they cohabit with someone of the same sex. Nevertheless, the law does not seem to have been passed. Poland made it more difficult for same-sex parents to get passports for their children by amending the Passport Act in 2022.

Regarding legal recognition of gender change, Hungary banned it in May 2020, while it is legal in Poland under the requirement of a medical diagnosis and a court trial against one’s parents. After the gender’s legal change, reassignment surgery can take place. However, Polish President Andrzej Duda [vetoed](#) the law on Gender Accordance in 2015, which would have made the legal recognition procedure simpler and more accessible.

An aspect in which Poland has gone further than Hungary is the case of so-called ‘LGBT-free zones’, probably the most visible example of the state-sponsored anti-LGBTQI propaganda. In 2019 and 2020, around 100 cities and regions ruled by PiS [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 contrast, in Hungary, only the municipality of Ásotthalom, a small village governed by the current far-right Mi Hazánk party’s leader László Toroczkai, adopted a similar regulation in 2016, which practically banned the practice of Islam and the promotion of homosexuality. However, the Constitutional Court [annulled](#) the municipality regulation in 2017 because local authorities are not entitled to pass laws directly concerning or limiting fundamental rights.

Where Hungary is clearly ahead is the ban on LGBTQI-related content and education activities for minors and the connection of LGBTQI issues to paedophilia. While Hungary adopted its own 'LGBTQI propaganda law' on the Russian model, the process in Poland has been put on ice. Under the pretext of banning the 'demoralisation and sexualisation of children' and the slogan "fight against child abuse", the "Stop Pedophilia" civic initiative proposed legislative changes. After collecting 250,000 signatures, the draft bill, which would ban sex education and criminalize the "promotion of underage sexual activity", was brought before the Polish parliament in [2019](#) and then in [2020](#) again. Since then, the notion has been put aside, but the speaker of the Sejm can bring it back for discussion at any time.

Poland was supposed to follow Hungary's theoretical ban on education on gender and LGBTQI-related topics, but Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 bumped it from the agenda. In January, the Sejm [approved](#) a bill to increase the government's control over schools by granting additional powers to government-appointed 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 deviations from the conservative curriculum approved by the PiS government. After being voted down by the upper house, the bill was referred to President Duda, who on 2 March [vetoed](#) the bill and sent it back to the Sejm for review. His veto has put a temporary hold on the legislation. Its further fate will most likely depend on the Polish government's considerations for how to proceed in the face of new political realities: whether to go further down the authoritarian, ultra-conservative path, which increasingly generates conflicts with the EU and the USA or to put ideological goals after security considerations and join forces with Western powers.

5. Actors²⁷

Several different actors from many fields are active in Hungary's anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation. Most have ties to the Fidesz government (personal, financial, cooperative, etc.). Some actors have been active either individually or in organisations for many years. They are funded from multiple sources, and their activities are extensive. However, most of them are supported by the government in some way, e.g., through generous funding and prizes. They are regular contributors to government-organised media and international and local thematic events. There are also relatively new organisations that are either founded or closely supported by the government and led by persons close to Fidesz. These actors are loyal to the government in every field, loudly supporting their decisions and activities and 'legitimising' them for the public.

Categories of actors

To give a general overview of the Hungarian actors, we have created seven thematic categories that present their characteristics, activities, and roles.²⁸ In each category, we provide examples and include a more detailed description of the most important actors.

²⁷ Besides our own research on Hungarian actors and their activities, we especially relied on the investigations of Kata Bálint and Márton Sarkadi Nagy (in alphabetical order of their family names), as well as Eszter Kováts, when writing up this chapter.

²⁸ When creating our categories, we built on the categorisation by Eszter Kováts. See Kováts 2021:16

5.1 The government and the governing Fidesz party

The Hungarian governing party, Fidesz, is not only actively involved in the mobilisation, but it has been its leading actor and the key organiser since 2017.²⁹ 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 (strategic) partnerships with domestic family organisations, and founding new organisations. The most important actors of the category are Katalin Novák, Zoltán Balog and László Kövér.

- **Katalin Novák** [has been](#) the Head of Cabinet of the Ministry of Human Resources (2012-2014), the State Secretary for Family and Youth Affairs at the Ministry of Human Capacities (2014-2020), Vice-President of Fidesz (2017-2021), and Minister for Family Affairs (2020-2021). In 2021 she was [announced](#) to be Fidesz's nominee for Hungary's next president. The parliament elected her on 10 March, and her five-year term starts on 10 May 2022. Novák has been the face of the "family-friendly Hungary" programme and actively networked with anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI actors locally and internationally. Although she has been embedded in the network for almost a decade, she did not really express her views on the topic for a long time. In 2016, she had a restrained position, stating that the situation of the LGBTQI communities is a sensitive question. Over the years, her position has become more radical ([2018](#): "a family needs a woman and a man, and a woman and a man are enough", [2020](#): the EU wants to force gender ideological approaches on Hungary; [2021](#): children must be protected from gender issues, [2022](#): "As the LGBTQI propaganda in the Western world has started to target kindergarteners and schoolchildren, we need to be vigilant"). At the local and international events, she usually presents and promotes the family-friendly programme of the government, rarely mentioning gender and LGBTQI topics explicitly.
- **Zoltán Balog** was the Minister of Human Resources between 2012-2018 and has been a Calvinist pastor since then. He was involved in the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI network and participated in several international and Hungarian events (for example, the [I](#), [II](#), and [IV](#). Demographic Summit, the [XI. World Congress of Families](#), and the [I. Transatlantic Summit](#)). He has taken a more specific position on gender compared to Novák. Although he signed the gender studies master's programme accreditation at Hungary's largest university, ELTE, in 2016, a year later, [he stated](#) that gender studies are "contrary to everything the government says about humans".³⁰ Eventually, the gender studies programme was abolished in 2018 by the Ministry of Human Resources decree. In 2021, he talked in a [radio interview](#) about the gender lobby, which aims to provoke and "would like to see Jesus as one of its own".
- **László Kövér** was a founding member of Fidesz and has been the Speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary since 2010. He used the phrase "gender madness" in 2015, called for action against gender studies in [2018](#), spoke in [2019](#) about gender transition as a norm in the Western world, and compared same-sex couples adopting to paedophilia. In the same year, in a speech in the parliament, [he claimed](#) that gender studies undermine the gender identity of young people and persuade children to change gender. In 2021 [he said](#) that Open Society, Soros and Brussels "will strive to destroy our identity, either through mass immigration or the spread of gender ideology".

²⁹ Kováts 2021: 128; 157

³⁰ Kováts 2021

5.2 Government-Organised Non-Governmental Organisations (GONGOs) and think tanks

The organisations in this category have been - directly or indirectly - set up, financed and controlled by the government. However, they present themselves as independent, autonomous organisations. They are active in different fields and regularly cooperate with other actors domestically and internationally. The primary examples of GONGOs are the Center for Fundamental Rights and Safe Society Foundation.

- **The Center for Fundamental Rights (CfFR)** is one of the most important Hungarian actors both nationally and internationally. The organisation that operates CfFR, Rule of Law and Justice Nonprofit Ltd. (Jogállam és Igazság Nonprofit Kft.), was co-founded in 2013 by its current director Miklós Szánthó, and [has received](#) a massive amount of state funding.³¹ Besides Miklós Szánthó, important actors from the CfFR are István Kovács, the strategic director, and Eszter Párkányi, analyst. The Center soon became apparent that it has mainly served government interests and spread propaganda. The activities of the CfFR include publishing books, producing videos and a radio show, cooperating with other actors, building international networks, organising and participating in local and international events, and frequently appearing in government-organised media. In December 2021, the CfFR launched an online campaign, the [StopGender](#) Facebook page, to support the government's so-called child protection referendum.
- **Mathias Corvinus Collegium (MCC)**, founded in 1996, is an education/mentoring centre which has provided high-quality education and mentoring for talented secondary school and university students. [In 2020](#), Balázs Orbán, the deputy minister and parliamentary and strategic state secretary at the Office of the Prime Minister, became the Chairman of MCC's Board of Trustees. At the end of the same year, MCC [received 500 billion HUF \(1.7 billion USD\)](#) in state assets (in the form of buildings, financial support and shares). Since then, MCC has [aimed](#) to build a Carpathian Basin network, consisting of local MCC branches in Hungary's counties and those regions in Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine, where ethnic Hungarians live. MCC provides fellowships and a stage at its events for prominent international anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI actors.
- **Safe Society Foundation (SSF)** [was founded in 2021](#) to become a counterpoint to George Soros' Open Society Foundations. It is led by a couple, László Földi and Andrea Földi-Kovács. According to their website, the organisation "provides protection against ideologies and globalist organisations seeking to eliminate physical, biological and moral boundaries". Andrea Földi-Kovács [stated](#) that it fights against organisations that promote abortion and the LGBTQI ideology, among other things. It aims to build an international network, but this is not yet visible. Nevertheless, it has set up a legal unit, the [Budapest Committee](#), as a counterpoint to the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, one of Hungary's oldest, biggest and most renowned human rights NGOs. László Földi is a frequent guest in Fidesz-organised media, and most of the members of the foundation are related to the Fidesz-organised cable news channel HírTV. Moreover, SSF has close ties to the extreme right scene as well. The manager of SSF's blog and

³¹ Between 2013 and 2020 [it got](#) more than 2 billion forints, and ~870 million forints from unnamed sources.

Facebook page is Tamás Horváth, who used to be an [activist](#) of the Neo-Nazi³² organisations Identitesz and Strength and Resolve and the editor-in-chief of the government-organised online ultraconservative news portal [vasarnap.hu](#). He is [close friends](#) with the leaders of the neo-Nazi group Legio Hungaria Béla Incze and Tamás Lipták. SSF's primary function is shaping the public discourse by organising panel discussions across the country, publishing opinion pieces and appearing in Fidesz-organised media.

- **Szent István Institute** was founded in June 2021 as an NGO. It [aims to](#) examine societal issues and shape the public discourse based on “the spiritual heritage of our state founder holy king, the worldview based on Judeo-Christian social teachings, the conviction that there is a God, and that through him we have a mission for the good”. They [describe](#) today's world as “where the sanctity of life is no longer evidence, in which it is slowly not known whether someone is a boy or a girl”. The Institute is a loud supporter of the so-called child protection law of the government. They have organised two conferences, both of them had members of the government as speakers (such as Máté Kocsis, Judit Varga, Róbert Répássy, István Hollik). Their first conference in November 2021 was titled [The Next Thousand Years for Our Children #StopGender](#), it was co-organised by the Center for Fundamental Rights and Batthyány Lajos Foundation, and it had speakers such as Miklós Szánthó and Gergely Szilvay. Since the Institute's foundation, its leader, Zsuzsa Máthé, has been a frequent guest of the government-organised media.

