PUSH*BACK*LASH

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Integrated report on Intersectional Inequalities and Activism

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Work package WP 5 – Intersectional Inequalities and Activism

Authors: Zsuzsanna Vidra (ELTE)

Contributors: Katarzyna Dębska, Angéla Kóczé, Ana Maria Miranda Mora, Enikő Anna Virágh, Magda Szarota, Zoe Lefkofridi, Vera Beloshitzkaya, Laura Kulterer, Lara Zwittlinger, Mónika Kovács, Lilla Lendvai

Reviewer: Kristi Winters (GESIS)

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About Push*Back*Lash

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Project summary:

The goal of PUSH*BACK*LASH is twofold: (1) Firstly, to systematically inquire into the present-day contestation of gender equality issues and policies at both elite and citizen levels. Approaching democracy from a global feminist perspective, we employ a rigorous, comparative, multi-method design (e.g., experiments, surveys, interviews, participatory theatre). Our project enables: (a) identifying anti-gender strategies as well as best practices in counteracting them across space and time; and (b) assessing the effects of anti-gender discourses by focusing on parties, social media, and public opinion. Secondly, to (2) develop and test strategies that can effectively counteract anti-gender and anti-feminist discursive strategies. Aiming at supporting the quality of democratic governance in more inclusive European societies, we acknowledge intersections between gender and other social categories at all stages of the project (composition of consortium and advisory board; theory formulation, empirical investigation, and policy recommendations) and thus engage with stakeholders. To develop sustainable solutions, we bring together gender activists, EU experts, and researchers from several fields of political science (political theory, public policy, political parties, public opinion, political behavior), anthropology, communication and media, philosophy, sociology, and social psychology. PUSH*BACK*LASH is a transdisciplinary, gender-diverse consortium aiming at equipping pro-equality actors with practical toolkits for responding to anti-gender equality and anti-feminist discursive strategies and backlash tactics.

Document versions

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Table of Contents

About this document

Description:

WP5 analyses intersectionality in anti-gender discourses, focusing on gender and disability, gender, race and ethnicity and economic status. It also pursues the question of whether and how the instrumentalization of gender-based violence reinforces racist and patriarchal structures in transnational contexts.

O5.1. To produce evidence on discursive strategies that specifically concern intersectional inequalities with focus on gender and disability; as well as gender, race and ethnicity, and their relationship to socioeconomic status;

O5.2. To map discourses of political elites and the wider population on issues of intersectionality as they appear in parliamentary debates, party manifestos and the social media;

O5.3. To assess existing survey data on persons at the intersections of gender and disability; and gender, race and ethnicity, while taking socio-economic status into consideration;

O5.4. To analyze gender-based violence and gender injustice by focusing on the instrumentalization of women's rights discourse by anti-gender politics and mobilizations in the EU and the global South;

O5.5. To explore the effects of anti-gender discourses on intersectional feminist activism.

List of abbreviations

EB – Eurobarometer

ESS – European Social Survey

EVS – European Values Study

GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences (originally *Gesellschaft Sozialwissenschaftlicher Infrastruktureinrichtungen*)

ISSP – International Social Survey Programme

LGBTQ – lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, trans, and queer

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

NANE – Women for Women Together Against Violence Association (Hungary)

TASZ – Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (*Társaság a Szabadságjogokért*)

UKRI – United Kingdom Research and Innovation

UN CRPD – United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

WP – Work Package (used for project structuring, e.g., WP5)

EU – European Union

AfD – *Alternative für Deutschland* (far-right political party in Germany)

Definition of key terms

Antigypsyism – A specific form of racism directed at Roma people, often institutionalized and intersecting with gender discrimination ("gender-based antigypsyism").

Anti-gender discourse – Political and social narratives that delegitimize the concept of gender equality and attack feminist and LGBTQ+ rights, often framing them as foreign or harmful.

Disability and feminism: Disability and feminism explores how women with disabilities experience dual oppression through both ableism and sexism, often having their womanhood delegitimized and their voices excluded from feminist discourse. Feminist disability perspectives highlight these intersecting barriers while calling attention to the lack of visibility, research, and activism addressing the specific struggles of disabled women.

Disability models: The *Medical model* defines disability as an individual impairment, locating the "problem" in the body. The *Social model* views disability as the result of barriers and discrimination in society. The *Human rights-based approach* (UN CRPD) frames disability as a matter of equality, inclusion, and rights, emphasizing systemic change and accessibility.

Discursive erasure / invisibilization – The process of silencing or making invisible the experiences of marginalized groups in political, media, or policy narratives.

Femi(ni)cide refers to the gender-based killing of women, rooted in systemic and structural violence that reflects deep inequalities and state complicity or neglect. It goes beyond individual acts to highlight how patriarchal, political, and institutional forces sustain violence against women, particularly in contexts like Latin America.

Gender-based violence against minority women refers to violence rooted in both gender inequality and ethnic or racial discrimination, where women experience intersecting forms of oppression. In the case of Romani women in Hungary, such violence is often rendered invisible in public discourse, as their gendered experiences are marginalized within both mainstream gender politics and ethnic minority struggles.

Gender ideology is a politicized term used by conservative and anti-gender movements to delegitimize gender equality and LGBTQ rights, framing them as foreign or harmful impositions on society. In contexts like Hungary, it serves as a rhetorical tool to justify restrictions on women's and LGBTQ rights, often by appealing to fears about family and child protection.

Gender nationalism is the strategic use of gender equality rhetoric to advance nationalist agendas, often masking racist or xenophobic undertones. It frames women's rights as symbols of national identity while reinforcing exclusionary politics against minority or marginalized groups.

Illiberalism – A system of governance that undermines liberal democratic norms (e.g., independent judiciary, civil rights), often tied to authoritarian and nationalist agendas.

Instrumentalization of gendered vulnerability – The political use of women's vulnerability or experiences of violence to promote other agendas (e.g., anti-immigration policies), while ignoring systemic gender inequality.

Intersectionality: Intersectionality, first articulated by Crenshaw (1991), highlights how overlapping identities—such as gender, race, class, and migration status—create unique forms of discrimination. She distinguished structural, political, and representational intersectionality, addressing unequal treatment, unequal political representation, and cultural/media portrayals. Beyond theory, intersectionality also functions as a political strategy and narrative tool that amplifies marginalized voices (Oleksy 2014).

Intersectionality in right-wing populism refers to the strategic appropriation of intersectional rhetoric by conservative actors to advance anti-feminist or exclusionary agendas. In Poland, for example, fetuses were framed as marginalized subjects, while women's rights were dismissed, showing how an emancipatory concept was reinterpreted to undermine gender equality.

Neoliberal racism refers to the way neoliberal policies and discourses reproduce and legitimize racial inequalities by framing structural disadvantages as individual or cultural failings. In contexts like Hungary, it operates through workfare and family policy narratives that stigmatize Roma communities while obscuring systemic discrimination and state responsibility.

Obstetric violence – Harmful practices, disrespect, or abuse experienced by women during childbirth, often underexplored in European survey data .

Reproductive justice – A rights-based framework that links reproductive rights to broader issues of social and economic justice, emphasizing equitable access for marginalized groups.

Romani feminism: Romani feminism is a form of feminism developed by Roma women that centers their lived experiences, addressing both racial and gender oppression through an intersectional lens. It challenges their exclusion from mainstream feminist and antiracist movements while advocating for equality, solidarity, and the redefinition of Roma identity.

Social capital is the value of social networks – the way that relationships between people help them achieve shared goals or access resources.

Structural invisibility – Systematic exclusion of minority groups' experiences from public discourse, law, or data collection, creating the impression that their inequalities do not exist.

Triple stigma – The compounded marginalization experienced by disabled women activists in Hungary and Poland, based on gender, disability, and activism.

Executive summary

Work Package 5 (WP5) of the *PushBackLash* project investigates how intersectionality is mobilized and contested within anti-gender discourses in Europe and beyond. The report analyzes the intersections of gender with disability, race and ethnicity, and socio-economic status; assesses existing survey data for their capacity to capture intersectional inequalities; and examines the instrumentalization of gender-based violence in national and transnational contexts. Finally, it considers how Romani and disability feminist activists in Hungary and Poland articulate and respond to intersectional inequalities in practice.

The report draws on qualitative case studies (Task 5.1), cross-national survey analysis (Task 5.2), comparative research on femicide in Mexico and Germany (Task 5.3), and in-depth interviews with Romani and disability feminist activists (Task 5.4). Together, these approaches demonstrate how anti-gender and anti-minority discourses strategically silence or distort intersectional inequalities, and how activists develop alternative frameworks for recognition and justice.

Crucially, the report brings these strands together to show that intersectionality is not merely absent from mainstream discourse and data collection, but often actively appropriated and inverted by illiberal actors. Task 5.1 highlights how Hungarian and Polish political and media narratives weaponize family, migration, and abortion debates to discredit gender equality while rendering the structural inequalities of Romani women and refugees invisible. Task 5.2 demonstrates that even robust survey programs, such as the European Social Survey, lack consistent tools for capturing overlapping forms of discrimination, contributing to structural invisibility at the level of data. Task 5.3 extends this picture to transnational contexts, showing that while Mexico recognizes femicide in law but fails to enforce it, Germany under-recognizes it entirely, leaving patriarchal and racialized patterns unaddressed. Finally, Task 5.4 shows that despite these systemic erasures, Romani and disability feminist activists in Hungary and Poland are generating alternative narratives and solidarities that reframe stigma as political critique and propose new models of intersectional justice.

By weaving these strands together, WP5 underscores the systematic nature of intersectional invisibility: what appears as a gap in discourse, data, or law is rarely accidental, but often the outcome of deliberate strategies that benefit from exclusion. This recognition is vital for understanding why intersectional inequalities persist despite decades of feminist activism and why surface-level reforms (e.g., recognition without enforcement, or inclusion without participation) rarely translate into substantive change.

The overarching takeaway is that sustainable progress on gender equality and minority rights requires moving beyond siloed approaches. Policies, surveys, and activist strategies must be

designed to account for overlapping forms of inequality rather than treating gender, race, class, or disability in isolation. This deliverable demonstrates not only the risks of ignoring intersectionality but also the opportunities that emerge when marginalized voices are centered in research, activism, and policy design.

Headline Findings

The four tasks of WP5 each address a different dimension of how intersectionality is mobilized, silenced, or resisted across political discourse, survey design, legal frameworks, and activism. While each task stands on its own, together they reveal a consistent pattern: intersectional inequalities are rendered invisible or distorted by dominant institutions, yet activists and critical scholarship continue to push back with alternative frameworks for recognition and justice. The following headline findings highlight the core insights from each task, showing both the specific contributions of individual case studies and the broader synergies across the work package.

Headline Findings

Task 5.1 – Anti-gender discourses erase or distort intersectional inequalities

- In Hungary and Poland, Romani women's experiences of violence are systematically marginalized in both political and media discourse. This reinforces invisibility at the intersection of gender and ethnicity.
- Policy discourses on workfare and family racialize Roma families, shifting from explicit racism to paternalism, which masks structural inequalities.
- In Poland, refugees were framed through gendered stereotypes — men as hyper-masculine aggressors or cowards, women as demographic threats. These portrayals distorted intersectionality to justify exclusion.
- Abortion debates in Poland showed both feminist and conservative actors using intersectional arguments. While feminists highlighted class and gender inequalities, conservatives appropriated the language of marginalization to frame fetuses as a disadvantaged group, undermining women's rights.

Task 5.2 – Existing surveys inadequately capture intersectionality

- Four major European surveys (Eurobarometer, ESS, EVS, ISSP) provide important but incomplete tools for analyzing intersectional inequalities.
- Strengths: The ESS is comparatively advanced, with nuanced measures on migration background, ethnicity and social class, and items measuring discrimination.

- Weaknesses: Disability is framed through a medical model; Roma are inconsistently included as a category; Eastern European experiences (e.g., obstetric violence) are largely absent. Explicit intersectional measures remain rare.
- Implication: Researchers often must reconstruct intersectional indicators post hoc, which limits comparability, weakens analysis, and reduces policy relevance.

Task 5.3 – Instrumentalization of gendered vulnerability obscures systemic violence

- Mexico legally recognizes femicide and has an extensive activist research base, but enforcement is undermined by corruption, impunity, and weak institutions.
- Germany has lower femicide rates, but the absence of a specific legal category masks gendered motives in homicide cases and reproduces racialized framings (e.g., so-called "honor killings").
- The comparative lens shows a paradox: recognition without enforcement (Mexico) versus awareness without recognition (Germany). Both models fail to deliver effective prevention or justice.

Task 5.4 – Intersectional feminist activism provides alternative models of justice

- Romani feminists in Hungary resist both exclusion from feminist spaces and marginalization within Roma politics. They emphasize community organizing, cultural activism, and solidarity to demand recognition as political subjects.
- Disabled feminists in Hungary and Poland face "triple stigma" (gender, disability, activism). Their movements are fragmented and underfunded, and their issues sidelined by both feminist and disability NGOs. In Poland, gender erasure and paternalism further entrench dependency.
- Across contexts, activists transform stigma into political critique, highlighting the urgency of intersectional frameworks that recognize marginalized women as leaders, not victims.

Selected List of Policy Recommendations

The policy recommendations that follow are directly grounded in the findings of each task. There are more in each task, but we selected a subset to focus on here. They reflect the structural dynamics identified in WP5: discursive erasures (Task 5.1), data gaps (Task 5.2), legal and institutional shortcomings (Task 5.3), and the lived realities and strategies of activists (Task 5.4). Read together, they highlight how reforms in discourse, measurement, law, and practice must work in concert if they are to effectively address intersectional inequalities. Each recommendation is therefore linked to its evidence base while contributing to a coherent strategy for policymakers, researchers, and civil society actors seeking to counter anti-gender and anti-minority politics.

From Task 5.1: Representation and Visibility

- Ensure Romani women's voices are visible in media, policy, and feminist discourses.
- Adopt responsible media guidelines to counteract dehumanizing portrayals of minorities and refugees.
- Guarantee equitable reproductive justice by expanding access to healthcare across socio-economic and minority groups.

From Task 5.2: Survey Design and Data Collection

- Introduce explicit intersectional items to capture multi-marginalized identities and experiences.
- Broaden social class measures to include power and social capital, not just economic indicators.
- Ensure consistent inclusion of Roma as an ethnic category.
- Reframe disability using rights-based and participation-focused measures
- Contextualize surveys to Eastern Europe.
- Modernize terminology (e.g., "Roma," "gay/lesbian") and mainstream accessibility in survey design.

From Task 5.3: Addressing Gender-Based Violence

- Mexico: Strengthen enforcement of femicide laws with specialized, well-funded investigative units.
- Germany: Introduce legal recognition of femicide as a distinct crime category, aligned with international standards.
- Both countries: Develop intersectional, gender-disaggregated data systems tracking perpetrators, victims, and vulnerabilities (e.g., ethnicity, migration, region).

From Task 5.4: Supporting Intersectional Activism

- Establish inclusive decision-making mechanisms for Romani and disability women's organizations in policymaking.
- Provide long-term funding for community-based activism, education, and empowerment projects.
- Build cross-movement alliances among Roma, disability, feminist, and LGBTQ+ groups to strengthen coalitions.
- Guarantee rights-based services in healthcare, education, employment, and protection from violence.

Introduction

Work Package 5 analyzes intersectionality in anti-gender discourses, focusing on the intersections of gender with disability, race and ethnicity, and socio-economic status. It also assesses existing survey data on intersectional inequalities and examines whether, and in what ways, the instrumentalization of gender-based violence reinforces racist and patriarchal structures in transnational contexts. Finally, it studies intersectional feminisms by applying an intersectional framework to investigate how Romani and disabled feminists in Hungary and Poland conceptualize and act upon inequalities experienced by marginalized groups. The report further provides concrete recommendations for improving measurement tools to better capture intersectional inequalities, and for developing policy and political strategies to counter anti-gender and anti-minority politics.

T5.1 Analyses Intersectional Anti-Gender Discourses using the analytical frameworks developed in WP1, this task examins discursive backlash strategies with a particular focus on intersectionality. It explors how gender issues intersect with disability, race and ethnicity (e.g. Roma, migrants), and socio-economic status, identifying the key concepts, narratives, and positions that underpin anti-gender discourses.

T5.2 focuses on the Assessment of Existing Survey Data on Intersectional Inequalities. Building on the data compiled in T2.1 (WP2), this task assesses the extent to which existing surveys capture the intersecting dimensions of inequality (e.g. disability, race and ethnicity, migration, socio-economic status). It also provides concrete recommendations for improving measurement tools to better analyse intersectional inequalities.

T5.3 Analyzes of the Instrumentalisation of Gendered Vulnerability. This task analyzes and conceptualises the historical, socio-political, and economic conditions shaping the emergence of "gendered vulnerability." Particular attention is given to gender-based violence policies and the relevant scholarship on international and domestic legislation, with Mexico and Germany serving as case studies.

T5.4 conducts In-Depth Interviews with Intersectional Feminist Activists. Applying the theoretical framework developed in T1.1, this task investigates how disabled and minority feminists in Hungary and Poland conceptualise intersectional inequalities. It examines how activists articulate the lived experiences of the marginalised groups they represent, and how these perspectives inform feminist activism and advocacy strategies.

T5.1 Analysis of intersectional anti-gender discourses

In the framework of this task, intersectionality was approached from various perspectives, examining different minorities and forms of disadvantage in two countries: Poland and Hungary. Two case studies were developed in each country, each exploring intersectionality from a different angle. These countries were chosen because both exhibited [1] strong signs of illiberal and authoritarian tendencies, and in both regimes, anti-gender discourse has been a significant political tool for maintaining power and mobilizing support. Each study employed some form of discourse analysis to uncover how anti-gender political narratives were constructed and deployed.

Table 5.1.1. Task 5.1 Case Study Number and Title

Case	Title
1	Representations of Violence against Romani Women in Hungary
2	Representation of Roma in workfare and family policy discourses in the authoritarian neoliberal context of Hungary
3	The Intersectional Aspects of the Refugee Crises in 2015–2023 in Public Discourse in Poland
4	Intersectionality in the Abortion Debate in Poland

Background to the Hungarian and Polish case studies

In both Hungary and Poland, gender related topics and migration issues have been central to the rise of illiberalism, with ruling parties embracing these topics to reinforce nationalist and authoritarian agendas. In Hungary, the Orbán government has politicized gender and LGBTQ rights as part of a broader "anti-gender" campaign–farmed as a fight against "gender ideology"–that devalued human rights and sees gender equality as a foreign imposition (Kovács 2017, Félix 2015, Grzebalska 2015, Korolczuk 2014). This discourse, often evoked fears about protecting children, targeted both LGBTQ communities and women, or attacked women's rights, such as abortion.

These regimes use different narrative strategies to either make enemies (such as LGBTQ people) or invisibilize certain groups in order to divert public attention away from their social and structural problems. Thus, marginalized minority women, such as Roma women, and their situation and problems – such as gender-based violence – are often invisibilized.

In the illiberal, authoritarian, and neoliberal system liberal democratic values are opposed, and traditional family structures and workfare policies are emphasized. Concerning how Roma families are treated in this system, they are often excluded from social benefits due to a class-based system favoring middle and upper-class, non-Roma heterosexual families. Nonetheless, research

[1] In Poland, the right-wing PIS party lost the elections in 2023.

show that significant number of Roma men and women still show strong political support for the regime. This paradox is partly explained by limited but tangible improvements in living standards among the Roma, alongside populist strategies that ensure some benefits reach disadvantaged groups, including Roma families, securing their loyalty despite structural inequalities (Scheiring, 2019; Stubb and Lendvai-Bainton, 2020; Szombati, 2021; Lendvai-Bainton and Szelewa, 2021).

Based on these observations, the case studies explored the following topics related to intersectionality:

- How violence against Roma women is represented in public discourse in Hungary?
- How Roma are represented in family, social and employment policy discourses in Hungary?

In Poland, despite restrictive laws already in place, PiS and the Constitutional Tribunal further limited already very restrictive access to pregnancy termination, notably removing the embryo pathological premise in 2020, sparking mass protests and, tragically, the reported deaths of several women due to denied care. Feminist movements have consistently pushed back, advocating for women's autonomy and criticizing the narrow "abortion compromise" that de facto banned access for decades (Nawojski, Pluta, Zielińska 2018; Grzebalska and Pető, 2018).

The same regimes used migration as another fearmongering topic, often intertwining it with gender issues—for example, portraying migrant men as aggressive toward (European) women. The Polish public discourse around refugees evolved from 2015 to 2023, particularly under the rule of the Law and Justice (PiS) party. In 2015, public support for accepting refugees dropped drastically following a right-wing campaign that framed refugees, particularly from the Middle East and Africa, as cultural and biological threats. Key events like the refugee crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border in 2021 and the influx of Ukrainian refugees in 2022 further influenced public perceptions and policies. While Ukrainian refugees were largely welcomed, non-European refugees faced discrimination, and revelations of visa corruption in 2023 exposed contradictions in the ruling party's anti-immigration stance. It was also an important aspect how gender and gender related questions appeared in the discourse, depicting refugees as a threat to the gender equality values of Europe.

Based on these observations, the case studies explored the following topics related to intersectionality:

- How intersectionality was present in the Polish abortion debate? Were there any minority women's groups who appeared in the debate?
- How intersectionality was present in the migration crisis debates in Poland? How migrant men and women were portrayed?

Summary of the case studies

Case study 1. Representations of Violence against Romani Women in Hungary

The study on the Representations of Violence against Romani Women in Hungary examines how gender-based violence against Roma women is represented in political, activist, and civil society discourses across Hungarian independent and pro-government media from 2010 to 2023. Building on the premise that illiberal regimes weaponize gender and women's issues while simultaneously rendering Roma concerns invisible through patronizing approaches, the study explores how Romani women are positioned within gender discourses—specifically, how the weaponization of gender intersects with the marginalization of Roma identity.

Methodology

Using search terms like "Roma/Gypsy," "violence," and "women," we analyzed 74 online media articles in both pro-government and independent Hungarian outlets covering violence against Roma women and published between 2010 and 2023. Despite the relevance of the topic, intersectional coverage was strikingly limited, prompting a second round of data collection on domestic violence alone to assess the presence of Roma-related content. Through discourse analysis, the research identified key types of violence (domestic, obstetric, prostitution) and developed a codebook to examine which gender and ethnic themes were made visible or remained invisible in media narratives.

Key findings

- Discourse analysis reveals key dynamics in the regime's narrative: the regime promotes an anti-gender ideology.
- It also engages in ethnic invisibilization (see Structural invisibility).
- These strategies obstruct the development of meaningful intersectional narratives.
- As a result, the gendered and racialized dimensions of structural inequalities are overlooked.

Policy recommendations

Violence against Romani women should be made visible in the media and public discourses by highlighting the intersectional discriminatory practices behind the cases of violence.

Case study 2. Representation of Roma in workfare and family policy discourses in the authoritarian neoliberal context of Hungary

The study examines how disadvantaged Roma were represented in government discourses on social, family, and workfare policies in authoritarian neoliberal Hungary. Using qualitative frame analysis, we investigated the extent to which Roma were racialized.

Methodology

The research analyzed 73 documents from three sources—pro-government media articles, annual state of the nation speeches by Prime Minister Orbán, and the 2010 Fidesz-KDNP party manifesto—covering the period from April 2010 to July 2023. Focusing on how Roma are addressed in the context of family and social policy, the study found that references to Roma in pro-government media were scarce, with only 60 relevant articles out of approximately 1200 on family policy alone. The analysis draws on the theory of neoliberal racism and the concept of (in)visibilization. Using thematic coding and policy frame analysis (diagnostic, prognostic, motivational), the research explored how government narratives identify social problems, propose solutions, and attempt to mobilize public support. The policy frame analysis used in the research (Benford and Snow, 2000; Smith, 2021) provides answers to the questions of what problems may be identified and how the Roma are involved (diagnostic framing), what solutions are suggested and how these affect both the Roma and the non-Roma population (prognostic framing), and how the majority and the Roma are motivated and mobilized to accept government messages (motivational framing). By exploring these dimensions in the discourses, a more refined picture of how Roma are perceived by the regime is created.

Key findings

- In the first half of the studied period, explicit or coded racism was present in the discourse.
- Over time, this shifted toward a more paternalistic tone.
- The policy discourse on family and social policies emphasizes merit and self-responsibility, which masks structural ethnic inequalities.
- As a result, the most marginalized Roma are rendered invisible and excluded from the official narrative.

Policy recommendations

1. Family and social policies which impact Roma families and women should be designed using anti-racist and equity-based impact assessments.

2. Invisibilisation should be avoided by focusing on the needs of Romani families, women and communities.

Case study 3. The Intersectional Aspects of the Refugee Crises in 2015–2023 in Public Discourse in Poland

This case study examined discursive strategies and the application of an intersectional perspective—explicitly or implicitly—by analyzing how the diversity of various actors is used as a rhetorical tool to support the arguments of different speakers. The case study analyzes Polish

press materials from 2015–2023, spanning the period of Law and Justice's rule and covering both the 2015 and 2023 parliamentary elections. The analysis highlights how the 2015 refugee crisis triggered a moral panic in right-wing discourse, framing refugees—especially from the Middle East and Africa—as threats, from which Law and Justice promised protection. It applies the concept of gender nationalism (Hadj-Abdou, 2017), showing how the rhetoric of gender equality was strategically used to mask Islamophobic and racist undertones, reinforcing exclusionary politics under the guise of liberal values. We find the discourses used promote fear and exclusion, aiming to keep refugees and their descendants permanently outside European societies.

Methodology

This study applied Critical Discourse Analysis and frame analysis to explore how discourses around refugees in Poland constructed social boundaries, defined subjects, and invoked values. The method was chosen because the research focused on minorities (refugees and women), whose status and position are largely shaped by how discourse constructs power and hierarchy around them. The study investigated who was represented as the subject, which values were emphasized or contested, and how concepts like gender, diversity, and borders were framed. The analysis includes both textual and visual materials—articles and magazine covers—collected from a wide range of Polish media outlets with diverse ideological orientations. The material for the analysis was collected via the Internet. The websites of the largest newspapers and magazines in Poland representing different worldviews on refugee crises.[2] The articles included in the analysis were selected either because the author of the text used an argument related to intersectionality, highlighting differences within the groups to which they refer, or highlighting selected characteristics of a particular group as entitling them to certain claims or as a source of discrimination. Another justification for the inclusion of a particular text in the analyzed data corpus was the fact that the text quoted the arguments of other actors, especially those that were important from the perspective of the discussion on refugee crises (in the pool of the Mediterranean Sea and on the Polish-Belarusian border) in Poland. Special attention was given to how intersectionality was used (explicitly or implicitly) and how visual representations contributed to shaping public opinion and attitudes toward refugees. The final number of analyzed articles was 53.

Key findings

- Right-wing populist discourse uses intersectionality in a way that harms both male and female refugees, erasing internal diversity and promoting dehumanization.

[2] List of media sources: "Gazeta Wyborcza", "Wysokie Obcasy", "Dziennik Gazeta Prawna", Oko.press, website of the radio Trójka Polskie Radio, "Rzeczpospolita", Gość.pl, Wirtualne Media, "Fronda.pl", "Polonia Christiana", "Sieci", "Do Rzeczy", "Niezależna.pl", Polish Press Agency, "Onet", "Money.pl", and "Dziennik.pl"

- Gender roles are used to reinforce stereotypes rather than individualize refugees, with identities seen as fixed and integration as impossible.

Policy recommendations

1. Develop and implement media guidelines on refugee representation to counteract dehumanizing and gender-stereotypical portrayals of refugees in public discourse.

2. Develop and implement intersectional gender sensitive integration policies for refugees and ensure that refugee integration efforts are informed by a nuanced understanding of gender and identity.

Case study 4. Intersectionality in the Abortion Debate in Poland

The case study, Intersectionality in the abortion debate in Poland, examines Polish abortion discourse and legislation from 2015 to 2023, spanning the Law and Justice (PiS) party's rule. The aim of the study was to reveal how the intersectional perspective—whether explicitly named or not—was used as a discursive strategy that draws on the diversity of various actors to justify specific arguments within the discourse.

Methodology

This study used thematic analysis informed by Critical Discourse Analysis to examine how Polish media discourses on abortion construct social groups—especially women and foetuses—through specific discursive strategies. Thematic analysis informed by discourse analysis was used to identify recurring themes and patterns in how abortion is discussed in Poland while also examining how language reflects underlying power relations, ideologies, and moral frameworks. This approach allowed for a deeper understanding of how different actors construct and contest meanings around abortion in a highly polarized social and political context.

The material for the analysis was collected via the Internet. Websites of the largest newspapers and magazines in Poland were searched representing different worldviews and publishing articles by authors representing different worldviews and views on abortion. The articles used in the analysis were collected by searching the internet portals and websites of Polish magazines and other types of media (radio) for publications dealing with the topic of abortion law changes and access to abortion from an intersectional perspective. On the one hand, when searching for texts, keywords (abortion, foetus) were entered into the search engines of the aforementioned websites, which allowed to identify relevant publications. The articles included in the analysis were selected either because the author of the text used an argument related to intersectionality, highlighting differences within the groups to which they refer, or highlighting selected characteristics of a particular group as entitling them to certain claims or as a source of discrimination. Another justification for the inclusion of a particular text in the analysed data corpus was the fact that the

text quoted the arguments of other actors, especially those that were important from the perspective of the discussion on abortion in Poland.

The study focused on how subjects are "interpellated" and how intersectionality is used (explicitly or implicitly) to justify or challenge arguments about abortion. Articles were manually coded and categorized into key themes, emphasizing those with strong discursive or intersectional relevance. The material was drawn from a broad ideological spectrum of Polish media outlets, selected based on their engagement with intersectional arguments or influential voices in the abortion debate.[3] The final number of articles included in the dataset was 77.

Key findings

- Intersectionality appeared in both pro-choice and pro-life arguments in Poland's abortion debate.
    - Feminists and left-wing politicians highlighted how abortion access is limited to well-off women, intersecting gender, class, and social inequalities.
    - Pro-life advocates used intersectional logic by portraying fetuses—especially those with disabilities—as victims of discrimination based on age or developmental stage.
    - Right-wing populists adopted intersectionality-like rhetoric (without naming it) to frame fetuses as marginalized but did not apply this logic to women.

- The terms used differ: pro-choice groups use "foetus," while pro-life groups used "conceived/unborn child" to shape perception.
- The debate reflected two ethical frameworks: sanctity of life (every life is sacred) vs. quality of life (some lives may not be worth living).
- Europeanness was also contested: pro-choice advocates saw EU norms as supportive of women's rights, while right-wing populists viewed Europe as morally corrupt.
- While intersectionality had emancipatory roots, in Poland's context it was also strategically used by conservatives to undermine women's rights.

Policy recommendations

1. Promote comprehensive, critical education on intersectionality and reproductive rights by integrating intersectional frameworks into education to foster critical thinking about how gender, class, ability, and power intersect in reproductive debates.

2. Ensure equitable access to reproductive healthcare to minority groups and disadvantaged social groups by implementing policies that guarantee universal access to reproductive healthcare, including abortion, regardless of socioeconomic status, or geographic location.

[3] List if resources: "Gazeta Wyborcza", "Wysokie Obcasy", "Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, oko.press, TVP Info, Opoka.pl, Wirtualna Polska, website of the radio RMF.fm, "Tygodnik Powszechny", "Rzeczpospolita", articles on the website of Ordo Iuris, Gość.pl, Menedżer Zdrowia, portal Medonet, Polskie Radio 24.pl.).

T5.2. Assessment of existing survey data on gender and disability, gender and ethnicity, gender and migration

Background

What measures of gender and social class, gender and disability, gender and ethnicity, and gender and migration are available in the four big cross-national European survey programs? What measures are explicitly intersectional (i.e., ask about two categories of inequality at the same time or offer response categories that capture multi-marginalized identities? Answering this question allows us achieving O5.3: "to assess existing survey data on persons at the intersections of gender and disability; and gender, race and ethnicity, while taking socio-economic status into consideration". In what follows, we will first discuss our data and methodology. We will then define each concept, namely, social class, disability, race and ethnicity, and migration background, and present the key findings on how each concept is operationalized in the survey programs we reviewed. We conclude with the presentation of the explicitly intersectional survey questions and recommendations.

Appendix 1 presents all the relevant questions by concept, starting with the measures of social class. Measures of gender are reported in "The Integrated Report on the Evolution of Gender Attitudes and Perceptions" (forthcoming on December 31, 2025).

Data and Methodology

To ensure consistency with Work Package 2, we assessed the same survey questionnaires as the team in Work Package 2. Using the questionnaires they collected, we systematically qualitatively assessed 23 waves of the Eurobarometer (EB), 10 waves of the European Social Survey (ESS), 5 waves of the European Values Survey (EVS), and four waves of the International Social Survey (ISSP) (n=42). We recorded all the questions related to social class, disability and impairment, race and ethnicity, migrant background and citizen status. We also recorded all explicitly intersectional questions and questions that captured the following:

- Direct measures of social class (i.e., education, income), ethnicity, disability, religion, etc.
- Personal experiences of discrimination based on social class, disability, ethnic, religious, and migration background.
- Attitudinal questions that reveal prejudiced beliefs based on these social categories.
- Questions assessing perceptions of institutional discrimination, such as bias in public services, workplaces, or legal systems based on these social markers.

Key findings

Measuring social class across surveys

Conceptualizing social class

The concept of social class, defined by Max Weber (1958 [1946]) as similarity of life chances, is a multidimensional concept that emphasizes the interrelation of its dimensions and their ability to reinforce one another. It consists of three intersecting dimensions: economic resources (property/wealth), power (one's ability to get their way despite resistance from others) and prestige (one's status in society, i.e., being a famous actor). These dimensions reinforce each other and can easily be converted into one another. For example, if one is a famous actor or TV star, it would be easier for them to break into politics due to their name recognition – an example of conversion of status and prestige into political power. What is more, membership in lower social class can become grounds for institutional and individual discrimination.

Mapping measures of social class

Across the four survey programs, most indicators of social class (see Appendix 1) measure only economic dimension of social class (though with limited measures of wealth, i.e., passive income derived from investments or rental property) and in rare cases, also the status dimension, neglecting the power dimension in most cases. Except for a few questions tapping into one's supervisory position at work, there are no questions about one's access to and ability to exercise power and influence, making this dimension of social class "invisible" in empirical research.

Measuring social class in the ESS

The ESS features a wide range of survey items that measure social class. Among other questions, the ESS includes questions on respondents' highest level of education, their employment status, their occupation, industry, and the type of organization they work for (only starting from wave 4 in 2008), their weekly working hours, and their income, which tap into the economic dimension of social class. Additionally, questions on one's employment history are also asked (i.e., if they have ever had a job, if they faced longer and shorter periods of unemployment spells in the near past). Other questions on individuals' employment history include the number of years they have been in full- or part-time work (only wave 2 in 2004 and wave 5 in 2010), the year they have last been in paid employment, the year they entered the labor market (wave 2 in 2004 and wave 3 in 2006), and the time since they started working for their current employer (wave 2 in 2004 and wave 5 in 2010). These questions allow the identification of groups that are particularly vulnerable to old-age poverty. Additionally, several items capture different aspects of unpaid work (childcare), with a special focus devoted to this topic in the 2nd round (2004). In 2004 and 2010, respondents

were asked about the proportion of women in their workplace, and this information can be used to obtain a measure of the occupational gender segregation, which is an important area in which gender and class intersect in creating inequalities (particularly lower salaries).

The ESS also features indicators that measure a thicker, more nuanced class concept across all the waves, such as the type of contract (limited, unlimited etc.), whether the respondent is responsible for supervising other colleagues in their workplace and if yes, how many they supervise, and how much autonomy and influence they have in deciding over their work environment, their tasks, their working time, and the direction of their work. Other questions that pertain to this thicker concept of class that goes beyond mere quantitative differences (e.g., in terms of educational achievement and monthly income) are respondents' work-life balance and their job satisfaction, to name a few examples. All ten waves also ask about partnership status and experiences, including questions about partner's hours spent on care and housework in waves 2 and 5. However, subjective class identification is only measured once in 2012.

Unfortunately, the otherwise rather rich question that asks whether respondents belong to a group discriminated against in their country, and on which grounds this discrimination occurs, does not include social class as a possible reason for discrimination, which is an interesting finding, given the importance of class inequalities in European societies. One question, where perceived discrimination based on social class can vaguely be identified was asked in 2018, when respondents had to answer whether they think their gross and net pay is unfairly low, fair, or unfairly high. The only aspect of discrimination that is covered in some survey waves are general societal perceptions about equal treatment by the police and courts of rich and poor individuals, I.e., how much institutionalized discrimination people perceive in their society. In 2010, respondents were asked if poor and rich are as likely to be found guilty in courts, or whether one of the two is more likely to be found guilty, as well as whether they think if the police would treat the two equally when they report a crime.

Measuring social class in the ISSP, Core Module Changing Gender and Family Roles

The ISSP measures social class through employment status and employment type, weekly working hours, educational achievement, and household income. These are included in each wave. Other indicators include supervisory status, work in private or public sector, occupational sector and for-profit or non-for-profit work (only included in 2012). Wave 2012 also asks if the respondent is currently not working, about the normal working situation and if the respondent ever had a paid job. Unemployment is only covered in the first wave (1988).

Additional survey questions that may feed into a broader concept of social class are a respondent's perceived work-family reconciliation, their job satisfaction (in the 2002 and 2012 waves), whether they would enjoy working even if they did not have to (only included in the 1988 wave), and their

self-placement on a class scale. This subjective measure for social class is asked in three out of four waves (1988, 1994 and 2012) in the ISSP waves (in the ESS it was only asked once).

