

GE webinar series - Webinar 4

**The impact of anti-gender discourses and politics on
academic and research organizations**

10 February 2025, 11:00 – 12:30 CET

Offered by:



With:



Introduction to NEXUS - Twinning Research and Innovation Institutions to Design and Implement Inclusive GEPs

Sara Clavero, TU Dublin



NEXUS - Twinning Research and Innovation Institutions to Design and Implement Inclusive GEPs

- 10 partner consortium, covering 9 countries (BG, CY, FR, HU, IE, IT, PL, RS, TR)
- Co-designs, implements, monitors and evaluates innovative and targeted actions aimed at bridging inclusivity gaps in 9 research organisations and their respective R&I ecosystems
- A twinning scheme -“NEXUS twin trios”- are set up to jointly design, implement and evaluate inclusive actions that provide solutions to their common inclusivity needs and priorities

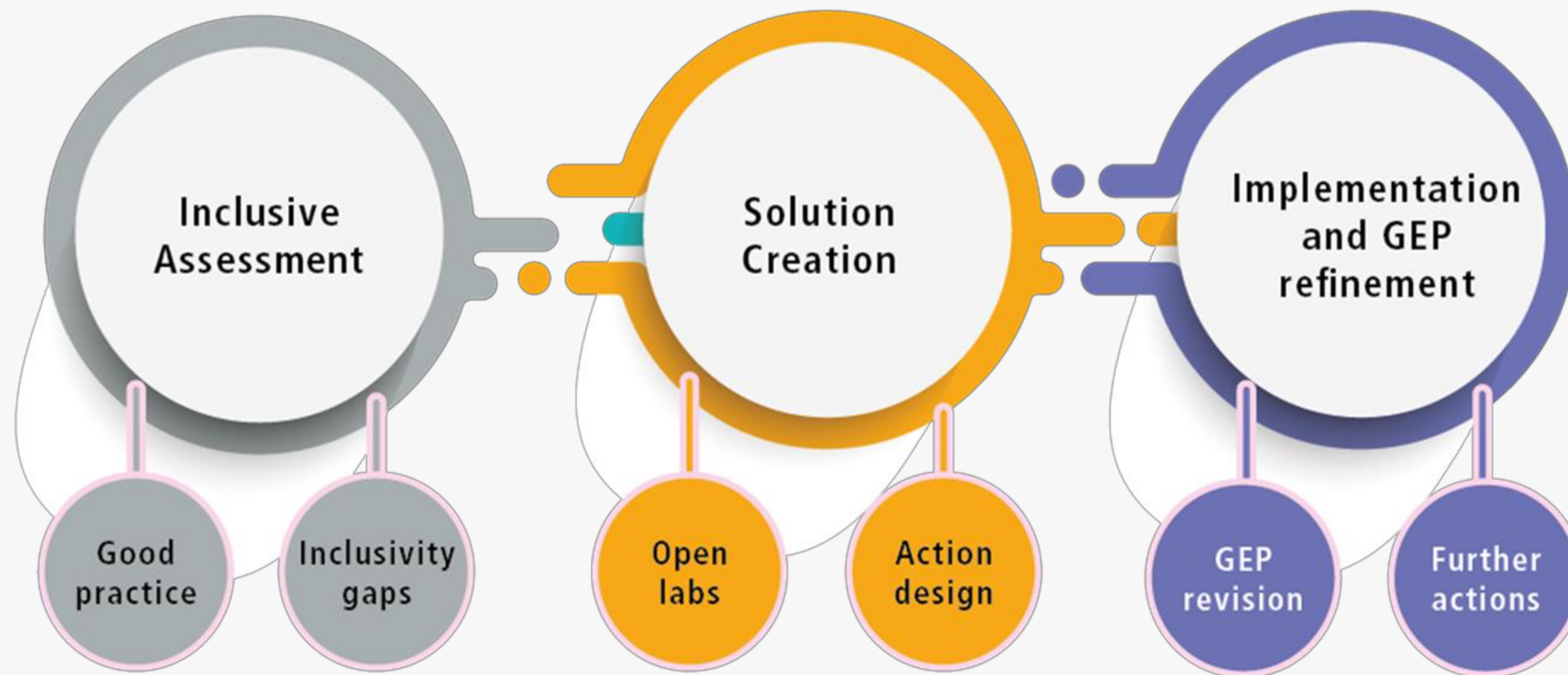
Grant agreement ID:
101094949
EU contribution:
€ 998 713,75
Duration: 24 months
Start Date: 1 September
2023
End date: 31 August 2025