5.3 Media

Government-organised and far-right media regularly publish content on anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI topics to provoke indignation, anger and anxiety. Often they report on individual, outlying cases concerning trans and queer issues occurring in Western countries in a dubious, hostile and inciting tone, presenting the cases as everyday events. Moreover, these media outlets, especially government-organised media, also provide a place for the Hungarian anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI actors, especially members of GONGOs, to support the government's narrative and shape public opinion. They frequently feature the active actors of the categories mentioned above, inviting them as guests, publishing their articles and interviews with them, promoting and reporting on their events, and picturing them as reliable experts. While far-right actors have a broad network of media channels, the impact of government-organised media is much more significant in mobilising against gender and LGBTQI and shaping public attitudes. The primary examples of government-organised media include 888, [vasarnap.hu](#), Pesti TV/Pesti Srácok, Origó, M5, Mandiner, and HírTV.

5.4 Intellectuals providing the ‘scientific’/ideological background

These actors give the scientific and ideological ground for the mobilisation via studies, books, articles and appearing as experts in government-organised media outlets. They provide the ideological reference base for other actors and support their activities and governmental decisions as representatives of the scientific world. The most important currently is Gergely Szilvay.

³² Or rather, Neo-Arrow Cross. The Arrow Cross Party – Hungarist Movement was a national socialist party in the 1930s and '40s, modelled by Nazism and Fascism.

- **Gergely Szilvay** is a journalist at the Fidesz-aligned online news portal Mandiner and worked previously at the online portal of the Fidesz-organised daily Magyar Nemzet and the Catholic news portal Magyar Kurír. Currently, he is an associate researcher at [Rubicon Institute](#), a historical, educational think tank that is [highly supported financially](#) by the government. He has been active in Hungary's anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation for many years. In 2012, he was the copy editor of the Hungarian edition of Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira's book "Revolution and Counter-Revolution", published by the Vienna subdivision of [Tradition, Family and Property](#), a traditionalist Catholic movement. He frequently publishes on the topic and is invited to pro-government media as an expert. In addition, he is regularly conducting and publishing interviews with anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI actors from abroad: activists, ideologists, and journalists, who come to Hungary. Thus, he plays an essential role in spreading anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI ideology to the public. He is the author of two books, "[On Gay Marriage](#)", published by Századvéd Kiadó in 2016, and "[A Critique of Gender Theory](#)", published by the Center for Fundamental Rights in 2021. Lately, he appears at [religious conferences](#) to speak about topics such as "[Characteristics of the "new family models" and the gender ideology](#)".

5.5 Family, youth, anti-abortion and other organisations

These actors represent mainly the civic background of the mobilisation. They play an essential role in the network, and most of them can reach and influence many people. They are active, organising various events and spreading anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI content under the pretext of family protection. In most cases, they are closely connected, have ties to Katalin Novák and get funds from different state institutions. There are organisations in this network that have been active for a long time advocating for family rights and are not strictly anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI. Still, they cooperate with the government and other actors who promote this cause and ideology more directly. Also, there are pro-government organisations in the network, founded by former politicians of Fidesz, that advocate against gender and LGBTQI rights. Finally, some organisations lie somewhere in the middle. The one thing visible across all actors in this category is that they have ties to the government and participate to some extent in its mobilisation.

- The **Association of Hungarian Women** was founded by Ilona Ékes, a former Fidesz politician. She opposes Pride celebrations and stated that homosexuality could be healed by therapy. She is a supporter of the International Federation for Therapeutic and Counselling Choice (IFTCC), an organisation promoting the healing of homosexuality [which held](#) its annual conferences in Budapest in 2016, 2018, 2019 and 2021. The Association of Hungarian Women started in 2000 as an alliance of shared values and interests. Although it doesn't have any declared anti-gender or anti-LGBTQI opposition, at least till 2011, Alfa Alliance, an anti-abortion organisation, [was a member](#) of it. Additionally, the association published a [statement](#) in 2009 against the Budapest Pride March on its webpage. Their [current activity](#) is organising roundtable discussions covering various topics regarding the topic of Hungary and the European Union, with speakers from government-close organisations, such as Mandiner, Szent István Institute, Safe Society Foundation, Kopp Mária Institute. Ilona Ékes is now the president of the European Regional Organisation (ERGO), which refers to the Association of Hungarian Women as their [sister organisation](#). ERGO [started](#) the

international [TeenStar sexual education program](#) in Hungary. Besides sharing anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI [content](#) on their Facebook page, they share the news and events of organisations such as [Human Dignity Center](#) (Edit Frivaldszky's organisation), [One of Us](#), [CitizenGo](#), [C-Fam](#) on their online platforms.

- **Together for Life Association** and **Human Dignity Center** are anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQI organisations founded and led by **Edit Frivaldszky**.³³ Edit Frivaldszky has a broad international network, and she is very active domestically as well. She is the founder and leader of the Hungarian CitizenGo. In November 2020, just before the ninth amendment of the constitution in December 2020, she [handed over](#) a petition with 33,000 signatures to Minister of Justice Judit Varga “to protect children from ideologies that deny biological evidence and to provide them with opportunities for peaceful and safe development by law”.³⁴ Edit Frivaldszky is a regular guest in the government-organised media. Together for Life Association has a youth wing, the **Youth in the Service of Life**, led by Ilona Keresztes, the former Editor-in-Chief of Kossuth Rádió.
- **Kopp Mária Institute for Demography and Families** [was established](#) by the Hungarian government in 2017 to support the work of the Minister of Families. The organisation conducts research, writes analyses, and organises events on the topic of the family. The organisation's president is Tünde Fűrész, the former deputy secretary of state for family and population policy and ministerial commissioner at the Ministry of Human Capacities. One of the vice-presidents of the organisation is Dr. Balázs Molnár, former deputy state secretary at the Prime Ministry. The organisation [has partnerships](#) with many Hungarian family organisations and other institutions, such as universities, and the Mathias Corvinus Collegium.

5.6 Far-right actors

Actors from far-right movements and parties have been engaged in anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation for a long time. In fact, far-right activists and organisations have been among the pioneers of this mobilisation in Hungary since the 2000s. They play an active role in the network with diverse functions. They have played an important role in building awareness of the issues and creating the “social demand” for ever-radicalising messages and policies, which [paved the way](#) for and legitimised the government's actions. Besides, they [support](#) the government's anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI activities and [express the need](#) for further legislative efforts. They are also embedded in the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI network both nationally and internationally. Key actors of the far-right scene are the activists Imle Téglássy, Edda and György Budaházy and Tamás Gaudi-Nagy; the organisations Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom, HVIM) Legio Hungaria (LH) and Identity Generation (IG), the Hungarian branch of the French ‘new right’ Identitarian movement; and the party Our Homeland Movement (Mi Hazánk Mozgalom, MHM).

- **Imre Téglásy** is a religious fundamentalist, a foetal protection, anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQI activist. He is the leader of [Alfa Alliance](#), one of the oldest anti-abortion organisations in Hungary. Téglásy and Alfa Alliance have organised and participated in numerous xenophobic events and anti-abortion campaigns (such as the [“Peace in the Womb! - Sympathy protest for Polish life-saving efforts”](#) in 2016 and the [CitizenGO](#)

³³ Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2021) Anti-SRHR movements in Central Europe: Hungary. Manuscript

³⁴ Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2021) Anti-SRHR movements in Central Europe: Hungary. Manuscript

[campaign](#) against LGBTQI propaganda in 2020). Besides being embedded in the anti-abortion and anti-gender scene, he also has close ties with many far-right and extreme-right organisations in Hungary. Moreover, Alfa Alliance had some relations with Fidesz around the 2010s, as it was a member of the Association of Hungarian Women at least until 2011, which was founded and led by Ilona Ékes, a former politician of Fidesz. Alfa Alliance received funds from the Ministry of Human Resources in [2015](#) and [2016](#), Alfa Alliance published a book "[Gender - the new ideology that destroys family](#)", which is edited from the presentation given by Gabriele Kuby³⁵ at a [conference](#) in Sümeg in 2015. The event was organised by the [John Henry Newman Higher Educational Center](#), whose director was Daniel Fülep, a roman catholic theologian. The [Educational Center](#) existed between 2014 and 2016 and was funded by government-close sources. It [published](#) two books of Marguerite A. Peeters, "The Gender Revolution: A Global Agenda" and "The globalization of the Western Cultural Revolution".

- **Edda and György Budaházy:** the Budaházy siblings, Edda and György, have both been vital figures of the anti-gender mobilisation within the extreme right scene since the early 2000s. Edda Budaházy heads the "Give Birth to One More Hungarian Movement" and is a regular organiser of and participant in demography, anti-abortion and anti-gender events. György Budaházy was the primary driver of protests against Pride marches in Budapest for a long time. In recent years, they have played a key role in organising protests against and disrupting gender and LGBTQI-related events.
- **Tamás Gaudi-Nagy:** along with the Budaházy siblings, Tamás Gaudi-Nagy has been a central figure of anti-gender discourse and mobilisation for a long time. As a lawyer, he mainly provides legal assistance to other far-right activists in police and court cases.
- **Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (HVIM) and Legio Hungaria (LH):** since its foundation in 2001, HVIM has been at the forefront of street activism, including anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation as well. For many years, HVIM was the main organiser of protests against Pride marches in Budapest. In recent years, the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI stance and activism have become the main focus of HVIM. They organise counter-protests, disrupt events and damage or destroy posters, publicly list teachers supposedly supporting LGBTQI rights etc. LH split from HVIM in 2018 and focuses on street activism by participating in activities similar to HVIM's. For instance, in 2019, LH activists burned a rainbow flag in Budapest. Tamás Lipták, a member of LH's board, is closely connected to the football ultra scene and was a central figure in [anti-LGBTQI activities](#) across stadiums in Hungary and elsewhere during the EURO 2020.
- **Identity Generation (IG):** The Hungarian branch of the pan-European Identitarian movement gained importance in Hungary in and after 2015, related to the so-called 'migration crisis'. Anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation has been the focus of the Hungarian group since its founding. Their main tactic is deliberate provocation. Hence, they mainly organise smaller protests, establish billboards, disrupt events etc. One of the group's leaders, Ábel Bódi, is a frequent guest on political shows on government-organised TV channels and regularly publishes opinion pieces in government-organised newspapers.

³⁵ Gabriele Kuby is the mother of Sophia Kuby, writer, sociologist. She has an orthodox position on the topics of sexuality and gender.

- **Our Homeland Movement (MHM):** Since splitting from the formerly far-right Jobbik party in 2018, MHM has carried on Jobbik's far-right agenda and became a central actor in anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation. Deputy Chairwoman Dóra Dúró and her husband, also a Member of MHM's board, Előd Novák, are the key figures in the issue within the party. Dúró inflamed strong anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI feelings and activities by shredding a children's book called "A Fairy Tale for Everyone" in September 2020. This was among the trigger events leading to the 'gay propaganda law' in June 2021.