Property ownership serves as an imperfect measure of wealth. This question has only been asked in 1988. Additionally, all waves asked about the place of living (urban-rural), the first three waves about the household size, two waves (2002 and 2012) about the number of children and wave 2012 about the time spent on childcare. The ISSP also includes various questions on the respondents' partnership, asking about the partnership status (all waves), weekly hours worked by the partner (2002 and 2012 wave), the partner's occupation (all waves), whether both the respondent and the partner work at the moment (1988 and 1994 waves) and the hours the partner spends on housework (waves 2002 and 2012) and care work (wave 2012).

Another limitation of class-related measures in the ISSP is that the more objective measures of class – such as income and education – mostly lack a post-conduct harmonization that allows international comparability of individual and household incomes, as well as the highest educational degree an individual has achieved. In their current form, education (until 1994) and income are measured with country-specific categories (due to different currencies and purchasing power) which would require the transformation into earning deciles or into PPS. The education categories must be transformed into ISCED levels to achieve international comparability. There are no discrimination questions based on social class in this survey.

Measuring social class in the EB

The EB features a wide range of survey items that capture diverse aspects of social class. EB includes questions about respondents' education, employment status, household composition and size, financial situation, etc. However, it is not the same set of questions in every wave, and item lists can also vary.

14 of the 23 survey waves analyzed (95.2 2021, 94.1 2020, 91.4 2019, 87.4 2017, 83.4 2015, 82.4 2014, 77.4 2012, 76.1 2011, 75.1 2011, 72.2 2009, 71.3 2009, 71.2 2009, 41.1 1994, and 39.0 1993) ask respondents about their self-reported class. With the exception of survey waves 41.1 1994 and 39.0 1993, the question on self-reported class is accompanied by another question on the difficulty with paying bills in the last twelve months, which can also serve as an indicator of the lower social class status. Survey waves 59.0 2003, 44.3 1996, 41.1 1994, 39.0 1993, 27 1987, and 19 1983 include a question where the respondent has to choose an income category of their family or household.

All survey waves, except waves 19 1983, 27 1987 and 44.2 1995–1996 ask about the place of living (urban-rural) and all the waves, except for wave 44.2 1995–1996, ask if the respondent lives in a steady partnership. More questions on the partner (e.g., their occupation, their weekly working hours or hours spent on care-/housework), however, were not asked.

Education is measured in a relatively simple way. In the majority of the analyzed survey waves (exceptions are 95.2 2021 and 94.1 2020), the question only asked about the age when a respondent stopped full-time education. Waves 95.2 2021 and 94.1 2020 include questions on the highest level of completed education as well. Moreover, the latest wave (95.2 2021) includes questions on the parents' education ("What is the highest level of education that has been achieved by your mother? And by your father?" Response categories ranging from 1 - not completed primary till 6 - completed doctoral degree or equivalent) enabling a more nuanced analysis of social mobility, as mother's education serves as a strong predictor of child's social mobility.

Besides the above, the item list on current and previous occupation is a very detailed one, and these questions are part of the demography block of every survey wave. It is worth noting that item lists of occupation questions in waves fielded in the 80's and 90's are not as detailed as in later years. All waves, except 87.4 2017, 44.2 1995–1996, 27 1987, and 19 1983, additionally ask whether the respondent is responsible of the supervision of others, and, if the respondent is currently not working, what their normal work situation would be and if they ever had a paid job.

Social class (i.e., lower-class status) is also usually overlooked category of discrimination. As in the case of the ESS, social class is, with one exception in the EB 91.4 2019 wave, also not included in questions that asks whether respondents belong to a group that is discriminated against in their country, and on which grounds this discrimination occurs. Moreover, it is not included in the item list of questions where social class would be especially relevant. Namely, in the survey wave 83.4 2015 among questions addressing perceptions of overall discrimination, a specific question regarding the recovery from the economic crisis was asked: "Do you think that in (OUR COUNTRY) measures to fight the economic crisis and policies to promote recovery are excluding people from each of the following groups?" Poor people, Roma people, families with more than two children, and single mothers can be specifically vulnerable in an economic crisis. None of these groups were included in the response list of this question. The EB also does not include questions about institutional discrimination.

Measuring social class in the EVS

The EVS includes questions on education, household composition and size, occupation and income level that tap into economic and status dimension of social class. Income is measured in all EVS survey waves. Employment status and occupation are measured in a very detailed way covering employment status (all waves), employment history (all waves), weekly working hours (all waves), current and previous occupations (EVS 1981, 1990 and 1999), industry (EVS 1981, 1990 and 1999), job title (EVS 1981, 1990 and 1999), self-employment and number of supervised employees (EVS 1981, 1990 and 1999). In the latest wave (2017) reviewed, there are also questions included on the main earner parent's occupation when the respondent was 14. Regarding education, in waves 1990 and 1981, only the age of finishing full-time education was asked. In waves 2017, 2008, and 1999, there was additionally a question on the highest level of attained

education. In survey waves 1999, 1990 and 1981 based on previous questions, the interviewer is asked to code the respondents social-economic class into one of the four categories (upper, upper-middle; middle, non-manual; manual workers (skilled, semi-skilled) and manual workers (unskilled, unemployed). Wave 1981 also asks about the place of living (urban-rural), and all other waves ask about the size of town the respondent lives in. Additionally, all waves include a question on marital status, waves 1981, 1999 and 2017 ask about the household size and waves 1990 and 2017 about the number of children.

When it comes to perceived discrimination of people based on their social class or attitudes against people from a different social class, the EVS has limitations. The waves in 1999, 2008 and 2017 ask how concerned respondents felt about the living conditions of unemployed people.

Table 5.2.1. Comparative Overview of Social Class Measures in Major European Surveys

Survey	Strengths	Weaknesses / Gaps	Notes
European Social Survey (ESS)	• Most comprehensive and nuanced measures of social class. • Some waves include employment history (vulnerability to old-age poverty). • Items on occupational gender segregation and unpaid labor. • Waves 2 & 5: partner's hours of house- and care work. • Includes measures of perceived institutional discrimination (e.g., fairness in courts, Wave 5, 2010). • Some measures of power dimension through supervisory status.	• Self-placement only in Wave 6. • Social class not included as a discrimination ground in items, measuring individual discrimination.	Strongest on qualitative aspects.
International Social Survey Programme (ISSP – Gender & Family Roles Module)	• Covers core socio-economic indicators (education, employment, income). • 3 of 4 waves (1988, 1994, 2012) include self-placement. • Qualitative aspects: work-family reconciliation, job satisfaction. • Unpaid work measures in some waves (childcare, housework, care work).	• Post-hoc harmonization lacking for income/education, limiting comparability. • No explicit questions on discrimination by social class.	Valuable for work–family balance and unpaid labor dynamics.

Survey	Strengths	Weaknesses / Gaps	Notes
Eurobarometer (EB)	• Wide range of socio-economic indicators: education, employment status, household composition, hardship (e.g., paying bills). • Questions about one's supervisory status often included. • Frequent self-reported social class (14 of 23 waves). • Began asking about parents' education.	• Item sets vary by wave; no consistent design. • Social class rarely included in discrimination questions (exception: EB 91.4, 2019).	Broadest coverage of social class dimensions, but inconsistent over time.
European Values Study (EVS)	• Consistent on education, household composition, employment status, marital status, income. • Income measured in all waves. • Employment history and weekly hours included.	• No questions on discrimination based on social class, but asks about one's concerns about the lived conditions of the unemployed. • Weak on subjective aspects of class (e.g., job autonomy, satisfaction).	Includes broad economic indicators.

Additional key findings are summarized below:

- None of the surveys offer a unified, consistent measure of social class. Researchers must construct their own indicators of social class using various indicators.
- Most surveys include basic objective quantitative socio-economic variables: education, employment status, income, and occupation. Subjective dimensions of social class (e.g., job autonomy, job satisfaction) are not consistently captured.
- Some existing indicators permit gendered analysis, as they ask about work-life balance and unpaid work.
- Self-reported class is inconsistently included, with the EB and the ISSP using it more frequently than the ESS and the EVS.
- Measures of some dimensions of inequality (i.e., economic dimension of social class) are more frequent in the surveys reviewed. Social class is measured more often and more consistently than any other dimension of inequality we reviewed.

Measuring race and ethnicity

Conceptualizing race and ethnicity

Racial and ethnic background as well as national origin can and often do serve as grounds for discrimination. Race refers to the socially constructed category that groups people according to the ascribed physical characteristics. At the same time, ethnicity refers to the sense of identity

based on shared cultural characteristics (i.e., language, ancestry, place of birth, traditions). In some cases (i.e., Jewish ethnicity), religion will also be a marker of one's identity, and if one is interested in how well surveys measure anti-semitic attitudes, one needs to also review all the questions on religion, which was not the primary goal of our study.

The European Social Survey (ESS) provides some of the most comprehensive measures of ethnicity and race among the surveys reviewed. Since 2002 it has included a self-identification question for minority ethnic groups, revised in 2020 to combine race and ethnicity. Since Wave 7 (2014), a standardized EU ancestry question was added, and language spoken at home has been included in all the waves as a proxy for ethnic background.

The ESS also contains items on perceived unfair treatment or prejudice based on race and ethnicity (2006, 2008, 2012), as well as a general self-reported membership in discriminated groups (ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic). Questions on institutional discrimination are less consistent, though Wave 5 (2010) asked about fairness of the courts and police, and Waves 1 and 7 (2002, 2014) included questions on the desirability of workplace anti-discrimination laws. Across its waves, the ESS has also explored attitudes toward diversity, asking about the desirability of having friends, neighbors, or even spouses from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, the importance of living in diverse areas, and stereotypical beliefs about the intelligence or work ethic of racial and ethnic groups. Some of the response categories, such as "Jews," "Muslims," and "Gypsies," reflect socially contested terminology, but nonetheless illustrate how ethnicity and race have been operationalized in the survey.

By contrast, the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) devotes less attention to ethnicity and race. In all four waves covered in this analysis, respondents were asked about their ethnicity, though in some national questionnaires, this item was labelled origin country, in others it was called ethnic group/ ethnic identity, and in still others, interviewers referred to participants' family origin. In three out of four survey waves analyzed (except for 2002), this question took the form of country-specific variables with different categories for each country. Only the 1988 wave included questions explicitly on race. This lack of harmonization makes cross-national comparison difficult. Furthermore, the ISSP does not ask about either experiences or perceptions of discrimination, nor does it probe attitudes toward minority groups based on race or ethnicity. As such, while ISSP provides limited indicators, it lacks systematic coverage of ethnicity and race.

The Eurobarometer (EB) contains broad coverage of ethnicity and race in terms of perceptions, experiences, and attitudes, though its treatment of Roma category is inconsistent and self-identification questions are limited. Ethnicity is included as a category in questions on self-identification, discrimination experiences, and diversity in multiple waves (2008, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2019), with later waves extending categories to include skin colour and Roma identity. The EB regularly measures perceptions of discrimination, both at the individual and institutional level, asking whether such discrimination is widespread, whether respondents have witnessed it in the last year, and whether they think the situation has improved or worsened over time. Workplace

discrimination is also a recurrent theme, with items probing unfair treatment in hiring based on ethnic origin, skin colour, or religious expression. The survey consistently tracks attitudes toward ethnic diversity in various social and political roles, for example, whether people from different ethnic or religious backgrounds should be accepted as political leaders, colleagues, or neighbors. Since 2006, several waves have also examined support for workplace equal opportunity measures, monitoring practices, and diversity promotion, with Roma explicitly included only in the most recent waves. The EB has also explored personal networks, asking whether respondents have friends from minority groups, including Roma or people of a different skin colour. Taken together, the EB offers broad coverage of attitudes and perceptions, but variability across waves and the inconsistent inclusion of Roma remain significant limitations.

Finally, the European Values Study (EVS) takes the narrowest approach. Ethnicity is not directly measured, and there are no questions on personal experiences of discrimination or general perceptions of ethnic inequality. Instead, the EVS relies on attitudinal measures of social distance. Across all waves, respondents were asked whether they would accept neighbors from various groups, including people of a different race, Christians, Muslims, Jews, and "Gypsies." In Wave 4 (2008), the EVS added a question on the importance of ancestry for "truly" being [NATIONALITY]. These neighbour-preference items provide a proxy for attitudes toward diversity, but the EVS does not include broader measures of ethnic identity, discrimination, or institutional inequality.

Table 5.2.2. Comparative Overview of Ethnicity and Race Measures in Major European Surveys

Survey	Strengths	Weaknesses / Gaps	Notes
European Social Survey (ESS)	• Direct self-identification with minority ethnic group (2002–2020), revised in 2020 to combine race and ethnicity. • Since Wave 7 (2014): standardized ancestry question. • Language spoken at home included in all waves as a proxy for ethnic background. • Includes perceived unfair treatment based on race/ethnicity (2006, 2008, 2012). • All waves: self-reported membership in discriminated groups (ethnic, race, language, religion). • Some waves measure attitudes to diversity (friends, neighbors,	• Few questions on institutional discrimination (only in Wave 5, 2010). • Coverage uneven across waves. • Some categories include contested terms like "Gypsies."	Offers most nuanced, multi-dimensional measures across time, but patchy on institutional discrimination.

Survey	Strengths	Weaknesses / Gaps	Notes
	spouses, bosses of other racial/ethnic groups).		
International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)	• Self-reported ethnicity included in 3 of 4 waves, measured as origin, ethnic group, or family background.	• Very limited focus on ethnicity/race. • Inconsistent categories across countries. • No questions on discrimination experiences or attitudes toward ethnic minorities.	Weakest coverage; difficult for cross-national comparison.
Eurobarometer (EB)	• Includes ethnicity as a response category in self-identification, discrimination, and diversity items. • Consistently measures perceptions of discrimination (individual and institutional). • Attitudes toward diversity in workplaces, politics, and social spaces tracked across waves (2006–2019). • Later waves (i.e., 2019) add categories for "skin colour" and "being Roma." • Includes questions on friendships with minorities and Roma.	• Roma inconsistently included (sometimes missing) • Item sets vary across waves. • Cross-wave comparability limited.	Strongest on measures of institutional and individual discrimination, but inconsistency undermines comparability.
European Values Study (EVS)	• Attitudes toward neighbors from different races/ethnicities/religions included in all waves ("people of different race," "Muslims," "Jews," "Gypsies"). • Wave 4 (2008): question on ancestry as a criterion of citizenship.	• No direct measure of ethnicity. • No items on discrimination experiences or perceptions. • Attitudinal measures limited to neighbor-preference questions.	Very limited on ethnicity as identity; strongest on normative attitudes about social distance.

Key findings on race and ethnicity measures

- Overall, the ESS and the EB include a variety of measures on self-identification with a given ethnicity, experiences with discrimination based on one's ethnic origin and skin color (often later additions), and attitudes towards people with perceived memberships in various ethnic and racial groups.
- The ISSP and the EVS offer limited measures of race and ethnicity. The ISSP measures are not standardized. Response categories that include "skin color" are less frequent.
- In many surveys, Roma is missing as a response category both in questions about self-identification and in questions about perceptions of discrimination.

Measuring migration background

Conceptualizing migration background

Migration background usually refers to a socially constructed category that categorizes people based on their place of birth. People with a migration background are people born outside a given state. They may or may not have citizenship of the state they live in. In some cases, they can be born on the territory of a given state, but they are still considered to be people with a migration background because their parents were born elsewhere.

The European Social Survey (ESS) offers the most consistent and comprehensive coverage of migration background. Every wave includes questions on whether respondents were born in their country of residence, as well as on citizenship, length of residence, and the birthplace of both parents. This allows researchers to distinguish between first- and second-generation immigrants. The ESS also consistently records membership in groups subject to discrimination, with "nationality" offered as a category, and it has occasionally included questions on institutional discrimination against immigrants and refugees (2014, 2018). Importantly, all waves include attitudinal questions on immigration, providing a robust dataset for analyzing both structural and perceptual dimensions of migrant integration.

By contrast, the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) provides little systematic information on migration background. It lacks standardized questions on migration status, citizenship, or parental birthplace, and does not include questions about discrimination or attitudes toward migrants. In some countries, measures of migration status or ethnicity are included, but these vary widely, undermining cross-national comparability.

The Eurobarometer (EB) includes migration background questions only in certain waves (2005, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2021), covering respondents' and parents' place of birth. It has one question on individual experience with discrimination (1995-1996), but it does not include questions on experiences with institutional discrimination. However, it is particularly valuable for analyzing public attitudes to migration. Several waves, notably 1993, 1994, and 2009, asked about

perceptions of migrant numbers, stereotypes such as welfare exploitation and crime, as well as positive contributions like labor supply and solutions to population ageing. These questions also capture perceptions of diversity and tolerance, offering insights into shifting social attitudes.

The European Values Study (EVS) measures migration background in only two waves (2008 and 2017), through birthplace, length of residence, and parental birthplace. Like the EB, it does not include questions on personal experiences of discrimination or institutional treatment. Nonetheless, the EVS has consistently examined public attitudes toward immigration, with waves in 1999, 2008, and 2017 asking about immigrants' economic, social, and cultural impact, as well as preferences for immigration policy. Its strength lies in the long-term perspective on values and attitudes, though it is comparatively weak on structural indicators of migration background.

Table 5.2.3. Comparative Overview of Migration Background Measures in Major European Surveys

Survey	Strengths	Weaknesses / Gaps	Notes
European Social Survey (ESS)	• All waves ask about country of birth, citizenship, length of residence, and parents' countries of birth. • Enables identification of second-generation immigrants. • Consistently includes discriminated group membership items with "Nationality" as a category. • 2014 and 2018 waves include questions on institutional discrimination against immigrants/refugees. • Attitudes toward immigrants included in every wave.	• Institutional discrimination items limited to a few waves.	• Richest and most consistent data on migration background; strongest for both structural and attitudinal analysis.
International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)	• In some countries, can measure migration status/background or ethnicity (depending on implementation).	• No standardized questions on migration status, citizenship, or parents' birthplace.	Very weak comparability; patchy and unsystematic measures.

Survey	Strengths	Weaknesses / Gaps	Notes
		• No questions on discrimination or attitudes toward migrants. • Coverage inconsistent across countries.	
Eurobarometer (EB)	• Certain waves (2005, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2021) include migration history (respondent and parents' birthplace). • Attitudinal modules (1993, 1994, 2009) measure perceptions of migrant numbers, stereotypes (crime, welfare), and positive contributions (labor, ageing).	• Migration history not included in all waves. • No questions on personal discrimination experiences or institutional discrimination.	Strong on public attitudes to migration, weaker on consistent structural indicators.
European Values Study (EVS)	• Two waves (2008, 2017) measure migration background (birthplace, length of residence, parents' birthplace). • Attitudinal items in 1999, 2008, 2017 cover perceptions of immigrants' effects (economic, social, cultural) and policy preferences.	• No questions on individual or institutional discrimination. • Migration background coverage limited to two waves.	Provides long-term attitudinal perspective but weak on structural measures.

Key findings on migration background measures

• Overall, the ESS provides the most consistent and comprehensive coverage of migration background, including country of birth, citizenship, parental birthplace, and length of residence. It also captures second-generation immigrant status and includes attitudinal questions on immigration in every wave.
• The EB and the EVS measure migration background only in selected waves. While weaker on structural indicators, they provide useful insights into public opinion, including stereotypes, perceived contributions of migrants, and preferences for immigration policy.
• The ISSP offers the most limited coverage, with no standardized measures of migration background and inconsistent items across countries, making cross-national analysis difficult.

Measuring disability

Conceptualization of disability

The *Medical model* defines disability as an individual impairment, locating the "problem" in the body. The *Social model* views disability as the result of barriers and discrimination in society. The *Human rights-based approach* (UN CRPD) frames disability as a matter of equality, inclusion, and rights, emphasizing systemic change and accessibility.

Mapping measurement of disability on the disability concept

Although around 15% of the world's population lives with a disability, major surveys (ESS, ISSP, EB, EVS) often overlook them or frame their experiences too narrowly. The main issue is reliance on the medical model of disability, which defines disability in terms of individual impairment rather than systemic barriers or discrimination. This framing stereotypes people with disabilities as patients instead of citizens with diverse experiences, limiting the ability of surveys to capture their political, social, and public life participation. Surveys also homogenize disability, disregarding differences by type of impairment, gender, or age, as well as self-identification versus legal recognition. Conditions such as pregnancy or female-specific health issues are invisible, while fluctuating impairments are wrongly assumed to be permanent. The absence of questions on inaccessibility means barriers in public and private life remain unmeasured. Disability is mostly linked to employment, reinforcing notions of productivity as central to individual worth, while ignoring unpaid labor, caregiving, or civic activism. Accessibility of surveys themselves is limited, often excluding people with intellectual or sensory impairments. As a result, surveys cannot be considered representative of people with disabilities as a diverse minority. Mainstreaming disability in an intersectional and social model framework, while ensuring accessible survey design, is essential for capturing the lived realities of disabled people.

Table 5.2.4. Comparative Overview of Disability Measures in Major European Surveys

Survey	**Measures**	**Strengths**	**Weaknesses**
European Social Survey (ESS)	• Daily activity limitations (all waves, 2002–2020). • Health problems (Wave 7, 2014). • Discrimination-based self-identification (all waves). • Employment status: "Permanently sick or disabled" (all waves).	• Consistent longitudinal coverage. • Captures functional limitation, health, discrimination, and employment status. • Allows linking disability to labor market participation.	• Daily activities category is vague and lacks nuance. • Excludes many conditions (esp. female-specific, cancer, mental health). • Narrow employment measure: only captures those unable to work.

Survey	Measures	Strengths	Weaknesses
International Social Survey Programme (ISSP)	• Employment status: "Permanently sick or disabled." (1988, 1994, 2002, 2012).	• Consistent across waves. • Allows some comparability with the ESS.	• Disability only inferred via employment status. • Misses less severe, invisible, or fluctuating disabilities. • Narrow scope, not intersectional.
Eurobarometer (EB)	• Self-identification as disabled/minority (2008, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2019). • Direct disability/health questions (2006, 2008, 2009, 2012). • Discrimination-based identification (2008, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2019). • Employment status (most waves, since 1980s). • Public attitudes toward disability (comfort, representation, discrimination). • Policy/law awareness (anti-discrimination laws, accessibility, recruitment).	• Broadest coverage: combines structural, attitudinal, and policy measures. • Rich evidence on public perceptions and discrimination.	• Disability often vaguely defined. • Categories change across waves. • Limited continuity for health-specific items.
European Values Study (EVS)	• Employment-related disability measure (2008, 2017). • Perceptions of discrimination measured as concerns for living conditions (1999, 2008, 2017). • Attitudes toward disability in employment (1990). • Attitudes toward abortion in case of fetus' disability (1981, 1990).	• Captures cultural and moral attitudes to disability over time. • Includes concern about living conditions of disabled people.	• Very limited structural measures. • Employment measure only available in later waves. • Attitudinal questions framed in outdated or stigmatizing terms ("handicapped").

Key Findings on Disability Measures

• The ESS provides the most consistent longitudinal data, combining functional, employment, and discrimination-based measures, though definitions remain broad and health coverage incomplete.

• The EB offers the widest scope, covering structural, attitudinal, and policy-related aspects of disability, but measures vary across waves and are inconsistently defined.

• The ISSP is the weakest, with disability measured only via employment status and excluding those with less severe or invisible disabilities.

• The EVS contributes limited but revealing insights into cultural and moral attitudes, though many items are dated and framed in stigmatizing language.

Key findings on explicitly intersectional measures

The final section is a summary of findings from the analysis that we report in full in "Approaches to measurement and analysis of intersectionality in survey research: Strengths and Blind Spots" in Lefkofridi, Z. (ed.) *Elgar Encyclopedia on Gender and Politics* (forthcoming). The surveys do not explicitly measure self-identification with more than one marginalized group. Rather, an assumption is made that this can be done at the analysis stage by interacting demographic variables, i.e., the variables on gender and ethnicity.

- Some questions in the ESS and the EB allow respondents to choose more than one characteristic that served as the basis of discrimination against them. They exist in all the waves of the ESS and some waves of the EB. These questions typically allow a respondent to select more than one axis of discrimination. For example, the ESS question across all waves asks on what grounds is a respondent's group discriminated against and lists the following comprehensive response options: nationality, religion, language, ethnic group, age, gender, sexuality, disability, and other grounds.
- In 2008, 2009, and 2012, the EB also includes questions that ask whether a respondent knew of someone who has been discriminated against based on one or more of the listed grounds.
- One explicitly intersectional question from the EB 82.4, 2014 serves as a good example of an intersectional question that includes the most salient dimensions of multiple discrimination, except the Roma and the poor (as a more direct indicator of social class). These dimensions need to be added in future studies.
- Out of the four survey programs reviewed, *only the EB asks three explicitly intersectional questions that tap into respondents' perceptions of the disadvantaged position of some groups or discrimination against these groups.* These questions are not asked consistently. The questions are asked in 2008, 2009, 2012, and 2014.

- Measures of prejudices against groups with intersecting identities are almost non-existent in surveys. There is *only one explicitly intersectional question* asked between 1981 and 2008 in the EVS about approval and disapproval of single mothers, highlighting the intersection of gender and parenting status.
- Most surveys assume similarity of social relations and life experiences between West and East European countries, using West European experiences as model experiences. These experiences are then codified in response categories, neglecting to include response categories that are more applicant to the life experiences of East Europeans. For example, questions about gender-based violence include a response category of genital mutilation, more common in West European societies but fail to include a response category of obstetric violence, more common in East Europe.

Policy Recommendations

1. Survey designers should consider the inclusion of explicitly intersectional questions or response categories when it is theoretically relevant and feasible.
2. Empirical research should be able to design surveys that include questions about different social identities and experiences. For example, a question might inquire about experiences of discrimination faced by individuals who identify, for example, as both women and ethnic minorities.
3. Surveys need to include indicators that measure social class beyond the economic dimension and focus explicitly on power dimension.
4. Roma category has been recently added in some surveys, but it needs to be consistently included in any question about race/ethnicity.
5. Intersectionality as an approach should cover Eastern European specifics as well. It is advisable to include common East European life experiences, social categories, or practices in cross-national surveys when feasible and justifiable (i.e., questions about gender-based violence should include experiences with obstetric violence, prostitution etc.)
6. We recommend considering including questions on perceptions of and experiences with discrimination against Eastern European migrants in Western societies.
7. EVS Wording: We recommend using gay or lesbian instead of homosexuals, Roma instead of gypsies.
8. Questions about lived experience of disability should be framed in line with the intersectional approach (e.g., combing gender/age/disability, etc.).
9. Lived experiences of disability should measure a wide range of experiences both in the public and private sphere – not solely in relation to paid employment.
10. Surveys should include the theme of (in)accessibility within public sphere as a way of identifying various barriers that people with disabilities face and which hinder their active engagement and realization of their civic rights.

T5.3. Analysis of the instrumentalization of gendered vulnerability: the case of Mexico and Germany

Background

Research on femicide in Mexico and Germany stems from distinct genealogies influenced by the unique historical, socio-political, and economic contexts that give rise to gender-based violence and vulnerability. In Mexico, there is a well-established tradition of over 30 years of academic and policy analysis on femicide, which has grown more rigorous over time. In Germany, on the other hand, the research on femicide is still developing. This is especially relevant as awareness of gender-based violence increases, emphasizing the critical conversations about the lack of legal definitions and classifications that explicitly identify femicide as a gender-based crime. Against this background, this section explores historical and transnational manifestations of gender-based violence in Germany and Mexico. First, it engages with a historical reconstruction of some critical moments of women's struggle to criminalize femi(ni)cide in Mexico and Germany and analyze the feminist responses to structural gender-based violence. Second, it presents contemporary challenges for feminist mobilizations against femi(ni)cide in both countries. This intersectional analysis sheds light on the dominant gender regimes and notions of violence at the core of both cases. A significant challenge for gender studies is to confront the essentialized and feminization of violence, which codes women as pre-victims and men as perpetrators as well as the heteronormative notion of woman and the racialized man behind its definition.

Summary of content

Mexico

Gender-based violence in Latin America, particularly in Mexico, has reached extreme levels, leading to legal recognition of femicide and feminicide as distinct crimes and prompting reforms in over a dozen countries since 2007. Scholars and activists such as Diana Russell, Marcela Lagarde, and Julia Monárrez have developed and debated concepts to explain this violence, emphasizing its structural and systemic roots, with particular attention to the state's role in perpetuating or ignoring such crimes. Segato (2016) argues that sexualized violence in Latin America is not merely incidental but a strategic tool of war, used by both the state and organized crime to assert territorial control, with the state often complicit or inactive. Although legal reforms across the region have recognized femicide/feminicide as distinct crimes, inconsistencies in definitions, data collection, and the fading acknowledgment of state responsibility have limited their effectiveness in addressing the structural and institutional nature of gender-based violence. The criminalization of feminicide and related gender-based violence in Mexico represents a significant achievement for feminist and women's movements, raising awareness of institutional violence and securing legal recognition of women's rights; however, these laws largely exclude trans women and reinforce a binary, heteronormative framework. Despite recent advances like the

“Paola Law,” critics argue that the legal system oversimplifies structural violence into isolated cases, perpetuating exclusion, reinforcing fixed gender roles, and failing to address broader social, political, and institutional forms of violence.

Germany

Following the 2016 Cologne assaults and the #MeToo movement, gender-based violence gained greater attention across Europe, with the COVID-19 pandemic intensifying domestic abuse. Despite EU-wide efforts like the Istanbul Convention and proposed directives, femicide remains a critical issue—especially in intimate settings—while gaps in legal definitions, data collection, and protection for LGBTQ+ and marginalized groups hinder comprehensive prevention and response.

In Germany, femicide is not legally defined and is prosecuted under general homicide laws, which overlook its gendered nature and motives such as misogyny or intimate partner violence. Advocates for legal reform argue that explicitly recognizing femicide as a distinct crime would align with international standards, improve data collection, raise public awareness, and strengthen efforts to prevent gender-based violence.

Opponents argue that Germany’s existing gender-neutral homicide laws are sufficient to address femicide and that creating a separate legal category could result in symbolic legislation without solving systemic issues like inadequate victim support. Instead, they emphasize improving shelters, services, and gender-sensitive training, while the government is taking steps—such as new legislation and data collection initiatives—to align with the Istanbul Convention and better address gender-based violence.

Despite recent initiatives, femicide in Germany remains under-researched and inadequately addressed due to inconsistent legal classifications, limited data, and media narratives that obscure its systemic nature. Feminist advocates criticize the racialized framing of "honor killings" and the privatization of domestic violence, arguing that these practices mask the broader societal and patriarchal structures underlying gender-based killings and hinder consistent legal and social responses.

Right-wing political actors in Germany, particularly the AfD, have instrumentalized gender-based violence to promote anti-immigration agendas by framing femicide—especially so-called "honor killings"—a threat from foreign cultures, thereby obscuring the broader, systemic roots of gender-based violence. This racialized narrative diverts attention from the shared patriarchal structures underlying all forms of femicide, reinforcing stereotypes while failing to address the societal norms and power dynamics that perpetuate violence against women.

Methodology

This study employs a comparative case study approach focusing on Mexico and Germany to explore how feminicide is addressed within different legal and political contexts. The analysis includes examination of legal texts, debates, and political discourse to understand how the issue is

defined, framed, and contested in each country. By comparing these cases, the study aims to uncover how cultural, legal, and institutional factors shape the recognition and response to feminicide.

Key findings

Mexico and Germany present two contrasting but complementary case studies of how femicide is addressed in legal, social, and political contexts.

In Mexico, femicide rates rank among the highest in the world, with an estimated ten women murdered every day, often in contexts shaped by entrenched misogyny, intimate partner violence, organized crime, and militarization. Marginalized women, particularly those in regions with weak state presence and high criminal or military activity, face the greatest risks. Although femicide has been legally recognized as a specific crime with stricter penalties and investigative protocols, enforcement remains inconsistent. Widespread impunity, corruption, and resource constraints undermine the effectiveness of these legal frameworks, creating a climate where perpetrators often go unpunished. Nevertheless, Mexico stands out for the strength of its research and activism: government bodies such as INEGI, NGOs like the Observatorio Ciudadano Nacional del Feminicidio, and grassroots feminist movements generate extensive data, shape public awareness, and press for accountability. Importantly, much of the research emphasizes intersectional dynamics, linking gender-based killings to broader patterns of organized crime, militarization, and state neglect.

In Germany, femicide occurs at lower rates but remains a pressing issue, especially within domestic contexts: approximately 40% of femicides involve current or former partners. Unlike Mexico, Germany has not legally recognized femicide as a separate crime, treating such cases under gender-neutral homicide laws. This masks gendered motivations and limits the visibility of the phenomenon in legal and statistical systems. Data collection is a key weakness, with no specific classification for femicide in federal crime statistics and limited gender-disaggregated information, making prevention efforts more difficult. Research on femicide in Germany is less developed than in Mexico, though awareness is increasing. Civil society groups and advocacy organizations are pressing for legal recognition of femicide, improved data collection, and gender-sensitive policy interventions. Germany's ratification of the Istanbul Convention has bolstered calls for stronger protections, but implementation gaps persist.

Taken together, the two cases highlight different but equally problematic dynamics: Mexico represents recognition without enforcement, while Germany illustrates under-recognition despite growing awareness. Both countries face challenges in translating awareness into effective prevention and justice. Mexico demonstrates how strong activism and legal reform can still be undermined by weak institutions and impunity, while Germany shows how lack of legal recognition and data gaps can obscure systemic gender-based violence even within a strong

institutional framework. These findings underscore that tackling femicide requires not only legal recognition, but also reliable data, institutional accountability, and sustained investment in gender-sensitive policies.

Table 5.3.1. Comparative Case Study: Femicide in Mexico and Germany

Dimension	Mexico	Germany
Femicide Rates	Among the highest globally (~10 women murdered daily).	Lower overall rates; ~40% of femicides involve current or former partners.[4]
Key Drivers	Intimate partner violence, organized crime, militarization, entrenched misogyny.	Primarily domestic and intimate partner violence.
Risk Factors	Marginalized women in regions with weak state presence and high criminal/military activity.	Women in domestic settings, particularly during or after relationships.
Legal Framework	Femicide recognized as a specific crime with stricter penalties and investigative protocols.	No specific femicide law; cases prosecuted under general homicide laws.
Enforcement & Justice	Enforcement inconsistent; impunity, corruption, and lack of resources undermine effectiveness.	Lack of legal recognition masks gendered motives; limited use of gender-sensitive prosecution.
Data & Statistics	Strong: INEGI and NGOs provide detailed data and analysis.	Weak: No femicide classification in federal crime statistics; insufficient gender-disaggregated data.
Research Base	Extensive scholarship linking gender violence and organized crime.	Limited research, but growing attention.
Activism & Advocacy	Grassroots organizations central to legal reforms and public awareness.	Advocacy groups push for legal recognition, improved data, stronger protections.

4 https://www.bka.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Publikationen/JahresberichteUndLagebilder/HaeuslicheGewalt/HaeuslicheGewalt2022.html?nn=219004

Dimension	Mexico	Germany
International Frameworks	National focus; activism intersects with global women's rights agendas.	Ratified Istanbul Convention; implementation gaps remain.
Intersectional Dimensions	Strong focus on intersections of gender, crime, militarization, and marginalization.	Intersectional lens less developed; discourse still centered on domestic violence.

Comparative Conclusion

- Mexico has a legal framework and protocols for femicide but struggles with implementation and impunity.
- Germany lacks a distinct legal category, which limits recognition of gender-specific violence, despite growing calls for reform.
- Both countries face challenges in data collection, enforcement, and gender-sensitive interpretation, though the contexts and root causes differ significantly.

Policy recommendations

1. Strengthen Enforcement Mechanisms for Existing Femicide Laws (Mexico): it would be desirable to establish specialized, well-funded investigative and prosecutorial units for femicide cases at the state level.

2. Introduce Legal Recognition of Femicide as a Distinct Crime (Germany): it would be important to amend criminal law to define femicide as a specific offense, with guidelines recognizing gender-based motivations in homicides of women.

3. Develop a Gender-Sensitive, Intersectional Data and Monitoring System (Both Countries): it would be crucial to establish or enhance centralized, gender-disaggregated databases that track femicide cases, including factors such as perpetrator relationship, geographic location, and intersectional vulnerabilities (e.g., ethnicity, migration status, region).

T5.4. In-depths interviews with intersectional feminist activists

By applying the theoretical framework, in this task we investigated how disabled and Roma feminists conceptualize intersectional inequalities as experienced by marginalized groups they intend to represent. The case studies include Roma feminist activism in Hungary and Disability feminism in Poland and Hungary.

See also educational cartoons informed by this research: https://pushbacklash.eu/dissemination/cartoons/ and an infographic on intersectional activism: https://pushbacklash.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/D10.9.pdf

Romani Feminist Activism

Background to Romani feminist activism

In the literature on Roma feminism, it is emphasized that Roma women are striving to shape a form of feminism that reflects their perspectives, demands, and lived experiences. They are fighting for gender equality by addressing both Roma men and non-Roma women. Many scholars argue that the struggles of Romani women are excluded from both mainstream feminist and antiracist movements. Romani women are often not considered within feminist frameworks because they are primarily seen through the lens of their ethnic identity as "Gypsies," while antiracist Roma politics frequently overlook their gender-specific demands.

Historically, feminism in Europe failed to recognize the issues faced by Romani women—and other minority women—as causes worth advocating for. Instead, it tends to promote a notion of universal gender empowerment that does not account for the specific challenges these women face. Romani women, however, articulate their demands by insisting that addressing their social and political marginalization requires an intersectional approach—one that also challenges broader societal hierarchies (Kóczé et al., 2018; Aiello-Cabrera et al., 2024; Oprea, 2004, 2012). In their view, intersectionality offers a more effective way to combat racism and oppressive patriarchy than the currently separate approaches. It can expose how racialized, gendered, and class-based mechanisms sustain the oppression, exclusion, and exploitation of Roma communities (Jovanovic et al., 2015; Kóczé and Popa, 2009).