45 inclusive actions
implemented overall

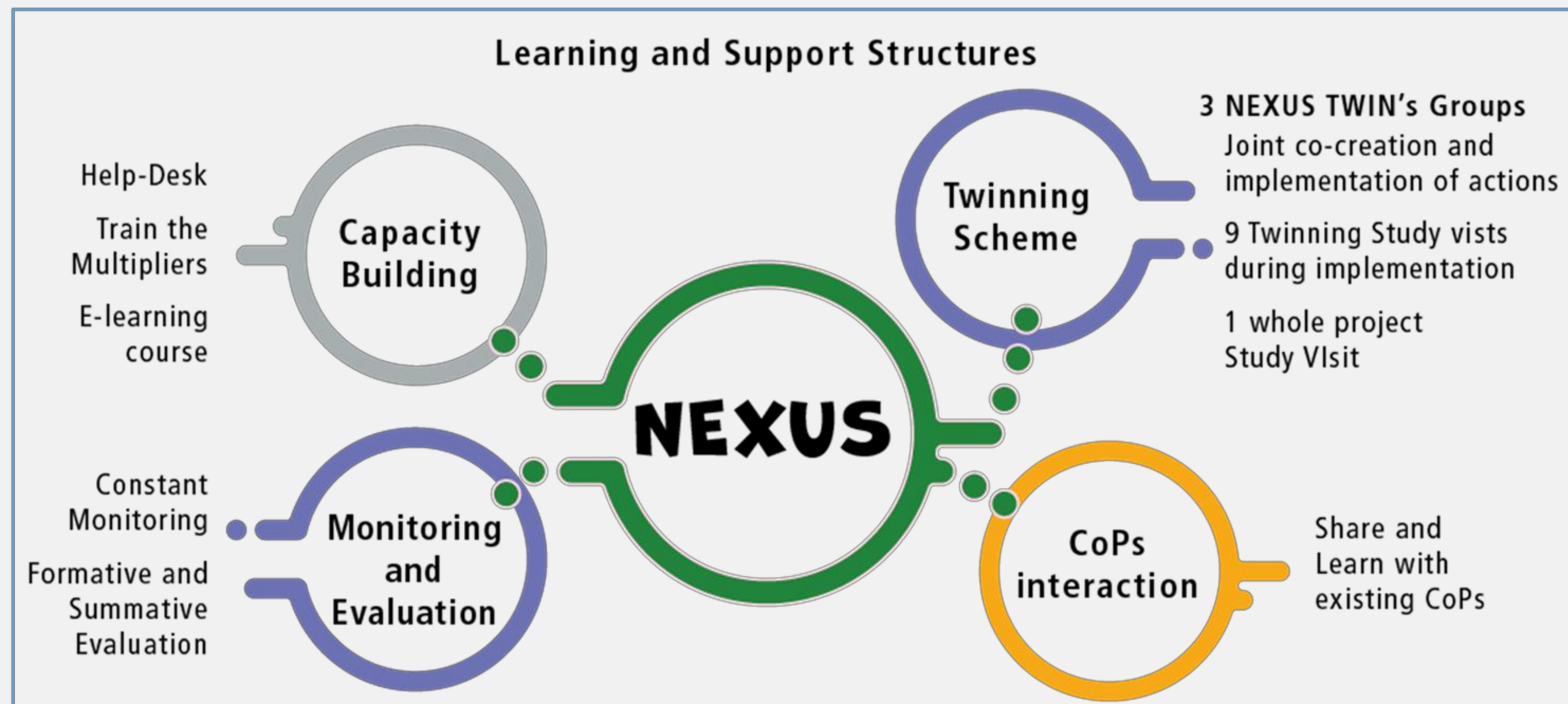
27 actions from the
NEXUS twin groups
(9 per group)

