

Mission Creeps

How EU Funding and Activist NGOs Captured the Gender Agenda

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Executive summary

In short:

- The European Union’s (EU) gender policy has undergone a radical transformation, moving far beyond its original focus on women’s rights to embrace a broad and ideologically driven agenda centred on gender identity.
- This shift has been driven not by democratic debate or public demand, but by a powerful network of EU-funded NGOs that have embedded their priorities deep within EU policymaking. With millions in EU funding, these organizations have reshaped policies, redefined gender, and silenced dissenting voices—all without democratic oversight.
- This report exposes how gender activism has been institutionalised through strategic lobbying, enormous EU grants, and direct involvement in policy formation. It outlines the mechanisms through which a small but well-connected group of NGOs, heavily subsidized by EU programs, have dictated the EU’s gender agenda.
- By funnelling public money into activist organizations and activist research, the EU has not only bypassed national governments but also imposed policies that have important consequences for families and women and which many citizens and member states strongly oppose.

Massive EU Funding for Gender Identity NGOs

- The EU has allocated at least €221 million to NGOs promoting gender identity ideology over the last decade.
- €40.5 million has gone to the most radical transgender advocacy groups.
- €64.95 million was allocated solely to ILGA worldwide, a leading gender identity advocacy group.
- Major beneficiaries include:
 - ILGA-Europe (€16 million, plus €65 million to its international arm)
 - IGLYO (€6 million)
 - Transgender Europe (TGEU) (€4.6 million)
 - EuroCentralAsianLesbian*Community (€6.2 million)
 - Organisation Intersex International Europe (€1.2 million)
- At least €26 million has been used to fund activist-driven research promoting gender identity ideology.

Covert NGO Influence on EU Policy

- Activists shape EU laws: NGOs have played a direct role in drafting EU gender policies, frequently operating without public transparency.
- Secretive lobbying tactics: ILGA urged politicians to keep their activities “out of the public eye whenever necessary,” with over 1,000 candidates signing a 2024 European Election pledge to support this strategy.
- Radical new LGBTQ strategy: The EU has officially adopted a strategy calling for self-ID for children

Policy capture through extensive EU institutional access:

- ILGA-Europe: 42 meetings with Commissioners, 14 public consultations, 16 roadmap contributions, and 10 European Parliament meetings, and 3 expert groups.
- Transgender Europe: 7 Commissioner meetings, 8 public consultations.
- The influence of these organisations raises concerns about democratic accountability, as policies are increasingly dictated by unelected activists rather than open national debates.

Undermining National Competencies

- NGOs use EU funding to pressure national governments into adopting gender identity laws, bypassing national sovereignty.
- The proposed EU Certificate of Parenthood could override national definitions of family law, forcing member states to recognise legal parenthood definitions imposed by Brussels.
- Education policies influenced without and often explicitly against parental consent:
 - NGO campaigners push for gender transitions in children to be hidden from parents, and for parents to be forced into compliance through the courts if necessary
 - Reports indicate that in Portugal, schools can facilitate child social transitioning without parental knowledge, and parental opposition may lead to state intervention.
 - Mandatory LGBTQI-inclusive curricula are being implemented despite parental concerns.

Weaponisation of Research Funding

- EU-funded research is being used as an advocacy tool to justify policy changes rather than for neutral academic inquiry.
- Horizon Europe grants fund ideological projects, including:
 - “Challenging the gender binary” (€2.4 million)
 - “MEN4DEM”, a €3 million study treating traditional masculinity as a threat to democracy.

Policy Consequences

- Erosion of women’s rights: Policies originally designed to protect women and girls have been reshaped to prioritise gender identity.
- Redefinition of legal terms: The shift from “violence against women” to “gender-based violence” dilutes protections specifically for biological females.
- Single-sex spaces at risk: The push for gender self-identification raises concerns over privacy, safety, and the integrity of women’s rights.

Call for Transparency and Oversight

- The report demands democratic accountability and urges the EU to ensure policy decisions are subject to public debate rather than activist lobbying.
- Greater scrutiny of EU funding allocation is needed to prevent ideological capture.
- Safeguards must be implemented to respect national sovereignty, parental rights, and the safety of women and children.