Romani feminists also advocate for the development of a modern Roma identity that embraces diversity and promotes equality within Roma communities (Bitu & Vincze, 2012). They emphasize the importance of building solidarity among women of different ethnicities, ages, and social classes. A key claim they make is that Romani women should not be viewed as passive victims of patriarchy in need of rescue. Instead, Roma feminists often identify themselves as subjects affected by antigypsyism and gender-based antigypsyism. They also engage in critical reflection on their own communities—a practice often considered taboo—in order to more effectively challenge the exclusionary and discriminatory practices of the dominant society.

The aim of the study was to reveal how activists working in Roma and gender-related fields perceived the situation of Roma women, the public discourse surrounding Roma women, and the political actions related to them in today's Hungary. Interviews were conducted with individuals actively involved in Roma-related issues. During the interview, personal experiences and opinions were asked, as well as insights into what opportunities they see for minority women to improve their situation, and what obstacles and challenges they face.

Methodology

Roma feminist activists were interviewed through semi-structured interviews that explored their activism, professional backgrounds, and pathways into activism. The discussions addressed the key issues Romani women face, the goals activists seek to achieve, and the methods they employ. Respondents also reflected on the state of gender and democracy in their country, the position of Roma women in Hungary and Europe more broadly, the relationship between feminism and Roma communities, gender-based violence against Roma women, and the effects of social and family policies on Roma families.

Nine interviews were conducted with representatives of the following organizations, the gender identity of the interviewee listed in parentheses.

- Roma women in Public Life (woman)
- Romaversitas (woman)
- Bura Galery (man)
- Women For Women Together Against Violence Association (NANE) (woman)
- Roma expert (man)
- Roma activist, trainer, TASZ, founder of Ame Panzh (woman)
- Phiren Amenca (woman)
- Roma Women's Network (woman)
- Association for Women (woman)

Results

First, several challenges were highlighted as major obstacles to advancing the empowerment and equality of Romani women. Secondly, activists discussed the objectives they strive to achieve and thirdly, they described how these objectives could be achieved:

Table 5.4.1. Insights from Romani Feminist Activists

Topic	**Insights**
Major Obstacles	1. Exclusion from decision-making: Romani women are often excluded from political and policy processes, leaving their needs unaddressed. 2. Multiple disadvantages: They face compounded challenges in housing, education, employment, and health due to intersecting gender and ethnic discrimination.

Topic	Insights
	3. Policy gaps: National policies are frequently incomplete or poorly implemented, with consultations seen as tokenistic and disconnected from lived realities. 4. Stereotypes and invisibility: Public discourse is simplistic and prejudiced, while mainstream feminist movements often overlook Romani women's experiences.
Objectives	1. Reframe Romani women not as passive victims but as active, autonomous agents in society. 2. Address invisibility in both feminist and public discourse through intersectional approaches. 3. Empower Romani women in public life by embedding their firsthand experiences into policies and programs, ensuring Roma communities are more effectively represented in decision-making.
How to Achieve Objectives	1. Community organizing: Initiatives like the Roma Women's Network bring together women from diverse backgrounds to work collectively on rights and community issues. 2. Education: Programs such as Romaversitas foster empowerment and inclusion through professional and project-based development. 3. Cultural activism: Romani artists challenge stereotypes, raise awareness, and build solidarity through community-based artistic projects. 4. Political activism: Activists engage in campaigns, collaborate with NGOs, and work to enhance Romani women's political representation and reduce social inequalities.

Policy Recommendations

1. Institutionalize Inclusive Decision-Making Processes: it would be essential to establish formal mechanisms to ensure the participation of Romani women in policymaking at local, regional, and national levels.

2. Develop and Fund Intersectional Policy Frameworks: it would be highly recommendable to design and implement intersectional policies that address the multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination faced by Romani women, and ensure these are backed by dedicated funding and regular impact assessments.

3. Support Community-Led Cultural and Educational Initiatives by providing sustained funding and institutional support for community-based educational programs, cultural activism, and empowerment networks led by Romani women.

Feminist Disability Activism in Hungary

Background

Due to their gender and disability, women with disabilities live in a multiply stigmatized existence and experience dual oppression resulting from both ableism and sexism (Zinsmeister, 2007). Women with disabilities are denied the opportunity to confront and cope with female gender stereotypes and role expectations by having their womanhood delegitimized (see e.g., Lendvai & Nguyen Luu, 2019, 2022). Consequently, in their attempts to integrate into society, women with disabilities face strong and deeply entrenched barriers. To date, no comprehensive study has been conducted on the situation of women with disabilities in Hungary. Only a few studies – typically adopting a feminist disability perspective – have addressed specific aspects of femininity within particular disability groups, such as the lived experience of womanhood, pregnancy and motherhood, or abuse targeting disabled women (see e.g., Hernádi, 2014; Lendvai & Nguyen Luu, 2019, 2022; Hankó et al., 2022; Pászti & Lendvai, in press).

Research explicitly focused on feminist disability activism is also lacking. When examining the development of these aspects and movements, it is essential to consider Mladenov's (2017) conclusion – based on Nancy Fraser's theory of social justice – that within the postsocialist disability matrix, regional specificities are of great significance, especially the legacy of state socialism and the processes of postsocialist neoliberalization. Under socialism, people with disabilities were rendered invisible (Mladenov, 2017), just as women with disabilities have remained invisible within feminist movements and among women more broadly (see e.g., Garland-Thomson, 2002, 2005; Wendell, 1997; Hernádi, 2014; Lendvai & Nguyen Luu, 2022). Therefore, the aim of the present study was to explore the characteristics of feminist disability activism in Hungary; however, it soon became clear that the focus should rather be placed on the reasons for the absence of such a movement.

Methodology

The aim of our study was to explore the development and current state of feminist disability activism in Hungary since the regime change, focusing on how activists interpret their roles, identities, and experiences. Adopting a phenomenological perspective, we prioritized personal narratives and positioning (Rácz et al., 2023).

The sample consisted of 16 interviewees connected to disability issues, including both organizational and independent activists, allies, and scholars. While some participants supported disabled women's causes only occasionally or did not identify as activists, most represented self-advocating disabled women. Activists with physical, visual, and autism-related disabilities took part, but organizations of people with intellectual disabilities declined. Recruiting was challenging,

as few participants identified fully with stigmatized labels such as “feminist,” “disability advocate,” or “activist.”

Data were collected between June 2024 and March 2025 through semi-structured interviews lasting 2.5–6 hours (after two shorter pilot interviews). Interviews were conducted online or by phone, recorded, transcribed with AI, corrected, anonymized, and carefully de-identified. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021, 2022) was applied with an inductive, reflexive approach to uncover underlying meanings and assumptions in the participants’ accounts.

Results and Key findings

The semi-structured interviews with disabled women activists revealed three overarching thematic categories: Fragmentation, The “Big Three” (Feminism, Disability, Activism), and Depoliticisation and Fear of Retaliation. These themes highlight the complex challenges activists face in building a coherent, intersectional disability politics under illiberal and exclusionary conditions.

1. **Fragmentation**. This theme captures the organizational and relational divides that weaken disability advocacy. Competition for scarce resources, limited cross-movement solidarity, and structural barriers to cooperation prevent the emergence of a unified feminist disability agenda. Fragmentation manifests both internally (between large and grassroots organizations) and externally (in limited alliances with Roma or LGBTQ+ movements).

2. **The “Big Three”: Feminism, Disability, and Activism**. This theme addresses the identity conflicts that arise when disabled women claim all three labels simultaneously. Interviewees described the “triple stigma” of being disabled, feminist, and activist—identities that are each stigmatized in Hungarian culture, and even more so in combination. Paternalism, cultural rejection of feminism, and condescending attitudes toward activism reinforce marginalization and block recognition.

3. **Depoliticisation and Fear of Retaliation**. This theme reflects the broader political environment that silences disability activism. Democratic backsliding, civil society restrictions, and hostile funding structures push disability organizations toward depoliticized cultural or leisure work, while discouraging advocacy. As a result, disabled women remain politically invisible, excluded from both family policy frameworks and national debates, even though EU and UN frameworks formally acknowledge them.

Linking Themes to the Table

The accompanying table organizes these findings into Topics and Insights, grouping them under the three main thematic categories. Each row illustrates how specific concepts—such as organizational fragmentation, triple stigma, or civil society constraints—belong to one of the broader themes. In this way, the table not only summarizes activist perspectives but also visually

demonstrates how diverse challenges cluster into three overarching categories that structure the lived realities of feminist disability activism in Hungary.

Table 5.4.2. Insights from Disability Feminist Activists in Hungary

Theme	Insights
Fragmentation	• Organizational fragmentation: Disability organizations compete for scarce resources, creating tensions between large state-funded institutions and smaller grassroots groups. • Lack of solidarity with other marginalized groups: Limited cooperation with Roma and LGBTQ+ movements, driven by stigma and fear of losing funding, though activists see potential for alliances. • Barriers to unified advocacy: Cross-disability cooperation is weak, even around shared issues like accessibility; activists stressed the need for clearer collective demands. • Structural challenges: Denial of disability in society, lack of legal/policy awareness, and limited education within movements hinder coherent feminist disability politics.
The "Big Three": Feminism, Disability, Activism	• Triple stigma and identity conflict: Disabled women face intersecting stereotypes—"lovable but incompetent" if disabled, "aggressive" if feminist or activist. Identifying with all three identities risks rejection. • Cultural rejection: In Hungary, feminism is stigmatized as anti-male and activism as confrontational, discouraging self-identification even among those doing activist work. • Paternalism and dismissal: Gender issues raised by disabled women are trivialized or treated with pity, reinforcing exclusion. Activists argued for embracing anger and resistance rather than relying on being "lovable."
Depoliticisation and Fear of Retaliation	• Political invisibility: Disabled women are excluded from family policy narratives and positioned as "invisible" or "not-quite-human," blocking recognition in public discourse. • Democratic decline: Since 2010, shrinking civic space and state hostility have depoliticized disability issues, ignoring EU and UN frameworks. • Civil society constraints: Funding structures channel disability organizations toward cultural/leisure activities while discouraging political advocacy, systematically silencing feminist disability activism.

Policy recommendations

1. Strengthen alliances and cooperation: Build intersectional partnerships with other marginalized groups (e.g., LGBTQ+, Roma) and enhance collaboration between disability organizations to reduce fragmentation and ensure unified, cross-disability advocacy.

2. Increase visibility and political recognition: Highlight disabled women's specific needs, ensure meaningful representation in leadership and policymaking, and embed disability and gender concerns into mainstream political discourse.

3. Empower through education and rights-based practices: Expand public and internal education on structural inequalities, provide targeted legal and policy training for activists, and guarantee access to healthcare, reproductive services, and advocacy platforms grounded in rights-based approaches.

Feminist Disability Activism in Poland

Background

Disabled women and girls are an estimated 15–22% of Poland's female population, yet they remain among the most marginalised and poorest groups. After 1989, public debate often treated neoliberal markets and democracy as a package deal. In practice, market-first policies - together with the Catholic Church's strong role - have weakened inclusion and kept structural disadvantages in place for women and disabled people, especially disabled women.

A blended disability model still shapes policy and public life: a post-socialist legacy that hides disability, a narrow "social" reading that underplays bodies and health, and a charity model backed by the Church. This mix depoliticises disability and normalises paternalism. Laws and strategies rarely address disabled women's specific needs. Many disability NGOs focus on services, not rights. Feminist groups are political but have often overlooked disability. The result is persistent inequality across health, education, work, and participation - worse than for disabled men or non-disabled women.

There is, however, a more political strand of organising grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Disabled women were visible in Poland's 2018 CRPD review, which spotlighted violations affecting girls and women and urged action under Articles 6 (women) and 19 (independent living). These findings helped activists mobilise, even though the government did not translate and post them until 2025 and only after pressure. Two milestone events - the First Congress of Women with Disabilities and Allies (21 Sept 2019) and the Second Congress (8 Mar 2024) – explicitly linked feminism, disability, and human rights. Still, the charity and medical frames remain strong, and everyday benefits have not reached most disabled women.

Methodology

This study combines desk research (media, campaigns, statements, grey literature) with semi-structured interviews. Twenty-two key Polish disability feminist activists took part (ages 20 - 50+), with a range of disabilities and backgrounds, from big cities and smaller towns.

Interviews ran from July to September 2025 in Polish over Microsoft Teams, about two hours each. They were recorded, transcribed, and anonymised when requested. Consent was obtained; participants could skip questions or retract material. Analysis used an inductive, reflexive thematic approach: close reading, iterative coding, clustering themes, and constant comparison. Final interpretations weave activists' perspectives with disability-studies debates and the post-socialist context. A summary table is provided below.

Key Findings

1. The Situation of Disabled Women in Poland

Interviewees describe layered barriers across home, health care, schools, work, and public space. What sets their situation apart is not one single obstacle but how many systems work together: desexualisation and infantilisation; welfare and assessment rules built around deficit; inaccessible buildings, information, and digital services; and public stories that erase disabled women either as women with specific bodies and needs or as citizens with a political voice.

A recurring theme is gender erasure - the idea that disabled people sit outside gendered life. Activists argue that feminist disability work must bring gender to the foreground so needs around sexual and reproductive health, autonomy, and protection from gender-based violence are actually recognised. Erasure shows up in inaccessible gynaecology, doubts about disabled motherhood, and treating disabled women as asexual.

Language and identity also matter. Many prefer person-first phrasing ("woman with a disability") to centre the person, while warning against policing language - preferences vary, and respecting that variety is part of a feminist-disability stance.

Assessments and welfare reinforce dependency. Eligibility logics reward performances of incapacity and penalise initiative. Periodic reviews push people to prove they are "disabled enough," which is demeaning and discourages participation. This plays out differently across localities and impairments but is gendered because women are already seen through family care roles.

Health care is a pressure point: inaccessible clinics and equipment, poor communication support, and provider bias are common. Policies that centre carers rather than personal assistance keep adult women in child-like roles and recast care as charity instead of a right.

In education and work, many activists describe a journey from internalised medicalisation (endless rehab, shame) to pride and structural thinking. This shift helps them see barriers as design and policy choices, not personal failings. Yet institutions still default to remediation over inclusion.

Within movements, carers' voices often dominate media and protest narratives, which keeps the charity frame in place and sidelines disabled women as leaders. At the same time, interviewees resist purely social explanations that ignore pain or fluctuation, arguing for a both/and view: bodies and environments matter.

2. Challenges and Opportunities in Disability-Feminist Activism

Mutual gaps in attention persist. Feminist organisations often treat disability as an add-on project; disability NGOs tend to default to a generic subject and underplay reproductive rights, anti-violence systems, and women's economic inequalities. National strategies frequently omit disabled women as a distinct group.

Infrastructure is thin. Much work rests on a few overstretched people, informal collectives, and short grants. Burnout is common; institutional memory is fragile. Activists also shoulder conceptual labour - adapting global disability ideas to Polish realities - work that is vital but rarely funded.

Still, there are openings. Cross-movement learning brings new tactics (from Pride to reproductive justice) that help redesign institutions. Making access an organising method - not an afterthought - changes who can participate and what issues rise (for example, accessible gynaecology). Coalition work improves when intersectionality is practised, widening frames to include trans and neurodiverse experiences and treating access as an upstream design choice. A shared, concrete agenda helps: personal assistance as a right; accessible reproductive health; disability-aware anti-violence systems; reform of the disability assessment system; and participatory mechanisms that centre disabled women's expertise.

3. Populist Discourse and Its Effects

Populist talk has gone mainstream: it praises strong, productive, heterosexual bodies and frames social policy as charity for the "weak." Scarcity frames ("who pays for whom") justify punitive rules and stigma, pushing disabled women further from jobs and politics. Some disabled voters seek recognition in religious-conservative spaces that offer cultural dignity but resist redistribution - showing how populism can promise status through hierarchy rather than rights.

Counter-moves should focus on naming disability as political, shifting from charity to rights, building pride, setting up advisory bodies, and allying with other minority groups.

Table 5.4.3. Insights from Disability Feminist Activists in Hungary

Insights	Themes
Layered Barriers in Everyday Life	• Barriers across home, health care, schools, work, and public space reinforce one another. • Gender erasure: Disabled women excluded from gendered life (e.g., inaccessible gynaecology, doubts about motherhood, assumptions of asexuality). • Language and identity: Preference for person-first phrasing but emphasis on respecting diversity of terms. • Assessments and welfare: Systems reward incapacity, penalise initiative, and require proof of being "disabled enough." • Health care pressures: Inaccessible clinics, poor communication support, and carer-centred rather than rights-based policies. • Education and work: Shift from medicalisation/shame to pride/structural thinking, but institutions still default to remediation. • Movement dynamics: Carers' voices dominate public narratives; activists call for a both/and approach that recognises both bodies and environments.
Challenges and Opportunities in Activism	• Mutual gaps in attention: Feminist groups treat disability as add-on; disability NGOs underplay reproductive rights and economic inequality. • Thin infrastructure: Reliance on a few individuals, short-term grants, fragile institutional memory. • Conceptual labour: Adapting global disability frameworks to local realities without funding support. • Openings: Cross-movement learning (e.g., Pride, reproductive justice); making access an organising method; intersectional coalitions including trans and neurodiverse groups. • Shared agenda: Personal assistance as a right, accessible reproductive health, disability-aware anti-violence systems, reform of assessments, participatory policymaking centering disabled women.
Populist Discourse and Effects	• Populist frames: Valuing "strong, productive, heterosexual bodies"; social policy cast as charity for the "weak." • Scarcity discourse: "Who pays for whom" logic justifies punitive rules and stigma. • Conservative recognition: Some disabled voters turn to religious-conservative spaces that offer cultural dignity but oppose redistribution.

Insights	Themes
	• Counter-moves: Name disability as political, shift from charity to rights, build pride, establish advisory bodies, and ally with other minorities.

Policy and Advocacy Recommendations

- Mainstream disability-gender perspectives across political agendas, human-rights work, anti-populist efforts, and feminist movements, with representative participation.
- Fund intersectional initiatives and ensure accessible, inclusive spaces for collaboration across marginalised groups and allies.
- Align assessments and supports with independent living: scale personal assistance, strengthen autonomy, and pair reforms with public messaging that challenges sexist and ableist stereotypes.
- Build permanent participation channels for organisations led by disabled women across policy design, budgeting, delivery, and review.
- Invest in routine, disaggregated data and mixed-methods research (by gender, age, disability type, region) to guide action.
- Adopt a national approach to gender-based violence that recognises disability-specific risks and funds accessible services.
- Make services usable: accessible shelters, hotlines, police, courts, and support centres with strong communication access.
- Provide recurring, survivor-informed training for police, prosecutors, judges, social workers, and victim-support staff.
- Guarantee accessible sexual and reproductive health care—gynaecology, contraception (including emergency), maternity care, and lawful abortion—rooted in free, informed consent.
- Clarify sterilisation policy: ban coercion; ensure clear, lawful access on request with counselling and safeguards; study current practice.
- Deliver comprehensive, accessible sexuality education on power, consent, relationships, and bodily autonomy.
- Make inclusion standard in schools through accommodations, trained staff, accessible buildings, and individualised supports.
- Expand decent-work pathways: accessible hiring, accommodation funds, anti-discrimination enforcement, targeted upskilling, public-sector goals, and regular labour data split by gender and disability.

- Support parenting: affordable childcare, peer mentoring, and practical assistance co-designed with mothers with disabilities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.

T5.1

Published academic paper:

Vidra, Z., & Virágh, E. A. (2025). (In) visibilized? Roma in social, family and workfare policy discourses in the authoritarian neoliberal context of Hungary. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, *45*(3/4), 365-379.

https://www.emerald.com/ijssp/article-abstract/45/3-4/365/1241393/In-visibilized-Roma-in-social-family-and-workfare?redirectedFrom=fulltext

Katarzyna Dębska: **The intersectional aspects of the refugee crises in 2015-2023 in the public discourse in Poland**

Introduction

The case study analyses press material from 2015-2023, a period that covers the rule of Law and Justice (in coalition with smaller right-wing parties). The parliamentary elections in Poland in 2015 and 2023 took place in October, so the collected corpus of texts also includes publications from before Law and Justice came to power and from the period immediately after the opposition parties' victory in 2023. The year 2015 is also significant because it coincides with the height of the refugee crisis in southern Europe. Poland has been accepting refugees from Asian countries for years, but this has not yet led to a moral panic. In 2015, however, the issue of accepting refugees from the Middle East and Africa became a bogeyman in right-wing discourse, from which only Law and Justice could protect Polish society.

Theoretical perspective

The concept of intersectionality has its origins in Women's studies and the recognition that a one-dimensional view of discrimination against minority and underprivileged groups can lead to further discrimination, as in the case of, for example, non-white migrant women in the US experiencing domestic violence (Crenshaw 1991). This recognition corresponds clearly with the achievements of feminist thought, whose development was based precisely on an ever-deepening awareness of the complexity of women's (and non-women's) identities and the positions they occupy in society.

Crenshaw distinguished three dimensions of intersectionality: structural, political, and representational intersectionality. Structural intersectionality concerns power structures associated with the unequal treatment of certain categories of people because of their gender, 'race', ethnicity, social class, etc. Political intersectionality refers to issues of representation in the political space; for some groups are more likely to be adequately represented than others, e.g. middle- or upper-class women find it easier to find representation for their demands than working class women, economic migrants, etc. Representational intersectionality, on the other hand, concerns the sphere of culture, media etc. and how different groups and complex identities are portrayed in media messages and cultural texts.

Intersectionality can also be a form of narrative about society and an argumentative strategy designed to give subjectivity to the representatives of the group in question. Intersectionality may serve not only as a theory but also as a form of a political action. The term appears in the texts written by feminists and other activists coming from outside of the academia (Oleksy 2014, 252).

In the analysis, I also refer to the concept of gender nationalism, described by Leila Hadj Abdou as a strategy of using the narrative of gender equality as a way to delineate barriers between us who belong to the community and in consequence enjoy several rights, and the Other who is excluded from the community (Abdou 2017). What should be highlighted here is the fact that

although gender equality is a value that should be protected, Abdou put attention to the use of the gender equality narrative as a way of overshadowing the racist and often Islamophobic claims of the far rights politicians and circles. In this way, the radical right may refer to the values respected by the liberal and left-wing circles while perpetuating the politics of discrimination and exclusion.

The socio-historical context of the analyzed material

The case of public discourse around the refugee crisis in Poland since 2015. The timeline of the events creates the timeline of changes in the Polish society's attitude towards the refugees.

Poland had been a mostly homogenous country after the Second World War. However, before the war in Poland several ethnic and nationalities coexisted together – in a more or less conflicted way (Bicz 2020). The multi-ethnic communities existed at that time, however, there also appeared various act of violence and discrimination from the Polish side, e.g. against Jews or Ukrainians.

Poles emigrated to Western countries both during the Polish People's Republic (then mostly illegally) and after 1989. After accession to the EU, many Poles left for many European Union countries and has accounted for the majority migrants there (e.g. Great Britain).

In May 2015, the CBOS (Centre for Public Opinion Research) published the results of a survey on Poles' attitudes towards refugees. CBOS is an institution that periodically carries out surveys of Poles' opinions on various topics. In May 2015, 79% of Poles claimed that Poland should accept refugees from countries under armed conflicts. Six months later the percentage dropped to 42% and one year later it was equal to 41% (CBOS 2017). As we can see, support for accepting refugees in Poland has fallen by 35 percentage points in six months, which is a significant change. It can be explained in reference to the changing discourse around refugees and migrants, initiated by the Law and Justice Party, which has been gaining more and more popularity before the Parliamentary elections.

In 2015, when the refugee crisis in Southern Europe was exacerbated, there was a rampant shift in the Poles' attitude towards accepting refugees in Poland. During the election campaign, the part Law and Justice, which would have a majority in the Parliament for the following eight years, used anti-Islamic, anti-refugee, and populist rhetoric to win the election. The leader of the party, Jarosław Kaczyński, talked about the refugees as carriers of parasites that can be dangerous to people living in Poland (Newsweek 2015).

The ways of interpreting the changes in Poles' attitudes towards helping refugees are several, for example cites the homogeneity of Polish society and the infrequent contact of Poles and Poles with Muslims and the resulting lack of knowledge about Islam (Pędzwiatr 2015). Research conducted since 2015 confirms a clearly negative attitude towards refugees, which translates, among other things, into allowing violence (physical and psychological) to be used against them (Świderska, Winiewski, Hansen 2016; Hall, Mikulska-Jolles.

The representations of refugees as a threat to the Polish people appeared in the right-wing discourse during the last eight years. The refugee crisis in the Mediterranean intensified in 2015.

Within the EU institutions, the idea emerged that member states should take in refugees in a spirit of solidarity, based on a quota system. The Civic Platform, which was in power at the time, said it was ready to accept a certain number of migrants. One of its MPs even declared that Poland would be able to accept the 12,000 refugees proposed by the EU if certain conditions were met, including procedures for sealing the EU's borders. The response from conservative and right-wing circles was a campaign of scaremongering about a 'flood' of refugees from Africa and the Middle East. Their cultural and even biological differences were emphasised (e.g. Jarosław Kaczyński, leader of the Law and Justice party, claimed that refugees could be carriers of diseases dangerous to Europeans) (Kaczyński 2015).

Another particularly important moment was the year 2021 when two important events took place. The first one was the appearance of the group of refugees from the Middle East in Usnarz Górny, a village on the Polish-Belarusian border. The refugees were not allowed to submit their asylum applications even though Polish law granted such a right for asylum seekers. The occurrence was a reason for erecting a metal fence at the border. Since the summer of 2021, many refugees tried to cross the Polish-Belarusian border and enter the European Union; several of them died. NGOs and many volunteers have been helping the refugees in the woods since that time.

The beginning of the war in Ukraine opened another chapter in the history of refugees fleeing to Poland. The first months after the beginning of the war can be called a “carnival of solidarity”: many Poles helped Ukrainians by providing them with accommodation, food, in-kind help, etc. The refugees from Ukraine have also been granted rights to social benefits, among others the “500+ benefit”, which is one of the measures Law and Justice promised during their successful election campaign in 2015. However, there have been several issues that have influenced the way the Ukrainian refugees have been presented in the public discourse. What is important here is the fact that media reported that people fleeing Ukraine, coming from Africa or Asia, were treated worse, made it difficult for them to cross the border. These were largely students who had come to Ukraine to study at local universities (Cynalewski 2022).

The issue of refugees is one of the most critical topics during the election campaign in Poland in 2023. In the second part of September, the practice of selling visas to Poland in African and Asian countries was revealed, which is another manifestation of the duplicitous attitude of the Law and Justice party, being ruling party in Poland in 2015—2023, to the topic of immigration and exile (Szczęśniak 2023).

Methodology

The study used thematic analysis inspired by Critical Discourse Analysis. The aim of the analysis of the collected material is to differentiate and define:

1. Discursive strategies of defining the boundaries between the groups tackled by the discourses, in the case analysed refugees and migrants;
2. Discursive strategies aimed at creating subjects and groups,;

3. Use of intersectional perspective (with or without naming it as such), using the fact of diversity of various actors and referring to it as a discursive strategy which justifies the arguments presented by those who speak.

The analysis was conducted manually, using the Excel and Word. The relevant parts of the articles were copied to the Excel file and assigned a label. Later, the labels were ordered into the labels of the higher order, which, then formed a topic. The topics, that appeared as most distinctive and most popular, were used to structure the analysis.

The method of analysis

The case is based on the analysis of the discourses portraying the refugees coming to Poland seeking help and protection because of war and dire economic conditions in their home countries. During the past 8 years, we have witnessed two refugee crises in Europe: one regarding the people fleeing from Africa and the Middle East, and another – from Ukraine. The case study is based on the analysis of the material discussing the first one, however, the appearance of Ukrainian refugees in Poland, mostly women and children, has influenced the way the refugees are portrayed in the media.

Analysis

In the study, the methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis is applied (Fairclough 2003, Reisigl, Wodak 2001), together with the frame analysis. The aim of the analysis of the collected material is to differentiate and define:

4. Discursive strategies of defining the boundaries because the groups tackled by the discourses;
5. Discursive strategies aimed at creating subjects and groups, 'interpellating' them (Althusser, Butler), e.g. the conceived baby in the Polish discussion on abortion;
6. The main actors of the discourse and how they define themselves, on whose behalf they speak;
7. Use of intersectional perspective (with or without naming it as such)

Research questions:

1. Who is the subject of the discourse around refugees?
2. What values are raised in the discourse, what values are in conflict?
3. What vision of social relations is revealed in the analysed discourse?
4. How is the concept of gender portrayed in the analysed discourses? How other dimensions of diversity are portrayed and conceptualised in the analysed discourses?

5. How is the concept of borders used in the analysed discourses? What factors/characteristics delineate the borders between groups?
6. Who is portrayed as equipped with the agency?
7. Which discourses interrelates with one another, enhancing or weakening the effectiveness of one another.

Both articles and magazine covers appearing during the period analysed were used in the analysis. The visual sphere also co-creates public discourse and can even more strongly influence public opinion, arousing intense emotions and producing certain perceptions and attitudes not only among the readers of a given magazine, but also among those who come into casual contact with these representations.

Description of the material collected and analysed

The material for the analysis was collected via the Internet. I searched the websites of the largest newspapers and magazines in Poland representing different worldviews on refugee crises. The articles included in the analysis were selected either because the author of the text used an argument related to intersectionality, highlighting differences within the groups to which they refer, or highlighting selected characteristics of a particular group as entitling them to certain claims or as a source of discrimination. Another justification for the inclusion of a particular text in the analysed data corpus was the fact that the text quoted the arguments of other actors, especially those that were important from the perspective of the discussion on refugee crises (in the pool of the Mediterranean Sea and on the Polish-Belarusian border) in Poland.

While collecting material, I searched Google and the websites of magazines and portals. The portals and journals that were included in the sample are as follows: “Gazeta Wyborcza”, “Wysokie Obcasy”, “Dziennik Gazeta Prawna”, Oko.press, website of the radio Trójka Polskie Radio, “Rzeczpospolita”, Gość.pl, Wirtualne Media, “Fronda.pl”, “Polonia Christiana”, “Sieci”, “Do Rzeczy”, “Niezależna.pl”, Polish Press Agency, “Onet”, “Money.pl”, and “Dziennik.pl”.

Results

Based on the material collected, 6 types of discourse on refugees from Africa and the Middle East were distinguished.

1. **Fascist discourse**, which calls for violence against refugees, sometimes even killing them (Ivanova 2023). The right-wing populist discourse assumes that refugees are a threat to Polish society, that they should not be allowed to enter Poland, and that if they are to be helped, it should be done locally. In fascist discourse, the division between men and women is clear; there are no interpretative doubts here. Women are first and foremost mothers and are, by definition, weaker than men, so they should be treated differently and should be entitled to a certain, albeit limited, protection. Men, on the other hand, are treated as a threat if they find themselves on another country's soil illegally.

2. Within **the right-wing populist discourse**, the violence to the refugees is also allowed but to a lesser extent than in the fascist discourse. Above all, there is a call to refuse to help refugees, and if such help is given, it should be "on the spot", in the country from which the refugees come (PAP 2023). Right-wing populist discourse is also dominated by the traditional pattern of gender relations, but in the context of seeing refugees from Africa and the Middle East as a threat to women, attention is nevertheless drawn to the freedom that women, including Polish women, can enjoy in European society. Right-wing populist discourse is in many ways consistent with fascist discourse, but the former does not explicitly call for the killing of people who do not belong to a particular national community.

3. The **liberal discourse** refers primarily to questions of law and legality: if people meet the required conditions, they should be accepted. The question of state sovereignty, including territorial sovereignty and the need to protect borders, is strongly emphasised. The liberal discourse emphasises women's rights to freely make individual choices and to be free from violence.

4. The **discourse of universal human rights** points to the need to protect everyone, refers to international guarantees of legal protection, etc. Here the characteristics of refugees are abstracted unless the characteristics they possess expose them to violence or death in their countries of origin.

5. At the heart of the **activist discourse** are the experiences of activists in direct contact with them, rescuing and supporting them, whether at sea, in the forest or during their stay in Poland. In 2015-2016, these were mainly the voices of activists rescuing refugees fleeing across the Mediterranean Sea. From 2021 onwards, the voices of activists providing food and medical assistance to those trying to enter Poland via the Polish-Belarusian border were particularly strong (e.g. Redzisz 2022; Tomczak 2024). Gender is not the criterion by which the rights of individuals to either protection or a dignified life are judged within this discourse.

6. The **verification discourse** reveals itself in those articles that aim to scrutinise the representatives of power who decide on migration and refugee policy. This concerns both power at the highest level (MPs, government, president) and manifestations of power at the micro level, e.g. in a situation where representatives of the Border Guard come into contact with a refugee at the Polish-Belarusian border. A particularly prominent position among the actors in the discourse creating it is occupied by the 'Oko.press.pl' portal, financed by contributions from readers, whose main objective is to control power. In the verification discourse, as in the universal human rights discourse, gender is not a source for dividing the refugee community according to whether or not an individual has the right to seek refuge. A key feature of this discourse is to relate to the other discourses in order to confront the content reproduced in them with facts, reliable data and scientific knowledge.

Who the ‘real refugees’ are

In the activist discourse there are stories about specific people, known by name, descriptions of their appearance, the sound of their voice, their nationality. The fact that the girl had a cat - her picture was widely published in the media - became a symbol of the beginning of the crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border. For the populist discourse, this image confirmed that refugees at the border were de facto privileged people, undeserving of help and compassion (Borodaj 2022).

The verification discourse discusses the reasons for the numerical predominance of men among refugees. Among other things, it is pointed out that men are the pioneers of migration because the path may be too difficult (DGP 2015; SE 2015).

How media describe and portray refugees

The most common ways of approaching the refugees in the media is by describing them according to their gender, age, family status, sometimes also their current health. They are presented more like a population than groups of individuals.

The most popular assumption about refugees is that the 'real' refugees are women and children rather than young, and therefore presumably strong and healthy, men. It is not uncommon for children to be feminised and women to be treated as children, infantilised, and disempowered (Burman 2008).

In the Polish right-wing populist discourse against the admission of refugees from Africa and the Middle East, the argument of gender nationalism, as described by Leila Abdou (2017), was generally absent. Bobako proposes a similar concept in relation to Islamophobia, distinguishing between progressive Islamophobia (declaring a commitment to the principles of liberal democracy, respecting women's rights) and conservative Islamophobia, based on the belief in the moral, economic and civilisational superiority of Europe vis-à-vis the countries of the Middle East or Africa (Bobako 2017). This phenomenon appeared, among others, in the political narrative of populist right-wing politicians such as Marine Le Pen, who used the unequal treatment of women in Muslim communities as an argument against the admission of immigrants. In Poland, however, male refugees were presented as a threat to Polish women, with little or no reference to the situation of Muslim women in some communities. An example of this discourse is the cover depicting a young white woman with light hair being touched by male dark or black hands, which the woman tries unsuccessfully to escape (WSieci) (picture below). The title on the cover means "*Islamist*

rape on Europe. Our report: what media and Brussels elites hide from the EU citiziens.

Source: https://www.wirtualnemedia.pl/artykul/serwis-w-sieci-zhakowany-za-antyislamska-okladke-jacek-karnowski-nie-damy-sie-zastraszyc-wspolczesnym-cenzorom (access: 29.02.2024).

On the cover we see a young white woman with blonde hair, wrapped in a European Union flag, flanked by male hands with a darker complexion than the woman's. Importantly, we don't see the men's faces or any individualising features; they are reduced to pure violence against the woman who metaphorically symbolises Europe.

Another way of portraying refugees from the Middle East and Africa is portraying them in animalistic terms. Members of the ruling Law and Justice party used contemptuous, dehumanising terms to describe refugees, comparing them to untamed animals: *young horny bulls called refugees* (Joachim Brudziński), *they are cattle and should be treated like cattle* (Armand Ryfiński) (Cywiński 2018). *Young horny bulls* refers to the image of young, muscular, strong but necessary intelligent men.

In the verification discourse, the gender issue of Middle Eastern refugees is explained by referring to the male function of the migrant pioneer. The outbreak of war in Ukraine and the arrival of Ukrainian women and children in Poland provides a counterexample to the presence of young men from African or Middle Eastern countries in Europe for the actors of the right-wing discourse. Meanwhile, as the expert quoted below points out, Ukrainian men were not allowed to leave the country legally, while many refugees leave countries torn apart by conflicts between tribal groups or experiencing political or humanitarian crises:

Refugees from the Middle East do not fit the European image of vulnerable refugees because they are young men (in fact, about 70 per cent men and 30 per cent women). And men are culturally

assigned the role of active subjects. "Men should fight for the country, like the Ukrainians, not flee cowardly". - is the second theme. What is overlooked here is that Ukrainian law prohibits men from leaving the country. (...) Refugees from Syria or Afghanistan did not flee the rule of law. They were not fleeing from serving in a state army fighting for a just cause. There is no state for them to identify with. Their countries are in chaos and anarchy. They could try to fight the terror of the despots (Zessin-Jurek 2023).

A drastic division along gender lines appears in fascist discourse, for example in the following statement by Janusz Korwin-Mikke, a politician who has led far-right, extreme neo-liberal political organisations for several decades:

Korwin-Mikke on refugees: Treat them like people, i.e. shoot them, not fence them in like cattle - I am in favour of treating refugees like people, i.e. shoot them, not fence them in like cattle. Women should be put in camps and men should be shot," Janusz Korwin-Mikke said in an interview (Ivanowa 2023).

In the above quote, there is a reversal of concepts: the 'humane' treatment of people is to kill them or keep them in camps. It is also worth noting the gender segregation presented in the above quote. Women deserve a certain protection from death that does not belong to men. At the same time, however, women are treated as subjects deprived of agency and self-determination. Here, it is also important to mention the numerous statements made by this politician in the past, in which he described women as subordinate to men, as being "between man and child".