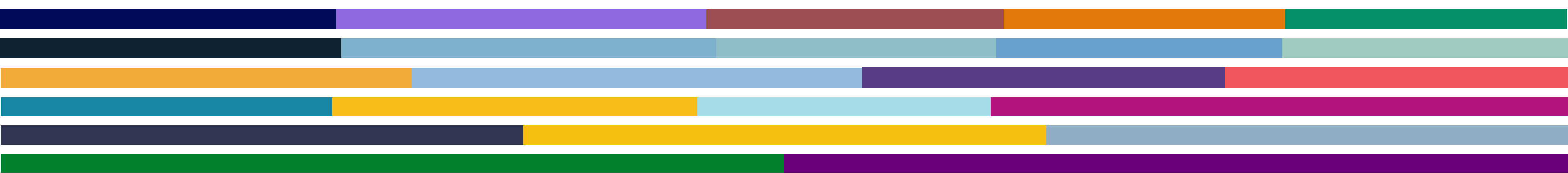
18 actions from
individual GEP
WGs

The NEXUS Process



Learning & Support





Learning objectives

1. Understand the presence and extent of anti-gender actors and politics in Europe based on findings from ongoing Horizon Europe projects.
2. Gain insights on how anti-gender discourses are infiltrating the policies of HEIs, RPOs, and RFOs, especially those that adopt inclusive and intersectional approaches.
3. Reflect on strategies and actions to support institutional change for inclusive gender equality in a regressive political climate.



Agenda

- 11:00 - 11:05 Welcome and introduction from the NEXUS Project - Maria Sangiuliano (Smart Venice), Sara Clavero (TU Dublin)
- 11:05 - 11:20 Anti-gender politics, their discourses and feminist responses: findings from the FIERCE Project - Lise Rolandsen Agustín (Aalborg University)
- 11:20 - 11:35 Politics of knowledge: findings from the CCINDLE Project - Silvia Díaz Fernández (Universidad Complutense de Madrid)
- 11:35 - 11:50 Challenges and resistances to intersectionality in promoting inclusive Gender Equality policies in research organizations: Findings from the INSPIRE Project - Rachel Palmén (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya)
- 11:50 - 12:10 Questions from NEXUS - Maria Sangiuliano, Sara Clavero (NEXUS Project)
- 12:10 - 12:25 Q&A session
- 12:25 - 12:30 Closing remarks

Speakers



Lise Rolandsen Agustín
Associate Professor
Aalborg University
FIERCE Project



Silvia Díaz Fernández
Postdoctoral Researcher
Universidad Complutense de Madrid
CCINDLE Project



Rachel Palmén
Senior Researcher
Universitat Oberta de Catalunya
INSPIRE Project



Anti-gender politics, their discourses and feminist responses: findings from the FIERCE Project

Lise Rolandsen Agustín (Aalborg University)

- In FIERCE you are studying anti-gender politics extensively: how are they framed and what are the main features of feminist responses in terms of mobilizations? How is intersectionality playing a role in both?
- FIERCE is actively promoting alliances and synergies between feminist scholars/academics and movements: do you believe there is potential to strengthen these alliances to respond to anti-gender politics in academia and society? What are the challenges that feminist academics and activists meet when promoting joint actions?



FIERCE

*Feminist movements
revitalizing Democracy in Europe.*

FIERCE perspectives on the impact of anti-gender discourses and politics on academic and research organizations

NEXUS and sister projects Webinar series
February 10, 2025

Lise Rolandsen Agustín, Aalborg University (Denmark)



**Funded by
the European Union**

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Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Commission.

