

HORIZON-CL2-2024-DEMOCRACY-01-05: Gender-roles in extremist movements and their impact on democracy

What we can do: Participate in the preparation of main analytical reports on the topics proposed below. We will also participate in the key part of the projects, such as addressing the roots of violent gender-based discourse and actions in public and online spaces after thorough analyses of speeches, posts, and rhetoric in public (demonstrations, leaflets) and social media (Facebook, Telegram, Vkontakte, and other media) of the far-right groups and ‘manosphere’ online communities - their popularity and links to other social media groups

Abstract: In order to develop innovative methods, policy approaches, and tools to tackle antidemocratic narratives and tendencies characterized by identitarian, nationalist, and right-wing extremist ideals in the EU member states and online “manosphere,” it is crucial to analyze and assess several aspects. The first one is to define external influences and sources of inspiration. One category of inspiration may stem from other extremist or toxic environments, such as incels or jihadists. Another source of inspiration may come from authoritarian regimes, such as Russia, deliberately using gender issues and homophobia to legitimize its power as a defense of “traditional values.” In the rhetoric of the Kremlin and state-loyal media, LGBT rights, feminism, multiculturalism, and atheism are identified not only as foreign to Russia’s values but as existential threats to the nation. The Putin regime instrumentalized a nationalist, authoritarian form of gender conservatism. Putin has positioned Russia as an international leader in the defense of “traditional values.” Russian regime has articulated a powerful and influential counternarrative to the liberal idea that LGBT rights are an inevitable element of modernity—one that has been received appreciatively by some Christian conservatives and far-right figures in the West, who see Putin’s Russia as a bulwark against wokeism and political correctness. Fear-mongering over gender dissolution, the feminization of men, and sexual and racial degeneration as signs of a nation’s or civilization’s decay comes straight out of a nationalist and fascist playbook (Edenborg 2022). In this regard, homophobic Putin’s regime in Russia provides the European far-right with an authoritarian ultra-conservative alternative to EU values.

The second is to analyze and assess different levels of far-right and misogynist radicalism and extremism ranging from propagating ultra-conservative values with, for instance, a benevolent approach to domestic violence to the most extreme right-wing actors, who advocate extreme patriarchy based on hypermasculinity and the total subordination of women on a basis similar to sharia law, including an overt justification for rapes. Perceived declining white demographics and globalization have made most extreme right-wing elements actors turn towards what they perceive as Islamist doctrine and can even encourage followers to convert to Islam to save the white race. The concept of “White Sharia” began as a white nationalist meme in late 2016, introduced by Andrew Anglin, editor of *The Daily Stormer*. “White sharia” rapidly became a serious battle cry for most extreme right-wing extremist elements. The term was used as the idea that the sexuality, reproduction, daily life, and right to consent of white women should be controlled by white men in the white supremacist ethno-

state. It is a misogynistic anti-feminist vision of extreme patriarchy, where women are subjugated to the white baby factories, preferably in head scarves. The various levels of misogynist radicalism within the European far-right and online groups will be juxtaposed and compared in order to tackle it more effectively.

Third, the definition of what is common in the far-right, ultra-nationalist, and identitarian discourse and what is country-specific is needed. It is also important for developing methods and tools to tackle their narratives and tendencies. For instance, how these hyper-masculine patterns of behavior are embedded in the culture, “traditions,” historical patterns, and references to authoritarian past (fascist Italy, conservative authoritarian regimes in Romania, Hungary, Poland; Nazi regime in Germany, Slovakia, Croatia, etc.) vs. countries with more democratic traditions in the 20th century (France, Belgium, Netherlands, Scandinavia, Czechoslovakia). Identify the sources and inspiration for emulation, a deliberate effort of external actors to incite and instigate hatred as a way of breaking the integrity of the society and increasing the polarization.

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References:

Edenborg, Emil (2022). Putin’s Anti-Gay War in Ukraine, *Boston Review*, 14 March, <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/putins-anti-gay-war-on-ukraine/>.