In 2015-2023, refugees, often described as economic migrants and not people seeking refuge, were mainly positioned as a threat to European culture, which Poland is portrayed to represent, and to Polish women. Right-wing politicians used examples of Western countries (such as Sweden or France) where -- allegedly -- there would be neighbourhoods where the police are afraid to enter, and women are regularly attacked by refugees (Jarosław Kaczyński quoted by TVN24 2015). This faction of the populist discourse particularly intensified in the period after New Year's Eve in Cologne, Germany, when many men of Arab origin harassed women.

In populist discourse, male refugees from Middle Eastern countries are even presented as the physical security of the country. The cover of the right-wing weekly “wSieci”, for example, presents a photograph from the early weeks of the Second World War when German soldiers crossed the Polish border. On the cover of this issue, one of the men of the Arab of African origin on the cover holds a Polish emblem, another a rifle. An inscription on the cover reads: *September 2015: Here they come! Germany pushes suicidal plan - Tusk (ex-Prime Minister at that time) and Kopacz (Prime Minister at that time) succumb.* The direct reference to September further reinforces the message; September is remembered in Poland precisely as the month in which the Second World War began.

Source: https://www.facebook.com/historycznebzdury/photos/a.791281577645653/932353816871761/?type=3 (access: 28.02.2024).

During the same period, in September 2015, another right-wing weekly also referred to the comparison of refugees with the threat of war in its visuals. The cover of 'Do rzeczy' (no. 38) featured a graphic with several men, mostly with dark complexions. However, a few women can be seen in the picture, tightly covered with headscarves. The title on the cover reads *Ziemkiewicz* (right-wing columnist – KD): *They are invaders, not refugees. Let's close Poland's borders to them*.

In 2021, Polish media published material purporting to prove that male refugees from Africa and the Middle East have paedophilic and zoophilic tendencies. Polish television, which was dominated by the party in power at the time, repeatedly showed footage of a press conference held by a Polish government minister, showing images allegedly found on mobile phones lost in forests near the Polish-Belarusian border, purporting to prove that refugees posed a threat to Polish children (*Gazeta Wyborcza* 2021).

The right-wing populist discourse emphasises that people coming to Poland from Africa and the Middle East are mainly young men which is consistent with the data, however, the populist interpretation of this fact contradicts the results of research on migration. “Refugees” in the populist discourse are therefore supposed to represent a group of young, fit, strong individuals who should be able to cope in their own country. The outbreak of the war in Ukraine has added an additional comparison to this narrative: young Ukrainian men are staying in their country to fight the enemy, while male refugees from the Middle East and Africa are supposed to be fleeing their countries and not participating in the defence of their countries. However, it should be borne in

mind that Ukrainian men of a certain age are not allowed to leave the country and that not all refugees from the Middle East and Africa come from countries at war (e.g. *Do Rzeczy*, 7.12.2023; *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 27.03.2022).

Two boys from Yemen fled because the ruling forces wanted to forcibly conscript them - there has been a civil war in the country for years. Guys from Iraqi Kurdistan also had to flee in fear for their lives (Boczek 2021).

A European has the inherent right to fight for a better life and material status - a Pole in Germany, a Lithuanian in Britain, but an African or Asian on the threshold of adulthood, distorted at the outset by the great geopolitics and the history of European colonisation, should already humbly endure repression, terror and misery (Zessin-Jurek 2022).

Muslim women are portrayed in populist discourse as a threat to the Polish nation, which is experiencing a demographic crisis. For example, Tomasz Terlikowski (*Fronda*, 15.09.2015), a conservative columnist, has criticised Pope Francis for his calls to accept refugees, pointing to the threat posed by refugee women as women who, unlike European women, are ready to bear many children.

It is not only men who are presented as a threat in populist discourse. Women are also a threat, but they do not directly pose danger to other individuals, but to the community, the population, and its future, through their fertility. Examples of this argument can be found in right-wing populist discourse, developed by politicians but also by the clergy. One example is the text of the right-wing Catholic columnist Tomasz Terlikowski, who, quoting the words of Pope Francis lamenting Europe's low fertility rate, states:

Instead of continuing to be upset about immigrants, it is worth doing something to create new Europeans. And to ask ourselves clearly: and you, what have you done to make Europe a mother and not a grandmother? If we don't take matters into our own hands (and more), the Muslims will defeat us. And not with terrorism, but with the wombs of their women (Terlikowski 2015).

Presenting Muslim women as a threat to the population because of their fertility is a part of the so-called gender nationalism.

There is no place in the populist vision for the integration of refugees into Polish society. In 2015, when right-wing and fascist parties focused on presenting refugees as a threat to the existence of the Polish nation and European societies. The assumption is that refugees and subsequent generations of those who have found refuge in Europe will try to impose their values on host societies:

First, the number of foreigners increases exponentially, then they declare that they do not want to respect our laws, our customs, and then - or in parallel - they impose their sensitivities and demands in public space, in various areas of life,' the Law and Justice leader said. - 54 zones where Sharia is in force and there is no state control, he added, describing the alleged situation in Sweden (TVN24 2015).

There is also a straightforward rejection of the 'war on gender' in the human rights discourse and an indication that it is crucial to fight for the rights of women – refugee women who are often victims of violence on the road.

In populist discourse, Poland is described as a safe country, in contrast to Western and Northern European countries (e.g. Sweden) where refugees from 'Africa and the Middle East' cause riots and threaten the citizens of these countries:

While Polish families were carefree over the last holiday weekend and Polish children were welcoming the new school year, terrible things were happening across our western borders. Riots, burnt cars, rapes of women and lynchings of police officers. This is the reality of countries like Sweden and Germany," the head of government announced (DoRzeczy 2023).

Gender appears in right-wing populist discourse not only as a source of new and different gender patterns that conservatives condemn, but even as a threat to gender in general. It derives from the fact that a one-dimensional concept of gender is limited to a traditional view of the division between the sexes:

Jerzy Czerwiński [Law and Justice senator] warned against gender, arguing that the tragedy of our continent is that men stop being men and Islam comes in with 'real men': Attempts to impose so-called social gender, or gender, will end tragically. Perhaps we are already witnessing this tragedy. In Europe, men are ceasing to be men and women are ceasing to be women. And the result is that Islam is coming in with 'real' men. Do you want that kind of equality here? Because I don't. I want to have men and women in Poland, because that is how nature, or rather God, created us," said Jerzy Czerwiński, who is also a member of the main board of the Catholic National Movement (Dziennik.pl 2017).

Refugees from Africa and Middle East are described hardly ever in terms of potential members of the society they reach - as residents, consumers, taxpayers (e.g. *Gazeta Wyborcza,* 21.10.2023). Such notions appear only in liberal discourse. One could expect it also in the activist discourse, however, the publications representing this type of discourse mostly address the issues of survival of the refugees (in the woods, in the centres for refugees and asylum applicants.

Gender as a threat and as a value under threat

Refugees are a paradoxical threat in this vision: their masculinity, which for some actors of this discourse appears as a danger to 'our' women (e.g. Sieci 2023), is at the same time this desirable masculinity, a masculinity that Europe is shedding by precisely recognising concepts such as gender. In fascist and right-wing populist discourses, refugee women are presented as victims of the cultural system from which they come. They are seen as more passive than men. At the same time, they fit more closely into the stereotypical image of the refugee; as noted above, one of the key arguments against refugees used by right-wing authors is the overrepresentation of young men among those arriving in Europe from Asia and the Middle East. Meanwhile, the right-wing populist discourse also includes a fear of women as propagators of Islam among their children.

It is the women who transmit the ideology. They recruit other women to marry jihadists and also raise their children (...), thus posing a threat to the next generation," said the French researcher.

In his opinion, the behaviour of Muslim women is dangerous because they often challenge the European education system and at the same time indoctrinate their children. - This is why there are many threats in schools in Europe today, especially in France," Micheron said, adding that it is a mistake in studying European jihadism to focus studies on terrorist attacks, which are only "the last link of the phenomenon" (PCh 2024).

Conclusions

Intersectionality in right-wing populist discourse about refugees works – paradoxically –to the disadvantage of both women and men. The latter do not qualify for the image of 'real refugees', however, women and children also do not arouse positive. The fascist discourse happens even to call for annihilating refugees. Populist discourse consistently seeks to erase differences within the refugee group, thereby removing the possibility of identifying with refugees as people 'like us'. Treating a group of people as an undifferentiated mass is a way of dehumanising members of that group.

The issue of gender diversity is used by right-wing populist discourse to portray refugees of Arab and African origin as a threat. The division between men and women, so often emphasised in publications promoting this discourse, does not serve to individualise refugees but to reduce them to specific gender roles and images. Men are portrayed as a threat to the host society and especially to women. They are portrayed as strong, aggressive and unrestrained in their lust. Their presence on Polish or European soil appears suspicious because, according to populists, men, especially young men, and therefore by definition strong and fit, should fight if there is conflict or war in their country. The struggle of the Ukrainians here provides a comparison, the validity of which is sought to be refuted by actors within the discourse I have described as verification one.

Men fleeing poverty or tribal conflict thus appear in the populist discourse as both masculine and unmasculine: masculine in their power to threaten Polish and European women, weak in their willingness to give up the fight. Men are not granted the right to seek a better life in this discourse, nor is it taken into account that these people are often fleeing persecution or are so-called pioneer migrants for whom it is impossible to cross the sea or land route to Europe. Refugee women are seen as a threat because of the higher fertility rates in their communities of origin compared to European countries. This raises the fear of being replaced in future generations by the descendants of today's newcomers.

Significantly, right-wing populist discourse sees the gendered identities of refugees as permanent and unchangeable. What is missing is a reflection on the possibilities of integrating this group into European societies. The same applies to the descendants of refugees, who are frightened by the populist narrative: the only solution in this perspective is to keep this group out of the community and at a maximum distance.

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Katarzyna Dębska: Abortion ban in Poland – the debate in 2015-2-23

Introduction

The report is a result of the project PUSH*BACK*LASH. The report presents the result of the analysis of the press publications regarding debate on abortion law in Poland in the period 2015-2023.

The issue of access to abortion has been the subject of public debate in Poland since the early 1990s (Nawojski, Pluta, Zielińska 2018). Reproductive rights, including access to abortion, are currently under attack from right-wing populist movements. Poland, in comparison to other EU countries, presents itself as a country where women's reproductive rights are not protected (see, for example, Contraception Atlas Europe 2024).

Scientific aim of the report

The aim of the report is to analyse discursive strategies in the discussion on abortion in Poland, referring to the concept of intersectionality. The analysis of the material collected is intended to show, firstly, who is considered the subject of the discourse. Who is considered the subject of rights? To whom does the state have an obligation to protect their rights? Secondly, the intersectional approach captures how different characteristics and dimensions of differentiation are considered in the discourses analysed.

Research questions:

1) Who is the subject of the discourse around abortion?
2) What values are raised in the discourse, what values are in conflict?
3) What vision of social relations is revealed in the analysed discourse?
4) How is the concept of gender portrayed in the analysed discourses? How other dimensions of diversity are portrayed and conceptualised in the analysed discourses?
5) How is the concept of borders used in the analysed discourses? What factors/characteristics delineate the borders between groups?
6) Who is portrayed as equipped with agency?
7) Which discourses interrelates with one another, enhancing or weakening the effectiveness of one another.

Theoretical perspectives

The concept of intersectionality has its origins in Women's studies and the recognition that a one-dimensional view of discrimination against minority and underprivileged groups can lead to further discrimination, as in the case of, for example, non-white migrant women in the US experiencing domestic violence (Crenshaw 1991). This recognition corresponds clearly with the achievements of feminist thought, whose development was based precisely on an ever-deepening awareness of the complexity of women's (and non-women's) identities and the positions they occupy in society.

The concept of intersectionality emerged in the context of analyses of the exclusion of women of colour in the United States. In social research, it is mainly used in the context of analysing phenomena such as exclusion, discrimination, etc. By showing the complexity of the identities and social positions that individuals occupy, it was intended to expose existing mechanisms of violence that often escaped the attention of researchers and social policy practitioners. The notion of intersectionality is thus embedded in a social critique orientation.

Crenshaw distinguished three dimensions of intersectionality: structural, political and representational intersectionality. Structural intersectionality concerns power structures associated with the unequal treatment of certain categories of people on the basis of their gender, 'race', ethnicity, social class, etc. Political intersectionality refers to issues of representation in the political space; for some groups are more likely to be adequately represented than others, e.g. middle- or upper-class women find it easier to find representation for their demands than working class women, economic migrants, etc. Representational intersectionality, on the other hand, concerns the sphere of culture, media etc. and how different groups and complex identities are portrayed in media messages and cultural texts.

Intersectionality can also be a form of narrative about society and an argumentative strategy designed to give subjectivity to the representatives of the group in question. Intersectionality may serve not only as a theory but also as a form of a political action. The term appears in the texts written by feminists and other activists coming from outside of the academia (Oleksy 2014, 252).

Even though the concept of intersectionality is widely recognised in the academia nowadays and is applied in the political and activist discourses, the critical aspect of it seems to be endangered with “domestification” and even taking it over (see e,g, Lin, Wang 2023). As regards capitalism’s use of LGBTQIA+ movements or ecology, one can mention pink washing or greenwashing. The report, however, presents the process and results of inquiry into how various discourses, present in the Polish public sphere, exploit the concept of intersectionality regarding women’s rights, especially in the context of the growing popularity of the right wing-populism.

The socio-historical context of the analyzed materials

The case study analyses press material from 2015-2023, a period that covers the rule of Law and Justice (in coalition with smaller right-wing parties). The parliamentary elections in Poland in 2015 and 2023 took place in October, so the collected corpus of texts also includes publications from before Law and Justice came to power and from the period immediately after the opposition parties' victory in 2023.

During the communist period in Poland, abortion could be performed in the following situations under the Act of 27 April 1956 on the conditions for permissible termination of pregnancy:

when there were medical indications that the health of the foetus or the pregnant woman required termination of the pregnancy;

if there was reasonable suspicion that the pregnancy was the result of a crime;

due to the difficult living conditions of the pregnant woman (Law of 27 April 1956 on the conditions for the permissibility of abortion).

In 1993, Law on Family Planning, Protection of the Human Foetus and Conditions for the Permissibility of Abortion (Journal of Laws 1993, No 17., position 78) was passed. It allowed abortion in three cases:

1) the pregnancy is a risk to the life or health of the pregnant woman,

2) severe and irreversible damage to the foetus (aka embryopathological premise)

3) there is a reasonable suspicion that the pregnancy is the result of a prohibited act (rape)

On 30 August 1996, the Sejm amended the 1993 law, relaxing it by adding the premise of a woman's difficult personal situation as a reason for legal abortion. The relaxed law remained in force for less than a year (Broniarczyk 2023).

In 1996, the Sejm amended the law of 30 January 1993 by adding the ground of a woman's difficult personal situation, under which a pregnancy could be legally terminated. In May 1997, the Constitutional Tribunal ruled that the provision introducing this condition was incompatible with the constitutional provisions in force under the so-called Little Constitution of 1992 (Broniarczyk 2023).

The almost complete ban on abortion and strong pressure from the Catholic Church created a 'chilling effect' (Amnesty International n.d.). Doctors often refused to provide abortions to women who were legally entitled to them. In 1996, under the left-wing Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej) government, the so-called conscience clause for doctors was introduced, allowing doctors to refuse to perform a procedure (including abortion) or prescribe contraception if it contradicts their world view (Art. 39, Bill on the Profession of Physician and Dentist).

In 1999, there was a police raid on a gynaecological practice in Lubliniec where an abortion was to be performed. The patient was subjected to a forced gynaecological examination (Gazeta Wyborcza 2006). The actions of the police and the atmosphere surrounding the abortion ban prompted feminist circles to act. The Porozumienie Kobiet Ósmego Marca (Women's Agreement of the eighth of March) was formed; protests were organised on women's right to abortion and a protest letter was drafted on the police actions in Lubliniec.

Another important event in the abortion debate in Poland was the arrival of the ship Langenort, belonging to the Women on Waves foundation, in 2003, in the port of Władysławowo. On the ship, Polish women were able to undergo a pharmacological abortion and receive advice on informed motherhood. The ship's presence sparked protests from pro-life activists. The activities of Women on Waves, on the other hand, were clearly supported by Polish feminist circles (Broniarczyk 2023).

Another major event in the Polish abortion debate was the 2007 ruling by the European Court of Human Rights, which awarded €25,000 in compensation to Alicja Tysiąc, whose doctors refused to perform an abortion even though the pregnancy threatened to cause her to lose her sight (Broniarczyk 2023).

In October 2015, one of the toughest anti-abortion laws in Europe was addressed by the Polish Constitutional Tribunal, which ruled that the need to name another doctor when invoking the conscience clause was unconstitutional (Trybunał Konstytucyjny 2015).

In 2015, even before the changes introduced by the Law and Justice party, the Constitutional Tribunal ruled that the obligation for a doctor to invoke the conscience clause when refusing to provide an abortion or prescribe contraception was unconstitutional.

In October 2020, the Constitutional Tribunal issued a ruling that removed the so-called embryopathological premise, which allows abortion in the case of severe irreversible damage or defects of the foetus, from the Polish legal system (Trybunał Konstytucyjny 2020). The court's ruling sparked numerous protests across the country, which lasted until spring 2021. During this period, the initiative 'Legal Abortion. No Compromise' was launched. More than 200,000 people signed the petition, but it was rejected by the Parliament.

The removal of embryopathology as a basis for abortion meant that many doctors were afraid to intervene when the foetus was damaged. It was expected that the foetus would die of its own accord, thereby endangering the life of the mother (Chrzczonowicz 2023). Feminist organisations reported that at least a dozen women died as a result of this situation (Głuszak 2023). The deaths of the women sparked protests in 2023 (Domagała-Pereira 2023).

For years, the discourse on abortion has de facto focused on who should be talking and who should have a say in the abortion decision. The populist right presents itself as the defender of life and of 'unborn children', which will be discussed in more detail later in the text. The feminist milieu focuses on a woman's right to decide about pregnancy, both before it occurs (the issue of contraception, including the 72-hour pill) and at the moment of its occurrence (the right to abortion).

In Poland, from the 1990s until 2000, the so-called abortion compromise was in force, which meant a de facto ban on abortion, as doctors refused to perform abortions on women in the public health service, even if they met the legal requirements. Feminist circles repeatedly drew attention to this and criticised the compromise as being too narrow, depriving women of the right to decide about themselves and their lives. Feminists do not focus on the rights of the foetus, drawing attention to women's right to self-determination and the right to a dignified birth, as exemplified by campaigns such as Birth with Dignity (pl. *Rodzić po ludzku,* https://rodzicpoludzku.pl) (e.g. Korolczuk 2021).

Methodology

The study used thematic analysis inspired by Critical Discourse Analysis. The aim of the analysis of the collected material is to differentiate and define:

1) Discursive strategies of defining the boundaries between the groups tackled by the discourses, in the case analysed mostly women and foetuses;
2) Discursive strategies aimed at creating subjects and groups, 'interpellating' them (Althusser 1971), e.g. the conceived baby in the Polish discussion on abortion;
3) Use of intersectional perspective (with or without naming it as such), using the fact of diversity of various actors and referring to it as a discursive strategy which justifies the arguments presented by those who speak.

The analysis was conducted manually, using the Excel and Word. The relevant parts of the articles were copied to the Excel file and assigned a label. Later, the labels were ordered into the labels of the higher order, which, then formed a topic. The topics, that appeared as most distinctive and most popular, were used to structure the analysis.

Description of the material collected and analysed

The material for the analysis was collected via the Internet. I searched the websites of the largest newspapers and magazines in Poland representing different worldviews and publishing articles by authors representing different worldviews and views on abortion. The articles used in the analysis were collected by searching the internet portals and websites of Polish magazines and other types of media (radio) for publications dealing with the topic of abortion law changes and access to abortion from an intersectional perspective. On the one hand, when searching for texts, I entered keywords into the search engines of the aforementioned websites, which allowed me to identify relevant publications. The articles included in the analysis were selected either because the author of the text used an argument related to intersectionality, highlighting differences within the groups to which they refer, or highlighting selected characteristics of a particular group as entitling them to certain claims or as a source of discrimination. Another justification for the inclusion of a particular text in the analysed data corpus was the fact that the text quoted the arguments of other actors, especially those that were important from the perspective of the discussion on abortion in Poland.

In collecting material, I searched Google and the websites of magazines and portals. The portals and journals that were included in the sample are as follows: "Gazeta Wyborcza", "Wysokie Obcasy", "Dziennik Gazeta Prawna, oko.press, TVP Info, Opoka.pl, Wirtualna Polska, website of the radio RMF.fm, "Tygodnik Powszechny", "Rzeczpospolita", articles on the website of Ordo Iuris, Gość.pl, Menedżer Zdrowia, portal Medonet, Polskie Radio 24.pl.

Analysis – Results

Intersectionality as an argumentative strategy in the abortion debate

The issue of intersectionality in the abortion debate appears in the arguments of left-wing pro-choice groups, who point out that in a situation where abortion is banned, economic capital is a key barrier to access:

> *What are we going to talk about today? About the right to life of Iza from Pszczyna and Dorota from Brzesko? What do we want to kindly ask the authorities for? So that*

we do not have to fear for our lives in maternity wards? So that we don't have to look at babies born without a skull, without a brain, who die in pain after a few hours? What should we beg for today?[P SEP]*That abortion should not be the privilege of rich women who can afford it, who can have it anywhere in the world without fear of social stigma and a visit from the prosecutor outside their home?* (Wantuch 2023a).

When abortion is illegal, only those women who can afford to go abroad or pay to have the procedure done illegally can afford it. Performing an abortion in the so-called underground, i.e. illegally, in Poland, involves the risk of being accused by the police (women still cannot be held legally responsible for undergoing an abortion) and the shame associated with doing something forbidden by law.

Abortion as discrimination of people with disabilities

Some pro-life authors claimed that abortion was a breach of the rule of life protection, ensured by the Constitution. The discussion around abortion contributed to the whole new dictionary of legal terms. A new subject was brought into existence: the unborn child, the conceived child. The rights of the foetus are equated with the rights of the natural person; supporters of this position refer to the fact that there is protection of the rights of the nasciturus in Polish civil law, but this ignores the fact that in this case it is a matter of possible future property rights of the born child (e.g. inheritance). The protection is therefore limited and dependent on the fact whether the baby has been born or not (Opoka 2011).

The Constitutional Tribunal's 2020 ruling removed from the Polish legal system the so-called embryopathological premise, which allowed abortion in a situation where examinations showed that the foetus was burdened with severe defects or was damaged. In the debate on abortion (both before 2020 and after the CT ruling), pro-life groups argued that abortion on the grounds of foetal damage constituted discrimination against people with disabilities.

The situation of 'conceived children' or 'unborn children" with disabilities is presented as **an extreme form of discrimination**, i.e. an attempt to eliminate them, to kill them:

- These are not big changes in the legislation, but they will help to change the state from one that murders children with disabilities to one that is more friendly to them, Kaja Godek [Anti-abortion activist, conservative, anti-abortion campaign leader] explained to 'Wyborcza" (Wilgocki 2017).

People with Down syndrome have a special place in the arguments of pro-life groups and populist right-wing politicians. Opponents of the right to abortion argue that the victims of so-called eugenic abortion are primarily people with Down's syndrome who, in their view, function independently in everyday life. The material analysed even compares abortion in such a case to the death penalty for a 'baby' with Down's syndrome:

[A person expressing anti-abortion stance, queoted in the reportage] Recently, a meme like this appeared on the internet: "Mother for killing her child - 5 years. Rapist - 3 months". I would add to it: "Child - death penalty". This is the truth. In Poland, in the

> *21st century, there are death camps that eliminate the weakest and most defenceless. And this is not a question of belief or disbelief. It is a question of humanity. (...) I know that people have problems accepting otherness. When I hear what a misfortune has befallen me, what a punishment from God that I gave birth to a sick child, I don't accept it. My daughter is my happiness, just like my other children.* (Domanowska 2016).

In the debate on embryopathological premise allowing for abortion, right-wing circles argue that abortion for trisomy 21 or Down's syndrome in this narrative implies a lack of respect for the rights of those born with Down's syndrome. Left-wing and liberal circles and feminists, on the other hand, point to the lack of concern of the right-wing government of the day and pro-life circles for the living conditions of people with disabilities who are already born. The protests of people with disabilities and their guardians in the Polish Parliament in 2018 and 2023, which were discredited by those in power at the time, should be mentioned here.

> *The language, methods of persuasion, arguments and attitudes used in favour of the permissibility of the abortion of foetuses with severe and irreversible malformations must be reconciled with respect and concern for children and adults who are nevertheless born with such defects (including as a result of conscious decisions by their mothers). If this does not happen, the opponents of "eugenic abortion" will have won a propaganda and, consequently, a legal victory* (Majcherek 2016).

The ban on abortion for serious foetal abnormalities has rendered prenatal testing in Poland de facto meaningless. It had already been pointed out in anti-abortion discourse that prenatal examinations were a **'pathway to abortion'**:

> *Well, it is written that questioning the eugenic rationale could mean banning this operation altogether, because its most common reason is precisely this: "when prenatal tests or other medical indications indicate a high probability of serious and irreversible damage to the foetus or an incurable disease threatening its life". And here my first doubt is not the only one: in practice, are fetuses born with Down's syndrome not losing their lives in this way? It can hardly be said of them what is generally said of cases of these diseases: that they cause those born to need round-the-clock care for the rest of their lives* (Jonasz 2018).

Another dimension of the discourse around abortion as discrimination is the extension of this concept to **'prenatal discrimination'** or **'prenatal infanticide'**:

> *The aim of the initiative is to restore the fullness of human rights, with particular emphasis on the right to life, to vulnerable people who cannot defend themselves. At the same time, the project ensures the implementation of the principle of equality before the law and serves to end legal discrimination against people in the prenatal period of their development, the initiators of the amendments argue in the explanatory memorandum* (Kośmiński 2016).

Opponents of abortion cite the existence of the Paralympics and Paralympians as proof that people with disabilities can be fit, live full and successful lives.

The discourse in opposition to populist pro-life discourse draws attention to the impact of the language used to talk about abortion. Actors in the pro-choice discourse highlight the changes that have taken place in the language used to talk about abortion in recent years. They point to the importance of the emergence of the concept of the conceived child in the Polish abortion debate. Along with the category of the conceived child came its defenders – defenders of life:

> *Opponents of abortion became in the 1990s in Poland "defenders of life". The mechanism of the manipulation performed on language here is easy to explain: who does not want to be a "defender of life"? Life is something important and precious. (...) Opposing the "right to life of the foetus" is the woman's right to dispose of her own body. When this is called "defence of life", however, the situation becomes black and white: only the supporters of the 'civilisation of death' can stand against the 'defenders of life'* (Leszczyński 2019).

The category of the civilisation of death was taken from the teaching of John Paul III, the Polish Pope, whose teaching had a major influence on the development of the Catholic Church's fundamentalist Sexual Ethics (see Wojtyła 1962).

Abortion as murder

One of the key aspects of intersectionality is the extent to which the identities and characteristics that define an individual's group membership are distinct from one another, and the extent to which they are inextricably linked (Gunnarson 2015). The dispute over the availability of abortion in Poland adds another dimension of intersectionality to the pro-life discourse. This aspect is the continuity and change of identities and characteristics that situate an individual within a group or category. In the case of abortion, the challenge is already one of descriptive language, because politically the struggle is precisely over language - but still in language, whether in public, media or legal discourse.

In discussions of intersectionality, one can argue about the relationship between the biological and the social, or about what is subject to choose and what is assigned and imposed on the individual. Mostly, however, the ontological status of the person is not questioned. Meanwhile, the dispute over abortion concerns precisely the deeply philosophical problem of when a person begins. The pro-life discourse and the populist right wing in the 1990s and at the beginning of the 21st century managed to consolidate in Poland the conviction that even in the earliest stages of pregnancy we are dealing with a so-called 'conceived child' and not a foetus. Still, much of the debate on abortion in Poland over the past 10 years has been devoted to the question of whether a foetus is a child. The success of right-wing circles, including radical right' circles, has been to replace the concept of a foetus with that of a conceived child, which has become generally accepted:

> *Most people no longer say 'damaged foetus', but 'sick child'. This change that has taken place in the conceptual apparatus is powerful," says Godek. [Anti-abortion activist, conservative, anti-abortion campaign leader] (Polska Kai Godek, PiS-u i Episkopatu. Kobiety będą się bały zachodzić w ciążę, dzietność spadnie, a podziemie aborcyjne się powiększy* (Gazeta Wyborcza, 24.08.2017)

The consequence of framing the abortion issue in this way has been the equation of the woman with the foetus in right-wing discourse and the emergence within right-wing populist discourse of the argument that abortion on the grounds of severe foetal defects constitutes discrimination.

A particularly vivid example of this approach is that of Kaja Godek, an important pro-life activist also known for her anti-vaccination activities. After the death of a woman, Iza from Pszczyna, as a result of doctors' refusal to perform an abortion for fear of terminating the pregnancy, which could be interpreted as an action triggered by the discovery of serious damage to the foetus, the woman died. It was one of the most notorious cases in Poland. The key point here was that damage to the foetus could be a threat to the woman's life and health, but a ruling by the Constitutional Tribunal in 2020 strengthened the so-called 'freezing effect' in the context of abortion. In the statement quoted below, Kaja Godek points out that mourning should not only be for the woman who has died, but also for the foetus:

> *Godek: Why are feminists only mourning a dead woman? "If anyone justified the failure to save a patient's life by outlawing eugenic abortion, feminist circles are to blame," - wrote pro-life activist Kaja Godek on social media* (RP 2021).

Thus, the life AND death of the woman, which could have been prevented by timely abortion, is equated with the life and death of the foetus, which occurred independently of the actions of the pregnant woman and the doctors.

In addition, the equation of the rights of the woman with those of the foetus leads its opponents to portray **abortion as murder** – in every case, including rape, which is still a reason for abortion, but is attacked by pro-life organisations and activists, e.g.:

> *A child cannot be punished for the crimes of its parents. The rapist should be punished as severely as possible, not the child with the death penalty. Because abortion is death," Krzysztof Kasprzak of the Foundation argued in an interview with Wyborcza in May* (Kośmiński 2015).

> *I perceived the protests following the Constitutional Tribunal's ruling that eugenic abortion was incompatible with the incompatible with the Polish constitution, I perceived them in a way as an undermining of my right to life. right to life. Admittedly, I heard from many people "this is not about you", "you are an adult". you", "you are an adult and you are functioning well. (...) I am 28 years old and I have the right to life, but if I were 28 years younger, I would not have that right. I would no longer have that right, and someone could legally "choose" to take my life?* (Waliczek 2021).

Another argument used by pro-lifers is that by fighting for the right to abortion, feminists are in fact contributing to the killing of women - only the unborn ones. Such an argument appeared in one of the texts published on the website of the right-wing conservative organisation Ordo Iuris, which was behind the project to tighten the law regulating the availability of abortion:

> *Abortion also kills women It seems to be a truism to repeat the fact that about 50% of the children born every day are women. Since they are born as women (girls, female newborns), it is logical that they are also women at the foetal stage* (Gęsiak 2023b).

Abortion is portrayed here as an attack on women, a violation of women's rights to live.

> *One thing is certain - it is the duty of doctors (and all of us) to care for sick children, not to kill them. This also applies to children with a lethal defect. After all, every one of us will die one day, but that is no reason to murder him or her before death* (PAP 2021).

Abortion as (not) ideological issue

In Polish public discourse over the past three decades, there has been a distinction (contested in some circles) between worldview issues (e.g. women's rights, including the right to abortion) and 'important issues', primarily related to the economy and economic growth (see. e.g. Dudek 2023). These 'worldview issues' have often been treated as 'substitute issues', irrelevant, distracting public opinion from the 'really important issues'. These 'worldview issues' were often treated as 'substitute issues', irrelevant, distracting public opinion from the 'really important issues'. Significantly, it was primarily women's and LGBTQ+ issues that were invalidated (see e.g. Oczak-Stach 2020); 'male' issues were to remain the focus of Polish sociologists analysing public discourse in the 1990s and early 2000s, who drew attention to the discursive strategy of referring to an issue as 'someone else's problem' (Czyżewski, Dunin, Piotrowski 1991). This allowed an issue to be overlooked as irrelevant, giving the impression that it was a marginal issue. An example of this is the rights of LGBTQ+ people, which have long been treated and defined in this way by the politicians of the right and centrist side as well as several publicists.

Academics and activists pointed out that LGBTQ+ rights issues are not only about the recognition of identity or the right to self-expression, but also about the possibility to benefit from state support, which married couples enjoy in Poland (see e.g. Mizielińska I Stasińska 2014). Moreover, discrimination against this group results in their worse situation on the labour market and in other areas of life. Similarly, feminists point out that the abortion ban primarily affects poorer women who cannot afford to pay for an abortion.

The argument that the issue of abortion is a "worldview issue" was used as a proxy topic by opposition politicians representing conservative views on women's rights, for example the representatives of Trzecia Droga (one of the coalition party in the government formed after the parliamentary election in 2023):

> *Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz [leader of the Polish People's Party, one of the party, being a part of the ruling coalition together with the Civic Coalition and the New Left] also stresses that the question of abortion is a question of ideology. When we asked him whether, as a doctor, he did not consider abortion to be a medical procedure that had nothing to do with ideology, he replied that he did not: - It is a question of freedom of conscience and a question of ideology, and therefore it cannot be covered by any*

> *bans and orders, and that is why we want the people to have their say in a referendum* (Wantuch 2023c).

These politicians are opting for at most a return to the 'abortion compromise' that existed before October 2022, which allows abortion in three cases: when the pregnancy endangers the life or health of the mother, when the foetus is severely deformed, or when the pregnancy is the result of a criminal act (rape). It was for them that the issue of abortion was troublesome, while right-wing populist circles gained popularity through it in circles close to the Catholic Church,.

The discussion on abortion that has taken place in recent years has made less use of the argument that abortion is a substitute topic than before.

In the excerpt from a bishop's statement quoted below, it is argued that abortion is not a worldview issue, not a substitute topic, but a 'scientific issue':

> *On the day when the Sejm is to consider a civil bill to tighten anti-abortion laws in Poland, the Bishops recall: - We support all those who, in various ways, work for the defence of the life of the unborn. The document "Pro memoria regarding the protection of unborn life" was signed by the entire Presidium of the Polish Bishops' Conference: Archbishop Stanislaw Gądecki, Archbishop Marek Jędraszewski and Bishop Artur Miziński. - A human right is the right to life. This is one of the reasons why the Catholic Church around the world supports initiatives to protect the dignity of the human person from conception to natural death. This is not a question of ideology, but of science," the bishops write* (Wilgocki 2015).

Such argumentation relates to the ontology recognised by the right wing politicians (e.g. Jarosław Kaczyński) and representatives of clergy (mentioned in the quotation above) regarding the statute of the human foetus. For advocates of the abortion ban, the fetus has the same status as a born human being, and therefore the issue of the abortion ban becomes a vital concern and not an issue that can be postponed.

Values in the abortion debate in Poland

Among the values referred to by the discourse actors supporting the removal of the embryopathological premise from the Polish legal order is the dignity and right to life of the foetus ('unborn children', 'conceived children'). Abortion, according to these actors, becomes a form of denial of the right to life of people with disabilities:

> *The draft [of the bill] is short but momentous; this act states that people with disabilities have the same dignity as healthy people and should have the same rights," the said during the deliberations of the parliamentary justice committee the plenipotentiary of the of the 'Stop abortion' committee, Kaja Godek [Anti-abortion activist, conservative, anti-abortion campaign leader]* (DGP 2018).

> *It is simply killing a child, taking the life of a tiny human being, who we are robbing of their dignity, robbing of their humanity, and often deprive them of the chance to fulfil their potential* (Bury, Nowak 2021).

The feminist side of the debate stresses the importance of values such as (, autonomy, and a woman's right to choose (e.g. Polczyk 2020). Feminists and the opponents of the abortion ban associate the rights of the foetus with the rights of the woman.

Abortion of the damaged foetuses as civilizational issue/threat to the civilization

Pro-lifers argue that nothing is more important than the life of the foetus. In recent years, the suggestion that a woman's mental health could be compromised to justify an abortion has been controversial in these circles:

> *"The introduction of the premise of endangering the mental health of the mother of the unborn child raises our strong objection for several reasons," the association stressed in the letter. The Defenders of Life presented their arguments to the head of the Ministry of Health. Firstly, "the doctor has a duty to care for the health of both the mother and the child". Article 39 of the Code of Medical Ethics was quoted: "In the medical treatment of a pregnant woman, the physician is at the same time responsible for the health and life of the child* (TVP Info 2023a).

The question of what harm the woman might have suffered is not discussed in this context. In this case, one can speak of structural intersectionality for the sake of the foetus. The rights of the foeutus are equalized with the rights of the woman. The argument here rests on the assumption that – from the perspective of right-wing populism – the health situation and even the life safety of pregnant women is not even slightly more important than the rights of the foetus. The priority of the rights of the fetus seems to override the needs of women. In this discourse, there is no discussion about the opportunity to leave the decision regarding the medical procedures affecting a woman and the pregnancy to the woman involved.

> *Thirdly, as warned, "abortion leads to the risk of post-abortion syndrome". "Numerous studies have compared the symptoms of this syndrome to those of post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by soldiers returning from war, for example, or by people who have experienced violence. If a pregnant woman suffering from depression or other mental disorders decides to have an abortion, not only will she not heal her traumatic experience, but she will compound it by further experiencing violence against herself and her unborn child," – noted* (TVP Info 2023a).