The FIERCE project

WP1	Anti-gender rhetorics/movements and their influence on democracies	WP4	Participatory research co-creation Labs
WP2	Feminist movements and democracies	WP5	Innovative strategies and solution pathways
WP3	Cross-cutting comparison of thematic areas within a policy framework and feminist contributions to engendering democracy	Data	Interviews, critical frame analysis, discourse network analysis FIERCE actions (democratic innovation)



Anti-gender politics: discursive coherence

- ❑ **Strength of ‘gender ideology’ critique** and articulation of common frames
- ❑ Nationalist discourses **entangled** with religious morality and traditional family values
- ❑ Protection of **children** and young people + parents’ right to **educate** their children (against indoctrination)
- ❑ ‘Gender ideology’ and ‘woke culture’ framed as **foreign imposition** threatening national identity



Anti-gender politics: Strategies of framing and influence

- Liberal discourse on **rights and freedoms** to persuade and shape public narratives
 - Freedom vs authoritarianism (wokeness);
 - Commonsense vs non-sensical identity politics;
 - Proper science vs pseudo-science (production of alternative knowledge to challenge academic authority)
- Instrumental use of (children's) rights to gain **legitimacy**; framing exclusionary beliefs as silenced majority needing protection

Feminist responses

Challenge deeply entrenched patriarchal norms; foster solidarity; education and training; peer-to-peer support; care-based organizing models

Types of responses

- confrontational vs non-confrontational (level of engagement)
- re-active vs pro-active (protecting achievements vs 'productive resistance')
- antagonistic vs non-antagonistic

Roman Kuhar & Rok Smrdelj (forthcoming): *Resisting the Backlash: Anti-Gender Mobilizations in Europe and the Feminist Response*, Palgrave Macmillan

Feminist responses

Direct action and public demonstrations

Legal and institutional actions

Watchdog advocacy

Transformative communication approach

Digital activism

Strategic (non)-engagement

Community and coalition-building

Self-care and precautionary activities

Systematic strategies to ensure accurate information dissemination and counter misinformation (deconstruct false claims; evidence-based counter-narratives)

Alliances to create united and comprehensive response (resources, expertise, influence)

Support, empowerment, and protection for individuals (peer-to-peer assistance; systematic reporting of discrimination)

Roman Kuhar & Rok Smrdelj (forthcoming): *Resisting the Backlash: Anti-Gender Mobilizations in Europe and the Feminist Response*, Palgrave Macmillan



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Thank you!



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Politics of knowledge: Findings from the CCINDLE Project

Silvia Díaz Fernández (Universidad Complutense de Madrid)

- In CCINDLE you are researching several forms of expression of anti-gender/anti-feminist politics in different arenas, including, for example, in institutional politics and the digital public space: what are your key findings so far, and which main feminist solutions/responses are emerging?
- In CCINDLE you started with a view of anti-gender politics as the tip of the iceberg of deeper exclusionary forces that are affecting European democracies, with feminist and gender equality movements as democratic forces. How can feminist knowledge production counteract the spread of exclusionary forces, as well as their impact on universities and research organizations?

Anti-gender forces in Spain

Eroding democracy and challenging feminist advances

Dr. Silvia Díaz Fernández
Prof. Emanuela Lombardo
Dr. Paloma Caravantes
Universidad Complutense de Madrid



Consortium

Radboud University

Prof.Mieke Verloo

**Sheffield
University, RU**

**University of
Amsterdam, Holanda**

**University of
Helsinki, Finlandia**

**Central European
University, Hungría**

**Complutense
University of
Madrid, España**

**University of
Antwerp, Bélgica**

**University of
Trento, Italia**

**University of
Varsovia, Polonia**

**Södertörn
University, Suecia**



2022



2026

Lines of work



Anti-gender campaigns and how **they challenge democracy**, particularly in relation to violence and the politics of knowledge production.



Future societies envisioned in feminist theories and practices related to **democracy** in Europe, with a focus on intersectional justice, inclusion, and participation.



Feminist movements and **institutional feminist responses** to anti-gender forces and other anti-democratic forces.

New Processes of De-Democratisation?

Complicated legacies that have shaped a liberal democracy with exclusionary mechanisms, now being exploited by actors opposed to equality (gender, racial, LGBTI rights, etc.).

- European democracy is not perfect and was **built on axes of oppression**: racism, LGBTI-phobia, colonisation...
- To halt the current de-democratisation, we must address the **deep-rooted problems within the European project** itself.