5.7 Religious organisations

Religious organisations, especially related to the Catholic Church, played a significant role in the mobilisation at its early stages in the late 2000s and early 2010s.³⁶ Since then, however, their visibility and impact have decreased, probably partly because of the massive and aggressive campaign by the government and its proxies and Pope Francis' more moderate stance. Nevertheless, some significant Church officials and organisations close to the churches are still active on the topic, even if less visible to the broader public. Examples are e.g.: Catholic Priest Zoltán Osztie, Hungarian Foundation for Christian Civilisation (Magyar Alapítvány a Keresztény Civilizációért) – founded by the Piotr Skarga Foundation (see in the next chapter), Dániel Fülep, Fraternity for a Sacred Hungary (Pro Hungaria Sacra Testvérület).

6. International connections and coalition-building³⁷

This chapter outlines the international relations and activities of the Hungarian actors in anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation. It consists of five parts: their involvement in the international anti-gender network and their connections and activities regarding the US, Russian, German and regional actors. The leading Hungarian actors involved are the members of the government (Katalin Novák, Zoltán Balog), government-organised NGOs and think tanks (Centre for Fundamental Rights, Mathias Corvinus Collegium, XXI. Century Institute) and independent or semi-independent actors (Danube Institute, Edit Frivaldszky, Imre Téglásy, Tradition Family and Property in Hungary, the Hungarian CitizenGo).

6.1 Hungarian actors in the international network of anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI organisations

The international network is mainly present in Hungary in two primary forms: as speakers at events and/or as members of the international umbrella organisation, Political Network for Values. These international actors have an essential role in the government's communication: their presence is portrayed as international support behind the government's (sometimes widely criticised) measures and decisions. This networking is beneficial for the

³⁶ Kováts 2021

³⁷ Besides our own research on Hungarian actors' international connections, we heavily relied on the investigations of Kata Bálint and Márton Sarkadi Nagy (in alphabetical order of their family names), when writing up this chapter.

Fidesz government because it allows Novák to internationally advertise the ‘family-friendly’ activities of the government, build an international image for Fidesz and gain supporters for it.

6.1.1 The beginning of the 2010s

Building relations with the international network of anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI organisations supposedly started in the early 2010s. The likely first connection point for the Hungarian and international actors was the anti-abortion movement. By 2011, it was already a prevalent topic for the Hungarian government, which launched a vast [anti-abortion billboard campaign](#) financed from EU funds (and later [stopped by the EU](#)). The new constitution granted protection to the foetus from conception, highlighting the significance of the topic for the government. Sexual and reproductive rights were also the subject of public discussion in other countries. For example, [in Poland](#), a new stricter legal framework for abortion was introduced around the same time.

In 2012, an [international pro-life conference](#) was held at the Hungarian parliament, organised by the [Association of Hungarian Women](#), a women’s organisation founded and led by Fidesz MP Ilona Ékes. Patrons of the conference included Speaker of the Parliament László Kövér, Minister of Human Resources Zoltán Balog and Ilona Ékes herself. Edit Frivaldszky also participated in the event. Moreover, many significant international actors attended the conference and later became regular guests at Hungarian events (Sharon Slater³⁸, Carlo Cassini³⁹, Kremlin-linked Igor Belobodorov⁴⁰). Another connection point was the 4th amendment to the Fundamental Law in 2013, which defined marriage and family in an exclusionary way and was widely criticised internationally (e.g., by the EU). To demonstrate its broad support, the government [proudly announced](#) a [list](#) of 66 organisations from 50 countries (e.g., Family Watch International, HazteOir.org⁴¹, Ordo Iuris⁴², World Congress of Families, Center for Family and Human Rights - C-Fam⁴³) that backed the amendment and added perceived legitimacy.

6.1.2 Katalin Novák and Zoltán Balog

Former Minister of Human Resources and current Reformist Bishop Zoltán Balog and former Minister for Family Affairs and President-elect of Hungary Katalin Novák are core actors in the international network. They both [participated](#) (Balog as a speaker) at the [I. Transatlantic Summit in New York](#), where Political Network for Values, an international umbrella organisation, was founded. Novák became the organisation’s vice-president and then served as its president between 2019-2022, which provided a sound basis for further international networking.

Internationally, Novák is mainly active through organising and participating in international events. In 2015 the Ministry of Human Resources and the Family-Friendly Country program organised the [I. Demographic Forum](#) for “discussing issues related to

³⁸Sharon Slater is the president of Family Watch International, an organisation that [lobbies](#) in the UN to curb LGBTQ+ and abortion rights, and she “[promotes anti-LGBTQI pseudoscience](#)” stating that homosexuality is a mental disorder and “conversion therapy” can eliminate same-sex attraction.

³⁹ Carlo Cassini was the [initiator of One of Us](#), and he is the [president of the Italian pro-life movement](#).

⁴⁰ Igor Belobodorov in 2012 was [international coordinator](#) of the “From Ocean to Ocean” international pro-life campaign, later he became [demographer of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies](#).

⁴¹ HazteOir is a [Spanish anti-LGBTQI](#) organisation, founder of CitizenGo, a petition platform.

⁴² Ordo Iuris is an [ultra-conservative Polish legal think tank](#).

⁴³ The Center for Family and Human Rights, C-Fam, is an [anti-LGBTQI hate group](#). It [was founded](#) in 1997 by the world’s largest anti-abortion organisation, Human Life International (HLI).

demographic trends, including the family, economic, employment and migration implications of Europe's population processes, and exploring possible solutions". The event was hosted by Novák, with international participants active in the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation, such as Igor Belobodorov, Luca Volonté⁴⁴, Patrick Fagan⁴⁵, and Jaime Mayor Oreja⁴⁶.

Novák and Balog participated in more World Congress of Families (WCF) events. WCF, [formed in 1997](#), is an [umbrella organisation](#) pushing for restrictions on LGBTQI rights and women's reproduction rights under the guise of the "natural family": heterosexual married couples and their children. WCF is a project of the Howard Center for Family, Religion and Society. WCF is a central network entity for the global anti-LGBTQI network, primarily through its annual summits and extensive links across the European and American far-right and the ultraorthodox and so-called 'traditional values' networks supported by actors linked to the Kremlin. The president of WCF [since 2016 is Brian Brown](#), a long-time anti-LGBTQI activist. Besides him, Konstantin Malofeyev, Alexey Komov and Vladimir Yakunin are essential actors for the organisation in Russia and [provide](#) Kremlin-adjacent support internationally. Malofeyev and Komov [forged](#) ties with the organisation in the years before its 2010s revival; since its founding, allegedly through cooperation between US and Russian pseudo-sociology and the Russian Orthodox Church in the 1990s, it had drifted into obscurity. WCF [has ties](#) to several major religious organisations, such as the Knights of Columbus, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Russian Orthodox Church. The [WCF's ties](#), which [include](#) some of the largest and most influential traditional and family value organisations in Europe and worldwide, position it at the centre of a vast international network of overlapping organisations and affiliations. These organisations include CitizenGo; Agenda Europe, a [professional advocacy network](#) organising activities against sexual and reproductive rights of women and sexual minorities in Europe; Alliance Defending Freedom, [an anti-LGBTQI hate group](#); Ordo Iuris, an ultra-conservative Polish legal think tank; and Tradition, Family and Property, a traditionalist Catholic movement.

[Novák gave](#) the [opening speech](#) at the One of Us conference in 2016, an event of the anti-abortion organisation One of Us. In 2017 the XI. WCF, the II. One of Us conferences and the II. Demographic Forum were organised together under the frame of the [Budapest Family Summit](#). On the event's website, the organisers stated that "our goal for Hungary is to become a "Family-friendly Country". In order to reach this goal, we wish to enter into cooperation with countries and organisations with similar values. It is a pleasure that Hungary has met with international recognition as a result of its family policy measures. This success provides an excellent basis for engaging in joint thinking and strengthening a family-friendly approach in our region and in farther areas as well." At this summit, many actors from the network were present, such as Jaime Mayor Oreja, Brian Brown⁴⁷, Ignacio Arsuaga⁴⁸, Birgit Kelle⁴⁹, Sophia

⁴⁴ Luca Volonté is an [Italian anti-sexual and reproductive health rights activist and former politician](#), and the member of CitizenGo's [Board of Trustees](#).

⁴⁵ Patrick/Pat Fagan is the director of the Marriage and Religion Research Institute [which was part of](#) the anti-LGBT hate group Family Research Council but now is part of the Catholic University of America.

⁴⁶ Jaime Mayor Oreja is a [former](#) Spanish politician, and former member of the European Parliament. He is the Honorary Chair of [Political Network for Values](#) and President of the [One of Us Federation](#).

⁴⁷ Brian Brown [fights against](#) same-sex marriage and to outlaw the "redefinition of marriage". He is the president of The National Organisation for Marriage, which aims to oppose state legislation allowing same-sex marriage in the United States, [president of WCF](#), and sits in the [Board of Trustees](#) of CitizenGo.

⁴⁸ Ignacio Arsuaga is [founder and president](#) of both HazteOir and CitizenGo.

⁴⁹ Birgit Kelle is a German anti-gender [journalist and writer](#), the author of several books in the topics of feminism, gender and motherhood.

Kuby⁵⁰, Sharon Slater, Marguerite Peeters⁵¹, and Carlo Cassini. The [III. Demographic Summit](#) was organised in 2019, where next to the returning guests (Sharon Slater, Jaime Mayor Oreja) there were high-profile politicians speaking, such as the President of Serbia, Aleksander Vučić, and the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, Andrej Babiš. In May 2021, Novák held the closing speech together with Jaime Mayor Oreja at an [online Hungarian webinar](#) organised by One of Us. The [IV. Demographic Summit](#) took place in Budapest in 2021, with conservative actors from the US, such as Mike Pence⁵², Gladden Pappin⁵³, Patrick Fagan, and Dan Schneider⁵⁴. Political Network for Values is hosting the [IV. Transatlantic Summit](#) in Budapest in May 2022. At all these events, Novák played a key role either as an organiser or as a speaker (or many times as both), clearly demonstrating the extent to which she is embedded into the international network.

6.1.3 Political Network for Values

[Political Network for Values](#) (PNfV) is an international umbrella organisation of anti-abortion, anti-LGBTQI, Christian and pro-family NGOs and activists from a wide range of countries, focusing mainly on the Spanish-speaking countries of Europe and the Americas. Besides promoting family protection and traditional values, PNfV's key characteristic is the presence of (radical) right-wing politicians and decision-makers⁵⁵. Hence the leadership of the organisation mainly consists of active and former politicians. PNfV has a broad international network⁵⁶: it is [connected](#) to organisations such as Alliance Defending Freedom⁵⁷, World Congress of Families, CitizenGo and the National Organisation for Marriage⁵⁸. Besides organising the [Transatlantic Summit](#) every two years, with the fourth taking place in Budapest in May 2022, PNfV organises a series, the [Transatlantic Webinars](#) too, at which Katalin Novák and the strategic and coordinating vice-president of [Kopp Mária Institute](#), Balázs Molnár, were speakers too. Although the organisation claims to be committed to positive values and a moderate tone, it is anti-abortion and considers marriage only legitimate between a man and a woman. The organisation has openly supported the [Polish anti-abortion law](#) and the Hungarian [anti-LGBTQI law](#). Political Network for Values has had a Hungarian subdivision since 2020 (Political Network for Values Hungary Association), whose aim was “finding and bringing together the conservative national and European parliamentarians of the continent, facilitating the exchange of information, experiences and good practices, and channelling conservative policy proposals into European policy thinking and decision-making”. In addition, it “aims to create professional, political forums to discuss issues that determine the EU's policy and future, in which concrete proposals and action plans are formulated and communicated

⁵⁰ Sophia Kuby is the Director of Strategic Relations and Training of Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), [an anti-LGBTQI hate group, one of the most active](#) US Christian Rights organisations involved in anti-gender activism in Europe.