In the media debate about the effects of the abortion ban introduced by the Constitutional Court's judgment, there were voices from people with disabilities themselves. One of them argues that the right to abortion also applies to persons with disabilities, in whose defense, they claim, opponents of access to abortion in the presence of an embryopathological premise stand.

Meanwhile, as the author points out, access to abortion is one way of ensuring the safety and dignity of women with disabilities:

> *People with disabilities are marginalised in society and even if they are noticed, the story about them is 'caring'. There is rarely any talk of independence of people with disabilities, boasting about yet another benefit or support (usually one-off) for families. No one even thinks that such a woman needs and wants the same things as a non-disabled woman - accessible gynaecological care, sex or abortion. That is why I, a woman with a disability, a woman simply, demand human rights and the right to self-determination. I demand systemic support, not handouts called care. I demand a normal country where everyone is equal* (Polczyk 2020).

Right-wing populist discourse puts the rights and interests of women and children against each other in the discussion around abortion.

On the other hand, among pro-choice circles, there is the argument that in some cases abortion is an act of grace and mercy for a child who will be born and will certainly die, often in great suffering:

> *The authorities are now preparing legal solutions and mechanisms to encourage parents of children diagnosed in the womb with a serious genetic defect to give birth to them. But I will ask brutal questions: the Ministry of Health claims that, according to the rabbit ideology, the more children, the better. Does this also apply to children who are practically incapable of living? Is it really the case that the more children are born in Poland with profound, irreversible genetic defects that cause immense pain and suffering, the better? And if so, for whom is it better? For the parents? For these suffering, severely, often fatally handicapped children?* (Kublik 2018).

When discussing access to abortion, populist discourse argues that the right to abortion is not a human right.

Conclusions

Intersectionality in the abortion debate in Poland over the last 10 years has appeared in the arguments of both the pro-life and pro-choice sides. Feminists and left-wing politicians (e.g. Wańtuch 2023) have highlighted the intersectionality of women's exclusion when abortion is only available to well-off women with relatively high social capital. Here we have an overlap between the gender dimension in a conservative society, which prevents access to safe and legal abortion, and cultural capital and, often associated with it, social capital.

The pro-life community, on the other hand, uses - consciously or not - a strategy of intersectionality, invoking the notion of discrimination and cross-discrimination, in which it is the age (or developmental stage of the foetus) that makes abortion in any situation a murder and a form of discrimination against 'conceived children'. It should be noted that the term "conceived child" or "unborn child" is used by the populist right (e.g. Terlikowski 2023; Gęsiak 2023a), while pro-choice activists and liberal journalists use the term "foetus" (e.g. Karwowska 2017.

According to the right-wing populist narrative, "unborn children" are discriminated against in relation to adults. Fetuses with defects, including Down's syndrome, are seen as people with disabilities who should be treated equally because they have not been born yet (e.g. Gęsiak 2023b; Kmieciak 2016). The anti-abortion discourse is strongly supported by the Catholic Church and religious discourse.

In the debate on the abortion ban, there are also two unspoken branches of ethics: the ethics of the sanctity of life and the ethics of the quality of life (McCormick 1978). The former holds that every life is sacred and that it is always wrong to cause the death of an individual, even if they make that choice (Kośmiński 2015; Sękowski 2011; Waliczek 2021). The ethics of quality of life distinguishes between lives worth living and lives not worth living. From this perspective, it may be that bringing someone into the world is an act of harm to another human being, rather than preventing their birth.

In the discussion around abortion, the issue of Europeanness, which is equally present in the Polish worldview conflict, comes up. Those in favour of women's choice argue that the abortion ban distances Poland from European standards, according to which women's rights are protected and the right to decide on a pregnancy, at least in its first stages, belongs to the woman. The right-wing conservative side, supported by voices from Catholic circles in Poland and abroad, creates an image of contemporary Europe as a space of corruption and a threat to truly European values. In this aspect, the Polish right-wing and those who support its views on abortion issues play the role of 'the people', whose opposition to the corrupt and corrupt elites is a key element of right-wing populism.

The issue of access to abortion has been one of the most important debates in Poland over the past 30 years. Compared to European countries, Poland is still lagging when it comes to securing women's reproductive rights. Concepts inspiring emancipation movements in Western contexts (e.g. intersectionality) are present in the social space in Poland. They are adapted to the local context. However, as the trajectory of the concept of intersectionality shows, it can be used against the rights of women and the disadvantaged. Right-wing populism's use of the concept of intersectionality (albeit without invoking the term explicitly) may be a strategy for incorporating an element of differentiation usually absent in populist discourse. It is important to note, however, that in the case of the abortion debate, actors in populist discourse only speak of discrimination and differentiation in the context of fetuses, not women.

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APPENDIX 2.

T5.2

Measures of social class, disability, race-ethnicity and religion in four cross-national European survey programs: ESS, EVS, EV, ISSP

Table 1.1: Measuring Social Class

Indicator	ESS	EVS	EB	ISSP
EDUCATION				
Level of education	All waves	3 waves (1999, 2008, 2017)	2 waves 95.2 2021 and 94.1 2020	All waves (1988, 1994, 2002, 2012), not harmonized
Years of schooling or education	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked	All waves (1988, 1994, 2002, 2012)
Age when full-time education stopped	Not asked	All waves	All but EB 44.2 1995–1996	Not asked
OCCUPATION				
Occupation	All waves	EVS 1981, 1990, 1999	All waves, except EB 44.2 1995–1996, EB 87.4 2017	All waves (1988, 1994, 2002, 2012),
Industry	All waves	EVS 1981, 1990, 1999	Not asked	ISSP 1988 (professional sector)
Type of organization	Wave 4-10	Not asked	Not asked	All waves (1988, 1994, 2002, 2012) (public/private), ISSP 2012 (profit/non-profit)
Type of contract	All waves	Not asked	EB 44.2 1995–1996	Not asked
Proportion of women in a respondent's workplace	Wave 2 (2004 and wave 5 (2010)	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
INCOME				
Income, all sources	All waves	All waves	6 waves 59.0 2003, 44.3 1996, 41.1 1994,	All waves (1988, 1994, 2002, 2012), not harmonized

			39.0 1993, 27 1987 and 19 1983	
Main source of household income	All waves	Not asked	Not asked	All waves (different question: Who has the higher income?)
Proportion of household income respondent provides	Wave 2 (2004) and Wave 5 (2010)	Not asked	Not asked	Not directly asked, but can be calculated because both personal and household income is asked
PARENTS				
Level of mother's and father's education	Not asked	Not asked	1 wave 95.2 2021	Not asked
Main earner's parent's occupation when respondent was 14	Not asked	2017	Not asked	Not asked
WORKING TIME/ CARE TIME				
Weekly working hours	All waves	All waves (only two options: more than 30hrs and less than 30hrs)	Not asked	All waves (1988, 1994, 2002, 2012)
Question about respondent's activity in the last 7 days (includes looking after children option)	All waves	Not asked	EB 44.3 OVR 1996	Not asked
Time spent full-time caring for children	Wave 2 (2004)	Not asked	Not asked	ISSP 2022, 2012 (hours spent caring a week)
POWER DIMENSION				
Supervision of others	All waves	1981, 1990, 1999	All waves, but EB 87.4 2017, EB 44.2 1995–1996, EB 27 1987, EB 19 1983	All waves (1988, 1994, 2002, 2012)

Number of Employees supervised	All waves	Not asked	Not asked	ISSP 2012
Autonomy and independence at work	All waves	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
EMPLOYMENT/ UNEMPLOYMENT				
Employment status, incl. self-employed	All waves	All waves	All waves, except EB 87.4 2017	All waves (1988, 1994, 2002, 2012)
Employment history (number of years in paid/unpaid work)	Wave 2 and 5	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
If currently not working (temporary illness/parental leave/vacation/strike etc.), what is the normal work situation?	Not asked	Not asked	EB 95.2 2021, 94.1 2020 - eb941, 83.4 2015, 82.4 2014, 77.4 2012, 76.1 2011, 76.1 2011, 75.1 EP 2011, 72.2 2009, 71.3 2009, 71.2 2009, 69.1 2008, 65.4 2006, 65.1 2006, 63.1 2005, 59.0 2003, 44.3 OVR 1996, 41.1 1994 and 39.0 1993	ISSP 2012
Unemployment lasting 12 months or more	All waves	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Unemployment lasting 3 months or more	All waves	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Unemployment in last 10 years and for how long	All waves: Unemployment in last 5 years	Not asked	Not asked	ISSP 1988
Ever had a paid job	All waves	EVS 1990, 1999, 2008, 2017	All but EB 87.4 2017, EB 44.2 1995–1996, EB 27 1987, EB 19 1983	ISSP 2012
What year last in paid job	All waves	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked

Year first started in paid employment	Wave 2 (2004) and 3 (2006)	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Total years doing kind of work currently doing, including all jobs	Wave 5 (2010)	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Paid work in another country	Waves 2-10	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
SELF-REPORT SOCIAL CLASS				
Self-report social class	Wave 6 (place in society)	EVS 1981, 1990, 1999	14 waves (95.2 2021, 94.1 2020, 91.4 2019, 87.4 2017, 83.4 2015, 82.4 2014, 77.4 2012, 76.1 2011, 75.1 2011, 72.2 2009, 71.3 2009, 71.2 2009, 41.1 1994 and 39.0 1993)	ISSP 1988, 1994, 2012 (slightly different)
MEASURES CAPTURING POVERTY				
Likelihood about becoming unemployed in the next 12 months	W3 (2006) and W4 (2008)	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Worry that they will not be able to retire when they want to	W3 (2006)	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Difficulty paying bills	All waves	Not asked	All but EB 69.1 2008, 65.4 2006, 65.1 2006, 63.1 2005, 59.0 2003, 44.3 OVR 1996, 44.2 1995–1996,41.1 1994,39.0 1993, 27 1987 and 19 1983	Not asked
Severe financial difficulties in family when growing up	Wave 7 (2014)	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked

PLACE OF LIVING AND HOUSEHOLD				
Place of living: urban-rural	All waves	EVS 1981, (Size of town: 1990, 1999, 2008, 2017)	All waves except EB 19 1983, EB 27 1987, EB 44.2 1995–1996	All waves (1988, 1994, 2002, 2012)
Property ownership	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked	1 wave (1988)
Household size	All waves	EVS 1981, 1999, 2017 (1990: number of children living at home)	All waves except EB 59.0 2003 and EB 44.2 1995–1996	Wave 1-3 (1988, 1994, 2002)
Number of children	Not directly asked Wave 1-8: Children living at home? All waves: ever had children living in household? Wave 2: Number of children not living in household?	EVS 1990, 2017	Not asked	ISSP 2002; 2012: only in household
QUESTIONS ABOUT PARTNER				
Living in steady partnership	All waves	All waves (marital status)	All waves but EB 44.2 1995–1996	All waves (1988, 1994, 2002, 2012)
Both partner and respondent working at the moment?	All waves	Not asked	Not asked	ISSP 1988 and 1994
Hours worked weakly partner	All waves	Not asked	Not asked	ISSP 2002, 2012
Hours partner spends on care work/housework	W2 2004 and W5 2010 (housework)	Not asked	Not asked	ISSP 2012 2002: only housework
Question about partner's activity in the last 7 days (includes looking after children option)	All waves	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Partner's occupation	**Not asked**	**Not asked**	**Not asked**	**All waves**

				(1988, 1994, 2002, 2012), not harmonized
OTHER INDICATORS				
Work from home or place of choice, how often	Wave 1 (2002), Wave 10 (2020)	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Education and training opportunities on the job	All waves	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Work involve working evenings/nights // having to work overtime at short notice, how often	Wave 2 (2004) and 5 (2010)	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Work involve working at weekends, how often	Wave 2 (2004) and 5 (2010)	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Know other employers who would have good use of what learnt in present job	Wave 5 (2010)	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
How difficult/easy for employer to replace you if you left	Wave 2 (2004) and 5 (2010)	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Exposure to harmful job conditions	Wave 7 (2014)	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Feel what I do in life is valuable and worthwhile	Wave 3 (2006) and wave 6 (2012)	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
I would enjoy having paid job even if did not need money	Wave 5 (2010)	Not asked	Not asked	ISSP 1988
JOB SATISFACTION AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE				
Job satisfaction	Wave 1 (2002), Wave 3 (2006), Wave 5 (2010), Wave 6 (2012), Wave 10 (2020)	Not asked	Not asked	ISSP 2002, ISSP 2012
Work-Life Balance	Wave 3 (2006), Wave 5 (2010), Wave 6 (2012),	Not asked	Not asked	Waves 3-4 (2002, 2012)

Table 1.2 Perceptions of discrimination against the respondent because of their social class

EB	
In the past 12 months have you personally felt discriminated against or experienced harassment on one or more of the following grounds? Please tell me all that apply. "Social Class" is included as a response category. Has not been included in the previous waves.	Wave 91.4 2019
ESS	
Would you describe yourself as being a member of a group that is discriminated against in this country? 1- Yes 2- No (When asked on what grounds respondents felt discriminated against, social class was NOT a response category)	All waves
Would you say your gross pay is unfairly low, fair, or unfairly high? Scale from -4 Low, extremely unfair to 4 high, extremely unfair	Wave 2018
Would you say your net pay / income from pensions / income from social benefits is unfairly low, fair, or unfairly high? Scale from -4 Low, extremely unfair to 4 high, extremely unfair	Wave 2018

***Note**: No questions on perceived discrimination against the respondent because of their social class in the ISSP and EVS*

Table 1.3.: General perceptions of discrimination against people because of their social class by other people

***Note**: No questions on general perceptions of discrimination against people because of their social class by other people in all four surveys*

Table 1.4.: General perceptions of discrimination against people because of their social class by institutions

ESS	
When victims report crimes, do you think the police treat rich people worse, poor people worse, or are rich and poor treated equally?	Wave 5 (2010)
Suppose two people - one rich, one poor - each appear in court, charged with an identical crime they did not commit. Choose an answer from this card to show who you think would be more likely to be found guilty. 1 Rich person more likely to be found guilty 2 Poor person more likely to be found guilty 3 Same chance of being found guilty 7 Refusal	Wave 5 (2010)

8 Don't know 9 No answer	
EB	
Please tell me to what extent you think the European Union has a positive or negative impact on each of the following employment and social policies. 1 - Setting minimum standards for working conditions throughout the EU 2 - Creating new job opportunities and fighting unemployment 3 - Reducing regional disparities in unemployment 4 - Exchanging best practices in employment policies among the Member States of the EU 5 - Improving access to education and training 6 - Promoting dialogue between employers and trade unions 7 - Fighting against social exclusion and poverty 8 - Promoting equality between women and men 9 - Combatting other forms of discrimination 10 - Coordinating the reform of the national systems of social protection (pensions, healthcare, etc.) 1 - Very positive impact - 4 - Very negative impact	Wave 71.2 2009

***Note**: No questions on general perceptions of discrimination against people because of their social class by institutions in the EVS and ISSP*

Table 1.5 Attitudes towards people from a different social class

EVS	
Many things are desirable, but not all of them are essential characteristics of democracy. Please tell me for each of the following things how essential you think it is as a characteristic of democracy. Use this scale where 1 means "not at all an essential characteristic of democracy" and 10 means it definitely is "an essential characteristic of democracy" "Governments tax the rich and subsidize the poor" and "People receive state aid for unemployment" as response categories	EVS 2017
To what extent do you feel concerned about the living conditions of: "unemployed people in [COUNTRY]" as response category 1- Very much – 5- not at all	EVS waves 1999, 2008 and 2017

Note: No questions on attitudes towards people from a different social class in the EB, ESS and ISSP

Table 2.1 Measures of disability

Question	ESS	EVS	EB	ISSP
Are you hampered in your daily activities in any way by any longstanding illness, or disability, infirmity, or mental health problem? If yes, is that a lot or to some extent?", 1 – Yes a lot; 2 – Yes to some extent; 3 – No	All waves	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Did you experience any of the following health problems in the last 12 months (0 – Not marked 1 – Marked): 1 – Heart or circulation problems; 2 – High blood pressure; 3 – Breathing problems; 4 – Allergies; 5 – Back or neck pain; 6 – Muscular or joint pain in hand or arm; 7 – Muscular or joint pain in foot or leg; 8 – Stomach or digestion related; 9 – Skin condition related; 10 – Severe headaches; 11 – Diabetes; 12 - none of these; 13 Refusal; 14 DK; 15 no answer	7th wave (2014)	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Did any of these problems (same as previous question) hamper your daily activities? (0 – Not marked 1 – Marked)	7th wave (2014)	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Permanently sick or disabled as a response category in the question on employment status (0 – Not marked 1 – Marked)	All waves	2008 and 2017 waves	All waves, except waves 87.4 2017, 44.2 1995–1996, 27 1987, 19 1983	All waves (1988, 1994, 2002, 2012)
Part of a minority self-identification question. "Where you live, do you consider yourself to be part of any of the following? Please tell me all that apply": a minority in terms of disability	Not asked	Not asked	Waves 91.4 2019, 83.4 2015, 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009 and 69.1 2008	Not asked
Do you suffer from "*a chronic physical or mental health problem which affects you in your daily activities"* (EB 77.4 2012, SD4). 1-yes, 2-no, 3-refusal	Not asked	Not asked	Waves 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009, 69.1 2008 and 65.4 2006	Not asked

In what year did you retire/ become permanently sick or disabled? YEAR 0 Never had a paid job; 1111 Always been sick or disabled; 6666 Not applicable; 7777 Refusal; 8888 Don't know; 9999 No answer	Wave 3 (2006)	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Which of the reasons shown on this card best describes your main reason for leaving your last employer? "Illness or disability" as a response category	Wave 5 (2010)	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Are you undergoing a long-term treatment? For what reason? 1: Yes, 2: No, 3: DK/refusal; The only relevant option (c. f., dardio-vascular disease, asthma, etc.)	Not asked	Not asked	Wave 59.0 2003	Not asked
Are you in favour or opposed to providing anonymous information about … as part of a census or statistical survey, if that could help to combat discrimination in (OUR COUNTRY)? "Any disability you might have" as response category 1: totally in favour – 4: totally opposed	Not asked	Not asked	Wave 91.4 2019	Not asked

Table 2.2 Perceptions of discrimination against the respondent because of their disability

EB	
And over the past 12 months, when at work, have you, or have you not, been subjected to ? "disability discrimination" as response category	Wave 44.2 1995–1996
On what grounds is your group discriminated against? "Disability" as response category	Waves 69.1 2008, 71.2 2009, 77.4 2012, 83.4 2015, 91.4 2019
ESS	
On what grounds is your group discriminated against? "Disability" as response category	All waves

***Note**: EVS and ISSP did not include any questions on perceived discrimination against the respondent because of their disability*

Table 2.3.: General perceptions of discrimination against people because of their disability by other people

EB	
For each of the following types of discrimination, could you please tell me whether, in your opinion, it is very widespread, fairly widespread, fairly rare or very rare in (OUR COUNTRY)? Discrimination on the basis of… "Disability" as a response category 1 (very widespread) – 5 (nonexistent)	Waves 91.4 2019, 83.4 2015, 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009, 69.1 2008, 65.4 2006

In the past 12 months, have you witnessed or heard of someone being discriminated against or harassed on the basis of one or more of the following grounds? Please tell me all that apply. "disability" as response category	Waves 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009, 69.1 2008
Would you say that the fact of belonging to the following groups tends to be an advantage or a disadvantage, or neither, in (NATIONALITY) society at the current time? The fact of… "Being disabled" as response category 1: Tends to be an advantage, 2: Tends to be a disadvantage, 3: Neither, 4: DK	Wave 65.4 2006
Discrimination can happen outside working life. For example, in education, when people go shopping, visit restaurants/ bars, try to rent an accommodation or buy a property, go to a doctor or to a hospital. Could you please tell me whether, in your opinion, discrimination outside working life is very widespread, fairly widespread, fairly rare or very rare in (OUR COUNTRY)? Discrimination on the basis of… "Disability" as response category 1 - 4: very widespread - very rare	77.4 2012
For each of the following groups of people, could you please tell me whether it is rather the women or rather the men who are more likely to experience inequalities in (OUR COUNTRY)? "3 – people with disabilities" as response category 1 – Men, 2 – Women, 3 - Both (SP.), 4 - Neither – no inequality (SP.), 5 - DK	82.4 2014
If you compare the situation with 5 years ago, would you say that the following types of discrimination are more common or less common in (OUR COUNTRY)? Discrimination on the basis of… "Disability" as response category 1: far more widespread – 4: far less widespread	71.2 2009, 69.1 2008, 65.4 2006
EVS	
To what extent do you feel concerned about the living conditions of the following groups living in your country: "v220 - sick and disabled people" as response category 1: very much – 5: not at all	2017, 2008, 1999

***Note**: ESS and ISSP did not include any questions on general perceptions of discrimination against people because of their disability by other people*

Table 2.4.: General perceptions of discrimination against people because of their disability by institutions

EB	
In (OUR COUNTRY) when a company wants to hire someone and has the choice between two candidates with equal skills and qualifications, which of the following criteria may, in your opinion, put one candidate at a disadvantage? "A disability" as response category	Waves 91.4 2019, 83.4 2015, 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009, 69.1 2008, 65.4 2006
Would you say that, with equivalent qualifications or diplomas, the following people would be less likely, as likely or more likely than others to get a job, be accepted for training or be promoted? "A disabled person compared with an able-bodied person" as response category	Wave 65.4 2006

1: Less likely, 2: As likely, 3: More likely, 4: DK	
Please tell me whether, in your opinion, in (OUR COUNTRY) there is a law which prohibits the following types of discrimination when hiring new employees. Discrimination on the basis of… "Disability" as response category 1: Yes, there is such a law, 2: No, there is no such law, 3: DK	65.4 2006
Do you think that diversity is sufficiently reflected in the media, in terms of…? "Disability" as response category 1: Yes, definitely, 2: Yes, to some extent, 3: No, not really, 4: No, definitely not, 5: DK	83.4 2015, 71.2 2009
Do you think that the economic crisis is contributing to an increase in discrimination on the basis of … in the labour market? "Disability" as response category 1 - 4: yes, definitely - no, definitely not	77.4 2012, 71.2 2009
Do you think that in (OUR COUNTRY) measures to fight the economic crisis and policies to promote recovery are excluding people from each of the following groups? "People with a disability" as response category 1 - 4: yes, definitely - no, definitely not	83.4 2015

***Note**: ESS, EVS and ISSP did not include any questions on general perceptions of discrimination against people because of their disability by institutions*

Table 2.5 Attitudes towards people with disabilities

EB	
Would you be in favour of or opposed to specific measures being adopted to provide equal opportunities for everyone in the field of employment? Measures such as, for example special training schemes or adapted selection and recruitement processes, for people depending on their... "Disability" as response category 1: totally in favour – 4: totally opposed	71.2 2009, 69.1 2008, 65.4 2006
Please tell me whether you personally totally agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree or totally disagree with each of the following statements. "More money should be spent on eliminating physical obstacles which make the lives of those who have a disability difficult" as response category	65.4 2006
Would you say that we need more…? "Disabled people in the Workplace" as response category 1: Yes, definitely, 2: Yes, probably, 3: No, probably not, 4: No, definitely not, 5: DK	Wave 65.4 2006
And using a scale from 1 to 10, please tell me how you would feel about having someone from each of the following categories in the highest elected political position in (OUR COUNTRY)?	Wave 69.1 2008, 71.2 2009, 77.4 2012, 83.4 2015, 91.4 2019

“A disabled person” as response category 1–10: Very uncomfortable – Totally comfortable, 11: Indifferent (SPONTANEOUS), 12: DK	
Persons with disabilities and older people may encounter obstacles in using and accessing goods and services. Where there is little or no accessibility, do you think this is discrimination against these groups? 1 - 4: yes, definitely - no, definitely not	Wave 77.4 2012
Do you think that enough is being done to promote diversity in your work place as far as each of the following is concerned? “Disability” as response category 1 - 4: yes, definitely - no, definitely not	91.4 2019, 83.4 2015, 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009
Regardless of whether you are actually working or not, please tell me, using a scale from 1 to 10, how comfortable you would feel, if a colleague at work with whom you are in daily contact, belonged to each of the following groups? ‘1’ means that you would feel "not at all comfortable" and ‘10’ that you would feel "totally comfortable" “A person with a disability” as response category 1 - 10: not at all comfortable, totally comfortable	91.4 2019, 83.4 2015
Regardless of whether you have children or not, please tell me, using a scale from 1 to 10, how comfortable you would feel if one of your children was in a love relationship with a person from one of the following groups. ‘1’ means that you would feel "not at all comfortable" and ‘10’ that you would feel "totally comfortable" “A person with a disability” as response category 1 - 10: not at all comfortable, totally comfortable	91.4 2019, 83.4 2015
For each of the following situations, please tell me using this scale from 1 to 10 how you would personally feel about it. On this scale, '1' means that you would be "very uncomfortable" and '10' means that you would be "totally comfortable" with this situation. “Having a disabled person as a neighbour” as response category 1–10: Very uncomfortable – Totally comfortable	69.1 2008
To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? School lessons and material should include information about diversity in terms of … “Disability” as response category 1-4: totally agree-totally disagree	91.4 2019
Do you have friends or acquaintances who are…? “Disabled” as response category Among: “People whose ethnic origin is different from yours”, “Roma”, “Gay, lesbian or bisexual”, “Of a different religion or have different beliefs than you”, “Transgender or transsexual”	91.4 2019, 83.4 2015, 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009, 69.1 2008, 65.4 2006

EVS	
Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? "Q319D - It is unfair to give work to handicapped people when able bodied people can't find jobs" as response category 1 – Agree, 2 – Disagree, 3 - Neither	Wave 1990
Do you approve or disapprove of abortion under the following circumstances? "Where it is likely that the child would be born physically handicapped" as response category	Waves 1990 and 1981

***Note**: ESS and ISSP did not include any questions attitudes against people with disability*

Table 3.1. Measuring ethnicity or race of the respondent

Question	ESS	EVS	EB	ISSP
Do you belong to a minority ethnic group in [country]? 1 – Yes, 2 – No	All waves	Not asked	Wave 91.4 2019 (ethnic minority, skin colour, being Roma, religious minority) 83.4 2015, 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009, 69.1 2008 (ethnic minority, religious minority)	Not asked
How would you describe your ancestry? Ancestry 1 European Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups	Waves 7-10	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
How would you describe your ancestry? Ancestry 2 European Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups	Waves 7-10	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
What language or languages do you speak most often at home? Language 1	All waves	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
Ethnic group	Not asked	Wave 1 (1981) Caucasian (white) Negro (black) Asian (brown) Oriental (yellow) Other non-white (specify)	Not asked	All waves Country-specific categories Additionally: Wave 1 (1988): Race of respondent
Do you consider yourself as belonging to any particular religion or denomination? 1 – yes, 2 - no	All waves	All waves	Non believer/agnostic as part of religious denomination question: Waves 95.2 2021, 91.4 2019, 83.4 2015, 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009, 69.1 2008, 65.4 2006, 63.1 2005, 41.1 1994, 39.0 1993	Waves 1 (1988), 2 (1994) and 4 (2012)
Which one?	All waves Options: 1 Roman Catholic	All waves (different options in	Waves 95.2 2021, 91.4 2019, 83.4 2015, 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009, 69.1	Waves 1 (1988), 2 (1994) and 4 (2012)

	2 Protestant 3 Eastern Orthodox 4 Other Christian denomination 5 Jewish 6 Islamic 7 Eastern religions 8 Other non-Christian religions 66 Not applicable 77 Refusal 99 No answer	different waves)	2008, 65.4 2006, 63.1 2005, 41.1 1994, 39.0 1993 (different options in different waves)	
Are you in favour or opposed to providing anonymous information about … as part of a census or statistical survey, if that could help to combat discrimination in (OUR COUNTRY)? "Your ethnic origin", "your religion or beliefs" 1: totally in favour – 4: totally opposed	Not asked	Not asked	Waves 91.4 2019 (also asks about skin colour), 83.4 2015, 65.4 2006	Not asked
In general, how much do you identify yourself with each of the following? Please answer using a scale from "0" to "10", where "0" means "not at all" and "10" means "a lot". "your ethnic or racial background", "your religion or beliefs", "being European" as response categories	Not asked	Not asked	Wave 94.1 2020	Not asked
To which ethnic group do you belong or from which country you or your ancestors are coming?	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked	ISSP88-ISSP12

Table 3.2 Perceptions of discrimination against the respondent because of their ethnicity or race

ESS	
On what grounds is your group discriminated against? "Color or race", "Religion", "Language" and "Ethnic group" as response categories	All ESS waves
Please tell me how often, in the past year, anyone has shown prejudice against you or treated you unfairly because of... "your race or ethnic background?" as a response category Never (0) – Very often (4)	ESS Wave 4 (2008)
EB	

And over the past 12 months, when at work, have you, or have you not, been subjected to_____? "race discrimination", "nationality discrimination" as response categories	EB Wave 44.2 1995–1996
In the past 12 months have you personally felt discriminated against or experienced harassment on one or more of the following grounds? Please tell me all that apply. "Ethnic origin", "skin colour", "being Roma", "Religion or beliefs"	EB Waves 91.4 2019 only "ethnic origin" and "religion or beliefs" asked: EB waves 83.4 2015, 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009, 69.1 2008

Note: No questions on perceived discrimination against the respondent because of their ethnicity or race were asked in EVS and ISSP.

Table 3.3. General perceptions of discrimination against people because of their ethnicity or race by other people

EB	
For each of the following types of discrimination, could you please tell me whether, in your opinion, it is very widespread, fairly widespread, fairly rare or very rare in (OUR COUNTRY)? Discrimination on the basis of… "ethnic origin", "skin colour", "being Roma", "Religion or beliefs" as response categories	EB Waves 91.4 2019, only "ethnic origin" and "religion or beliefs" asked: 83.4 2015, 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009, 69.1 2008, 65.4 2006
If you compare the situation with 5 years ago, would you say that the following types of discrimination are more common or less common in (OUR COUNTRY)? Discrimination on the basis of… "ethnic origin", "Religion or belief" as response categories	EB Waves 71.2 2009, 69.1 2008, 65.4 2006
In the past 12 months, have you witnessed or heard of someone being discriminated against or harassed on the basis of one or more of the following grounds? Please tell me all that apply. "Ethnic origin", "Religion or beliefs" as response categories	EB Waves 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009, 69.1 2008
Would you say that the fact of belonging to the following groups tends to be an advantage or a disadvantage, or neither, in (NATIONALITY) society at the current time? The fact of… "Being a person of a different ethnic origin than the rest of the population", "Being a Roma", "Being part of a religion that is different from the main religion in the country"	EB Wave 65.4 2006
Discrimination can happen outside working life. For example, in education, when people go shopping, visit restaurants/ bars, try to rent an accommodation or buy a property, go to a doctor or to a hospital. Could you please tell me whether, in your opinion, discrimination outside working life is very widespread, fairly widespread, fairly rare or very rare in (OUR COUNTRY)? Discrimination on the basis of… "Ethnic origin", "Religion or beliefs",	EB Wave 77.4 2012

Note: No question on perceptions of discrimination against people because of their ethnicity or race o by other people are asked in the ESS, EVS, and the ISSP

Table 3.4. General perceptions of institutional discrimination against people because of their ethnicity or race

ESS	

And when victims report crimes, do you think the police treat some people worse because of their race or ethnic group or is everyone treated equally? 1 People from different race treated worse 2 People from same race treated worse 3 People from all races treated equally 7 Refusal 8 Don't know 9 No answer	ESS Wave 5 (2010)
Now suppose two people from different race or ethnic groups each appear in court, charged with an identical crime they did not commit. Choose an answer from this card to show who you think would be more likely to be found guilty. 1 Person from different race more likely to be found guilty 2 Person from same race more likely to be found guilty 3 All races same chance of being found guilty 7 Refusal 8 Don't know 9 No answer	ESS Wave 5 (2010)
How good or bad is it for a country to have a law against racial or ethnic discrimination in the workplace?0: Extremely bad – 10: Extremely good	ESS Wave 1 (2002) and Wave 7 (2014)
How good or bad is it for a country to have a law against promoting racial or ethnic hatred? 0: Extremely bad – 10: Extremely good	ESS Wave 1 (2002)
EB	
In (OUR COUNTRY) when a company wants to hire someone and has the choice between two candidates with equal skills and qualifications, which of the following criteria may, in your opinion, put one candidate at a disadvantage? "The candidate's way of speaking, his or her accent", "The candidate's ethnic origin", "The candidate skin colour", "The candidate being Roma", "The expression of a religious belief (e.g. wearing a visible religious symbol)"	EB Wave 91.4 2019 Not including "being Roma" as response category in: 83.4 2015, 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009, 69.1 2008, 65.4 2006,
Would you say that, with equivalent qualifications or diplomas, the following people would be less likely, as likely or more likely than others to get a job, be accepted for training or be promoted? "A person who is not White compared to a White person", "A person of different ethnic origin than the rest of the population", "A person who practises a different religion than that of the rest of the country"	EB Wave 65.4 2006
Do you think that the economic crisis is contributing to an increase in discrimination on the basis of … in the labour market? "Ethnic origin", "Religion or beliefs" a response categories 1: yes definitely – 4: no, definitely not	EB Waves 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009
Do you think that in (OUR COUNTRY) measures to fight the economic crisis and policies to promote recovery are excluding people from each of the following groups? "People from a different ethnic origin than the majority of the Population", "People from a different religion than the majority of the Population" as response options 1: yes, definitely – 4: no, definitely not	EB Wave 83.4 2015

Please tell me whether, in your opinion, in (OUR COUNTRY) there is a law which prohibits the following types of discrimination when hiring new employees. Discrimination on the basis of… "ethnic origin", "religion or beliefs"	EB Wave 65.4 2006

Note: No question on perceptions of discrimination against people because of their ethnicity or race by institutions was asked in the EVS and the ISSP

Table 3.5. Attitudes towards people from a different ethnicity or race

ESS	
To what extent do you think [country] should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most [country] people to come and live here? 1 Allow many to come and live here, 2 Allow some, 3 Allow a few, 4 Allow none	All ESS waves
How about people of a different race or ethnic group from most [country] people? 1 Allow many to come and live here, 2 Allow some, 3 Allow a few, 4 Allow none	All ESS waves
Suppose you were choosing where to live. Which of the three types of area on this card would you ideally wish to live in? 1 Almost nobody minority race/ethnic group, 2 Some minority race/ethnic group, 3 Many minority race/ethnic group, 4 It would make no difference, 7 Refusal, 8 Don't know, 9 No answer	ESS Wave 1 (2002)
Now thinking of people who have come to live in [country] from another country who are of a different race or ethnic group from most [country] people. Using this card, please tell me how much you would mind or not mind if someone like this would...? 1 – be your boss 2 – marry one of your close relatives 0: Not mind at all – 10: Mind a lot	ESS Wave 7 (2014) and wave 1 (2002)
I am going to ask you about different groups of people who might come to live in [country] from other countries. Using this card, please tell me to what extent you think [country] should allow? 1 Jewish people / 2 Muslims / 3 Gypsies	ESS7 (2014)
Please tell me how important you think each of these things should be in deciding whether someone born, brought up and living outside [country] should be able to come and live here. "Christian background" and "be white" as response categories	ESS 1 (2002) and 7(2014)
Do you think that some races or ethnic groups are born…? 1 - less intelligent than others 2 - harder working than others 1: Yes, 2: No	ESS Wave 7 (2014)
Thinking about the world today, would you say that some cultures are much better than others or that all cultures are equal?	ESS Wave 7 (2014)
Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with each of these statements. Firstly … 1...It is better for a country if almost everyone shares the same customs and traditions 2...It is better for a country if there are a variety of different religions	ESS Wave 1 (2002), Only response category 1: ESS Wave 7 (2014)

3...It is better for a country if almost everyone is able to speak at least one common language 1- agree strongly to 5-disagree strongly	
Do you think the religious beliefs and practices in [country] are generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries? 0 – Religious beliefs and practices underminded, 10 – Religious beliefs and practices enriched	ESS Wave 7 (2014)
And now using this card, how would you describe the area where you currently live? 1 – Almost nobody minority race / ethnic group, 2 – Some minority race / ethnic group, 3 – Many minority race/ethnic group, 7 – Refusal, 8 – DK, 9 – no answer	ESS Wave 1 (2002) and Wave 7 (2014)
Do you have any friends who are of a different race or ethnic group from most [country] people?	ESS Wave 7 (2014) (different ethnic group or race included) IF YES, is that several or a few? 1 – Yes, several, 2 – Yes, a few 3 – No, none at all
How often do you have any contact with people who are of a different race or ethnic group from most [country] people when you are out and about? This could be on public transport, in the street, in shops or in the neighbourhood. 1 – Never, 2 – Less than once a month, 3 – Once a month, 4 – Several times a month, 5 – Once a week, 6 – Several times a week, 7 – Every day	ESS Wave 7 (2014)
Thinking about this contact, in general how bad or good is it? 0: Extremely bad – 10: Extremely good	ESS Wave 7 (2014)
EVS	
Some people say the following things are important for being truly [NATIONALITY]. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is? v278 - To have [COUNTRY]'s ancestry 1: very important – 4: not important	EVS 2008 (wave 4)
On this list are various groups of people. Could you identify any that you would not like to have as neighbours? "people of different race", "Christians", "Muslim", "Jews", "Gypsies" as response categories	All EVS waves
EB	
Do you have friends or acquaintances who are…?	EB Waves 91.4 2019 (different ethnic origin, skin colour, Roma and Religion) 83.4 2015, 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009 , 69.1 2008, 65.4 2006 (different Ethnic origin, Roma and Religion)
Please tell me whether you personally totally agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree or totally disagree with each of the following statements.	EB Wave 65.4 2006