Mapping anti-gender actors and discourses to determine **their impact on current de-democratisation processes**, always understanding them as a continuation of previous legacies.

Knowledge production



- Reducing political and civil rights, perpetuating exclusion of specific groups in the public sphere and eroding democratic principles through the normalisation of violence and epistemic discrimination.
- Knowledge about gender, race, sexuality and class is a constant battleground for anti-gender actors.
- Production of **alternative knowledge for anti-feminist purposes** as a response to feminist theory.



At glance: knowledge production

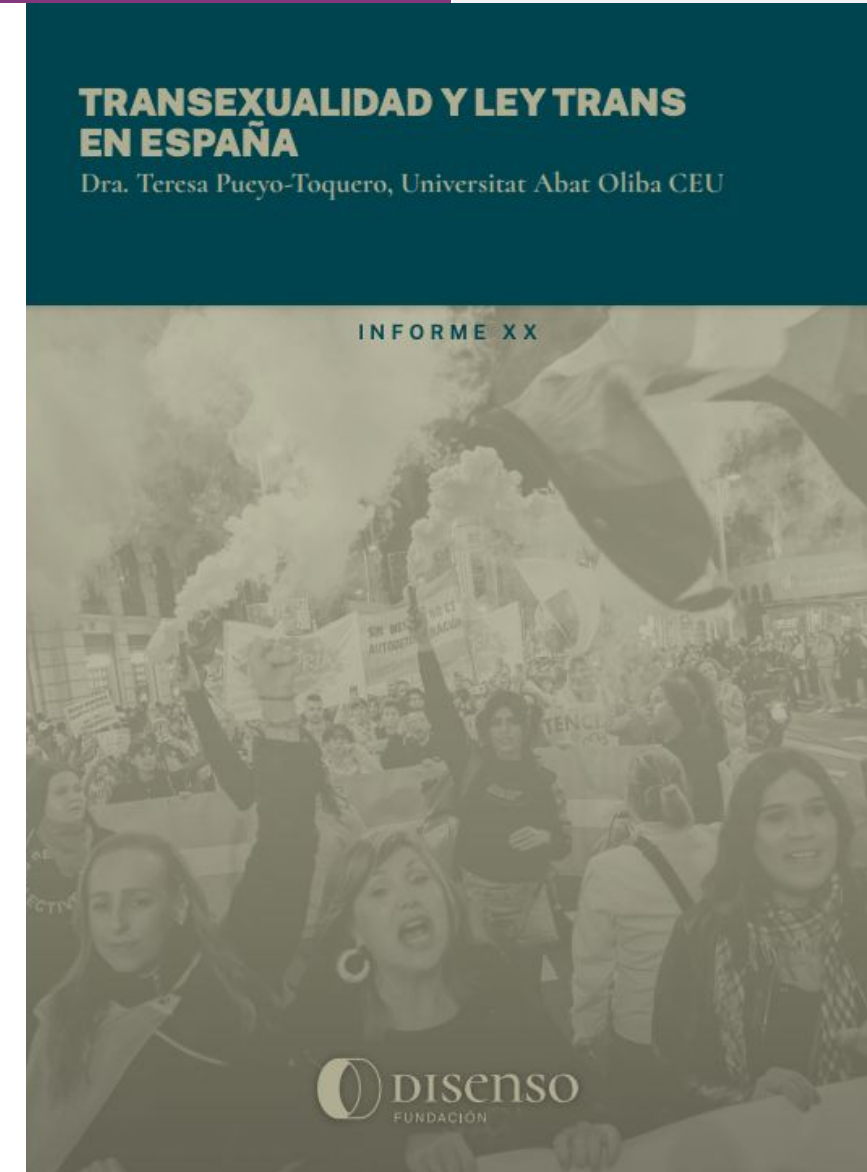


- Against gender ideology: engagement in a **complete discursive reframing of feminist and anti-racist actors** through re-signification mechanisms. Feminism is totalitarian, feminism is anti-men, feminism is discriminatory, etc.
- **Other ideological convergences**: anti-trans rhetoric, racist & xenophobic narratives (emphasis on islamophobic sentiments), and intensified nationalism in defence of Western values.
- **Misuse of existing data** or outright **data manipulation** to support their claims, especially with regards to sexual and reproductive rights and trans rights.
- Use of extended networks of anti-gender actors to finance activities (lobbying events, commission “studies”) to produce **alternative expert knowledge**.