⁵¹ Marguerite A. Peeters is a writer, in her books [she opposes](#) gender theory.

⁵² Mike Pence is a politician, broadcaster and lawyer, he was the vice-president of the USA between 2017-2021.

⁵³ Gladden Pappin is Christian-Conservative political scientist, university professor and guest lecturer at the Mathias Corvinus Collegium from Autumn 2021.

⁵⁴ Dan Scheider is the executive director of the American Conservative Union.

⁵⁵ Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2021) Anti-SRHR movements in Central Europe: Hungary. Manuscript

⁵⁶ Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2021) Anti-SRHR movements in Central Europe: Hungary. Manuscript

⁵⁷ Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) is [an anti-LGBTQI hate group, one of the most active](#) US Christian Rights organisations involved in anti-gender activism in Europe

⁵⁸ National Organisation for Marriage aims to oppose state legislation allowing same-sex marriage in the United States. The president of the organisation is Brian Brown, who [fights against](#) same-sex marriage.

to European policy-making”.⁵⁹ After Novák left the organisation in 2022, Fidesz MEP Enikő Győri joined as a [member of the advisory board](#) as a replacement.

6.1.4 Mathias Corvinus Collegium (MCC)

In the past few years, the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation was not a prominent topic for Mathias Corvinus Collegium, but it recently seems to have gained importance. This can be expected to intensify in the near future, based on the growing number of recently published books on the subject and the potential collaboration with European educational institutions.

As mentioned earlier, MCC has relations with international and regional networks. MCC mainly invites international actors either as guest speakers to its events⁶⁰, such as the [MCC Feszt](#) (e.g. Tucker Carlson⁶¹), [MCC Budapest Summit](#) (e.g. Paul Coleman⁶², Sophia Kuby, Gladden Pappin, Denis Prager), the lecture series [Patriotic Talks](#) (e.g. Jaime Mayor Oreja, Grégor Puppink⁶³, Luca Volonté) and [Budapest Lectures](#) (e.g. Marion Maréchal Le Pen) or as guest lecturers (e.g. [Francesco Giubilei](#)⁶⁴), by granting generous fellowships. Hence, these actors are presented as renowned foreign experts. MCC also publishes books on the topic, disseminating them through sponsored advertisements and launching events with the authors. These authors are either well-known to the Hungarian audiences from international events (such as [Grégor Puppink](#) and [Birgit Kelle](#)) or relatively new (e.g. [Maria Keffler](#), [Katy Faust](#)).

MCC aims to build relationships with conservative educational institutions across Europe. The international director of MCC, Dóra Szűcs, was present at the Collegium Intermarium (CI) conferences in 2021 ([Space of Freedom and Order](#) in May and [The Place of Truth in the Age of Cancel Culture](#) in October). CI is a higher educational institution which has close ties to the Polish ultraconservative organisation Ordo Iuris.⁶⁵ Additionally, Marion Marechal Le Pen expressed in an [interview](#) that she hopes her higher educational institution, [Institut des Sciences Sociales, Économiques et Politiques](#) (ISSEP), will build future cooperation with Collegium Intermarium and MCC.

6.1.5 Danube Institute

Danube Institute was founded in 2013 by the [publicly funded](#) Batthyány Lajos Foundation [with the aim of](#) “encouraging the transmission of ideas and people within the countries of Central Europe and between Central Europe, other parts of Europe, and the English-speaking world”. Its president is [John O’ Sullivan](#), who was a special adviser to Margaret Thatcher and is a journalist. The activities of the institute include (1) establishing and supporting research groups and research projects to interpret and advance current thinking within conservatism and democratic nationalism; (2) encouraging the exchange of scholars, political leaders, and cultural figures through international conferences and exchange

⁵⁹ Source: The 2020 annual report of the organisation downloaded from [birosag.hu](#).

⁶⁰ Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2021) Anti-SRHR movements in Central Europe: Hungary. Manuscript

⁶¹ Tucker Carlson is an American [television host](#) and conservative political commentator on Fox News Channel.

⁶² Paul Coleman is the [Executive Director of ADF](#).

⁶³ Grégor Puppink is the director of European Centre for Law and Justice, an [influential ultra-conservative organisation](#) that has its roots in the United States, founded in the 1990s.

⁶⁴ Francesco Giubilei is founder of the Italian Nazione Futura, an organisation which is a member of the [Alliance for the Common Good](#), founded by Ordo Iuris and the Centre for Fundamental Rights in 2021.

⁶⁵ Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2021) Anti-SRHR movements in Central Europe: Collegium Intermatium. Manuscript

fellowships in Hungary; (3) engaging and supporting young people interested in science, scholarship and political ideas; (4) encourage relevant discussions on matters of importance to Hungary. Although the Institute is doing expert work, it was [criticised](#), particularly O’Sullivan, for being pro-Orbán and supporting the politics of Fidesz abroad.

The Institute has a minimal international network concerning anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation. It is involved in the network mainly through cooperating with Mathias Corvinus Collegium. Their joint event series, [Patriotic Talks](#), has hosted some notable international actors. In addition, Danube Institute [invited Gabriela Kuby](#) to Hungary for its conference in 2014.

6.1.6 Edit Frivaldszky

The first Hungarian actor involved in the European network of anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI actors was presumably Edit Frivaldszky. She has participated in many international events, been involved in petitions and initiatives, and attended [at least three WCF summits](#). Moreover, she is the [founder](#) and leader of the Hungarian leg of CitizenGo.

She [was present](#) at the event in 2011 in Rome, Italy, where the first idea to launch a pan-European anti-abortion campaign came up. This has become the [One of Us European Citizens Initiative](#) and federation. Frivaldszky became the initiative’s National Coordinator for Hungary and a member of its Executive Committee. Her organisation, the anti-abortion Together for Life Association, was the only [Hungarian actor](#) involved in the initiative. The [One of Us](#) European Citizens Initiative, which became unsuccessful in 2014, demanded that the EU ban and end the financing of activities which presuppose the destruction of human embryos, particularly in research, development aid and public health. As she said in an [interview](#), she was actively networking with pro-life, pro-family, religious and political organisations and leaders to make this initiative successful in Hungary. In 2013, her organisation, Together for Life Association, signed a [document](#) that supported the [Russian ‘gay propaganda law’](#).

In 2015, she participated in the meeting of [Agenda Europe](#). This [professional advocacy network](#) plays a crucial role in organising activities against the sexual and reproductive rights of women and sexual minorities. After the meeting, she submitted to the European Commission the [Mum, Dad and Kids](#) European Citizens’ Initiative as the main organiser “to protect marriage and the family”. This initiative was unsuccessful as well. She participated in almost all of the Demographic Summits. Her other organisation, the Human Dignity Center, has joined two anti-gender anti-LGBTQI [international initiatives](#) of the Center for Fundamental Rights and Ordo Iuris.

6.1.7 CitizenGo Hungary

CitizenGo is an [ultra-Catholic organisation](#) and a [hub](#) for conservative campaigners [claiming to be active](#) in more than 50 countries in 12 languages. It started as a project of the Spanish ultraconservative ‘family values’ organisation HazteOir in 2010. Its main activity is via its platform for online petitions calling for restrictions against sexual and reproductive health rights. It has also run public stunt campaign projects, such as the “[bus of freedom](#)” touring Spain, grabbing attention with its slogan “boys have penises, girls have vulvas, don’t be

fooled”.⁶⁶ CitizenGo regularly participates in international events, such as the World Congress of Families (since [2012](#) and as recently as [2019](#)) and the Transatlantic Summit (e.g., in [2017](#), [2019](#), [2022](#)) as an organiser or sponsor.

CitizenGo Hungary [was founded](#) and has been led by Edit Frivaldszky. The organisation’s [campaign coordinator](#) is Eszter Schittl-Zaymus, [former director](#) of the Human Dignity Center, one of Edit Frivaldszky’s other organisation. CitizenGo Hungary is active both in writing petitions and co-organising events. Some of their petitions are adopted from the international CitizenGo portal⁶⁷, such as one targeting Lego for selling rainbow-coloured diverse figures (an [international](#) and [Hungarian](#) petition). Still, others are originally Hungarian, such as the “Support Hungary protecting children from LGBT indoctrination” ([Hungarian](#) and [international](#) petition). CitizenGo Hungary co-organised events in Hungary, for example, with the [Youth in the Service of Life](#), the youth wing of Edit Frivaldszky’s pro-life organisation Together for Life Association.

6.1.8 Tradition, Family and Property (TFP) in Hungary

Tradition, Family and Property [is](#) a traditionalist Catholic movement founded in Brazil in 1960. It played a crucial role in establishing a global network that works against sexual and reproductive health rights. In the 1980s, it expanded to the US through influential connections to the Republican Party. Post-2000, TFP [reoriented itself towards Europe](#), forging close links to organisations such as CitizenGO and Agenda Europe and setting up a network of national TFP branches, such as the Piotr Skarga Association in Poland.

TFP tried to [establish a presence](#) in Hungary in 2015 when the Polish TFP subdivision Piotr Skarga Association founded an organisation in Hungary, the Hungarian Foundation for Christian Civilisation (HFfCC). Although TFP organisations were present across European countries by this time, the Hungarian branch soon lost ground for various reasons. One of them was that they had too many direct ideological competitors in Hungary. Another reason was financial disagreements between the Hungarian and the Polish sides. The last visible activity of HFfCC was a planned movie screening in 2020, which had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since then, the organisation has seemed to be inactive. For a while, the organisation used a [website](#) and a [Facebook page](#) called Pannonia Christiana, registered by the Piotr Skarga Association. These have been inactive since 2020, too.

HFfCC [organised conferences](#) and had close ties with the Hungarian far-right scene. One of the organisation's leaders, Péter Szász, was [previously involved](#) in the neo-Hungarist Pax Hungarica [movement](#). HFfCC was a co-organiser of the [anti-abortion protest](#) at the Polish Embassy in Budapest in 2016 among several far-right organisations. Additionally, in 2017 it [organised an event](#) with the Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (HVIM), one of the most active far-right organisations in Hungary regarding anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation. [Other representatives of HFfCC](#) were Norbert Filemon, a former journalist at Mandiner, currently editor in chief of Axióma, a government-close media platform; Áron Czopf, a journalist at Mandiner; Balázs D. Fekete, a member of the Templarius Foundation; and two members of the Piotr Skarga Foundation, Sławomir Olejniczak and Arkadiusz Stelmach.