"People of different ethnic origin than the rest of the population living in (OUR COUNTRY) enrich the (NATIONALITY) culture" "Getting into night clubs is harder for people of different ethnic origin than for the rest of the population" "The wearing of visible religious symbols in the workplace is acceptable"	
Would you say that we need more…? "MPs of a different ethnic origin than the rest of the population" as response option 1: yes, definitely – 4: no, definitely not	EB Wave 65.4 2006
And using a scale from 1 to 10, please tell me how you would feel about having someone from each of the following categories in the highest elected political position in (OUR COUNTRY)? "A person from a different ethnic origin than the majority of the population", "A person from a different religion than the majority of the population" as response options	EB Waves 69.1 2008, 71.2 2009, 77.4 2012, 83.4 2015 EB Wave 91.4 2019 also includes "A person with a different skin colour than the majority of the population" and "A Roma"
Would you be in favour of or opposed to specific measures being adopted to provide equal opportunities for everyone in the field of employment? Measures such as, for example special training schemes or adapted selection and recruitement processes, for people depending on their... "Ethnic origin", "Religion or belief" as response options 1: Totally in favour – 4: Totally opposed	EB Waves 71.2 2009, 69.1 2008, 65.4 2006,
To what extent do you support or oppose the following in the work place? "Monitoring the composition of the work-force to evaluate the representation of people from ethnic minorities", "Monitoring the recruitment procedures to ensure that candidates from ethnic minorities have the same chance of being selected for interview or hired as other candidates with similar skills and qualifications" 1: Totally support – 4: Totally oppose	EB Waves 71.2 2009, 69.1 2008,
For each of the following situations, please tell me using this scale from 1 to 10 how you would personally feel about it. On this scale, '1' means that you would be "very uncomfortable" and '10' means that you would be "totally comfortable" with this situation. "Having a Roma as a neighbour", "Having a person from a different ethnic origin than yours as a neighbour", "Having a person with a different religion or belief than yours as a neighbour"	EB Wave "69.1 2008"
To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? School lessons and material should include information about diversity in terms of … "Ethnic origin or skin colour", "Roma culture and history" as response categories	EB Waves 91.4 2019 83.4 2015 (Roma culture and history not included)
For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you tend to agree or tend to disagree.	EB Waves 71.3 2009

1 - (NOT IN CY(tcc)) People from other ethnic groups enrich the cultural life of (OUR COUNTRY) (M) 2 - (ONLY IN CY(tcc)) People from other ethnic groups enrich the cultural life of our community (N) 3 - The presence of people from other ethnic groups is a cause of insecurity 4 - (NOT IN CY(tcc)) The presence of people from other ethnic groups increases unemployment in (OUR COUNTRY) 5 - (ONLY IN CY(tcc)) The presence of people from other ethnic groups increases unemployment in our community	
Some people are disturbed by the opinions, customs and way of life of people different from themselves. a) Do you personally find the presence of people of another nationality, disturbing in your daily life? b) And do you find the presence of people of another race disturbing? c) And do you find the presence of people of another religion disturbing?	EB Wave 39.0 1993
Do you think that enough is being done to promote diversity in your work place as far as each of the following is concerned? "Ethnic origin", "Skin colour", "Roma origin or background" as response categories	EB Waves 91.4 2019 Only "Ethnic origin" and "Religion or beliefs" as response categories: 83.4 2015, 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009
Do you think that diversity is sufficiently reflected in the media, in terms of…? "Ethnic origin" as response category	EB Waves 83.4 2015, 71.2 2009

Note: No questions on attitudes towards people from a different ethnicity, race or religion askedties in the ISSP

Table 4.1.: Measuring Migration Background

Question	ESS	EVS	EB	ISSP
Were you born in [country]?	All Waves	Waves 4 (2008) and 5 (2017)	Waves 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009, 69.1 2008, 65.4 2006, 63.1 2005	Not asked
Are you a citizen of [country]?	All Waves	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
What year did you first come to live in [country]?	All Waves	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked
In which country were you born?	Not asked	Waves 4 (2008) and 5 (2017)	Not asked	Not asked
Was your father born in [country]? Was your mother born in [country]?	All Waves	Waves 4 (2008) and 5 (2017)	Asks whether mother and father were	Not asked

			born in [country], in EU MS or outside EU: Waves 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009, 69.1 2008, 65.4 2006, 65.1 2006, 63.1 2005	
In which country was your father born?	Not asked	Waves 4 (2008) and 5 (2017)	Not asked	Not asked
In which country was your mother born?	Not asked	Waves 4 (2008) and 5 (2017)	Not asked	Not asked
Were you or your parents born in a country other than (OUR COUNTRY)?	Can be constructed from the questions above	Waves 4 and 5: can be constructed from the questions above	Waves 95.2 2021	Not asked
To which ethnic group do you belong or from which country you or your ancestors are coming?	Not asked	Not asked	Not asked	ISSP88-ISSP12
Were you or your parents born in a country other than (OUR COUNTRY)?Yes, you yourself were Yes, your mother was Yes, your father was No, neither you nor your parents Refusal/DK	Not asked	Not asked	EB 95.2 2021	Not asked
You personally were you born? In (OUR COUNTRY) In another Member State of the EU In europe, but no tin a Member State of the EU In Asia, in Africa or in Latin America In Northern America, in Japan or in Oceania DK/Refusal	Not asked	Not asked	EB 77.4 2012, EB 71.2 2009, EB, 69.1 2008, EB 65.4 2006, EB 63.1 2005	Not asked
Can you tell me in which year you first came to live in [COUNTRY]?	Not asked	EVS 2017, EVS 2008	Not asked	Not asked

Table 4.2.: Perceptions of discrimination against the respondent based on their migration background

Question	Waves
ESS	
Would you describe yourself as being a member of a group that is discriminated against in this country? On what grounds is your group discriminated against?	All Waves
On what grounds is your group discriminated against? 1 – Color or race 2 – Nationality 3 – Religion 4 – Language 5 – Ethnic group 6 – Age 7 – Gender 8 – Sexuality 9 – Disability 10 – Other grounds 11 - DK 12 – Refusal	All Waves
EB	
And over the past 12 months, when at work, have you, or have you not, been subjected to ? "nationality discrimination" as a response category	EB Wave 44.2 1995–1996

Note: EVS and ISSP did not include questions on the perceptions of discrimination against the respondent as a member of the group. No survey included questions on the perceptions of discrimination against the group by other people on the basis of migration background.

Table 4.3.: Perceptions of institutional discrimination based on migration background

Question	Waves
ESS	
In your opinion, how much influence does each of the following factors have on the decision to recruit or not to recruit a person for a job in [country]? Person has immigrant background	ESS9 (2018)
Some people come to this country and apply for refugee status on the grounds that they fear persecution in their own country. Using this card, please say how much you agree or disagree with the following statements. Firstly...The government should be generous in judging people's applications for refugee status. 1 – Agree strongly 2 – Agree 3 – Neither agree nor disagree 4 – Disagree 5 – Disagree strongly 7 – Refusal	ESS7 (2014)

8 – DK 9 – no answer	
Compared to people like yourself who were born in [country], how do you think the government treats those who have recently come to live here from other countries? 1 – Much better 2 – A little better 3 – The same 4 – A little worse 5 – Much worse 6 – not applicable 7 – Refusal 8 – DK 9 – no answer	ESS7 (2014)

Note: EVS, EB, and ISSP did not include questions on the perceptions of discrimination against the group by institutions.

Table 4.4.: Attitudes towards people with a migration background

Question	**Wave**
ESS	
To what extent do you think [country] should allow people of the same race or ethnic group as most [country] people to come and live here? How about people of a different race or ethnic group from most [country] people? 1 Allow many to come and live here 2 Allow some 3 Allow a few 4 Allow none	All Waves
How about people of a different race or ethnic group from most [country] people? 1 Allow many to come and live here 2 Allow some 3 Allow a few 4 Allow none	ESS Wave 1-10 (2002-2020)
How about people from the poorer countries outside Europe? 1 Allow many to come and live here 2 Allow some 3 Allow a few 4 Allow none	ESS Wave 1-10 (2002-2020)
Now thinking of people who have come to live in [country] from another country who are of the same race or ethnic group from most [country] people. Using this card, please tell me how much you would mind or not mind if someone like this would 1 – be your boss / 2 – marry one of your close relatives?	ESS1 (2002); ESS7 (2014)

Please tell me how important you think each of these things should be in deciding whether someone born, brought up and living outside [country] should be able to come and live here. 1 – good educational qualifications 2 - close family living here 3 – speak country's official language 4 – Christian background 5 – be white 6 - be wealthy 7 – work skills needed in country 8 – committed to way of life in country	ESS7 (2014)
I am going to ask you about different groups of people who might come to live in [country] from other countries. Using this card, please tell me to what extent you think [country] should allow? 1 Jewish people / 2 Muslims / 3 Gypsies	ESS7 (2014)
Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country]'s economy that people come to live here from other countries? 0 Bad for the economy ... 10 Good for the economy	ESS Wave 1-10 (2002-2020)
Would you say that [country]'s cultural life is generally undermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries? 0 Cultural life undermined ... 10 Cultural life enriched	ESS Wave 1-10 (2002-2020)
Is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries? 0 Worse place to live ... 10 Better place to live	ESS Wave 1-10 (2002-2020)
Are [country]'s crime problems made worse or better by people coming to live here from other countries? 0 – Crime problems made worse 10 – Crime problems made better _____ 77 Refusal 88 – DK 99 – No answer	ESS7 (2014), ESS1 (2002)
Please tell me to what extent you think [country] should allow …. to come to live in [country]? 1 professionals from poor European country 2 professionals poor non-European country 3 unskilled laborer from poor European country 4 unskilled laborer from poor non-European country 1 – Allow many to come here and live 2 – Allow some 3 – Allow a few 4 – Allow none 7 – Refusal	ESS7 (2014)

8– DK 9 – no answer	
Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with each of these statements. Firstly … 4...Communities of people who have come to live here should be allowed to educate their children in their own separate schools if they wish. 5...If a country wants to reduce tensions it should stop immigration 1- agree strongly to 5-disagree strongly	ESS1 (2002)
Out of every 100 people living in [country], how many do you think were born outside [country]? 0-100	ESS Wave 1 (2002) and Wave 7 (2014)
EB	
a) If people from different countries of the South of the Mediterranean wish to work here in the European Community, do you think that they should ... (SHOW CARD **) b) And what about people coming from Eastern Europe who wish to work in the West ? c) And what about people suffering from human rights violations in their country, who are seeking political asylum ? d) And what about citizens of other countries of the European Community, who wish to settle in (OUR COUNTRY)? Items: a - IMMIGRANTS FROM THE COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTH OF THE MEDITERRANEAN b - IMMIGRANTS FROM EASTERN EUROPE c - THOSE SEEKING POLITICAL ASYLUM d - CITIZENS OF OTHER COUNTRIES OF THE BC Values: 1 - Be accepted, without restrictions 2 - Be accepted, but with restrictions 3 - Not be accepted 4 - DK	EB 39.0 1993
Generally speaking, how do you feel about people living in (OUR COUNTRY) who are not nationals of the European Community countries : are there too many, a lot but not too many or not many? 1 - Too many 2 - A lot but not too many 3 - Not many 4 - DK	EB 39.0 1993
Generally speaking, how do you feel about foreigners living in (OUR COUNTRY) : are there too many, a lot but not too many, or not many? 1 - Too many 2 - A lot, but not too many 3 - Not many 4 – DK	EB 41.1 1994, EB 39.0 1993
Do you think immigrants and/or political asylum seekers are a big problem for (OUR COUNTRY), or are they not a big problem? 1 - Big problem	EB 41.1 1994, EB 39.0 1993

2 - Not a big problem 3 – DK	
Still thinking of these people, do you think their rights should be ... ? (READ OUT) 1 - Extended 2 - Restricted 3 - Left as they are 4 – DK	EB 41.1 1994
I'm going to read out some statements. For each, please tell me whether you tend to agree with it or tend to disagree? a) - Foreigners' children in a school reduce the standard of education b) - Foreigners exploit our social welfare system c) - The presence of foreigners in our country increases unemployment d) - The presence of foreigners is one of the causes of delinquency and violence e) - Having foreigners as neighbours creates problems f) - Being married to a foreigner generally ends badly 1 - TEND TO AGREE 2 - TEND TO DISAGREE 3 – DK	EB 41.1 1994
For each of the following statements, please tell me whether you tend to agree or tend to disagree. 6 - We need immigrants to work in certain sectors of our economy 7 - The arrival of immigrants in Europe can be effective in solving the problem of Europe's ageing population (M) 8 - Immigrants can play an important role in developing greater understanding and tolerance with the rest of the world (N) 9 - (SPLIT A) Immigrants contribute more in taxes than they benefit from health and welfare services (N) 10 - (SPLIT B) Legal immigrants contribute more in taxes than they benefit from health and welfare services (N)	EB 71.3 2009
Some people are disturbed by the opinions, customs and way of life of people different from themselves. a) Do you personally find the presence of people of another nationality, disturbing in your daily life?	EB 39.0 1993
EVS	
Now we would like to know your opinion about the people from other countries who come to live in [your country] - the immigrants. How would you evaluate the impact of these people on the development of [your country]? 5 - Very good 4 - Quite good 3 - Neither good, nor bad 2 - Quite bad 1 - Very bad 8 - don't know (spontaneous) 9 - no answer (spontaneous)	EVS 2017
Please look at the following statements and indicate where you would place your views on this scale? A -	EVS 2017, EVS 2008, EVS 1999,

Immigrants take jobs away from [NATIONALITY] || Immigrants do not take jobs away from [NATIONALITY] B - Immigrants make crime problems worse || Immigrants do not make crime problems worse C - Immigrants are a strain on a country's welfare system || Immigrants are not a strain on a country's welfare system D - It is better if immigrants maintain their distinct customs and traditions || It is better if immigrants do not maintain their distinct customs and traditions 1 - (first statement) ... 10 - (second statement)	
How about people from less developed countries coming here to work? Which one of the following do you think the government should do? 1 - let anyone come who wants to [A] 2 - let people come as long as there are jobs available [B] 3 - put strict limits on the number of foreigners who can come here [C] 4 - prohibit people coming here from other countries [D] 8 - don't know (spontaneous) 9 - no answer (spontaneous)	EVS 2008, EVS 1999
Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding immigrants living in your country: v274 - Because of the number of immigrants in [COUNTRY], I sometimes feel like a stranger v275 - Today in [COUNTRY], there are too many immigrants 1 - agree strongly 2 - agree 3 - neither agree nor disagree 4 - disagree 5 - disagree strongly 8 - DK 9 – NA	EVS 2008
Some people say the following things are important for being truly [NATIONALITY]. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is? v276 - To have been born in [COUNTRY] v277 - To respect [COUNTRY]'s political institutions and laws v278 - To have [COUNTRY]'s ancestry v279 - To be able to speak [THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE] [NOTE: if more than one national languages, ask the national languages] v280 - To have lived f 1 - very important 2 - quite important 3 - not important 4 - not important at all 8 - DK 9 - NA or a long time in [COUNTRY]	EVS 2008

Note: No questions on attitudes towards people with a migration background were found in the ISSP surveys.

Table 5. Explicitly intersectional questions

EB	
For each of the following groups of people, could you please tell me whether it is rather the women or rather the men who are more likely to experience inequalities in (OUR COUNTRY)? 1 - Young people (15-24 years old), 2 - Elderly people (above 65 years), 3 - People with disabilities, 4 – Migrants, 5 - Single parents, 6 - working parents with 1 2 3 4 5 young children	EB 82.4 2014
We have just been discussing discrimination based on ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, and\ or disability. Some people may experience discrimination on the basis of more than only one of these characteristics. If they experience discrimination on several grounds, we call this 'multiple discrimination'. Could you please tell me whether, in your opinion, multiple discrimination is very widespread, fairly widespread, fairly rare or very rare in (OUR COUNTRY)?	EB 69.1 2008
In the past 12 months, have you witnessed someone being discriminated against or harassed on the basis of one or more of the following grounds? Please tell me all that apply. 1 - Ethnic origin, 2 – Gender, 3 - Sexual orientation (being gay, lesbian or bisexual), 4 - Being over 55 years old, 5 - Being under 30 years old, 6 - Religion or beliefs, 7 – Disability, 8 - Gender identity (being transgender or transsexual) (only asked in 2012), 9 - For another reason, 10 – No, 11 - DK	EB 77.4 2012, 71.2 2009, 69.1 2008
EVS	
If a woman wants to have a child as a single parent, but she doesn't want to have a stable relationship with a man, do you approve or disapprove? 1 - approve 2 - disapprove 3 - depends (spontaneous) 8 - don't know (spontaneous) 9 - no answer (spontaneous)	All four waves (1981, 1990, 1999, 2008)

APPENDIX 3.

T5.3

Miranda Mora: Femi(ni)cide in Mexico and Germany. Historical perspectives and contemporary challenges

Research on femicide in Mexico and Germany stems from distinct genealogies influenced by the unique historical, socio-political, and economic contexts that give rise to gender-based violence and vulnerability. In Mexico, there is a well-established tradition of over 30 years of academic and policy analysis on femicide, which has grown more rigorous over time. In Germany, on the other hand, the research on femicide is still developing. This is especially relevant as awareness of gender-based violence increases, emphasizing the critical conversations about the lack of legal definitions and classifications that explicitly identify femicide as a gender-based crime. Against this background, this paper explores historical and transnational manifestations of gender-based violence in Germany and Mexico. First, I engage with a historical reconstruction of some critical moments of women's struggle to criminalize femi(ni)cide in Mexico and Germany and analyze the feminist responses to structural gender-based violence. Second, I present contemporary challenges for feminist mobilizations against femi(ni)cide in both countries. This intersectional analysis will shed light on the dominant gender regimes and notions of violence at the core of both cases. A significant challenge for gender studies is to confront the essentialized and feminization of violence, which codes *women as pre-victims and men as perpetrators*. As well as the *heteronormative notion of woman* and *the racialized man* behind its definition.

Feminicide in South America: The Mexican case

Violence against women is a global issue, and in Latin America and Mexico, gender-based violence has reached alarming levels, manifesting in severe forms such as human trafficking, disappearances, kidnappings, rapes, unlawful detention, murders, torture, and clandestine burials. This form of sexualized violence[5] has inspired theoretical reflections and political action from Latin American scholars and activists, including organizations like Ni Una Menos, the Observatorio Ciudadano Nacional del Feminicidio, and Ni Una Menos México Frente Nacional, among others. These murders have gained legal recognition as extreme manifestations of violence against women and feminized individuals. What sets Latin America apart from other regions is the introduction of legal reforms in over a dozen countries since 2007 to criminalize specific murder

[5] In her work, Rita Laura Segato (2016, 70) identifies the mechanism by which violence is sexualized, how it becomes a weapon of war, and the processes by which women's bodies become the "terrain-territory of war action itself".

types such as femicide or feminicide.[6] Various factors have influenced these legislative changes, including the rise of these crimes, the brutality of the killings, ongoing regional armed conflicts, and the state's inadequate response, which fueled social mobilization. Latin American feminist movements have advocated for these legal changes as part of a broader campaign against structural violence and discrimination towards women, particularly those from impoverished, afro descendants, and indigenous backgrounds (Mobayed Vega et al. 2023). Women's and feminist activism have brought the issue of gendered violence into public discourse and political discussions. In Mexico, the awareness of lethal violence against women escalated following the events in Ciudad Juarez, near the U.S. border, in 1993. It was only in 2004, after widespread outrage from mothers, academics, and activists, that the state acknowledged this form of violence as structural and initiated a nationwide investigation.

Diana Russell and Jane Caputi defined femicide as the killing of women by men driven by hatred, contempt, pleasure, or a sense of ownership (1990), describing it as "hate killing of females perpetrated by males" (2011). Subsequently, Russell, alongside Jill Radford, refined this definition to "the misogynous killing of women by men" (1992: 3). These definitions initiated numerous theoretical and political discussions and initiatives globally. It is crucial to acknowledge that these killings represent not just homicides of women but a specific form of sexual violence where gender plays a pivotal role. Moreover, these acts are not ordinary homicides; they stem from pervasive male violence. Radford and Russell centered their studies on "femicide" in England and the United States, primarily focusing on femicide occurring within marriages or partnerships (intimate femi(ni)cide) (Luján Pinelo 2018: 43). In Latin America, the coexistence of femicide and feminicide stems from political and historical debates. A pivotal moment in this discourse was Marcela Lagarde's 1994 translation of "Femicide: The Politics of Woman Killing," which introduced Russell's concept of femicide. Lagarde's translation emphasizes the gender-based violence underlying these murders. It goes beyond merely distinguishing between male and female homicides, underscoring the social aspect and highlighting the state's obligation to prevent and punish these offenses due to its failure to act. Lagarde emphasizes the state's neglect, denial, or complicity regarding such killings, viewing these actions as a form of structural and institutional violence (2006).

In 2000, Ana Carcedo and Montserrat Sagot (2000, 9) adopted the English term femicide to analyze "murders of women in Costa Rica due to gender-based violence." They followed Radford and Russell, arguing that femicides stem from a systemic oppression of men over women. According to Carcedo and Sagot (ibid., 12), femicide represents "the most extreme form of sexist terrorism, primarily driven by a desire for possession and control over women." Their definition highlights the gendered nature of this violence, acknowledging its social aspects while dismissing

[6] Costa Rica (2007), Guatemala (2008), Colombia (2008), Chile (2010), El Salvador (2012), Nicaragua (2012), Argentina (2012), Mexico (2012), Panama (2013), Bolivia (2013), Honduras (2013), Ecuador (2014), Venezuela (2014), Dominican Republic (2014), Brazil (2015), Colombia (2015), Peru (2015), Paraguay (2016), and Uruguay (2017) (Smutt 2019).

individualistic, naturalizing, or pathologizing interpretations. Introducing this concept in Central America sparked intense debate among theorists and activists across Latin America. In 2009, Julia Monárrez in Mexico presented an alternative explanation through an analysis of the term's origin and etymology, suggesting that the term feminicide is more precise. She highlights the significance of the Latin root femininus and offers a way to accurately translate it into modern Spanish (Monárrez Fragoso 2009, 34 et seq.). Additionally, monárrez argues that while all femicides or feminicides involve the murder of women, not every murder of a woman qualifies as a femicide or feminicideNot every woman's murder is driven by unequal gender dynamics or gender-based violence; for instance, a woman may be killed during a robbery (Luján Pinelo 2018). The central discussion focuses on the various concepts and the different authors' emphasis on the causes and mechanisms through which this type of violence is perpetuated. Russell, Caputi, Radford, Carcedo, Sagot, Lagarde, and Monárrez contend that violence against women is both structural and systemic, rooted in a sex-gender system that creates an unequal distribution of power. However, not all of them examine the state's role or the institutional violence that facilitates and sustains these murders, resulting in impunity. This sets apart the studies by Lagarde and Monárrez in Mexico and Rita Laura Segato in Brazil and Argentina.

Segato (2016) argues that the state plays a crucial role in sustaining and escalating these killings. She develops a feminist political theory of violence to elucidate the unique nature of sexualized violence against women and feminized bodies in the region. Segato illustrates the logic and mechanisms through which organized crime and the state weaponize sexual violence, highlighting the connections among political actors, the military, and criminal organizations. Rather than being a mere byproduct of war, sexual violence against women and feminized bodies has transformed into a strategic aim and a key component in processes of territorial control (Marchese/Miranda Mora 2022). Similarly, the nature of war has evolved; it now goes beyond the traditional conflicts between nation-states and is increasingly tied to various power dynamics involving the control and occupation of both territories and individuals. Consequently, sexual violence has become a tactic of war, serving as a cost-effective military strategy. Segato states in "The War on Women" (2016, 63 et seq.) that sexualized violence represents "a form of elimination without the expense of bombs or the response of neighboring countries (…) it is an integral part of military strategy."

This disagreement or varying approach was only partially addressed in the legal framework. Some countries have classified femicide or feminicide as a distinct crime, while others have changed existing criminal codes to incorporate it as an aggravating factor. The laws implementing these changes differ, along with the penalties and, in certain instances, the defining elements of the crime itself. A notable advancement in Latin America and the Caribbean is the enactment of laws or reforms to penal codes that define gender-related murder of women as a separate criminal offense, categorized as femicide, feminicide, or aggravated homicide. The traits that define behaviors or situations qualifying a crime as femicide or feminicide vary among countries. Consequently, records of femicide or feminicide in the region do not uniformly denote the same

phenomenon. Different definitions and registration criteria are used in the Caribbean and South American countries; quality standards are limited, and many analytical variables lack a gender perspective (Smutt 2019). In addition, after thorough academic and legal discussions, the concept of state responsibility has faded, leading to femicide and feminicide mainly being seen as synonymous terms to refer to the violent murder of a woman. Therefore, femicide/feminicide represents both structural, systematic, and sexualized violence as well as an individual criminal act driven by a specific gender-based motive.

The criminalization of killings of women has formally delegitimized male violence against them. Laws regarding this issue differ markedly across the Americas. However, a shared trait is that all of these laws classify femicide as a legal offense, following international human rights standards such as the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women, adopted in Belem do Para, Brazil, in 1994. This convention defines violence against women as “any action or conduct, based on gender, that results in death or psychological, sexual, or physical harm or suffering to women, irrespective of the public or private sphere” (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores 2008, art 1). In Mexico, after the first national study in 2004, the Chamber of Deputies proposed a definition for Federal Criminal Law in 2006, which initially considered institutional violence and state responsibility. At the same time, a group of female deputies successfully passed the General Law on Women’s Access to a Life Free of Violence in 2007, which defines various forms of violence against women and sets guidelines for collaboration among different government levels and institutions to prevent, punish, and eliminate violence against women.

The General Law provides two key definitions of violence. Firstly, institutional violence is defined as "the actions or inactions of any public servants from any level of government that either discriminate against or aim to delay, obstruct, or impede women’s human rights and their access to public policies intended to prevent, address, investigate, penalize, and eliminate various forms of violence” (Cámara de Diputados Del H. Congreso de la Unión 2015, art. 18). Second, feminicidal violence refers to a range of conditions that can result in feminicide (Lagarde 2006, 224). This violence is perpetrated by communities, individuals, institutions, and the broader network of social relations. Based on this understanding, any preventable deaths of women can also be classified as feminicidal violence. In this context, the General Law establishes a fundamental right to “a life free of violence," grounded in the principles of equality and non-discrimination (Cámara de Diputados Del H. Congreso de la Unión 2015, art. 1). It also sets forth guidelines for developing federal and local public policies and institutions aimed at investigating and preventing gender-based violence (ibid., art. 44 & 47). For instance, the Special Prosecutor’s Office for the Investigation of Feminicide was established in 2019.

Ultimately, following extensive discussions that explored various interpretations of the new type of crime, feminist groups, and women’s organizations implemented diverse legal strategies. In 2012, feminicide was officially recognized in the Federal Criminal Law. This offense is detailed in a designated chapter; it is classified not as aggravated homicide but as an intentional

murder of women in particular circumstances. This category notably imposes penalties on negligent or obstructive actions by public officials, acknowledging their accountability in upholding justice. In this classification, the state's role, initially described in 2004 and the General Law, becomes less pronounced. Feminicide, as defined in the Federal Criminal Law, refers to "anyone who takes a woman's life for gender-based motives" (Comisión Nacional de los Derecho Humanos 2014 art. 325), suggesting criteria to identify gender-based motives. The Federal Criminal Law enforces stricter penalties for feminicide, imposing sentences of forty to sixty years in prison and fines ranging from five hundred to one thousand workdays (ibid.).

The conceptualization of feminicidal violence and the criminalization of feminicide within Mexico's Federal Criminal Law signify remarkable victories for the Mexican feminist, mothers', and women's movements. While challenges remain in enforcement and issues of impunity persist, these laws have highlighted various barriers that women face in seeking justice. They illuminate the multiple types of violence that women endure—psychological, economic, sexual, and physical—and have raised awareness about police and military violence against women and feminized bodies, highlighting it as a grave violation of human rights and institutional violence. Additionally, the criminalization of feminicide and other forms of gender-based violence, including rape, harassment, and digital violence, has fostered social acknowledgment of a phenomenon that has long been overlooked and culturally accepted. Furthermore, the recognition and study of sexualized violence have resulted in the creation of specific rights for women. However, within this new framework of laws, the feminicide of transgender women remains unacknowledged and unpunished.

In Latin America, trans women face a persistent cycle of violence, discrimination, and criminalization. After Brazil, Mexico has the second-highest number of trans feminicides (Transgender Europe 2021). Between 2008 and September 2021, there were 593 trans feminicides in Mexico, with the majority of cases remaining unpunished (Letra S 2021). In this context, various campaigns led by non-governmental organizations such as Observatorio de Crímenes de Odio de Letra S, Fundación Arcoíris, Casa de las Muñecas Tiresias, and Infancias Trans have played a significant role in advancing the legal and social recognition of the rights. One example is Mexico's 2021 Law for the recognition and care of LGBTQ+ individuals, which acknowledges the right to gender identity and provides various rights, such as personal and collective freedom, integrity, and security (Gobierno de la Ciudad de México, 2021, art. 3).

In Mexico, fifteen federal states acknowledge the right to gender identity in their Civil Codes, beginning with Mexico City in 2014. Nonetheless, the murders of trans women have yet to be recognized and investigated as a national issue. Since 2015, the Supreme Court of Justice has mandated the analysis of all violent deaths of women through a gender lens. In 2018, the National Public Safety Council decided that the Attorney General's Office is required to investigate all violent deaths of women following feminicide protocols. In 2019, the Human Rights Commission in Mexico City urged a tailored method for examining trans feminicides. Two recent legislative efforts aimed at punishing offenses against trans individuals in the Mexican Congress have stalled.

The first, presented in October 2021, seeks to make trans feminicides a criminal offense under a new law named after the slain transgender activist Paola Buenrostro. A second bill from February 2022 suggests adding "gender identity" and "gender expression" as aggravating factors in discrimination and homicide. These proposals ask law enforcement and judges to assess the murders of trans women while considering them as both transgender individuals and women. This entails examining and evaluating murder cases through the dual lens of transphobia and misogyny. A murder motivated by transphobia does not equate to trans-feminicide. Legally, this requires the assessment and development of laws aimed at safeguarding trans women's rights to live without violence, along with their rights to gender identity, equality, and protection from discrimination.

In July 2024, Mexico City implemented the "Paola Law," named after Paola Buenrostro, a trans woman murdered in 2016. This law criminalizes trans femicide, assigning prison sentences of 35 to 70 years for offenders. The unfortunate events surrounding Paola's death, particularly the release of her suspected killer due to an alleged lack of evidence, intensified the push for laws aimed at reducing violence against transgender individuals. Moreover, the Paola Law further protects transgender people by officially recognizing gender identity as a protected category under hate crime laws (Congreso de la Ciudad de México, 2024). Alongside Mexico City, Nayarit has also enacted strict laws against trans-femicide, with penalties reaching up to 60 years. These legislative efforts are part of a broader movement spearheaded by activists and organizations like Letra S, which monitor violence against LGBTQ+ individuals nationwide. Advocates for trans rights are persistently urging for federal legislation that uniformly addresses anti-trans violence across all Mexican states to help mitigate discriminatory practices and prevent re-victimization in various regions (Transgender Law Center 2016, Gobierno de la Ciudad de Mexico 2024).

The General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence and the inclusion of feminicide in Federal Criminal Law are significant achievements for the Mexican feminist and women's movements. Despite ongoing impunity and numerous enforcement challenges, these laws highlight the many obstacles women encounter in their pursuit of justice and the violence they suffer. In recent years, the exposure of police violence and discrimination by public officials has clarified the violence against (trans)women, emphasizing it as a significant human rights violation and form of institutional violence. Additionally, it underscores the state's obligations and processes. By criminalizing feminicide and various forms of gender-based violence—such as rape, harassment, and digital violence—society acknowledges a phenomenon that has long been overlooked, emphasizing its gender-specific nature.

In recent years, scholars, activists, and feminist lawyers have questioned the effectiveness of these new laws, highlighting their flaws and challenges. One primary concern is that these laws fail to address the underlying issues they are meant to tackle; instead, they reduce the systemic social problem of violence to isolated incidents and view it solely through a legal lens that emphasizes the victim-aggressor dynamic. Consequently, the criminalization and its enforcement have obscured the reality of gender-based violence, often hampered by varying interpretations from judges, lawyers, and institutional staff. This resistance mirrors the challenges faced by other

laws addressing hate crimes, such as those concerning genocide or the ongoing discussions surrounding transfeminicides. The particularity of (trans)feminicide in Mexico lies in how these laws can perpetuate some issues they aim to address. A major challenge is their binary approach to gender-based violence, which exclusively targets cis women and thus marginalizes other expressions of femininity and feminized bodies Guerrero/Muñoz 2018). The issue with the legal definition of gender-based violence lies not just in its association with violence toward women but primarily in its focus on violence against cisgender and heterosexual women. This approach perpetuates a cisgender and heteronormative understanding of gender identity. The challenge in defining gender-based violence occurs not only due to its broad and often unclear legal criteria but also because it is predominantly framed as “violence against cis women," which reinforces heteronormative standards and penalizes those who do not conform.

In cases like the one in Mexico, even when laws and criminal terms are expressed neutrally, using words such as victim, perpetrator, person, body, and partner, judges and lawyers still interpret them in specific ways. This method effectively overlooks sexualized violence against various groups, particularly impacting transgender and transsexual individuals who endure dual discrimination—not only as trans persons but also as unrecognized women. This highlights how the law sustains a binary view of gender, initially reflected in the victim-perpetrator dynamic, while simultaneously reinforcing a strict heteronormative framework within the new criminal justice system. For example, in the case of a lesbian partner's murder in Mexico, the female offender faced unusually harsh penalties (Toledo 2017). Laws are enforced more severely against women who exhibit masculine behaviors. Lesbian and queer individuals encounter consequences for straying from societal norms.

This highlights how sexuality and gender are closely tied to rights aimed at protecting cisgender women, which are rooted in a binary understanding of gender based on heterosexuality. They indicate the degree to which the injury's foundation, the heterosexual identification of women, is reinforced in the crafting of rights that promise restitution (Brown 2000: 235). These laws punish the perceived deviance of lesbian and bisexual women while also rendering transsexuals, transvestites, and transwomen invisible and discriminated against. Moreover, the absence of criminalization for trans feminicides strips trans individuals of legal recognition, effectively excluding them from the law and violating their rights, even posthumously. Conversely, women are often positioned as victims, as the framework of this law and related criminal categories portrays the female subject as a perpetual victim needing state protection, but only in limited circumstances. This perspective perpetuates gender identities, emphasizing women as weak victims and men as aggressive perpetrators (Núñez 2018: 181). Consequently, these laws, despite being articulated in both general and specific terms, do not allow (trans)women to break free from their marginalized identity as victims.

These difficulties have raised several doubts about the effectiveness of these laws. Many academics and lawyers consider this scenario a problem of interpretation connected to its ambiguity or overly broad formulations. For others, it is caused by a lack of education or sensitivity

from the judges, lawyers, and officials, or even the political class's lack of interest in addressing these issues. However, the problem seems more profound. Though they involve some protection, these laws and criminal types reinscribe the most constraining features of the designation of the *cis* woman as a victim. While it protects *cis* women, it also facilitates further regulation through that specific designation and discrimination against other genders. The legal strategy appears insufficient to address the issues it aims to tackle. This inadequacy stems primarily from a tendency to simplify the structural problem of social violence to individual action, aligning it with punitive justice logic. This results in cases being viewed strictly through a legal perspective, focusing on the interactions between victims and perpetrators, especially in personal relationships like families and partnerships or among ex-partners. As a result, this viewpoint fails to acknowledge feminicides carried out by police, military, and organized crime. The tendency to treat such violence as merely an individual offense has masked the existence of other types of violence, including institutional and feminicidal violence. Penal justice maintains that when a kind of crime is ineffective, it is only because judges, lawyers, and public servants lack the necessary knowledge and misinterpret it. This neglects the influence of social and political violence, as well as the consequences of the war on drugs, migration from south to north, human trafficking, military operations under the national security strategy, sexual exploitation, and the maquiladora (sweatshop) industry.

Furthermore, feminist demands for the criminalization of femicide and the associated call for harsher punishments have the effect of jeopardizing the demand for justice as they produce and reproduce essentialized gender subject positions. This juridical strategy ends up associating individuals with the identities of either victim or aggressor and in- or excluding them as either normal or deviant. Additionally, in these laws, women are textually victimized since the subject of these laws is always an irremediable target of violence that the state must protect only within a specific context and a particular social and political status, that of a cis citizen who is formally employed, hence excluding sex workers, migrants, indigenous, and trans women (Frias 2023). The law thus reinforces particular forms of subjectivation: it defines cis women as weak victims and cis men as aggressive victimizers (Núñez 2018, 181). This confines cis women to the subordinate role of the (hetero)normative victim while portraying trans women as deviant bodies. The structural problem of the law concerning gender-based violence and feminicide is embedded in the legal system's normative framework. Wendy Brown (2000) argues that the primary challenge for women's and feminist movements within the legal context is twofold: first, the law must protect and empower women without reinforcing fixed identities, and second, it must acknowledge and address the diversity within marginalized groups by transforming these distinctions into effective legislation. Laws aimed at combating sexualized violence and ensuring a life free from harm focus on protection by conferring special rights and criminalizing acts of violence. However, these laws often reinforce limiting aspects associated with the identity of cis women and the (hetero)normative victim. Although these regulations safeguard cis women, they also promote additional oversight and marginalize trans women and lesbians due to this specific categorization. These problems show that the laws do not merely target those who are cisgender and heterosexual; instead, they actively construct such identities (Miranda Mora, 2022).