Knowledge production: Spain



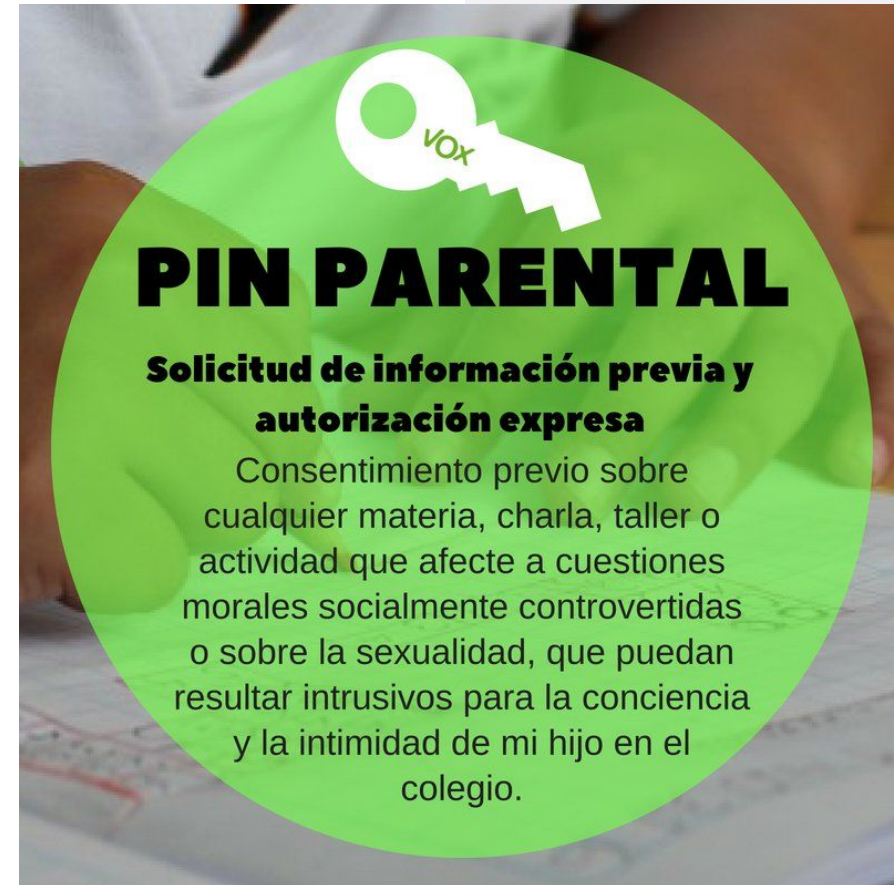
- **Common sense frame** used to charge against feminism across multiple anti-gender actors in different settings (parliamentary, media, academic circles...)
 - **(Mis)Utilisation of data and expert opinions:** creation of organisations with explicit links to political parties (Disenso foundation led by Santiago Abastcal, leader of VOX) and commissioning of specific reports to “debunk” transfeminist claims. Use of expert voices, such as the Spanish Society of Psychiatrists, to validate transphobic stances by resourcing to “scientific” data.



Knowledge production: Spain



- **Attacks on academic institutions and curricula:** portrayal of schools and universities as “breeding grounds of ideological indoctrination”. Emphasis on parental pin campaigns and work towards implementing actual policy changes in the regions where VOX-PP govern.
- **Attacks on scholars and academic freedom:** less frequent, but notable criticism directed towards queer academics by trans-exclusionary feminists (public forums, self-organised anti-trans events, books).