⁶⁶ The campaign was a reaction to a preceding [campaign](#) of a transgender support group that aimed to raise public awareness about transgender children by running busses with the text: “There are girls with penises and boys with vulvas.”

⁶⁷ Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2021) Anti-SRHR movements in Central Europe: Hungary. Manuscript

6.1.9 Imre Téglásy

Imre Téglásy is an anti-abortion activist in Hungary with close ties to the Hungarian far-right scene and the leader of the Alfa Alliance. He has also been active in international networking. He is the Hungarian representative of at least two international organisations. [One of them](#) is Human Life International⁶⁸, a Roman Catholic anti-abortion organisation from the US and the founder of the Center for Family and Human Rights (C-Fam). Besides, he is the [Hungarian representative](#) of the Britain-based, pro-Kremlin, far-right Knights Templar International, which [welcomed](#) the Hungarian anti-LGBTQI law in 2021. Alfa Alliance got funds from both of these organisations, from Human Life International [in 2013](#) and the Knights Templar International [in 2016](#). Alfa Alliance also [supports](#) the international network Voice of the Family.

6.1.10 Family Science Alliance (FSA)

[Family Science Alliance](#) was founded in 2019 [as a successor to](#) Family Science Platform, founded in 2017 [by the Batthyány Society of Professors](#). The only visible member of FSA is the [European Family Science Society](#) (EFSS), founded in 2007. The original name of EFSS, used until 2015, was Science for the Family. FSA and EFSS share the same values concerning couple relationships, marriage and family. They state that “marriage is a (...) lifelong alliance between a woman and a man” and “human life is entitled to protection and dignity from conception”. They also mention gender without using the term itself: “The dissemination of ideologies questioning or denying the two sexes of human beings should also be avoided as these are regarded as political-ideological experiments rather than a society organising power, furthermore they deny the dignity of women and men, and their short and long-term social impacts are incalculable.” The [Family Science Journal](#) is accessible on both organisations' web pages. The Journal has only four editions: one in 2014, 2015, 2020 and 2021, respectively. One of the journal's [editorial board](#) members, supposedly since 2020, has been Tymotheusz Zych, rector of Collegium Intermarium and former member and vice president of the board of Ordo Iuris.

The leaders of both the organisations and the main editors of the journal are Imre Balásházy and Győző Czettele. In 2012, [together with](#) Imre Téglásy and Fidesz politician Mónika Keresztes, they founded the Hungarian Family Science Society. This became known for being [criticised by the public](#) because, in their [mission statement](#), they excluded same-sex couples and their children from being a family and declared themselves anti-abortion. More organisations, such as the [Hungarian Civil Liberties Union \(TASZ\)](#) and the [Hungarian LGBTQI Alliance](#), objected to the organisation's missions.

FSA has some international connections. It participated in various [events](#), such as the first three Demographic Summits and the Budapest Family Summit. Both FSA and EFSS are [members of the international Empowered Youth Coalition](#) alongside numerous organisations worldwide, including CitizenGo. In 2021, FSA organised an international conference, called “[Culture of Relationship and Demography](#)”, with speakers such as Zoltán Balog, Brian S. Brown, Patrick Fagan, Edit Frivaldszky, Dániel Füle, Gabriele Kuby, Balázs Molnár, Katalin Novák, Eszter Párkányi, Eszter Schittl, Sharon Slater and Zych Tymotesz. The conference aimed to [protect the traditional family model as](#) “(...) there is a cultural war going on against the institution of marriage and the family. The three main fronts of this attack so far are free

⁶⁸ Human Life International is the world's largest anti-abortion organisation.

love, homosexuality, and the spread of gender and queer theory”. The Ministry of Human Capacities partly funded the event.

6.2 Hungarian-US connections

6.2.1 Hungarian actors facilitating relations with US actors

Hungary and PM Orbán have become a point of reference for US conservatives for conservative policies, particularly around family and gender. The Hungarian government has strategically and systematically established connections to US actors for various reasons. It wanted to influence its perception in the USA, increase its image internationally, present its international ‘fame’ to the domestic audience in Hungary, and counterbalance the heavy criticism it receives for its autocratic policies and corruption. Mathias Corvinus Collegium and Centre for Fundamental Rights are the main Hungarian actors building and facilitating connections to US actors.

6.2.1.1 Mathias Corvinus Collegium (MCC)

MCC’s central role is to invite intellectuals and thinkers such as university professors, authors, journalists, and media personalities to spend several months in Hungary as guest lecturers and MCC fellows, receiving generous fellowships. During this time, guests get acquainted with the situation in Hungary, hold lectures, publish in Hungarian government-organised news outlets, get interviewed by pro-government journalists, and are invited to government-organised media and events organised by MCC or other pro-government organisations. A key figure in establishing and maintaining relations seems to be MCC’s Board Director and Deputy Minister of the Prime Minister’s Office Balázs Orbán, who is also the political director of PM Orbán.

6.2.1.2 Center for Fundamental Rights (CfFR)

The Center for Fundamental Rights has built strong ties with the Republican Party in the past few years. CfFR’s Director Miklós Szánthó and Strategic Director István Kovács [took part](#) in the most significant Republican annual event, the Conservative Political Action Conference, for the first time in 2020. Since then, Szánthó has been a regular speaker at the events ([February](#) and [June](#) 2020, [February](#) and [July](#) 2021, and [February](#) 2022). CfFR [proudly announced](#) at the beginning of 2020 that in May that year CPAC would take place in Budapest, [co-organised](#) by [the Mathias Corvinus Collegium](#). However, the event had to be postponed because of the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021 they [set](#) the [new date](#) for March 2022, which they postponed again because of the Russo-Ukrainian war to May the same year. It will be the first time a European country hosts a CPAC event. The event in Hungary is highly significant for the Hungarian government, demonstrated when PM Viktor Orbán [mentioned it in a speech](#) in 2021. According to CfFR and Mandiner, Dan Schneider, the executive director of the American Conservative Union, said that they had chosen Hungary because it has become the [leading force of conservatism in Europe](#), and they were looking for a [reliable partner that represents Europe well](#). Miklós Szánthó [claimed](#) that CPAC in Budapest will be one of the events opening the counter strike against the “comprehensive and ultimate ideological attack [that] is taking place against the Judeo-Christian foundations of our culture, the essence of national identity and state sovereignty, and the family as a creation of a male-female unit” as “history, with (...) the gender ideology threatening the healthy mental and physical development of the children,

has crossed a red line along with the open society network that can no longer be treated as a purely political matter”.

6.2.2 US conservative actors with connections to Hungary

- **Dennis Prager** is a conservative radio talk show host, writer, and founder of media company PragerU, which creates five-minute videos on various political, economic, and philosophical topics from an American conservative perspective. Among others, he has produced content on [erasing gender](#) and [gender identities](#). Once, he [claimed](#) that unvaccinated Americans are modern “pariahs”, more than gay men and drug users used to be during the AIDS crisis. He was a speaker at the [Patriotic Talks](#) series organised by MCC and the Danube Institute and at MCC’s 2021 [summer festival](#), where he [spoke](#) on the media and freedom of speech. His [fee](#) for this contribution was \$30,000. In his presentation, he [stated](#) that an American who tweets that men cannot give birth would be condemned and banned from Twitter. According to him, in the US, it is not acceptable to say a person is male or female, only animals. “Humans are the only animals that are not men or women anymore.” In an [interview](#) given to MCC, he [claimed](#) that sex education of children must be the exclusive duty of parents.
- **Tucker Carlson** is a conservative TV host since 2009 with Fox News. As a university student, he was a member of the Dan White Society, possibly named for the man who killed Harvey Milk, California’s first openly gay elected official, [according to](#) his 1991 Trinity College yearbook entry. In 2019, he [talked](#) about parallels between homosexuality and wildfires in California. In the 2000s, he made racist, homophobic and insulting [comments](#) about Iraqis, Barack Obama, Muslims and gay people, on top of [jokes](#) about lesbians and sexual violence against minors. In Summer 2021, he did an exclusive [interview](#) with PM Orbán, for which Donald Trump warmly [congratulated](#) PM Orbán. At the same time, he also received a lot of [criticism](#) in the US for praising PM Orbán and his policies. In 2021, he [spoke](#) at the MCC festival.
- **Rod Dreher** is a senior editor and blogger at The American Conservative, the author of several books, and has written about various topics in publications like the National Review, The Weekly Standard and The Wall Street Journal. His [views](#) on sexuality and gender are based on biblical Christian teaching; hence he is [opposed](#) to same-sex sexual relations and committed to “[gender binary](#)”. Dreher was a guest lecturer at MCC in 2021, with the financial support of the Danube Institute. He often defended the so-called ‘child protection’ (or ‘gay propaganda’) law in both the [Hungarian](#) and the [US](#) press, which in his view, ensures normality and the security of family and closes the door on LGBTQI propaganda. [According to him](#), gender is an ideology that is “abnormal in a grotesque way, and destroys families and society”. He [criticises](#) the situation in the US, which he calls extreme because many schools have policies on how to cope with students who claim to be “transgender, non-binary or anything alike”. According to him, many schools do not inform the parents in such cases due to the assumption that the school must protect the child from their parents. His 2017 book “The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation” was translated into Hungarian and published by [MCC Press](#) in 2022. Besides being [interviewed](#) by Gergely Szilvay once, his pieces are regularly published on the Hungarian online news portal Mandiner.
- **Steve Bannon** is the founder of the media company Breitbart and former strategic advisor to Donald Trump. In 2016, the LGBTQ news portal Washington Blade

[published](#) a collection of his extremist statements, including one that criticised a retail chain for allowing employees to use the toilet that fits their gender identity. In a recent [podcast episode](#), aired just hours before the Russian invasion of Ukraine started, he and the host stated with satisfaction that Putin and Russia are against LGBTQI. Bannon strongly supports the Hungarian government, as reflected in his [lecture](#) at the Visegrád group's "Future of Europe" conference in 2018, when he met with PM Orbán personally. Ahead of the 2019 EP elections, he founded an umbrella organisation called "The Movement" to support and coordinate the campaign of the anti-EU, far-right and populist parties across the EU, but not all welcomed his initiative, which ultimately [failed](#).