Feminicide in Europe: The German case

Following the sexual assault incidents in Cologne in 2016 and the emergence of the #MeToo movement, gender-based violence has gained significant focus in the media, policy discussions, and feminist research across Germany and Europe. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic intensified these problems, resulting in a rise in domestic abuse during lockdowns. In Europe, one in three women in the EU reports having faced physical or sexual violence, and many incidents remain unreported. [7] In Europe, gender-based violence affects both women and LGBTQ+ individuals, although they encounter unique challenges linked to their identities. Women predominantly suffer from gender-based violence in the form of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, harassment, and human trafficking. According to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), nearly one in three women in the EU has experienced physical or sexual violence. At the same time, one in two has encountered sexual harassment. This violence often manifests as domestic abuse, stalking, and online harassment, particularly impacting young women and marginalized communities. [8]

LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly transgender and gender-nonconforming people, frequently encounter violence in the form of hate crimes, bullying, and discrimination. Reports from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and ILGA-Europe indicate that throughout Europe, LGBTQ+ people are facing an increase in harassment, particularly in nations where anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric is becoming more prevalent.[9] This violence is frequently aggravated by hate speech from political figures and discriminatory policies, especially targeting transgender individuals. Studies show that in recent years, LGBTQ+ people, particularly trans people, have experienced escalating harassment and violence, including from law enforcement and in asylum contexts.

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) indicates that gender-based violence and violence against women are frequently regarded as synonymous, given the common understanding that men primarily perpetrate most of this violence against women and girls.[10] However, gender-based violence encompasses violence aimed at individuals due to their gender. While both men and women can be victims, the majority of those affected are women and girls. In the European Union, starting from the age of 15, one in three women has faced physical and/or sexual violence; one in two has experienced sexual harassment; one in twenty has been raped; one in five has experienced stalking; and 95% of those trafficked for sexual exploitation are women. In Germany, data released in November 2019 indicates that, on average, at least one woman suffers

[7] https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-measures-end-violence-against-women/
https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/739208/EPRS_BRI(2022)739208_EN.pdf
[8] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2022/739208/EPRS_BRI(2022)739208_EN.pdf
[9] https://www.ilga-europe.org/report/annual-review-2023/
https://assembly.coe.int/LifeRay/EGA/Pdf/TextesProvisoires/2021/20210921-RisingHateLGBTI-EN.pdf
[10] https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/what-is-gender-based-violence

physical injury from her partner every hour. Overall, more than 114,000 women were victims of domestic violence, threats, stalking, or coercion by their partners or ex-partners in 2018.[11] Femicide remains a serious concern throughout the European Union, characterized by widespread gender-based violence, particularly in intimate or domestic settings. Annually, over 3,000 women in the EU lose their lives at the hands of partners or family members. In Germany, intimate partner violence constitutes the majority of femicide cases, making up nearly 40% of all murders of women by their partners or family. Although protective measures exist, over 80% of these violent incidents were not reported to authorities prior to the fatal act, highlighting deficiencies in preventive support and intervention systems.[12]

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) defines femicide as "the killing of a woman or girl because of her gender."[13] This type of violence manifests in various ways, including the murder of women as a result of intimate partner violence, the brutal and misogynistic killings of women, and honor-related slayings of women and girls, among others. Femicide highlights the gendered nature of violence, as traditional definitions of homicide frequently overlook the root causes of inequality, oppression, and systemic violence that affect women. In Europe, EU Member States do not have a uniform legal definition, classifying the killings of women through different categories such as intentional homicide, unintentional homicide, and manslaughter. Some states have introduced aggravating factors to more accurately identify femicides, including acts fueled by hatred, contempt, or hostility based on sex, as well as cases of gender-based violence, intimate partner homicide, or sexual violence. While Eurostat and various EU reports have attempted to monitor these incidents, discrepancies in data collection persist among EU countries because of insufficiently harmonized definitions and standards for classifying femicide. This shortfall hampers efforts to comprehend and tackle the issue systematically. In Germany, most femicides fall under the sections above of the Criminal Code. According to data from police crime statistics provided by the Federal Criminal Police Agency, there were 366 female homicide victims reported in 2017, 40% of whom were killed by intimate partners (n = 147). These figures are estimates as the term ‘female’ is used rather than ‘woman’, making it difficult to separate data based on victim age; thus, victims could include both women and girls under 18. The term ‘homicide’ is employed because the motivation behind these intentional killings is not documented by gender, preventing a complete classification as femicides. Furthermore, a binary classification of "male" and "female" is used, which means there is a lack of clarity in the treatment of registered and lived gender. Consequently, homicides of trans women remain unrecorded in police crime statistics.[14]

[11] https://www.bmj.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Formular/Mehr_Schutz_bei_haeuslicher_Gewalt_ENG.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4

[12] https://www.bka.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Publikationen/JahresberichteUndLagebilder/HaeuslicheGewalt/HaeuslicheGewalt2022.html?nn=219004

[13] https://www.bka.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Publikationen/JahresberichteUndLagebilder/HaeuslicheGewalt/HaeuslicheGewalt2022.html?nn=219004

[14] https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/20211578_mh0821037enn_pdf.pdf

The EU defines femicide as a type of 'structural violence', recognizing it as an individual act influenced by particular gender-related motives. In 2012, the United Nations Vienna Declaration on Femicide became the first in Europe to classify different forms of femicide, including (1) murders of women resulting from intimate partner violence, (2) the torture and misogynistic killing of women, (3) killings of women and girls in the name of "honor"; (4) targeted killings of women and girls during armed conflicts; (5) dowry-related murders of women; (6) killings of women and girls due to their sexual orientation and gender identity; (7) the murder of Aboriginal and Indigenous women and girls related to their gender; (8) female infanticide and gender-based sex selection *foeticide*; (9) deaths resulting from genital mutilation; (10) deaths related to accusations of witchcraft; and (11) other femicides tied to gangs, organized crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and the proliferation of small arms.

In response, the EU has taken significant steps to address femicide and broader gender-based violence issues. It has established a robust set of laws and policies aimed at preventing gender-based violence, focused on protecting women and ensuring accountability for offenders. The Istanbul Convention, which the EU ratified in 2023, mandates countries to criminalize violence against women and set up support systems for victims, including shelters and helplines. The Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence serves as the benchmark for international legislation against gender-based violence in Europe, highlighting the need for comprehensive measures and providing a framework for policy and legal reforms among member states. It frames gender-based violence and violence against women as a gendered act that is "a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women". Under the *Istanbul Convention, gender-based violence* is highlighted as resulting in "physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." *Gender-based violence against women* means "violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately".[15] Additionally, the EU's directive proposal from 2022 explicitly targets violence against women, emphasizing the criminalization of behaviors such as cyberstalking, non-consensual sharing of images, and various types of digital abuse.[16]

In Germany, femicide lacks a definition in the Criminal Code. These acts are not separately categorized as crimes but are instead addressed under general laws related to homicide or bodily harm, which are gender-neutral. Certain motives, such as "honor" killings or jealousy, can be considered aggravating factors, though this is not consistently applied across all femicide cases. As a result, there have been calls to establish more precise legal definitions and classifications that acknowledge femicide as a specific gender-based offense.[17] Nevertheless, such incidents can still be prosecuted under other areas of German criminal law. The relevant sections for identifying

[15] https://www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/council-of-europe-convention-on-preventing-and-combating-violence-against-women-and-domestic-violence

[16] https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/combating_cyber_violence_against_women_and_girls.pdf

[17] https://www.ifes.fau.de/files/2022/12/FEM-UnitED_-Policy-Brief-GERMANY_english-version_DE_IfeS.pdf
https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/femicide-observation-center-germany.pdf

femicide cases are *Sections 211: Murder* under specific aggravating circumstances (*Mord*), *212: Murder* (*Totschlag*), and *227: Bodily harm resulting in death (Körperverletzung mit Todesfolge)*[18].

In Germany, the legal discussion surrounding femicide focuses on the question of whether to recognize it as a separate crime officially or to continue with the existing legal framework, which categorizes murders of women under general homicide laws. There is growing advocacy for legislative reform to explicitly define femicide, as the current legal system does not inherently consider the gendered nature of such crimes as an aggravating circumstance unless specific motivations—such as honor or jealousy—are present. Consequently, the gender-specific motivations for the murders of women, especially by intimate partners, are frequently overlooked, as well as other kinds of femicides, i.e., the torture and misogynistic killing of any women or transwomen, killings of women and girls due to their sexual orientation and gender identity; the murder of women and girls related to their ethnicity or race; and other femicides tied to gangs, organized crime sexual labor, and human trafficking. The discussion about treating femicide as a unique crime, separate from general homicide, revolves around various arguments for and against the reform.

Advocates contend that femicide frequently arises from misogynistic motives, especially in instances of intimate partner violence. By officially categorizing femicide, Germany could more effectively acknowledge the unique character of these crimes, thus aiding in the recognition and tackling of gender-based violence that women encounter as a result of patriarchal and cultural norms. This approach would be consistent with the standards of the Istanbul Convention, which Germany has ratified in 2018, mandating targeted actions against violence perpetrated against women based on their gender. Criminalizing femicide could improve the accuracy of data collection on gender-based killings. At present, femicides are frequently not tracked as distinct cases, which hides the extent and patterns of this issue. Both official and unofficial sources gather data on intimate partner femicide as well as other forms of femicide, including family-related femicide, sex work-related femicide, and those connected to racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia. Analyses also consider the suspects' age, gender, relationship status, alcohol influence, and nationality. Despite these data points, the insights derived from this information remain

[18] Section 211 – Murder under specific aggravating circumstances (Mord)
(1) Whosoever commits murder under the conditions of this provision shall be liable to imprisonment for life.
(2) A murderer under this provision is any person who kills a person for pleasure, for sexual gratification, out of greed or otherwise base motives, by stealth or cruelly or by means that pose a danger to the public, or to facilitate or to cover up another offence.
Section 212 – Murder (Totschlag)
(1) Whosoever kills a person without being a murderer under Section 211 shall be convicted of murder and be liable to imprisonment of no less than 5 years.
(2) In especially serious cases, the penalty shall be imprisonment for life.
Section 227 – Bodily harm resulting in death
(1) If the offender, by inflicting bodily harm, causes the victim's death, the penalty is imprisonment for a term of at least 3 years.
(2) In less serious cases, the penalty is imprisonment for a term of between 1 year and 10 years.

unclear. Furthermore, there is no assessment of what are termed extended suicides (erweiterten Suiziden), which involve the killing of close individuals, such as (ex-)partners or children, prior to the perpetrator's suicide. Referring to these acts solely as extended suicide reduces the partners and children to mere extensions of the perpetrator, disregarding their individuality and consequently obscuring the nature of the homicide. It remains uncertain if and where these killings are accounted for in current evaluations. For instance, boys are only listed among male victims without any contextual description or analysis (Dyroff, Pardeller, Wischnewski 2020: 17).

By making femicide a criminal offense, Germany could better gather consistent data, recognize trends, and develop more focused preventive and protective policies. Defining femicide as a unique crime could enhance awareness of gender-based violence, promoting a more targeted public discussion. Supporters argue that this increased awareness would strengthen preventive strategies and motivate victims to seek help, ultimately leading to a decrease in gender-based violence over time (Steinl, 2019).[19]

The opposition maintains that the existing German Penal Code, which uses gender-neutral language to prosecute murder and manslaughter, adequately addresses these offenses. They claim that femicides fall under current laws and that establishing a distinct category might not improve conviction rates or outcomes for victims. Instead, they advocate for enhancing support services rather than pursuing legislative changes.[20] Other arguments suggest that making femicide a crime could lead to what is termed "symbolic legislation." This implies that while it may represent a reasonable faith effort to reform, it might not lead to significant change. Some concerns simply adding a new category won't solve systemic issues victims face, like insufficient shelter availability and inadequate law enforcement support. Critics point out that genuine progress necessitates practical, well-funded preventive strategies instead of merely introducing new crime classifications. A significant technical aspect involves complications within the federal-state legal structure. The decentralized legal framework in Germany poses challenges for implementing uniform changes across all states. Critics contend that classifying femicide as a distinct legal category may lead to additional complexities. This would include the need to train law enforcement and judicial professionals to recognize and prosecute femicide consistently across various jurisdictions, which might undermine the efficacy of current homicide laws.[21] Opponents of reclassification contend that legal changes alone may be insufficient and emphasize the need for increased resources for shelters, support services, and gender-sensitive training within the judicial system to prevent femicide and support victims effectively.

In response to the current situation, the government is actively working to combat and prevent femicide, following the guidelines of the Istanbul Convention. This dedication has led to

[19] https://www.ifes.fau.de/files/2022/12/FEM-UnitED_-Policy-Brief-GERMANY_english-version_DE_IfeS.pdf https://www.bpb.de/themen/gender-diversitaet/femizide-und-gewalt-gegen-frauen/517633/femizide-rechtlicher-rahmen-und-strafverfolgung/#node-content-title-6

[20] https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/femicide-observation-center-germany.pdf

[21] https://www.ifes.fau.de/files/2022/12/FEM-UnitED_-Policy-Brief-GERMANY_english-version_DE_IfeS.pdf

initiatives like the Civil Protection from Violence Act, aligning with the EU Directive 'Combating violence against women and domestic violence' passed by the EU Parliament on 24 April 2024. The law aims to bolster support for shelters and establish a 24-hour helpline for victims of violence. Research institutions and NGOs are advocating for improved funding and comprehensive data collection to understand femicide rates across the country better. The proposed Violence Assistance Act seeks to guarantee free protection and counseling for all domestic violence survivors, creating a legal right to access shelters. This legislation aims to fill the gaps created by Germany's federal system, where the division of responsibilities between federal and state governments can obstruct protective measures. Additionally, the Act aligns with the recent EU Directive that requires gender-neutral protections against domestic violence and emphasizes extensive support for victims, including specialized helplines and advanced training for law enforcement personnel.[22]

Similar to the situation in Mexico, the growing focus on gender-based violence today can be traced back to the efforts of feminist movements and civil society organizations. This shift signifies progress, especially considering these topics were previously regarded as relevant only in the global South. In Germany, the concept of femicide is steadily becoming more recognized, although this acceptance remains broad and somewhat vague. This can largely be attributed to the insufficient data and research applicable to the local context (Dyroff, Pardeller, Wischnewski 2020: 6). Despite new policies, the German government has been slow to define the issue and reluctant to recognize it as a problem in Germany fully. In a 2014 submission to the United Nations, the government suggested that femicide occurs only when the murder of a woman is not sanctioned by criminal law, thus asserting that "this phenomenon does not occur in Germany."[23] This denialism has resulted in insufficient data in Germany, as no organized data collection meets the requirements set by the conventions. In this context, the Federal Ministry of Family, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) has tasked the German Institute for Human Rights to create a concept for a national reporting center focused on gender-based violence and human trafficking. In partnership with the Federal Criminal Police Office, they are currently planning a comprehensive Gender Differentiating Survey to assess the experiences of violence among women and men in Germany, with particular emphasis on relationships and sexual violence issues.[24]

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[22] https://www.maennergewaltschutz.de/en/news/new-eu-directive-germany-committed-to-strengthening-protection-of-men-against-violence/
https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/europe_direct/items/836014/
https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1385

[23] Statement by Germany on the investigation and prosecution of gender-related killings of women and girls, 2014, in: www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/IEGM_GRK_BKK/Germany_Annex.pdf.

[24] www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/FemicideWatch.aspx.
https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-12/germany.pdf
https://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/das-institut/gefoerderte-projekte/berichterstattungsstelle-gegen-geschlechtsspezifische-gewalt-und-menschenhandel
https://rm.coe.int/germany-comments-to-the-grevio-report/1680a86939

Additionally, even with recent initiatives, femicide in Germany continues to be an underexplored area of research and is still primarily in the diagnostic phase. Feminist and women's rights advocates in Germany point to various challenges that persist in connection with the legal discourse and difficulties in data collection. For example, feminists criticize the report when a man murders his (ex-)partner, as depicted in German media that often sensationalizes and romanticizes these killings. Such crimes are usually labeled as "crimes of passion," “jealousy dramas" (Eifersuchtsdrama), "relationship dramas" (Beziehungsdrama), "marriage dramas" (Ehedrama), “relationship acts" (Beziehungstat), "bloody deeds" (Bluttat), "sex offenders" (Sextäter), "honor killings" (Ehrenmord), and "family tragedies" (Familientragödie). These terms obscure the nature of the killings and suggest that these incidents are rare, unfortunate events without any rational or systematic structural explanation. This conceptualization confines these killings to a private issue, viewing them as isolated incidents rather than a systemic issue within German society. The official statistics are problematic as they reflect only those cases that have resulted in charges or convictions, concentrating solely on intimate partner femicide. However, a 2014 EU-wide study indicated that only about one in three domestic violence incidents is reported to law enforcement (Garcia 2004).

Given that these killings stem from systemic violence, femicides occurring within intimate relationships must be recognized as both a political and social issue. The underlying systemic violence associated with femicides often remains unaddressed, rendered invisible by the belief that such acts take place in the sanctity of the home. The term 'domestic violence' (häusliche Gewalt), as used in the German-speaking context, falls short of adequately addressing the issue. Labeling it as 'domestic' obscures the nature of violence, suggesting it is a private concern. Furthermore, this terminology fails to clarify the primary victims (mostly women and children) and the typical perpetrators (primarily men), as well as how these acts are rooted in patriarchal societal structures. However, the term points to the location of the violence, which gives it a specific context but limits its broader implications (Freeland 2022).

A significant issue lies in the absence of official criminalization within domestic law. Although all EU Member States have committed to human rights frameworks like the Istanbul Convention and CEDAW—which require them to fight violence against women, eliminate impunity, prohibit all forms of violence, implement preventive measures, protect survivors adequately, and provide avenues for redress—women’s access to justice remains severely lacking. The legal classification of a woman’s killing based on gender suffers from inadequate terminology and faces two main obstacles. In Germany, some incidents are prosecuted as murder, while others are categorized as manslaughter, leading to inconsistencies in sentencing and fostering victim-blaming that perpetuates patriarchal values and discriminatory practices.

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https://www.bmfsfj.de/resource/blob/93906/9c0076fc66b1be6d0eb28258fe0aa569/frauenstudie-englisch-gewalt-gegen-frauen-data.pdf

https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2021/femicide-watch-initiative-2021

In Germany, femicides tend to be recognized as an issue primarily when they occur within religious or ethnic minority groups. The Federal Criminal Police Office categorizes offenders based on their citizenship. The 2019 report indicates that the majority of murder and manslaughter cases involved German citizens, accounting for two-thirds of suspects. Gender-based violence and feminicide affect individuals across all social classes, ethnicities, and migratory statuses without any links to specific religions or nationalities. However, when femicides involve non-German perpetrators, a different pattern emerges, with only incidents labeled as "honor killings" receiving thorough examination and investigation. Crimes are only viewed through a gender-specific lens in instances with particular aggravating factors, like “honor killings.” This limited perspective overlooks the broader societal context of femicides, complicating efforts to tackle the issue by framing it as a marginalized and minority-related concern. The term “Ehrenmord” is often used to describe murders in immigrant or minority communities, especially among those from Middle Eastern or South Asian backgrounds, instead of applying uniformly to all cases of gender-based violence. This selective usage reinforces damaging stereotypes, suggesting that honor-based violence is exclusive to non-Western cultures while masking the prevalence of gender-based violence in German or Western settings (Ercan, 2014). Such a narrow focus racializes these incidents and conveys the notion that violence against women in immigrant communities stems from cultural issues rather than systemic ones. Using the "Ehrenmord" category can lead to legal treatment inconsistencies. This category introduces bias in the investigation, prosecution, and sentencing of cases, as it implies a motive linked to culture or family honor. This perspective can obscure the application of broader homicide laws and hinder the integration of these cases into Germany’s legal framework. Consequently, attention may divert from prioritizing women's protection and violence prevention to cultural justifications, which might result in unequal legal outcomes for offenders (Foljanty & Lembke, 2014).

The instrumentalization of gender-based violence is exploited by anti-Muslim racism, suggesting that the act originates externally. This fosters a perceived threat unrelated to German society, purporting to stem from a purportedly foreign culture or religion. This dynamic is particularly evident when the focus on the perpetrator's nationality or origin overshadows the recognition and discussion of the gender-specific aspects of the acts (Dyroff, Pardeller, Wischnewski 2020: 32). Furthermore, right-wing parties, especially the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), have leveraged gender-based violence to bolster their anti-immigration and nationalist agendas. In the aftermath of the high-profile attacks in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2015, these parties heightened their scrutiny on gender-based violence perpetrated by migrants, depicting immigrants, particularly those from Muslim-majority nations, as threats to "German women." This framing casts German women as victims in need of protection, thereby reinforcing nationalist concepts that present immigrants as at odds with German cultural values. Within this framework, the AfD frequently highlights specific incidents of violence involving migrants, seeking to evoke fear and anger among voters while advancing anti-immigration policies

(Hestermann & Hoven 2020).[25] The AfD and other right-wing factions thus create a divisive "us versus them" framework, casting themselves as defenders of German culture, family values, and women's safety while using gender-based violence as a critical issue to advance these narratives. For instance, The Istanbul Convention, designed to address violence against women, has encountered opposition from right-wing groups who argue it threatens German sovereignty and family values. This situation emphasizes the connection between nativist sentiment and gender politics in their discourse (Berthet, 2021).[26]

The racialization of femicide[27] does not negate the impact of cultural factors or the specific value systems tied to so-called honor killings; instead, it highlights their restrictive and essentializing nature. Related to the perceived "restoration of family honor," this situation may suggest underlying motives rooted in a violent reaction from the (ex-)partner as women seek independence, separation, or act on suspicions of infidelity. This trend appears across all societies and can be seen as a severe manifestation of male dominance and possessiveness regarding women. When a non-German perpetrator kills a woman, it is often labeled an "honor killing"—a homicide aimed at restoring family honor. This classification reinforces stereotypes of a foreign and regressive culture. Labeling a crime as an "honor killing" masks the underlying complexity of motivations for gender-based violence, which frequently include control and power dynamics and misogyny, not strictly "honor." This framing tends to ignore broader societal issues, such as patriarchal norms and power imbalances, and risks reducing gender-based violence to a cultural phenomenon rather than recognizing it as part of a wider pattern of femicides and domestic violence affecting women globally.

In many instances, these murders serve to punish a desire for independence. This is often carried out by men who identify as Germans. In cases of so-called honor killings or violence within a (ex)partnership, the motivations are generally similar. When a wife wishes to leave, the husband often cannot accept this separation. If we examine femicides in both scenarios, a clear pattern emerges the asserted or perceived right of a man to control a woman. This reflects possessiveness and domination. The perpetrators believe that women should not have the autonomy to make their own choices or lead their own lives. Terms like "relationship act" and "honor killing" create a misleading impression of the incidents and their motivations. When such acts are framed in this manner, it becomes difficult to comprehend their causes as the focus shifts toward the personal rather than the societal structures we all engage with. As a result, the underlying pattern is overlooked (Dyroff, Pardeller, Wischnewski 2020: 47).

Conclusions

[25] https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/gender/2020/02/27/the-afd-and-right-wing-anti-gender-mobilisation-in-germany/
[26] https://www.dw.com/en/istanbul-convention-how-a-european-treaty-against-womens-violence-became-politicized/a-56953987
[27] https://mau.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1665010/FULLTEXT01.pdf

Femicide is a critical issue in Mexico and Germany. However, the manifestations, legal responses, and research emphasis differ based on each nation's unique social, cultural, and legal environments. In Mexico, femicide rates rank among the highest globally, with about ten women murdered each day, mainly due to gender-based violence linked to intimate partner violence, organized crime, militarization, armed conflicts, and pervasive misogyny. Studies reveal that women in impoverished or marginalized areas face a disproportionate danger, where limited state presence is often limited and violence, organized crime, and military groups are prevalent. The high levels of violence associated with organized crime also foster a climate of impunity in numerous femicide cases, hindering efforts for prevention and prosecution. Conversely, while femicide rates in Germany are lower, the issue remains serious, especially regarding intimate partner violence. Most femicides in Germany occur within domestic settings, and current statistics show that approximately 40% involve a partner or ex-partner. Germany's legal system does not explicitly label femicide, treating these incidents under gender-neutral homicide laws. This complicates the ability to consistently identify the gender-based motivations behind these offenses, which negatively impacts data collection and prevention strategies.

In Mexico, extensive research has been carried out by government entities, such as Mexico's National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), and advocacy groups, such as the Observatorio Ciudadano Nacional del Feminicidio. These organizations track femicides and analyze how various social, economic, and legal elements contribute to gender-based violence. There is a particular emphasis on investigating the connections between organized crime and violence against women, which is especially relevant in the Mexican context. Additionally, grassroots activism has been pivotal in influencing the research and legislative approaches toward femicide, fueled by public outrage that has prompted reforms and raised awareness. In contrast, research on femicide in Germany is relatively recent, revealing substantial gaps in systematic data collection and classification. While federal crime statistics encompass intimate partner violence and homicides, they lack a specific focus on femicide. Some institutions, such as the German Federal Office of Criminal Investigation (BKA), offer insights into domestic violence yet often fall short of providing gender-disaggregated data necessary for understanding gender-motivated killings. Advocacy groups in Germany are advocating for more precise definitions and more accurate statistics regarding femicide to enhance preventive measures through improved awareness and focused policy efforts.

To conclude, Mexico has established specific laws concerning femicide, introducing stricter penalties for killings that are motivated by gender and improving the documentation processes for such cases. The Mexican Supreme Court and various states have initiated protocols for investigating femicides, responding to concerns about widespread impunity. However, despite these laws, enforcement is often inconsistent, with high rates of impunity continuing due to corruption, insufficient resources, and obstacles within the judicial system. In contrast, Germany does not have a separate legal definition for femicide, instead categorizing it as general homicide. Activists contend that this approach limits the nation's capacity to address the gendered aspects of

these crimes effectively. The ratification of the Istanbul Convention by Germany has resulted in calls for stronger protections against gender-based violence. Nonetheless, there are still shortcomings in preventive measures, and discussions about whether femicide should be recognized as a separate legal category persist.

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APPENDIX 4.

T5.4

Zsuzsanna VIDRA: Roma feminist activism in Hungary

Introduction

In the literature on Roma feminism, it is emphasized that Roma women are striving to shape a form of feminism that reflects their perspectives, demands, and lived experiences. They are fighting for gender equality by addressing both Roma men and non-Roma women.

Many scholars argue that the struggles of Romani women are excluded from both mainstream feminist and antiracist movements. Romani women are often not considered within feminist frameworks because they are primarily seen through the lens of their ethnic identity as "Gypsies," while antiracist Roma politics frequently overlook their gender-specific demands.

Feminism in Europe has historically failed to recognize the issues faced by Romani women-and other minority women—as causes worth advocating for. Instead, it tends to promote a notion of universal gender empowerment that does not account for the specific challenges these women face.

Romani women, however, articulate their demands by insisting that addressing their social and political marginalization requires an intersectional approach-one that also challenges broader societal hierarchies (Kóczé et al., 2019; Munté et al., 2020; Aiello-Cabrera et al., 2024; Oprea, 2004, 2012).

In their view, intersectionality offers a more effective way to combat racism and oppressive patriarchy than the currently separate approaches. It can expose how racialized, gendered, and class-based mechanisms sustain the oppression, exclusion, and exploitation of Roma communities (Jovanovic et al., 2015; Kóczé, 2009a).

Romani feminists also advocate for the development of a modern Roma identity that embraces diversity and promotes equality within Roma communities (Bitu & Vincze, 2012). They emphasize the importance of building solidarity among women of different ethnicities, ages, and social classes.

A key claim they make is that Romani women should not be viewed as passive victims of patriarchy in need of rescue. Instead, Roma feminists often identify themselves as subjects affected by antigypsyism and gender-based antigypsyism.

They also engage in critical reflection on their own communities—a practice often considered taboo—in order to more effectively challenge the exclusionary and discriminatory practices of the dominant society.

The aim of the study was to reveal how activists working in Roma and gender-related field perceived the situation of Roma women, the public discourse surrounding Roma women, and the political actions related to them in today's Hungary.

Theoretical background

In the literature on Roma feminism, it is emphasized that Roma women are striving to shape a form of feminism that reflects their perspectives, demands, and lived experiences. They are fighting for gender equality by addressing both Roma men and non-Roma women.

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The aim of the study was to reveal how activists working in Roma and gender-related field perceived the situation of Roma women, the public discourse surrounding Roma women, and the

political actions related to them in today's Hungary. Interviews were conducted with individuals actively involved in Roma-related issues. During the interview, personal experiences and opinions were asked, as well as insights into what opportunities they see for minority women to improve their situation, and what obstacles and challenges they face.

Methodology

Roma feminist activists were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. Questions addressed their activism, professional background, their paths leading to activism. Their views on the current state of gender and democracy in their country. Also, their opinion on the state of feminism and its relation to the Roma in Hungary, the situation of Roma women in Europe and in Hungary, their opinion on gender-based violence against Roma women, and their views on social and family policies and their effects on Roma families.
Interviews were conducted with representatives of the following organaizations:

Roma women in Public Life (woman)
Romaversitas (woman)
Bura Galery (man)
Women For Women Together Against Violence Association (NANE) (woman)
Roma expert (man)
Roma activist, trainer, TASZ, founder of Ame Panzh (woman)
Phiren Amenca (woman)
Roma Women's Network (woman)
Association for Women (woman)

Results

In the activist interviews, three main issues were addressed. Respondents discussed the problems faced by Romani women and activists, the goals they aim to achieve, and the methods they use to pursue these goals.

Challanges of Romani feminism

Firstly, the interviews explored the main issues Romani women face, as identified by activists. Several challenges were highlighted as major obstacles to advancing the empowerment and equality of Romani women.

Exclusion from decision-making: Activists reported that Romani women are often excluded from decision-making processes at all levels of public and political life. As a result, policies and programs are not designed with their specific needs in mind.

"Even 50 or 60 years ago, Roma activists already said that if you're doing something related to Roma issues, you should involve Roma people—not just as tokens, like, I don't know, to add some color, or just have them there to smile and wave. Instead, there should be real access to decision-making processes, the planning stages, and even the organization of the projects—so that they are involved in everything, not just as figurative dolls, like 'look, we have some Roma here,' and then put them in the picture on the poster or on our website." (Roma activist)

Multiple disadvantages: Activists described how Romani women face compounded challenges in areas such as housing, education, employment, and health, where both gender and ethnic discrimination intersect. They shared specific cases from their work where Romani women experienced multiple layers of discrimination and disadvantage.

"Well, yeah, there's a lot of different things. I don't know… even access—so, I don't know, in these four policy areas: housing, education, employment, and healthcare. Roma people, and especially Roma women, have very limited access to these things. They face different forms of disadvantage and discrimination. For example, in Budapest, it's really hard for Roma people to find an apartment to rent. Finding a job isn't easy either. Just general experiences: sometimes the apartment we were looking for had already been rented the same day, or after calling, the job had already been filled even though everyone could still apply yesterday—or something like that.

*And healthcare… obviously for women, going to the gynecologist is already a kind of dreaded thing—every woman dislikes going—but as a Roma woman, it's an extra burden. You constantly feel shamed, not just in your own perception, but the doctors actively contribute to it, making you feel like you're nothing, like a piece of ****." (Roma activist)*

Policy gaps: Activists noted that policies affecting Romani women at the national level are often incomplete or poorly implemented. A key concern was that social consultations are frequently formal and insincere, with policy texts failing to reflect the real problems of the most vulnerable groups. In other words, governments and other responsible actors often disregard the voices of Romani women.

"That at some point, you know, the work gets done, and the state should engage in a more active dialogue with civil society, not like how the Fidesz government is doing it now—consulting only with the civil organizations it has itself generated and then presenting that as the opinion. Instead, there should be a dialogue with all stakeholders in the field, with all the relevant groups included." (Roma association)

Stereotypes and invisibility: One of the most critical issues identified was the prevalence of intersectional challenges and the simplistic, prejudiced nature of public discourse about Romani women. Furthermore, their experiences are often invisible within mainstream feminist movements, which further marginalizes them.

"Well, I'd say that visibility and taking on roles, and so-called representation, were definitely about this as well. ... Representation or taking on roles in the media, even in streaming media, in those kinds of media." (Roma civil organization representative 1)

Objectives of activism

Secondly, activists discussed the objectives they strive to achieve:

They emphasized that Romani feminism aims to view Romani women not merely as victims but as active, autonomous agents in society.

Addressing their invisibility within both the feminist movement and public discourse was identified as a priority. Activists believe that applying an intersectional approach is key to overcoming this issue.

Empowerment in public life should be achieved by incorporating the firsthand experiences of Romani women into policies and programs. In doing so, the voices of entire Roma communities can be better represented in political decisions.

"This so-called left-liberal intelligentsia basically did things like supporting Roma people through various 'affair-motivated' initiatives, but at the same time, they kept them in this very much victimized role—as helpless Roma who need help and must be uplifted. That's how it is.

The idea was that they should behave normally, like members of 'normal' society, and in this way, you can clearly see the influence of the big sociologists, in terms of their work and how they framed these problems." (Roma civil organization representative 2)

Activist strategies

Thirdly, activists described how these objectives could be achieved:

Community organizing was highlighted as a fundamental method for understanding and addressing the real problems faced by Romani women. For instance, the Roma Women's Network brings together women from diverse backgrounds to work on women's rights and broader community issues.

Education is another important approach. One example is Romaversitas, an educational organization where participants engage in various projects that promote empowerment and inclusion.

Cultural activism plays a vital role in achieving these goals. Artistic activism, such as challenging stereotypes through the work of Romani artists, helps raise awareness and build solidarity. Activist artists often implement community-based projects that address pressing social issues.

Political activism is equally important. Activists may participate in political campaigns to advocate for the rights of Romani women and reduce social inequalities. They collaborate with NGOs to enhance the political representation of Romani women.

> *"I think we shouldn't aim for these large, systemic changes, because those aren't going to happen in our lifetime. Instead, the focus should be on smaller, bottom-up, locally organized measures and initiatives. These are small successes, but in our immediate environment. People tend to think that things have to be some huge, grand thing, that activism has to be something enormous—but that's not true. Even in your own immediate environment, you can create change or represent interests that nobody else is representing, and those can already lead to meaningful changes.*
>
> *For example, a teacher at school, an HR person at a company, or a parent at a kindergarten—if everyone were a bit more proactive in their immediate environment, different changes could happen faster. I always say that we are the system, not just part of the system. If we don't take action or remain proactive, and just wait for things to happen, then nothing will happen." (Roma activist)*

Discussion

The findings from the interviews with Roma feminist activists highlight both the unique challenges faced by Romani women in Hungary and the strategies being employed to address these issues. Consistent with the theoretical literature, Romani women continue to navigate complex social positions, where their experiences are marginalized both within mainstream feminist movements and in broader antiracist frameworks. As the activists emphasized, Romani women are often simultaneously subjected to ethnic discrimination and patriarchal oppression, illustrating the critical need for an intersectional approach to understanding and addressing their marginalization (Kóczé et al., 2019; Jovanovic et al., 2015).

A recurring theme in the interviews was the exclusion of Romani women from decision-making processes. This exclusion reflects a systemic issue in which both political structures and social policies fail to account for the lived experiences of marginalized groups. Activists reported that policies affecting Romani women often remain superficial, lacking meaningful consultation or genuine consideration of their specific needs. These findings support previous research that highlights policy gaps and the inadequacy of formal mechanisms designed to include Roma voices in public discourse (Munté et al., 2020; Oprea, 2012).

The interviews also underscored the multiple disadvantages that Romani women face, which emerge at the intersection of ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. Access to housing, education, employment, and healthcare remains limited, with discrimination manifesting in subtle and structural ways. This aligns with the broader literature on intersectional oppression, demonstrating how racialized and gendered inequalities compound to create persistent disadvantages for Roma women (Kóczé, 2009a).

Activists emphasized that stereotypes and invisibility significantly hinder the empowerment of Romani women. Negative public discourse reduces Romani women to simplistic victim narratives, while mainstream feminism often fails to address their specific needs. This dual invisibility reinforces marginalization and illustrates the importance of strategies that not only challenge external discrimination but also reshape internal perceptions of agency and identity within Roma communities (Bitu & Vincze, 2012).

In terms of activist objectives, the interviews reveal a strong commitment to reframing Romani women as autonomous agents rather than passive victims. This reflects a conscious effort to challenge both societal prejudice and internalized norms that may limit women's empowerment. The focus on intersectionality in activism is particularly noteworthy, as it enables the recognition of complex social hierarchies and provides a framework for advocating for policies that genuinely reflect the needs of marginalized groups.

The strategies employed by activists-community organizing, education, cultural activism, and political engagement-demonstrate a multifaceted approach to Roma feminism. Community organizing allows women to articulate their experiences and develop collective responses to systemic inequality. Education initiatives, such as those promoted by Romaversitas, cultivate skills and awareness that empower women to participate meaningfully in society. Cultural activism, particularly through art, challenges dominant stereotypes and fosters solidarity across diverse communities. Political activism seeks to translate grassroots knowledge into policy influence, bridging the gap between lived experiences and decision-making processes. Together, these strategies highlight the holistic approach necessary to address the intertwined challenges of gender, ethnicity, and social exclusion.

Overall, the findings reinforce the notion that Roma feminism in Hungary-and more broadly in Europe-requires a distinctly intersectional perspective that recognizes both the structural inequalities facing Romani women and their agency in confronting these challenges. By emphasizing the dual focus on empowerment and visibility, Romani feminist activism challenges both mainstream feminist and antiracist movements to rethink their approaches, ensuring that policies and programs are inclusive, context-sensitive, and responsive to the specific needs of Romani women.

Conclusions

This study highlights the unique challenges faced by Romani women in Hungary and the ways in which Roma feminist activists work to address them. Romani women experience intersecting forms of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, and social class, which often render them invisible in both mainstream feminist and antiracist movements. Activists emphasize that overcoming these challenges requires an intersectional approach that recognizes the complexity of their lived experiences and addresses systemic inequalities in a holistic manner.