Knowledge production: Spain



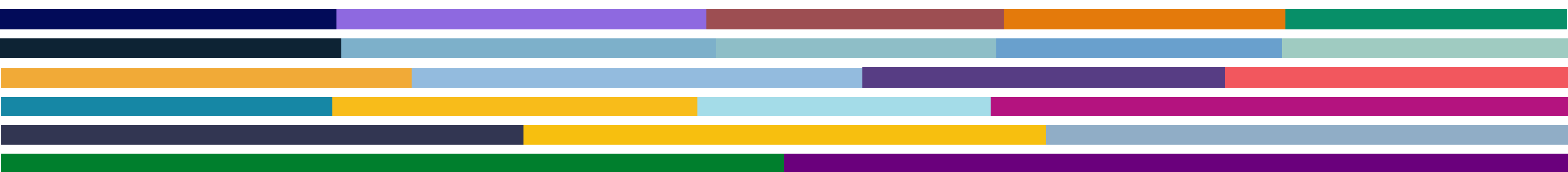
- **Cultural and political strategies:**
 - i. **Banning gender knowledge in the cultural sphere.** Example: VOX veto of a Virginia Woolf play in Madrid. Policymaking as a tool to build (or preserve) Spanish identity.
 - ii. **Assertion of their ultraconservative, nativist and traditional values through institutions and production of alternative knowledge.** Example: Disenso foundation, international network of far-right allies (Patriots for Europe Congress, Madrid 2025); creation of own universities (ISSEP Madrid, founded by Marion Maréchal, granddaughter of Jean-Marie Le Pen); new political parties - Se Acabó La Fiesta (3 seats in the latest EP elections) and Aliança Catalana, Catalanian party elected in Ripoll.

Anti-gender forces in Spain

Eroding democracy and challenging feminists advances

Silvia Díaz Fernández
Emanuela Lombardo
Paloma Caravantes
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

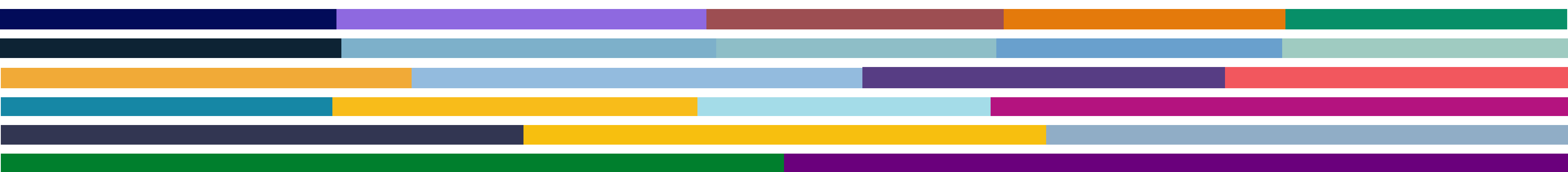




Challenges and resistances to intersectionality in promoting inclusive Gender Equality policies in research organizations: Findings from the INSPIRE Project

Rachel Palmén (Universitat Oberta de Catalunya)

- In the INSPIRE project you are focusing on how to promote inclusive/intersectional gender equality policies in academic and research organizations, the starting point being the widely acknowledged challenge of translating intersectional theory into practice: how is the INSPIRE Centre of Excellence contributing to this, and what are the main emerging challenges that these more inclusive and intersectional approaches are facing in a context where anti-gender/anti-feminist forces are becoming more and more vocal and powerful in Europe and globally?
- An Open letter to the Commissioner for R&I has been recently released by the GENDERACTIONplus consortium with more than 600 signatories asking to keep the momentum and continue to support the advancements made so far on intersectional and inclusive GE and the GEP requirement in Horizon Europe, by strengthening gender in the ERA Policy Agenda 2025-27 and the next Framework programme: do you think the recent advancements are at risk and what could be done to prevent/address backsliding?



Q&A Session



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Link in chat: <https://forms.gle/ps5RPe3jXSWcr9An7>



STREAM IT

Streaming girls and women
into STEAM education,
innovation and research



NEXUS



SUPPORTER



GenderSAFE
ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN ACADEMIA

BUDGET  **IT**

GE Sisters projects