- **Patrick J. Deneen** is a Christian-conservative political scientist, university professor, and author. In 2019, while in Budapest for the Hungarian launch of his book "Why Liberalism Failed", he [met](#) with PM Orbán and MCC's Board Director Balázs Orbán. In 2021, he [expressed](#) his support for the so-called 'child protection law' and called Hungary's family protection policies exemplary. In his view, sex education in schools in the US poses a danger. In an [interview](#) with the Hungarian state radio, Deneen said that activists in the US want to persuade children about sexual identity being only a question of choice, which can be changed at any time. The good thing about the Hungarian law, [in his opinion](#), is that it prevents such events and tendencies from happening. [According to him](#), LGBTQI movements pose a long-term threat to civilisation. In 2021, he held seminars as MCC's [guest lecturer](#) in Budapest and was [interviewed](#) for Madniner by Gergely Szilvay.
- **David Reaboi** is a conservative advisor, lobbyist, blogger, journalist, author, and national security expert. Even though he denies sympathising with the American alt-right, he co-founded the national security media company Big Peace with Andrew Breitbart, which has since merged with Breitbart News. In his early career, [he worked](#) for the [Center for Security Policy](#), [considered](#) by rights defenders a hate group, specifically an anti-LGBTQI organisation. He had close relations with Steve Bannon and Sebastian Gorka⁶⁹, and served as a [lobbyist for the Hungarian government](#) in the US. His [task](#) was to "pave the way for finding new friends among the American Conservatives". He is said to have contributed to forming a generally positive public [image](#) of Minister of Justice Judit Varga.
- **Sohrab Ahmari** is an Iran-born Christian-conservative writer who sharply criticises liberalism, modern consumer societies and gender, and is opposed to same-sex marriage. He visited Hungary as MCC's guest lecturer in 2021. In an [interview](#) for Mandiner by Gergely Szilvay, he said gender ideology had been present for a while. Still, it became more widespread and developed a goal of changing society entirely, based on a perception that diverges from reality. According to him, authorities treat claims of gender ideology as dogmas that cannot be questioned. For instance, instead of "pregnant women", one has to say "pregnant person" so that transgender persons do not feel excluded, which is a clear denial of reality for him. In an earlier [interview](#), he expressed his opposition to education on gender issues in secondary schools.
- **Gladden Pappin** is a Christian-conservative political scientist, university professor and MCC's guest lecturer from Autumn 2021. He participated in the IV. Demographic

⁶⁹ Sebastian or Sebestyén Gorka was a former deputy [assistant](#) to US president Donald Trump in 2017, he was a contributor to [Fox News](#) between 2017-2019. According to [sources](#) he was the an adviser to Viktor Orbán and he maintained [ties](#) to, and voiced opinions supportive of, extreme-right and anti-Semitic Hungarian groups and political parties.

Summit in 2021 and calls Hungary's family policies exemplary. In an [interview](#) with Mandiner, he said that while choosing non-traditional forms of union is a question of personal freedom, everybody feels in their heart that it devalues relationships. In MCC's conference on the media in 2021, he asserted that Facebook would have to accept if the state limits pornographic or LGBTQI content.

- The **National Conservatism Conference** takes place in Brussels in March 2022, [organised](#) by the Edmund Burke Foundation, with John O'Sullivan from Danube Institute also involved. The [conference aims](#) at "a transatlantic coalition of national conservatives together with anti-Marxist liberals committed to preserving and defending the independent nation-state". The event will centre around internal and external threats faced by the West, including "a progressive, cultural neo-Marxism making a bid to capture leading institutions on both sides of the Atlantic" and the "European Union usurping the authority of its sovereign member states and using the power of the purse to exact political and ideological compliance in areas such as energy security, social policy, and immigration". Speakers will include Deputy Minister of the Prime Minister's Office Balázs Orbán, who also [participated](#) in the 2021 event.

6.3 Hungarian-Russian connections

6.3.1 Basis for friendly relations: ideological proximity and similarities

Russia has long positioned itself as the moral compass for countries that adhere to illiberal values. Russian official political discourse positions conservative values against the obsolete Western, liberal ideas. For instance, in June 2019, Putin claimed in an [interview](#) that "The liberal idea ... has come into conflict with the interests of the overwhelming majority of the population," exemplifying such ideas through the country's policies towards refugees, migrants or LGBTQI issues. Hence, it may not be surprising that PM Orbán is often described and promoted in the Russian pro-regime media as a brave warrior and protector of Hungarian values who does not shy away from going against the tide of European liberalism. The Russian state-owned nationwide TV network, run by the Russian Ministry of Defence, [Zvezda](#), presented Orbán as "a critic of anti-Russian Western politics" in April 2018. In June 2021, [sports.ru](#) called PM Orbán "a wild soccer fan", who differs "from the liberal and tolerant politicians of Europe", "sympathises with Russia at least verbally", "opposes Western sanctions" (although extending them), and "communicates warmly with Vladimir Putin". According to the article, Putin and Orbán are "in many ways (...) really similar. Both expand their powers and strive to stay in power as long as possible. (...) Both build a special state bound together by family values, patriotic education and nationalism."

6.3.2 Russian media's assessment of Hungary's anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI stance

The similarities between the Russian and Hungarian anti-LGBTQI stances are hard to miss. One example is the resemblance of the 'gay propaganda laws' in the two countries, which Russian media outlets have acknowledged (e.g., [RBK Daily](#)⁷⁰ or [Gazeta.ru](#)). Another parallel is anchoring the family's definition as a union between a man and a woman in the legal

⁷⁰ Not available due to war in Ukraine

system. During a meeting concerning drafting amendments to the Russian Constitution in 2020, Putin insisted: “As for ‘Parent #1’ and ‘Parent #2’, I’ve already said publicly, and I’ll repeat it again: as long as I’m the president...there will be a ‘father’ and a ‘mother’.” PM Orbán echoed this very thought in a [speech](#) in November 2021, when he claimed that “in Hungary, marriage requires a man and a woman, that the father is a man, the mother is a woman.” Shortly after this, Hungary included this phrase in its constitution.

Detailed analysis of Russian media regarding Hungary’s anti-LGBT stance reveals an **overwhelmingly approving, in many ways admiring attitude**. Often, **newspapers externalise LGBTQI support to that of the West and portray the EU as a political behemoth compelling Hungary to think a certain way against their will**. More importantly, Russian media has capitalised on the events to **depict Europe as divided and the EU as a weak institution** capable of empty threats and not much more.

Russian language articles often present **Russia as a role model**, when it comes to anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI stance in other countries. In July 2021, a Svoboda [article](#) asked whether Orbán has “become a ‘student’ of Putin in part by attacking the rights of sexual minorities”. In February 2020, a report on [Russia Today](#)⁷¹ claimed that Eastern European countries – primarily Poland, Hungary, Romania and Estonia – follow the lead of Moscow in questions of LGBTQI rather than looking at the West as a role model. The article concludes that these countries are “drawing inspiration from Russia, where Vladimir Putin defends traditional values in the face of the so-called ‘decaying’ West.” Moreover, a recurring narrative portrays EU values as irrational and outright harmful and Hungary, the sovereign state under attack, as merely protecting minors. For instance, as [REN TV](#) and [RIA Novosti](#) reported, Russia’s Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in July 2021:“(…) Apparently, from the point of view of the values of the European Union (...) it is fundamentally important that children of primary school age understand all the intricacies of the gender-sexual preferences of some adults (...), even before gaining basic knowledge about the world around them.”⁷¹

Another technique of Russian media is representing the EU as a despotic intruder, juxtaposed with democratic Hungary. For example, in July 2021, when describing Hungary’s plans to hold a referendum about the law on “anti-LGBT propaganda”, [RIA Novosti](#) argued that Orbán relied on the “common will of the people” through a referendum to resist Brussels’s requests (namely, their attempt to “force Hungary to accept migrants”). [Rossiyskaya Gazeta](#) described the EU’s criticism towards Hungary as a panic-like, arrogant reaction, and PM Orbán, in contrast, as a well-reasoned leader. The article indeed follows this line of the EU’s colonising attitude, implying that when a country’s norms are not to the liking of the EU, the country is called a “wrong and sick democracy”, which must be corrected. [Rossiya 24](#) also assessed EU criticism as disrespect for Hungary’s sovereignty, which “is secondary in importance when its conversation is joined by LGBT allies in the European Parliament”. This news segment suggestively included NGOs in the story, insinuating that NGOs are foreign agents representing the interests of the West.

Multiple media outlets also exploited the contention around Hungary’s anti-LGBTQI policies to present a picture of a divided Europe. For instance, Rossiya 24 anti-LGBTQI movements in Bulgaria, Georgia and Poland to counter-balance the widely publicised German attempt at criticising Hungary’s anti-LGBTQI stance during a football match. However, some news outlets simply reproduced Hungary’s official stance. For example, in June 2021, the news portal [Izvestiya](#) published an analysis by Aleksey Pushkov, an active politician of the

⁷¹ Not available due to war in Ukraine

United Russia party and a [key voice](#) in the Kremlin's so-called traditional values push. The article defended the Hungarian law claiming it does not discriminate against LGBT rights since the ban is not on LGBT culture but its propaganda. Russian media, blogs and social sites often quote Katalin Novák and her conservative stance as well. For example, Novák is often cited for her statement that Hungary has only two genders, male and female (e.g., [Yuzhnyi Federalnyi](#) in November 2020, [KONT](#) in December 2020, [Yandex](#) in November 2020). [One site](#) states that "in Russia, the words of the Hungarian official are treated positively," demonstrated by a post from journalist Yulia Vityazeva praising Novák for "being able to maintain her sanity and not be afraid to go against the dictates of 'tolerance'".

In summary, Russian media only presents the official Hungarian narrative regarding the LGBTQI law. In addition, Russian media regularly portrays Hungary as a strong country that stands up for its interests (without consideration of the plurality of interests within the country), with such "fearless warriors" as Orbán and Novák.

6.3.3 Ties and Networks Promoting Conservative Family Values and anti-LGBTQI Values between Hungary and Russia

Political Capital's 2016 study "[The Weaponization of Culture: Kremlin's traditional agenda and the export of values to Central Europe](#)" has identified various actors that promote the Kremlin's illiberal, ultraconservative agenda in Hungary. At that time, Russian ideological influence was mainly spread by two groups of actors. First, it was the Hungarian far right, including the then far-right Jobbik party, right-wing extremist organisations and their media networks, and the governing Fidesz party and its proxies (e.g., government-organised media and GONGOs). According to the study, in the prior years, the Kremlin had the most impact on far-right organisations and "those Christian, pro-family and pro-life NGOs which fall under Fidesz leadership". In terms of anti-gender, anti-LGBTQI mobilisation, one of the actors at that time was the Christian Women Against Femen [Facebook page](#), which was founded and operated by the Jobbik Youth Section, but ceased its operation in 2018. The page had [strong connections](#) to pro-Russian French far-right circles and promoted French events like the Manif Pour Tous movement. In June 2013, the page organised a demonstration both in Budapest and Warsaw in front of the French embassies in support of nineteen activists of the far-right Identitarian movement (Génération Identitaire) who [occupied](#) the French Socialist Party's roof to protest the legalisation of same-sex marriage. Moreover, the Association of Christian Intellectuals (Keresztény Értelmiségiek Szövetsége, KÉSZ), which was founded by Fidesz's sister party, KDNP, [signed](#) a petition (not available anymore) supporting the Russian 'gay propaganda law'. The petition was also signed by Together for Life Association, led by Edit Frivaldszky, and Oikosz Foundation, a Fidesz-proxy GONGO, which [operated](#) an online news portal echoing Fidesz's narratives (operations terminated). An important actor has been Alfa Alliance for the Protection of Unborn, New-Born Babies, Children and Families, a pro-life organisation, led by Imre Téglássy, who was the Hungarian representative of Knights Templar International (KTI), a Britain-based international far-right organisation with close ties to the Kremlin; KTI's leaders [Nick Griffin](#) and James Dowson openly served Russian interests, attended pro-Kremlin events and spoke out in favour of the Kremlin's agenda [many times](#).

