



Joint Statement on Best Practices for Countering Gendered De-Democratization in Europe and Beyond

Anti-gender politics is not a peripheral cultural phenomenon but a core component of contemporary autocratization projects. The findings of [the CCINDLE project](#), including the report on [how anti-gender politics contributes to autocratization](#), demonstrate that populist and far-right actors strategically mobilize gendered and intersectional mechanisms - most notably through manipulating the language and institutions of democracy, through violence and interventions into democratic knowledge production - to undermine equality, pluralism, accountability, and democratic participation. They promulgate an exclusionary understanding of the demos, by drawing on [legacies of exclusion and violence](#), including capitalism, colonialism, and fascism, either directly or through the use of symbols, discourses, and political strategies. These processes operate not only in overtly autocratizing regimes, but also within consolidated democracies, where anti-gender actors increasingly deploy democratic language and institutions to advance exclusionary and hierarchical visions of society.

This Joint Statement builds on the results of the CCINDLE project, particularly on the co-production initiatives, which involved actors representing academia, state institutions, grassroots movements, and non-governmental organizations from the countries under study. These initiatives included Feminist Democracy Labs organized in Belgium, Hungary, Germany, Spain, and Sweden, as well as conferences on anti-gender politics and feminist responses to this trend organized in Hungary,

Sweden, and Poland. These meetings allowed us to articulate shared principles and best practices to counter gendered de-democratization, strengthen democratic resilience, and protect the feminist and gender-transformative foundations of democracy. These best practice recommendations are shared below.

I. RECOGNIZING ANTI-GENDER POLITICS AS A SYSTEMIC DEMOCRATIC THREAT

Anti-gender politics contributes to democratic erosion by functioning as part of the autocratic toolbox, employing repression, coercion, control of information and knowledge, and manipulation of democratic institutions. The results of the CCINDLE project demonstrate that this process is bi-directional. Anti-gender politics accelerates autocratization for instance by challenging the rights of minoritized groups (e.g. women, LGBTQ, and Black people) while simultaneously anti-gender narratives are instrumentalized by autocratizing regimes to consolidate their legitimacy and power as morally right and justified. Moreover, our study shows the importance of recognizing and addressing the historical and structural legacies of exclusion that anti-gender politics mobilizes.

A first best practice, therefore, is the **explicit recognition of anti-gender politics as a structural risk to democracy**, rather than as a value-based disagreement or isolated cultural backlash

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against feminism or LGBTQ rights. Democratic institutions must move beyond issue-specific or sectoral responses and adopt holistic approaches to democracy that treat gender equality not as a separate issue, but as integral to democratic governance, the rule of law, and human rights protection. This includes systematically integrating gendered analysis into democracy monitoring, early warning mechanisms, and rule-of-law assessments at national, EU, and international levels.

II. COUNTERING GENDERED VIOLENCE AS A MECHANISM OF DE-DEMOCRATIZATION

Our study identifies gendered [violence](#) - physical, psychological, sexual, symbolic, economic, and cyber - as a central enforcement mechanism of anti-gender politics. Such violence is targeted, strategic, and designed to prevent and silence dissent, marginalize feminist, LGBTQIA+, and racialized actors, and deter democratic participation. Importantly, anti-gender politics also undermines policy responsiveness to violence by weakening legal frameworks, obstructing implementation, and excluding expert civil society from policy processes. Thus, **addressing and combating different forms of violence is of key importance for safeguarding democracy.**

Best practices in this domain include:

- Safeguarding comprehensive violence-prevention frameworks, including full implementation of international and European standards on gender-based violence, and resisting attempts to dilute, instrumentalize, or selectively apply them.

- Introducing effective measures to ensure that political actors, civil society, journalists, educators, and knowledge producers are protected from gendered political violence, harassment, and lawfare, including in digital spaces.
- Ensuring institutional accountability by preventing the shielding of perpetrators, particularly where state actors or state-aligned organizations are implicated.
- Recognizing gendered violence as a democratic harm, not solely as a criminal or social issue, and addressing its chilling effects on participation, representation, and dissent.

Countering gendered violence is not only a matter of protection, but a precondition for meaningful democratic participation and equality, especially in the case of vulnerable groups.

III. DEFENDING DEMOCRATIC KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND EPISTEMIC PLURALISM

A second core mechanism of gendered de-democratization identified in the study is [anti-gender interventions into knowledge production, dissemination, and access](#). These interventions include delegitimizing feminist and equality-oriented knowledge and attacking scholars who work in these fields, promoting counter-scientific narratives, and establishing parallel knowledge institutions aligned with exclusionary political projects. Such practices restrict academic freedom, contribute to epistemic chaos, erosion of trust, and the breakdown of the very process of democratic deliberation.

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Best practices to counter these processes include:

- Defending academic freedom and freedom of expression across all educational levels, including protection against censorship, political interference, and administrative repression.
- Ensuring pluralism in expertise and policymaking by safeguarding the inclusion of feminist, LGBTQIA+, anti-racist, and intersectional knowledge in advisory bodies, curricula, and public debate.
- Resisting the institutionalization of exclusionary counter-knowledge, including the strategic funding and legitimization of pseudoscientific or ideologically aligned knowledge actors.
- Investing in public knowledge infrastructures, including independent research, data collection, and education, as pillars of democratic accountability and evidence-based policymaking.
- Integrating gendered analyses into all democracy and rule-of-law frameworks.

Democracy depends on open, critical, and contestable knowledge environments. Undermining these environments is a direct attack on democratic governance.

IV. STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY AND INTERSECTIONAL ALLIANCES

The CCINDLE reports show that anti-gender politics systematically targets feminist, LGBTQIA+ and anti-racist civil society as key democratic actors and

carriers of transformative knowledge. Best practices therefore require moving beyond instrumental civil society support toward long-term democratic partnership between different actors, including [feminist institutional](#) actors (e.g. politicians) and extra-institutional actors, who [experiment](#) with democracy.

Best practices in this area include:

- Providing sustainable, independent funding for civil society organisations working on gender equality, democracy, and human rights.
- Protecting civil society access to policymaking, consultation, and service provision.
- Supporting intersectional alliances that connect gender equality to broader struggles against racism, authoritarianism, and social exclusion.
- Recognizing feminist and gender equality actors as democratic defenders, not special-interest groups.

Creating and nurturing cooperation between different civil society and political actors across sections is crucial for sharing knowledge, strategizing and pushing for change.

CONCLUSION

Countering gendered de-democratization is not optional but essential for the safeguarding of democracy itself. Anti-gender politics targets the very foundations of pluralism, equality, and accountability, and must be addressed accordingly. Thus, there is a need for all pro-democracy actors

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and institutions to reaffirm our shared responsibility to uphold democratic values, resist autocratization, and advance inclusive, feminist, and transformative democracies in Europe and beyond.

Note: This joint statement is based on research carried out by the CCINDLE project (Ref: 101061256) and funded by the European Commission that examines feminist institutional responses to anti-gender and anti democratic forces in eight European parliaments: Belgium, the European Parliament, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Poland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. CCINDLE aims to analyse threats to democracy and feminism and to co-create solutions that are feminist, anti homophobic and anti-racist, that support high quality democratic politics, and that strengthen responses to anti-gender efforts.

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For more information on the CCINDLE project, visit [our website](#).

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