Roma feminist activism is focused on empowerment, visibility, and agency. By engaging in community organizing, educational initiatives, cultural activism, and political participation, activists aim to ensure that Romani women are not merely seen as victims but as active participants in shaping social and political life. Furthermore, these strategies foster solidarity across diverse groups, challenge harmful stereotypes, and advocate for inclusive policies that reflect the real needs of Roma communities.

Ultimately, this study underscores the importance of centering the voices and experiences of Romani women in both feminist and antiracist discourses. It calls for sustained efforts to bridge policy gaps, amplify marginalized perspectives, and recognize the agency of Roma women in shaping their communities and challenging structural inequalities.

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Lilla Lendvai: ‘There Is No Feminist Disability Agenda in Hungary’: Feminist Disability Activism in Hungary

Background/Summary of ContextsAdded value and summary of deliverable

Due to their gender and disability, women with disabilities live in a multiply stigmatized existence and experience dual oppression resulting from both ableism and sexism (Zinsmeister, 2007). Women with disabilities are denied the opportunity to confront and cope with female gender stereotypes and role expectations by having their womanhood delegitimized (see e.g., Lendvai & Nguyen Luu, 2019, 2022). Consequently, in their attempts to integrate into society, women with disabilities face strong and deeply entrenched barriers. To date, no comprehensive study has been conducted on the situation of women with disabilities in Hungary. Only a few studies – typically adopting a feminist disability perspective – have addressed specific aspects of femininity within particular disability groups, such as the lived experience of womanhood, pregnancy and motherhood, or abuse targeting disabled women (see e.g., Hernádi, 2015; Lendvai & Nguyen Luu, 2019, 2022; Hankó et al., 2022; Pászti & Lendvai, in press). Research explicitly focused on feminist disability activism is also lacking. When examining the development of these aspects and movements, it is essential to consider Mladenov’s (2017) conclusion – based on Nancy Fraser’s theory of social justice – that within the postsocialist disability matrix, regional specificities are of great significance, especially the legacy of state socialism and the processes of postsocialist neoliberalization. Under socialism, people with disabilities were rendered invisible (Mladenov, 2017), just as women with disabilities have remained invisible within feminist movements and among women more broadly (see e.g., Garland-Thomson, 2002, 2005; Wendell, 1997; Hernádi, 2015; Lendvai & Nguyen Luu, 2022). Therefore, the aim of the present study was to explore the characteristics of feminist disability activism in Hungary; however, it soon became clear that the focus should rather be placed on the reasons for the absence of such a movement.

Method

The aim of our study was to explore the characteristics of feminist disability activist movements in Hungary from the period following the regime change to the present. Accordingly, our research question was multi-layered: How would one describe the development and current state of Hungarian feminist disability activism? How do individuals interpret their own activist roles and identities? How do they understand their activist experiences?

Our research was conducted from a phenomenological epistemological standpoint, as we were primarily interested in how the interviewees experience the evolution and current state of the movement, and how they interpret their activist roles and experiences. Thus, personal perspective,

identity, and individual positioning were at the core of understanding the process and the phenomenon (based on Rácz et al., 2023).

The sample was homogeneous in the sense that all interviewees were connected to disability issues in some way. Their activism (some participants were engaged in activist work but did not consider themselves activists) focused on this area, and although typically in a less targeted manner (not over a long period, sometimes only for a single project, or not exclusively), they had also engaged with issues affecting disabled women. Based on Petri's 2019 study, we considered it important to also include activists who, while not disabled themselves, support the cause of disabled people. However, the number of these allies in the sample remained low, as our primary aim was to understand the perspectives of self-advocating activists who, as disabled individuals, stand up for their own and their disabled women peers' rights and goals, in order to thoroughly explore lived experiences from a disabled woman's standpoint.

Among the interviewees were activists operating both within formal organizations and independently, outside of any formal organizational context. In the case of activists active in organizations, it was also essential to examine their views on the structure of leadership and the main focus of the organization. Only one project specifically addressed issues of disabled women; the other organizations mainly represented the interests of specific groups – such as individuals with physical disabilities. All perspectives and experiences from the different groups were considered relevant and are presented in the discussion of the findings.

Recruiting interviewees proved challenging, as it involved identifying with multiple (and in Hungary often stigmatized) labels such as "feminist," "disability advocate," and "activist" – labels with which only a small number of interviewees fully identified. Ultimately, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 16 activists who were deemed relevant based on their known activities and through recommendations from experts in disability studies, special education, the social sciences, and intercultural studies. None of the interviewees identified explicitly and exclusively as feminist disability activists. Therefore, we sought intersections and aimed to uncover the reasons behind the rejection of these labels.

The sample included representatives of organizations working on behalf of people with physical disabilities, as well as individual activists (with varying degrees of mobility impairments). Individual activists on the autism spectrum and with visual impairments also participated, all of whom had engaged with issues concerning disabled women at some point in their careers. Unfortunately, no representatives from organizations of people with intellectual disabilities took part in the study, either declining participation or responding only after the data collection period had ended (a typical justification being: "Having read your letter, we find that your research area falls outside the scope of our association's activities."). One participant was identified by others as a feminist disability activist but did not consider herself as such. Two scholars who viewed themselves as non-disabled allies entered the study from both the disability and feminist fields.

The leader of a women's rights organization also participated, while other contacted organizations declined participation, stating that they did not find the topic relevant.

Data collection took place between June 2024 and March 2025. Interviewees were contacted through targeted emails or phone calls. The interviews were conducted by a university lecturer with a disability and graduate students in intercultural studies. Two pilot interviews, each approximately one hour in length, were conducted first, after which the interview questions were revised. Subsequent interviews ranged from 2.5 to 6 hours in duration. Except for the pilot interviews, all were conducted online or via telephone.

Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim using AI-based transcription tools, after which the accuracy of the transcripts was verified and any textual errors were corrected. All transcripts were anonymized, and during data processing, any information that could potentially identify individuals – particularly within the relatively small disability advocacy community – was either modified or removed (e.g., specifics about injuries, precise organizational descriptions).

The semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis (TA), following the six-phase approach of Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021, 2022). Given the exploratory nature of the study, we employed an inductive analytic strategy, aiming to uncover latent content. To examine underlying meanings and assumptions, it was essential to conduct the analysis with the reflexivity emphasized by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2021).

Key Findings

Due to the length and depth of the interviews, the data collected proved to be a particularly rich source for an in-depth exploration of feminist disability activism. Due to space constraints, only the main findings are presented here. All interview participants agreed that currently, "feminist disability politics does not exist in Hungary," prompting us to explore the primary reasons behind this absence.

Fragmentation

Interviewees commonly identified fragmentation – namely, the lack of cohesion among disability organizations – as the main obstacle to developing an effective and unified feminist disability activism and movement. As one participant put it: “The whole movement is fragmented, and the organizations don’t support each other, they don’t work together.” Others noted: “The Hungarian disabled community is extremely diverse and divergent,” and “These groups simply don’t encounter each other. And even if they do, the focus is not on cooperation but on competition. As a result, they achieve relatively little, in my view – although some argue that compared to other movements, the disability movement is still strong and successful. (...) But everyone wants to claim those few successes for themselves and monopolize the resources. My critique is that this is why the entire movement is so fragmented; the organizations don’t support one another, don’t collaborate. (...) This is one of the reasons I burned out – because I saw that it's impossible to initiate cooperation.”

Thus, when an activist tried to build a feminist disability movement or raise gender issues within an organization, they often found that the disability-specific goals of different organizations took precedence. These isolated or under-supported efforts frequently led to burnout. This issue was compounded by tensions between smaller and larger organizations, and by a conflict of interest: larger, top-down initiatives tend to rely on state funding, which renders them less critical of the state and political decision-makers compared to grassroots or smaller organizations.

Participants noted that the division was not limited to the disability organizations themselves, but extended to a lack of solidarity with other marginalized communities. For instance, the disability movement was described as "prejudiced against other communities," such as LGBTQ+ activists and groups. One reason for this lack of cooperation was the fear of being identified with these communities: "Both groups avoid stigma from association with the other, but I think there's more common ground than it seems at first." Some interviewees believed that cooperation with LGBTQ+ activists – particularly due to shared bodily experiences and challenges faced by trans people – could be meaningful, but feared that government stigmatization of the LGBTQ+ community would jeopardize funding opportunities. Potential cooperation with Roma organizations was also mentioned, though only a few informal consultations took place and these never developed into formal collaborations.

Participants perceived this fragmentation as a significant barrier to effective cross-disability advocacy. They provided concrete examples of how they might unite around specific issues: "During the drafting of the UN Convention, the psychiatric representative explained the rights of Deaf people and why they are important from a Deaf person's perspective – to demonstrate that they do indeed (...) belong together and represent one another. (...) So, we need to be able to articulate what we want. If we want an accessible environment, we need clearer definitions – what are the specifics?" Interviewees emphasized that common issues primarily revolve around equal access, which is still not guaranteed in Hungary: "If we have this, these are our shared issues – then, I think, a feminist disability politics could emerge. (...) Then it wouldn't have to be only women with mobility impairments organizing separately, but disabled women could collectively articulate that, yes, we are also affected by this and that – say, when it comes to using restrooms."

Other structural barriers facing the movement include societal denial of disability. As one interviewee observed: "The majority society also deflects the topic of disability because they don't want to consider their own vulnerability." Furthermore, there is a marked lack of awareness regarding disability-related policy and legal frameworks. Only a quarter of interviewees were able to name a specific policy demand, law, or treaty related to feminist disability activism. There is no widespread or general knowledge about this topic within disability movements or organizations. Independent activists, not affiliated with any organization, were only aware of these issues if they worked as experts or within academic contexts.

The lack of education was seen as a critical issue, contributing to the absence of a coherent strategy: "Yes, there is a lack of funding, and there are organizational difficulties, but in my view, the root

of the problem lies in this fragmentation, in working against rather than alongside each other, and in prejudice."

The "Big Three": Feminism, Disability, and Activism

Throughout the interviews – as well as during the preparatory phase – a recurring obstacle emerged that warrants further discussion and may be meaningfully interpreted through Fiske's Stereotype Content Model (see e.g., Fiske et al., 2002; Cuddy et al., 2007, 2008): is it possible to identify simultaneously with all three elements of the "big three" – feminism, disability, and activism?

In a country where "it's a revolutionary act to go to the cinema, to board a suburban train – and I don't even think it's reasonable to expect Hungarian citizens to organize themselves," where simply stepping out into public space or entering employment as a disabled person is considered revolutionary, "what is lacking is the recognition that a person can be disabled and still be a woman." According to the Stereotype Content Model, disabled women are subjected to a paternalistic majority gaze, characterized by being placed in the "cute and lovable" category. In contrast, activists are often perceived as "aggressive" and antagonistic – an image similarly imposed on feminists. Therefore, if a disabled woman were to identify as a feminist or activist – or both – she would be subject to the stigmas associated with all three identities. This identification entails the risk of losing the perceived lovability attributed to her disabled group membership and being regarded instead as incompetent or unlikable.

Interview participants reported that members of the majority society tend to look down on them and view their engagement with women's issues – particularly in academic contexts – with condescension and pity, often dismissing research or activism related to disabled women as unserious: "Oh, my sweet dear, don't you have enough troubles already?"

Respondents were acutely aware of how different forms of stigma intersect and reinforce each other. One participant remarked: "The equality of people with mobility impairments hasn't been achieved, and because of that, gender equality hasn't either." Others highlighted the central role of lovability in the effectiveness of social movements: "This isn't about dignity – it's about being lovable. As long as disabled people in Hungary desperately fight to be seen as lovable, there can be no strength, no demonstration of power. (...) What we need to mobilize here is anger and despair." Some interviewees recognized the harmful effects of paternalistic attitudes and argued that the risk of losing lovability must be embraced if disabled individuals are to demand their rights.

However, defining the key concepts – disability, feminism, activism – proved challenging. Regarding feminism, most interviewees associated it with stereotypical notions of "anti-male," "aggressive" organizing (with the exception of those who had acquired more nuanced knowledge through academic study, research, or advocacy work). Many felt that feminism is widely rejected in Hungary: "I think what's missing in Hungary today is that feminism doesn't have a positive connotation. You know, the idea that you're a feminist, or that women should have a movement,

or anything like that – it just doesn't sound good. And you have to get over that before you can become active."

Similarly, many participants distanced themselves from activism, perceiving it as an overly confrontational activity that could be counterproductive. Some explicitly noted that neither activism nor movement organizing is perceived as a "Hungarian trait": "There's already this rejection of feminism and gender. And I think activism – going out into the streets and expressing your outrage through criticism – that's not really characteristic of Hungarian culture either."

Depoliticisation and the Fear of Retaliation

According to the interviewees, the Hungarian state does not engage with the issues of disabled women – nor with other minority or women's issues. The Prime Minister once declared, "I don't deal with women's issues," and one interviewee explicitly highlighted Viktor Orbán's role: "Because everything he does regarding women is all traditional, patriarchal, oppressive – just terrible, simply terrible." As a result, Hungarian politics does not position disabled women *at all*, at most casting them as "completely marginal, not fitting anywhere; I guess they don't even see us as capable of giving birth, so that's a minus point too." While family policy features prominently in governmental communication, the interviewees felt entirely excluded from it. Thus, disabled women are "Invisible. Completely invisible. (…) Disabled women have not even received the status of being women in this society. So (…) the authorities don't talk about them as women either, because they are not seen as women. And that's the first major issue – that they aren't even slotted into the stereotypical, absolutely patriarchal system, because they're not seen as women. And this basically puts them in the category of not-quite-human. I believe this is a deeply serious problem."

The interviewees linked the condition of democracy with the success (or lack thereof) of their movement. The years following the regime change – after a brief period of optimism – were not considered satisfactory from the perspective of disability rights. The current regime since 2010 received specific attention: "I think democracy here has been over for a while, so first and foremost the democratic institutional system should be rebuilt," suggesting structural issues so serious that the cause of disabled women appears insignificant in comparison. When the interviewees attempted advocacy in support of disabled women, they experienced that "the issue gets swept off the table" in Hungary, and they felt powerless even on the international stage: "It's a huge deterrent, because even if a few women are brave enough to speak up, the organisation will withdraw support, step back – because then they won't get funding. And I think that has seriously harmed the cause of disabled women. Because fundamentally, this women's issue is not understood here at home. I mean, domestically, people don't get what the hell this is, why it's even a thing worth addressing, you know? And at EU level, they do get it; it's included in the women's strategy, the EU's gender strategy. Disabled women are mentioned in the women's strategy and also in the disability strategy. So that's progress, but there's still work to be done. And what's terrible is that if we don't go to

the UN, then we can't make our voices heard. And the other thing is that even UN conclusions are now being ignored in Hungary. Those used to be sacred."

The interviewees typically described Hungarian society as "very unequal (…) if it were a more equal society, then disabled people would also be more equal – and as a result, so would disabled women. So yes, I fundamentally see the huge social inequalities as the problem, and I also think that our politicians have a strong vested interest in maintaining this inequality." A key part of this inequality is that "the Hungarian disability movement or disability issues are endlessly depoliticised, when in fact they should be politicised. Maybe the home care issue was the closest to becoming political – but even that was handled very carefully, to avoid crossing a line. And that was no coincidence. That was probably the only way they could really achieve anything."

Rights achieved and funding are closely linked: "We can fight for rights, but if we can't turn them into concrete gains – into factors that actually improve our lives – then it's very difficult to keep fighting. And even so, it's difficult, because before 2006 there was no high-level convention on disabled women."

Political communication plays a key role in portraying civil organisations as enemies, and "politics divides civil society." Even at the municipal level, the situation is problematic: representing minority rights, mapping actual challenges, or articulating problems is not prioritised. "They give you money to organise cultural events, some entertainment, leisure activities, but god forbid you run a campaign that might carry a political message – or rather a social message – about what's happening to a social group. So what do they do? They use this to silence local organisations, who take it for granted that their scope of work is limited to this – because that's what gets funding from local councils. And they're not yet conscious enough to want to go beyond that. And to do that, they'd need training from national-level organisations – but all of this gets fragmented."

Thus, political support plays a significant role in the operation of disability organisations, as does the systematic disabling of civil society. Since politics is invested in eliminating critical voices, the emergence and functioning of feminist disability activism *within* disability organisations is practically impossible.

Policy Recommendations

- ***Initiate collaborations with other marginalised groups****,* particularly with LGBTQ+ and Roma organisations, to strengthen intersectional alliances and collective advocacy.
- ***Enhance cooperation between disability-specific organisations****,* fostering stronger inter-organisational dialogue and coordinated action across various types of impairments.
- ***Establish comprehensive cross-disability representation****,* ensuring unified advocacy platforms that encompass the diversity within the disability community.

- ***Prioritise overcoming organisational fragmentation**,* which currently weakens advocacy efforts and limits political visibility.
- ***Expand the role of education***, not only for the general (non-disabled) public but also within the disabled community itself, moving beyond awareness-raising to deeper structural understanding.
- ***Reframe local (rural and municipal) events***, shifting focus from cultural entertainment ("village day" style) towards meaningful advocacy, problem articulation, and rights-based approaches.
- ***Increase the visibility of women's issues*** within disability advocacy, recognising disabled women as political subjects with specific needs and rights.
- ***Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment*** to explore the lived realities, challenges, and requirements of disabled women – a currently missing but essential knowledge base.
- ***Ensure equal access to gynaecological screenings, reproductive healthcare, and childbirth services**,* free from paternalism and judgement, grounded in a rights-based healthcare approach.
- ***Critically examine representation within leadership and decision-making bodies**,* assessing whether disabled people – especially disabled women – hold meaningful, non-tokenistic positions of power.
- ***Reduce financial dependency of organisations**,* and restructure funding mechanisms to eliminate the current pressure toward depoliticisation and self-censorship.
- ***Ensure political recognition and substantive representation of disabled people's concerns*** at governmental and policy-making levels, embedding their needs in mainstream political discourse.
- ***Provide targeted training*** to increase the legal and policy literacy of activists and organisational members, with an emphasis on both disability rights and gender equality.

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Dr Magda(lena) Szarota: Rights Without Reach? Feminist Disability Activism amid Populism and Structural Discrimination in Poland

Disabled women and girls constitute an estimated 15 - 22% of Poland's female population, yet remain among the most marginalized and impoverished groups in post-socialist, strongly neoliberal Poland. Since 1989, neoliberalism has been taken as inseparable from democracy in dominant discourse; in practice, neoliberal doctrine has worked in concert with the Catholic Church's patriarchal influence to weaken the democratic project and entrench structural disadvantage for women, disabled people, and especially disabled women (Pamuła, 2022; Pamuła & Szarota, 2023). This disadvantage is reinforced by an amalgamated disability paradigm - part post-socialist legacy, part reductive "social" approach, and part Church-backed charity model - that depoliticizes disability and normalizes paternalism (Pamuła et al., 2018; Król, 2022, 2024).

Across policy and civil society, this depoliticization is visible. Governments and elites have persistently neglected disabled women; policy documents and legislation rarely address gendered disability, and disability NGOs - largely disability-rather-than-disabled-people's organizations - tend to provide services rather than pursue rights-based advocacy. By contrast, the feminist movement is overtly political but has paid limited attention to disabled women, reflecting neoliberal logics that sideline intersectional claims (Zeglicka et al., 2018). The result is disproportionate discrimination across life domains relative to disabled men and non-disabled women.

Against this backdrop, a politicized strand of disabled-women's activism has consolidated around human-rights instruments, especially the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Disabled women were central during Poland's 2018 CRPD review; the Concluding Observations highlighted disproportionate violations against girls and women and urged action under Article 6 (women with disabilities) and Article 19 (independent living) (Mackiewicz-Ziccardi et al., 2019). These became key levers for organizing - even as domestic uptake lagged, with the Observations not translated and posted to a government website until 2025 and only after repeated interventions by the Commissioner for Human Rights. Building on this momentum, the First Congress of Women with Disabilities and their Allies (hosted by the Commissioner on 21 September 2019) explicitly linked feminism, disability, and human rights; a Second Congress followed on 8 March 2024. While the CRPD now anchors activist framing, its benefits have yet to reach most disabled women (Szarota, 2025).

Within movements and discourse, charity and medical models still dominate, impeding a rights-based mainstreaming of disability. Activists call for enforceable parity and accessibility in public debate; documentation and recognition of disabled women's leadership; and structural reforms - above all, legislation on personal assistance and comprehensive measures addressing gender- and disability-based violence (Pamuła et al., 2018; Wołowicz & Kocejko, 2022). Constraints on allyship, funding for accessibility, and knowledge production (including under-research and stereotyped educational portrayals) continue to limit impact, even as the disability-feminist activist field shows organizational resilience and a clear orientation towards international human rights norms.

Polish critical disability studies offers theoretically informed, empirically rigorous analyses of disabled women (e.g., Wołowicz, 2013, 2021; Król, 2022; Pamuła, 2022) and a growing body of

work on activism (e.g., Albin, 2023 on disabled women advocates' identities; Szarota, 2019, 2025 on political aspects of disability-feminist advocacy). What is still missing, however, is an analysis of disabled women advocates' own theorisations of populism and the contemporary anti-human-rights and anti-discrimination backlashes. This study takes an initial step to address the gap, examining leading disability-feminist advocates' discourse and praxis and how they conceptualise and contest intertwined backlash dynamics in Poland.

Methodology:

This study combines qualitative desk-research with semi-structured, open-ended interviews to examine disabled feminist women's activism in Poland. After mapping the field through public materials (media, statements, campaigns, grey literature), I purposefully invited key informants whose roles illuminated different strands of feminist disability activism. Twenty-two activists participated (ages 20 - 50+), encompassing visual and hearing impairments, mobility limitations, chronic illnesses, and both congenital and acquired disabilities, living in large cities and smaller towns, and spanning working- to upper-class backgrounds, including students and graduates.

Interviews took place from July to September 2025. Conversations were conducted in Polish via Microsoft Teams and lasted about two hours. They were audio-recorded, transcribed, and anonymized where requested. Participants received plain-language information, provided informed consent, and could skip questions or retract sensitive material.

Analysis followed an inductive, reflexive thematic approach. I immersed myself in transcripts and desk-based sources. Through iterative clustering and constant comparison, initial codes developed into themes and subthemes. The final interpretations integrate activists' accounts with disability studies debates, contemporary Polish disability discourses, and the post-socialist context.

1. The Situation of Disabled Women in Poland: Challenges and Types of Discrimination

Interviews with Polish women disability activists depict a landscape in which disabled women contend with layered exclusions that run through family life, health care, education, employment, and public space. What sets their situation apart from that of disabled men or non-disabled women is not a single barrier but an interlocking set of mechanisms: gendered desexualisation and infantilisation; welfare and assessment systems organised around deficit; inaccessible physical, informational, and digital infrastructures; and discursive frames that render women with disabilities illegible either as "women" with gender-specific bodies and needs or as autonomous citizens with political voice and agency. Rather than one master mechanism, the interviews point to a mesh of practices that materialise ableist patriarchy in everyday decisions by officials, clinicians, educators, employers, media, and even movement allies.

A core theme is gender erasure - the assumption that disabled people live outside gendered life. Some advocates diagnose a long-standing trope in policy and culture in which people with disabilities are treated as a "genderless magma," an image that flattens difference and conceals women's specific needs around sexual and reproductive health, bodily autonomy, and protection from gender-based violence. They argue that feminist disability work exists precisely to bring gender to the forefront so that women's needs are acknowledged in policy and practice. This erasure is not merely symbolic. It shapes how gynaecological care is-or is not-organised, how parenting by disabled women is imagined, and how sexuality is policed, often as if disabled women

were asexual. As several interviewees stress, this assumption ignores the diversity of experiences: some disabled women are asexual, many are not.

Language and identity politics likewise matter because labels anchor social expectations. One researcher-advocate recounts being reduced to "that one without an arm," a descriptor that eclipsed her personhood and talents; her preference for person-first phrasing ("woman with disabilities") intentionally re-centres subjecthood before impairment. At the same time, interviewees caution against imposing a single "correct" linguistic rule. Preferences differ across disability communities and contexts. Prescriptive approaches risk replicating control, whereas recognising plural naming practices can itself be a feminist-disability stance that respects self-definition and intra-group difference.

The architecture of welfare, assessment, and care in Poland reinforces dependency by design. Respondents describe an eligibility logic that rewards displays of incapacity and penalises self-advocacy and improvement, entrenching power asymmetries with doctors, assessors, and municipal offices. Although details vary by locality and impairment, activists converge on the performative aspect of disability assessment: one must prove one is "disabled enough," sometimes by downplaying assistive strategies or everyday achievements, to protect entitlements. Even highly educated or professionally active women are compelled to stage "spectacles of disability" during periodic reviews. The practice corrodes dignity and disincentivises participation, and its effects are gendered because women are already positioned within familial care scripts-measured through their relations to parents, partners, and children rather than as autonomous rights-holders.

Health care discrimination intersects with both gender and disability. Interviewees point to persistent barriers to accessible gynaecology-physical access, adapted equipment, communication support, and provider attitudes-and to the marginalisation of disabled mothers. Even well-intentioned initiatives have been abruptly cancelled or reduced to token gestures, signalling that maternal identities are conditional and revocable. Policies that foreground carers rather than personal assistance further infantilise adult women with disabilities and recentre family responsibility over rights-based services. In this environment, care is framed as benevolence rather than entitlement, and clinical encounters too often presume incompetence rather than autonomy.

Education and employment trajectories are similarly mediated by stigma and (in)visibility. Several activists narrate a move from internalised medicalisation-childhood surgeries, rehabilitation as life's organising principle, and shame at "difference"-toward disability studies and movement histories that foster pride, solidarity, and structural analysis. This intellectual turn is not abstract; it reframes everyday frustrations, such as being blocked from activities, as design choices and political decisions rather than personal deficits. One respondent, an advocate in her twenties with disabilities, is explicit about this transformation, describing a shift from being pushed into a victim script to understanding disability as integral and powerful-"from a social construct… to something that became my strength, but it was a very long and painful process." Such re-orientation enables claims-making in schools and workplaces and opens routes to leadership, yet it also highlights how institutions often default to remediation over inclusion.

Intra-movement hierarchies further shape disabled women's experiences. Public debates and media coverage frequently privilege carers' voices over those of disabled adults; protests have sometimes centred parents-usually mothers-and framed demands as relief for carers rather than autonomy for disabled women themselves. Respondents argue that this dynamic entrenches

a charity model of disability. High-profile events, including sit-ins and parliamentary protests, sometimes deepened the cultural association of disability with childness and dependence because political responses and media narratives foregrounded carers as protagonists while sidelining adult women with disabilities as speakers and decision-makers.

At the same time, interviewees resist purely social readings that risk erasing bodies, pain, or fluctuating conditions. Many embrace the analytic power of the social model of disability while insisting on a both/and frame-impairment and environment. This stance adds nuance to policy slogans and helps explain varied positions on identity language and on what "access" should prioritise, whether assistive technologies, pain management, or anti-violence infrastructures. The point is not relativism but a call for multi-scalar policy: disability- and gender-specific measures that respect heterogeneity in bodies, experiences, and preferences.

Taken together, the interviews portray a system in which disabled women in Poland face gender erasure and desexualisation, linguistic regimes that set expectations about dependence, welfare and assessment systems built on deficit, health-care barriers and maternal stigma, schooling and employment pathways punctuated by micro-exclusions, and intra-movement hierarchies that privilege carers. Yet the same voices articulate strategies of counter-power: self-definition, cross-movement learning, and claims to rights rather than charity. Two quotations capture the synthesis. "People with disabilities have often been treated as a 'bodiless, genderless mass'… and this activism aims to 'bring gender to the forefront,'" observed advocate with visual impairment. And another researcher-advocate with disability: "I was always 'the disabled one, the one without an arm'… so I put the subject first: 'a woman with a disability,' and only then does disability follow me." These statements anchor, but do not exhaust, a broader account of the gendered architecture of ableism in Poland-and of the knowledge and organising practices that seek to dismantle it.

2. Challenges and Opportunities in Disability Feminist Activism

The interviews portray a field in motion. Disability feminist activism-sometimes explicitly named as such, sometimes practiced without the label-works amid scarcity, fragmentation, and persistent conceptual misunderstandings. Yet the very obstacles it faces also contain seeds of redesign: inaccessibility in mainstream feminist spaces, for instance, becomes a prompt to re-tool events, funding models, and leadership pipelines. Activists, often quietly, are already testing these redesigns, building novel coalitions and repertoires along the way.

A first thread concerns the mutual areas of neglect between feminist and disability movements. Interviewees note that established feminist organisations in Poland have only recently begun to address disability, and then largely through ad-hoc, project-based initiatives. Meanwhile, mainstream disability NGOs tend to default to a generic "person with disability" subject, with little sustained attention to reproductive rights, care and anti-violence systems, or the distinctive economic inequalities affecting women. This double absence makes intersectional leadership hard to sustain. As researcher-advocate with visual impairments observes, national disability strategies frequently omit women as a distinct category-"that group isn't specified there at all, either"-and neither mainstream feminism nor disability organisations consistently treat disabled women as a priority.

A second thread is the fragmentation and precarity of activist infrastructures. Respondents describe cycles of mobilisation that hinge on a few overextended individuals, informal collectives, and short-term grants. Workloads spill over into private life; the same names recur across committees,

councils, and campaigns; burnout is common. Many narrate their trajectories as phases attached to specific people and local needs, an ecology that enables agility but undermines institutional memory and care.

A third thread is conceptual labour-the ongoing work of translation and synthesis. Several interviewees recount a shift from purely social-model framings toward hybrid understandings that hold embodiment, pain, and structural barriers together. This intellectual work happens in classrooms, municipal councils, and social media threads, translating global disability studies into Polish contexts while resisting imported orthodoxies. The payoff is strategic clarity-why, for example, personal assistance should be rights-based rather than charitable-but the cost is time and emotional labour that almost no funder recognises.

Against these constraints, the interviews also illuminate a set of openings. Cross-movement fertilisation introduces vocabularies and tactics that help activists name Polish problems and imagine institutional reforms. Encounters with disability and feminist histories-from Pride to assistive technologies to reproductive justice-reorient expectations and strategies. One advocate in her late forties with multiple impairments, living in a small Polish town, explicitly credits American disability-rights narratives with shifting her stance from waiting on the state to initiating grassroots action - a pattern echoed by younger activists, who now enter municipal councils and advisory bodies with reformist agendas.

Redesigning feminist spaces with access as method is another generative frontier. When gender-equality events, reproductive-rights campaigns, and campus activities are re-tooled for physical, communication, and sensory access, new constituencies participate and the agenda itself changes-as with accessible gynaecology initiatives. Interviewees link such redesigns to an ethic of care rather than to "entitlement," arguing that activism should be read as civic care, not complaint. This reframing makes cross-movement alliances less defensive and more imaginative.

Coalition building likewise gains traction when intersectionality is taken seriously in practice. One of the leading disability-feminist advocates with mobility impairments urges widening feminist frames to include trans and neurodiverse experiences, describing the "turbo-intersectional" character of contemporary struggles and the need for coalitional literacy across LGBT+, feminism, and disability. Practically, this means cultivating leadership pipelines for disabled women in mixed-issue spaces-city councils, equality bodies, party platforms-and treating accessibility not as downstream accommodation but as an upstream design criterion for campaigns.

Finally, interviewees converge on a concrete agenda capable of animating coalition work: recognising personal assistance as a right; ensuring accessible gynecology and reproductive health; designing anti-violence systems for disabled women, including crisis lines and shelters with communication access; reforming the disability assessment system to remove perverse incentives; and building participatory mechanisms that centre disabled women's expertise.

Taken together, the interviews depict a field that is uneven but generative. Its strength lies in the quiet redesign of institutions and narratives; its vulnerability lies in thin infrastructures and in the persistent misrecognition of disabled women as political subjects. The task ahead is to stabilise the infrastructural base without losing the experimental energy that has made these coalitions and methods possible.

3. Populist Political Discourse and Its Detrimental Effects on Disabled Women

Interviewees place their experiences within a broader change in Polish political culture: populist talk has moved into the mainstream, praising strong, productive, heterosexual bodies and casting social policy as charity for the "weak." This shift has linked effects for disabled people, with sharper harms for women: it turns politics toward paternalism; it sidelines rights-based reforms; it paints dissent as illegitimate; and it ties anti-feminism to an ableist nationalism.

Paternalism becomes performance. Politicians use disability for media moments-cash transfers, photo-ops with "wards," one-off programs-while avoiding systemic changes such as personal assistance, accessible health care, or fairer adjudication. As one of the leading disability-feminist advocates with mobility impairments notes, disabled people appear as "teddy-bears… the kind you can nicely show off with in front of the camera," props for a smiling "good uncle" not as citizens with views or leverage. Women with disabilities are doubly infantilized: gender norms cast women as dependants, and ableist assumptions cast them as incapable.

Charity pushes out rights. When protests are framed mainly through carers' exhaustion, the public learns to see respite care, not autonomy or personal assistance. Interviewees argue that the 2018-2020 protest cycle deepened to some extent the old link between disability and care, pushing rights language further to the edge. Populist rhetoric fits this frame: it can reward carers without recognizing disabled women's claims to bodily autonomy, reproductive justice, or decision-making power.

Dissent is delegitimized and the Overton window narrows. In a climate where activists are branded as elites or troublemakers, feminist-disability critiques are written off as "too radical" or as "culture war." Some advocates point to far-right ideals of the strong, healthy (male) body; even when unstated, this view shapes policy and media, making disabled women less visible as political actors. Policing patterns send the same message: tolerant responses to counter-protests that harass feminist and equality events show whose security the state prioritizes.

Ableist nationalism fuses with anti-feminism. Populist narratives promote a narrow family model and regulate women's bodies, with specific consequences for disabled women already facing medical paternalism. Majority of respondents link feminism to the basic right to decide about one's body especially in recent years-a point echoed in accounts of inaccessible gynecology and the symbolic exclusion of disabled mothers. In this vision, the "nation" is strong when dependency is hidden; disabled women disrupt this by asserting sexual agency, motherhood, paid work, and the right to protest.

Economic securitization and scarcity talk add pressure. Populist scripts ask "who pays for whom" to justify punitive eligibility rules and to stigmatize recipients. Activists describe a culture where people-including some disabled voters-adopt claims that the state "they're robbing me to fund the 'poor folks' while assessments force a humiliating performance of incapacity to access minimal benefits. These views help keep disabled women at the edge of labor markets and politics.

Generational and ideological cross-pressures also matter. Not all disabled people join progressive coalitions; some are drawn to religious-conservative imaginaries that offer moral order and cultural recognition, even as those groups resist redistribution or rights. One of key disability researchers and advocates with visual impairments suggests that strongly religious disabled voters may prefer movements that elevate national-Catholic symbols while downplaying socioeconomic protection, a tension many do not link to their own security. This is less hypocrisy than evidence of how populism offers dignity through hierarchy rather than through expanded rights.

These dynamics produce gender-specific harms. When policy centers the carer, disabled women's autonomy disappears. When police tolerate intimidation of feminist spaces, routes into public life shrink. When reproductive decision-making is restricted, disabled women-already second-guessed by clinicians-are hit first. And when citizenship is equated with productivity and strength, women who need infrastructural supports are treated as outside the political community.

The interviews also map counter-strategies. Activists name that disability should be seen as political, shifting claims from charity to rights; utilized to build pride (with attention to context), and form alliances with other marginalized groups.

Taken together, the interviews show that populist discourse does not merely insult; it reorganises institutions and imaginations in ways that keep disabled women peripheral. The response, activists suggest, is to normalise and mainstream disabled women's leadership, embed access into the design of feminist and civic life, and insist that social protection, health care, and assistance are entitlements - not favours - to which all citizens are equally entitled.

Policy and Advocacy Recommendations

- Mainstream disability and gender perspectives and ensure representative participation within political agendas, anti-populist movements, human rights organisations, and feminist movements.

- Provide organisational and financial support for intersectional disability-gender initiatives, and ensure inclusive, accessible spaces for collaboration with other marginalised groups and allies.

- Align assessments and supports with independent living: scale personal assistance, strengthen autonomy, and pair reforms with public messaging that challenges sexist and ableist stereotypes.

- Build permanent channels for early, continuous input from organisations and collectives led by women with disabilities across policy design, budgeting, delivery, and review.

- Invest in routine, public data and mixed-methods research that separates results by gender, age, disability type, and region to guide targeted action.

- Adopt a national approach to preventing and responding to gender-based violence that recognises disability-specific risks and funds accessible services.

- Make help usable in practice: ensure shelters, hotlines, police, courts, and support centres are physically accessible, communication-friendly, and easy to navigate.

- Provide recurring, survivor-informed training for police, prosecutors, judges, social workers, and victim-support staff on consent, communication, accommodations, and bias.

- Guarantee sexual and reproductive healthcare that is accessible, acceptable, and high-quality-covering gynecology, contraception (including emergency contraception), maternity care, and lawful abortion-always based on free and informed consent.

- Eliminate ambiguity around sterilisation: prohibit coercion; where a woman requests it, ensure clear, lawful access with counselling and safeguards; study current practice, including in institutions.

- Deliver comprehensive, age-appropriate sexuality education in accessible formats, addressing power, consent, relationships, and bodily autonomy.

- Make inclusion the default in schooling: provide reasonable accommodations, trained staff, accessible buildings, and individualised supports rather than segregation or home-schooling.

- Expand decent-work pathways: accessible recruitment, accommodation funds, enforcement against discrimination, targeted upskilling, public-sector hiring goals, and regular labour data split by gender and disability.

- Support parenting: affordable childcare, peer mentoring, and practical assistance co-designed with mothers with disabilities to reduce isolation and financial pressure.

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