6.3.3.1 Demographic Summit

In 2015, Budapest held the [Demographic Summit](#), which hosted anti-LGBTQI and anti-women's rights organisations and was attended by Igor Belobordov, the Head of the Sector of

Demography, Migration and Ethno-Religious Problems of the Center for Humanitarian Studies of the [Russian Institute for Strategic Studies](#) (RISS)⁷². Beloborodov, a pro-life activist, connected the WCF with Orthodox Cleric Archpriest Dmitriy Smirnov, who in turn [introduced](#) the WCF to its future Russian representative and instigator of its post-2012 revitalisation Aleksey Komov. Katalin Novák expressed her gratitude through a [letter](#) published on RISS' website in December 2015. Beloborodov's presentation, since then removed from RISS' website, was entitled "Family-Oriented Solutions as a Strategy to Overcome Depopulation".

6.3.3.2 World Congress of Families (WCF)

In September 2014, Gergely Pröhle, the deputy state secretary at the Ministry of Human Resources in charge of international and European Union affairs, [attended](#) the event "International Forum: Large Family and Future of Humanity" in Moscow as the representative of the Hungarian government. The event was supposed to be the eighth annual congress of WCF. However, due to the Russian annexation of Crimea, and because three Russians individuals (Vladimir Yakunin, Yelena Mizulina, and Aleksey Pushkov) involved with the event were among those sanctioned by the United States and Australia, the WCF nominally pulled out of the conference. Hence, WCF's name was removed from the program. The event was [handed off](#) to a consortium including the Russian Orthodox Church, the Vladimir Yakunin Center of National Glory, the St. Andrew the First-Called Foundation, and Konstantin Malofeev's Saint Basil the Great Charitable Foundation. Ultimately, the event was a WCF summit in [all but name](#), even keeping the same logo, the majority of its speakers and the Kremlin State Palace as a venue. Initially, State Secretary Katalin Novák was [supposed](#) to attend the conference, but most probably due to the event's rebranding, Pröhle was delegated instead. Hungary was the only EU member state that was represented by a government member.

In April 2019, [RT](#)⁷³ reviewed an article from [The Times](#) that, commenting on the 2019 meeting in Verona, Italy, described the Word Congress of Families as "an excuse for the Kremlin to get closer to European populists". At the same time, CitizenGo's Russian VK page at length quoted Novák's speech at the WCF in Verona and posted her speech as a Youtube video. The address and the video were also approvingly posted on the CitizenGo's Russian [website](#).

About 20 people from Russia attended the 2019 Congress meeting. Archbishop Anthony of Vienna and Budapest [read out](#) Patriarch Kirill's greetings, and Deputy Viktor Vladislavovich Zubarev read the State Duma's greetings. Moreover, Archpriest Dimitry Smirnov, Chairman of the Patriarchal Commission for Family Affairs, Protection of Motherhood and Childhood, [gave a speech](#) at the event.

6.3.3.3 Russian Orthodox Church (ROC)⁷⁴

There seems to be a growing collaboration between ROC and the Hungarian government, and ROC representatives have expressed their support for developments in

⁷² The main purpose of the Institute is providing "information and analytical support of the federal governmental bodies when forming strategic directions of the governmental policy in the area of national security of the Russian Federation," according to their website. Source: <https://en.riss.ru/about-us/>. RISS has also been described as collaborating with the Kremlin on activities in Crimea and election interference in the US. Source: <https://vsquare.org/ordo-iuris-and-a-global-web-of-ultra-conservative-organisations/>.

⁷³ Not available due to war in Ukraine

⁷⁴ If not indicated differently, timeline of contacts between ROC and the Hungarian government is based on the information from the Consulate of the Russian Federation in Debrecen - <https://debrecen.mid.ru/ru/countries/bilateral-relations/>.

Hungary. According to a comment given to [RIA Novosti](#) in November 2020 by Vakhtang Kipshidze, deputy chairman of the synodal department of the Moscow Patriarchate for relations between the church and society and the media, the ROC supported the initiative of the Hungarian government to enshrine the concept of sex and marriage in the basic law. Moreover, in an [article](#) by the Orthodox news site Form in June 2021, Vladimir Legoyda⁷⁵, head of the Synodal Department for Church Relations with Society and the Media, stated: "Hungary can serve as a vivid example of positive cooperation between the Church and the state in the field of protecting traditional family values in modern Europe".

The first publicly communicated connection between the ROC and the Hungarian government seems to have happened in November 2012, when the Hungarian government signed an agreement with the Hungarian diocese of the ROC in Budapest. In December 2013, Metropolitan Hilarion, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, met with PM Orbán. In April 2013, Patriarch Kirill received Hungary's Minister of Human Resources, Zoltán Balog (who oversaw church issues), and in March 2015, he received Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén. As mentioned above, in 2014, Deputy State Secretary of the Ministry of Human Resources Gergely Pröhle attended the semi-WCF event "International Forum: Large Family and Future of Humanity" in Moscow, which probably was an important milestone in building relations with the ROC as well. In 2016, Hungary's State Secretary of the Ministry of Human Resources Miklós Soltész and the head of the Hungarian diocese, Bishop Tikhon of Podolsk, signed an agreement on allocating funds for the restoration of the Russian Orthodox Cathedral in Budapest. The bishop stressed that this was Budapest's first such official decision, and it was "unprecedented." According to him, the ROC saw this as part of "the general context of the development of Russian-Hungarian relations to protect traditional values in society." According to [RIA Novosti](#), the allocation of funds for the restoration was a personal decision of PM Orbán.

In January 2017, Patriarch Kirill met in Moscow with Miklós Soltész, during which the Patriarch accepted the invitation of PM Orbán to visit Hungary after the restoration works of the Cathedral were completed. In September 2018, [Archbishop](#) Anthony of Vienna and Budapest [met with Viktor Orban](#) in Budapest in September 2018. The meeting took place in the Parliament and was attended by the Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Policy János Balla, newly appointed Ambassador of Hungary to Russia Norbert Konkoy, Secretary of the Budapest-Hungarian Diocese Archpriest Kirill Tatarka, and assistant adviser to the ruling bishop Priest Svyatoslav Bulakh. During the meeting, the archbishop expressed gratitude for the assistance provided by the Hungarian Government to the Budapest-Hungarian Diocese of the ROC in restoring and constructing churches. According to the [official site](#) of the Moscow Patriarchy, during a meeting in Budapest in September 2019, Zsolt Semjén awarded the Hungarian Order of Merit to Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, the Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate. The Merit was given for "the tireless proclamation of the value of Christianity and its power in uniting the community, for attracting the younger generation to these values, for ecclesiastical and diplomatic work and promoting international cooperation of Christian communities." Hungarian President János Áder awarded this high state award on the proposal of PM Orbán. A further boost to the relations between the Hungarian government and the ROC was provided by the issue of

⁷⁵ Legoyda is a Russian public figure, journalist, university professor, and political scientist with a list of positions: professor of the Department of World literature and culture, Moscow State Institute of International Relations; co-founder, editor-in-chief of Foma magazine; Chairman of the Department for Church's Society and Mass Media Relations (Russian Orthodox Church); and Acting Head of the Press Service of the Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus'.

protecting Christians. In October 2019, PM Orbán initiated talks with church hierarchs about the plight of Christians in the Middle East, according to [Argumenty i Fakti](#). At the [meeting](#) held in Budapest, in addition to the Hungarian and Russian leaders, all the hierarchs of the Syrian Christian churches were present: the patriarch of the Syrian Catholic Church, the patriarchs of the Antiochian Orthodox and Antiochian Orthodox Churches, the patriarch of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church, and the representative of the Russian Orthodox Church, Archimandrite Filaret. Vladimir Putin stressed that Russia would do everything possible to help Christians in the region. In November 2019, in Budapest, the II International Conference on the Persecution of Christians in the Modern World took place, which gathered several religious and political leaders. [Regnum](#) reported that another roundtable took place in the Hungarian capital on the same days, entitled “The Russian Orthodox Church and compatriots: the experience of cooperation in the countries of the Middle East and Africa”. During the roundtable, Metropolitan Hilarion, Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, recalled that “recently, Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Budapest and, as part of this visit, he met with the heads of Middle Eastern Christian Churches. The meeting was organised by the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who also participated in it.” Metropolitan Hilarion praised Hungary’s leadership for “making special efforts to help the Christian Churches in the Middle East”. At the meeting, Putin also stressed the importance of joining efforts in order to protect the interests of Christians.

In summary, there is a visible politicisation of the ROC both within and outside Russia. A testament to the political interests of the ROC is, for example, its support for the development of the draft "Fundamentals of State Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Russian Spiritual and Moral Values", which has been widely discussed in Russian society, and which, according to [ROC's statement](#) from February 2022, should be based on religious traditions.

6.4 Hungarian-German connections⁷⁶

There are a lot of relations between the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI discourse and mobilisation in Hungary and Germany. Regarding the timeline, the anti-gender discourse in Germany started earlier, in 2005-2006, and it became represented by movements, intellectuals and also at the party-political stage in 2013-2014. There are overlaps between Hungary and Germany concerning the issues picked up by the anti-gender movement, and there have been connections between the anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI actors in the two countries. Regarding relations with German actors, the most critical actor on the Hungarian side is the Public Foundation for Research on Central and Eastern European History and Society, a conglomerate funded by public money, to which many institutions belong, most notably the **House of Terror Museum** and the **XXI. Century Institute**, all led by Mária Schmidt. The latter's director is Márton Békés, a key thinker and author laying the ideological foundations of the illiberal cultural regime in Hungary. Békés is the editor of *Kommentár*, a cultural and public affairs journal committed to and supporting the government’s ideological line. In his publications, Békés regularly refers to German ‘new right’ thinkers like Götz Kubitschek, Ellen Kositzka, Karlheinz Weißmann, and Thor von Waldstein and praises the institutional structures behind the party Alternative for Germany (AfD), like the Antaios publishing house, the journal *Sezession* and the Institute for National Policy (Institut für

⁷⁶ This chapter is based on Eszter Kováts’s yet unpublished PhD dissertation, unless additional reference is provided. Kováts 2021

Staatspolitik). In return, both AfD and the German ‘new right’ consider Orbán’s ‘gender policy’ exemplary.⁷⁷

The most impactful German actor connected to Hungary is probably the author **Gabriele Kubly**, whose books were translated into Hungarian and can be downloaded free of charge from the website of the party KDNP and the Piarists. The last time she visited Hungary was in May 2021, when she participated in the “[Culture of Union and Demography](#)” conference organised by the Family Science Alliance. Her daughter, Sophia Kubly, the director of the Alliance Defending Freedom, also attended the World Congress of Families’ annual event in Budapest in 2017.

Another key figure is **Götz Kubitschek**, a publicist, journalist and far-right activist. He is one of the founders of the think tank **Institute for National Policy** and the publishing house **Antaios** and the editor of the journal **Sezession**. Kubitschek is thought to be largely behind the German new right’s metapolitical success until a few years ago. Kubitschek considers Orbán a role model and the ‘political maximum’. Kubitschek was invited to [speak](#) at the House of Terror Museum in 2018, and ‘in return’, Programme Director of House of Terror Museum Gábor Tállai [participated](#) in Sezession’s summer university in the same year.

A further German actor related to Hungary is the publicist **Birgit Kelle**, a member of the biggest German conservative party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), and a key ideologue of the anti-gender discourse in Germany. In her [opinion](#), “a grotesque ideology is spreading in Germany, claiming gender to be a construct, damaging the language and devouring public money. (...) An entire nation is just ‘gendering’ itself into madness.” Also, she [urges](#) the “gender craze” to be stopped”. However, she differentiates between the fair need and interests of intersex people and the ‘false claims’ of those ‘constantly inventing new crazy identities’. On page 46 of her 2017 book ‘Dam - An announcement’, she states: “the lobby business of sexual diversity simply exploits a minority’. Upon the invitation of the Hungarian-German Institute for European Cooperation, an MCC branch, Kelle [participated](#) in panel discussions in Budapest in September and November 2021. Moreover, she came to Budapest to the [launch event](#) of her book “Gender Comedy: How an absurd ideology wants to rule over our day-to-day life” too. It was her first book translated into Hungarian. The event was organised by Mathias Corvinus Collegium.

Another German thinker connected to Hungary is **Benedikt Kaiser**, a political scientist and author. He regularly cites Orbán’s statements and praises his fight against liberalism and gender ideology. Márton Békés often refer to Kaiser as a thinker of the German ‘new right’. An article by Kaiser was published in the [01/2021 edition](#) of the journal *Kommentár*.

6.5 Regional connections

6.5.1 Poland

The closest tie between Hungary and Poland concerning anti-gender and anti-LGBTQI mobilisation is the cooperation between the Center for Fundamental Rights (CfFR) and [Ordo Iuris](#). Since the two organisations signed a partnership agreement in 2020, Ordo Iuris has been active in Hungary. The collaboration mainly involves joint lobbying and advocacy against decisions and proposals of the EU and networking with like-minded organisations.

Ordo Iuris and CfFR signed a [partnership agreement](#) “to join hands in opposing the globalist network of an open society”. According to their assessment, “Europe is in a crisis of

⁷⁷ Kováts 2021

identity; families and Christianity are increasingly undermined; a radical, fundamentalist interpretation of human rights is spreading as well as gender ideology and the ideology of open society; political correctness is suffocating free speech”. Their first common action was the international [“petition against EU accession to the Istanbul Convention”](#) in 2020, joined by twenty organisations from Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and the Human Dignity Center, Edit Frivaldszky’s organisation. Their following joint petition was [“Say no to redefining parenthood”](#) in 2021, supported by pro-family communities from France, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Ukraine. It targeted an EU draft “regulation on the recognition of parenthood between member states”. The petition objected to the regulation because it would result “in recognition of the adoption of a child by two fathers or mothers, which has already been instituted in some Member States, whereas in others, such a recognition is not permitted by national law”. The same year they had another petition called [“Stop ideological neocolonialism!”](#). It was against a planned partnership, the [Post-Cotonou Agreement](#), between the European Union and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS). In their opinion, it “commits signatories, among others, to promote the concept of gender, which is not defined in any binding act of international law, at all levels of national and international policy” and the “adoption of the document in its current form may soon result in abortion being regarded as a ‘human right’ (...). This would mean a reversal of the system of human rights against the human being.”

In the spring of 2021, Ordo Iuris, CfFR and Political Network for Values, among others, organised the [Geneva Consensus Declaration Intermarium Regional Conference](#). The event’s aim was “to reaffirm and promote the concept of the Geneva Consensus Declaration in the Intermarium Region”. The [Geneva Consensus Declaration on Promoting Women’s Health and Strengthening the Family](#) is an [anti-abortion declaration](#) signed by thirty mainly [illiberal or authoritarian governments](#) in 2020, with core supporters such as Brazil, Egypt, Hungary, Indonesia and Uganda. The twenty-seven other signatories include Belarus, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Sudan, South Sudan, and Libya, joined by the [US](#) (which later [withdrew](#)) and [Russia](#). On Hungary’s side, the declaration was signed by Katalin Novák, who [posted a video about it](#) (without mentioning the name of the document), claiming that “we need to show the value of life” and that she is “happy to see that there are more and more initiatives and partnerships with the government of the United States and other like-minded countries that aim at acting jointly”. Despite joining the Declaration, [according to Novák](#), the Hungarian government did not intend to change the current regulation of abortion in Hungary.

The cooperation of Ordo Iuris and CfFR reached a new level in 2021 when founding the [Alliance for the Common Good \(ACG\)](#), a [pan-European conservative think-tank network](#). Members of ACG, next to CfFR and Ordo Iuris, are conservative organisations: [Human Rights and Family Policy Institute](#) from Slovakia, [Alliance Pro Rodinu](#) from the Czech Republic and [Nazione Future](#) from Italy. ACG has not done much yet, but it [welcomed](#) the Hungarian government’s so-called ‘child protection referendum’ and has [joined](#) the above petition “, Stop ideological neocolonialism”.

In 2021, Ordo Iuris [announced](#) a new higher educational institution Collegium Intermarium (CI) (formally founded by Education to Values Foundation)⁷⁸, a new university, [“as an answer to the crisis of academic life”](#). CI [aims](#) “to build a platform of cooperation between academics from the countries of the Intermarium region”, and it has already signed

⁷⁸ Institute for Strategic Dialogue (2021) Anti-SRHR movements in Central Europe: Collegium Intermarium. Manuscript

a [partnership agreement](#) with Marion Marechal Le Pen's ISSEP. CI organised two conferences in 2021 ([Space of Freedom and Order](#) in May and [The Place of Truth in the Age of Cancel Culture](#) in October), where representatives of the Hungarian government⁷⁹, CfFR⁸⁰, MCC⁸¹, the Danube Institute⁸² and various actors of the international network were present⁸³.

Ordo Iuris has another, less apparent leg in Hungary as well. Tymotheusz Zych, the rector of CI and former member and vice president of the board of Ordo Iuris, has been a member of the [editorial board](#) of the [European Family Science Journal](#) supposedly since 2020. This journal [has published](#) the Convention on the Rights of the Family, an alternative to the Istanbul Convention, [prepared by Ordo Iuris](#). The document was signed, among others, by Ignacio Arsuaga, the founder and president of both HazteOir and CitizenGo; Gregor Puppinc, the director of the European Center for Law and Justice; and Varro Vooglaid⁸⁴, head of the Foundation for the Protection of Family and Tradition (SAPTK). From the Hungarian side, the representatives of the Family Science Alliance organisation (Imre Balásházy, Győző Csettele) signed it.

6.5.2 Regional impact of the anti-LGBTQI law in Hungary

The anti-LGBTQI (or 'gay propaganda') law introduced in Hungary in June 2021 was widely criticised in Europe. Eighteen European Union Member States joined the [initiative of Belgium](#) to express their concern "about the adoption by the Hungarian Parliament of amendments which discriminate against LGBTIQ persons and violate the right to freedom of expression under the pretext of protecting children". [Many countries from the region](#) did not join the initiative. Hungary's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Péter Szijjártó, thanked **Croatia** for not joining the initiative, highlighting the event's importance to the Hungarian government. In the summer of 2021, **Slovenian** Prime Minister Janez Janša [backed](#) Hungary's right to outlaw the promotion and portrayal of homosexuality to children, claiming that if "imaginary European values and dual standards" are used, it leads to the collapse of the European Union. In October 2021, Janez Janša [assured Hungary](#) of his full support regarding the law, stating that "Children's rights are the very basis of the human rights concept. [The] LGBTQ etc. lobby can do whatever they like with themselves, but: hands off our children!"

The Hungarian law has had some other impacts in the region as well. In **Poland**, a similar initiative was launched by civil society (described in detail in the chapter on comparing the legal environment in Poland and Hungary). At the same time, draft laws were submitted to the parliaments in Romania and Slovakia.

In **Romania**, MPs of the party Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania [submitted a draft law](#) to modify the child protection law in December 2021. The draft is very similar to the Hungarian anti-LGBTQI law and was justified by the spread of gender ideology in the West, which, according to the proposing MPs, threatens the traditional family model based on Christian values on which society is built. The draft [states](#) that "all children have the right to preserve their citizenship, nationality, name, family ties and (birth) gender identity

⁷⁹Gergely Gulyas, Minister of the Prime Minister's Office; Gergely Ekler, Secretary of State at Ministry of Family; Balazs Orban, Minister of State at the Hungarian Prime Minister's Office, Chairman of the Board of Trustees at MCC

⁸⁰ Miklós Szánthó, István Kovács

⁸¹ András Láncki, the rector of MCC and also a lecturer at CI; Dóra Szűcs, international director

⁸² John O'Sullivan, president

⁸³ Gladden Pappin, Grégor Puppinc, Marion Maréchal Le Pen, Francesco Giubilei, Patrick Deneen, Rod Dreher

⁸⁴ Varro Vooglaid is an Estonian lawyer, [head of the](#) Foundation for the Protection of Family and Tradition (SAPTK), the Estonian branch of Tradition, Family and Property (TFP), was founded in 2020. Varro Vooglaid's family founded the think-tank Elukultuuri Instituut, an anti-abortion organisation.

without external interference”. It also gives children the right to protection against any content on gender identity different from the birth gender or that would promote homosexuality and gender transition.

In **Slovakia**, [legislative proposals](#) were submitted to the parliament in October 2021, including proposals to amend the Constitution similarly to the Hungarian law. The recommendations include elements such as the prohibition of changing the birth gender; the definition of the father as a man and the mother as a woman; the possibility for the state to protect birth gender; the ban on promoting “homosexuality, gender reassignment and deviation from gender identity acquired by birth” in schools, advertising and broadcasting; and the ban on legal gender recognition and displaying rainbow flags on state buildings. None of these proposals has been accepted, but further tabling of such proposals can be expected in the future.