Introduction

The European Union's gender policy has been hijacked. What began as a fight for women's rights and equality has been transformed into an ideological project dictated by a handful of well-funded NGOs. These activist organizations, bankrolled by millions in EU funding, have embedded their radical vision into EU law, redefining gender, silencing dissent, and bypassing democratic debate. Under the guise of 'progress,' the EU is using public money to enforce policies to which many citizens never agreed and about which they were never asked.

This report exposes how the EU funds its own policy capture, creating a closed system where activists influence lawmakers, lawmakers fund activists, and the public is left out of the conversation. Policies that undermine women's rights, erase biological sex, and strip parents of authority are being pushed through without transparency or accountability. As member states face financial pressure to comply, the EU is not just legislating—it is dictating culture. This is not democracy. It's ideological enforcement—and it's time to call it out.

The report is structured as follows: First, it provides a historical overview of how gender has been conceptualised and integrated into EU policy, from its origins in women's rights to its current expansive focus on LGBTIQ issues. Next, it examines the role of EU-funded NGOs in shaping a captured agenda, highlighting how these groups have used their financial resources and access to EU institutions to push for policy changes and bypass public debate. Finally, the report explores the consequences of these policies for families, education, women's and gay rights—consequences that the icy atmosphere of policy capture and authoritarian tactics have made it more and more difficult to talk about. But the time for silence has ended.

By shedding light on the connections between EU funding, NGO lobbying, and the expansion of the gender agenda, this report aims to spark a broader debate about the role of unelected actors in shaping EU policy and the need for greater transparency and accountability in how EU funds are allocated and used.

1. The Discovery of Gender

When we read the term ‘gender’ in current policy documents and NGO activities, it’s often unclear what it actually means. Over decades, the term has transformed from a shorthand for women and women’s rights to a much broader and confusing concept of ‘gender identity’. This shift has been driven by academic theories, activist movements, and well-funded-NGOs—many of whose funds come from the EU itself. These groups have been successful in enshrining a nebulous concept of gender increasingly disconnected with sex into EU policy and funding programmes. It is a story of policy capture through which, ironically, the voices of biological women have been systematically sidelined.

From Women’s Rights to Gender Identity

Movements for women’s rights began to emerge as early as the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Liberal figures like John Stuart Mill defended the rights of women, arguing their inferiority was not innate, but came from social arrangements like enforced domestic drudgery. Toward the middle of the twentieth century, the differences between men’s and women’s bodies were core to political demands aiming to further women’s equality, for instance, in movements for labour market and family policies around pregnancy, birth and childcare.¹

The early feminist movement had seen sex as the basis of women’s inequality and ‘gender’ was not used widely until the 1970s. The term emerged from psychologists working with intersex people as a way of separating biological sex from gender roles which they argued were learned in childhood.² By the 1970s and 1980s, the term had made its way into the feminist vocabulary as part of a criticism of masculine and feminine stereotypes and to distinguish between biological sex and the social expectations attached to it.³ Still, gender acted as a shorthand for the specific difficulties that women experience in society. However, the gradual distancing of sex from gender in academic discussions made it possible for sex and gender to become more and more distanced from each other, and eventually, to downplay the importance of sex and biology.

One of the most significant ways in which gender entered into policy at the European level was through ‘gender mainstreaming’. Still functioning as a shorthand for women’s equality, gender mainstreaming called for strategies designed to achieve equality between men and women to be integrated into the design, implementation and monitoring of any policy or programme.⁴ Gender mainstreaming was formally adopted as a legal obligation for all EU member states with the signing of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997. While this approach was initially focused on addressing inequalities between men and women, it laid the groundwork for the eventual expansion of the gender agenda to include LGBTIQ issues and for these to be widely embedded in the policy and practice of the European Union and its member states.

From Women’s Rights to Gay Rights

This was able to happen because the project of supporting women’s rights became subject to significant mission creep. The rumblings of change began to appear as early as the 1980s, as intersectional critiques emerged questioning how much traditional feminism had really reflected the ‘lived experience’ of the people for whom it was supposed to advocate. Intersectionalism argues for ‘recognition of the ways that race, class, age, and – fundamentally – power intersect with issues of gender and sexuality.’⁵ From this perspective,

liberation could only be achieved if movements incorporated ‘the story of gay rights, recognising the combination of a variety of insurgent struggles across race, gender, class, and sexuality.’⁶

This coincided with policy shifts at the European level. Already by the 1990s, there was a sense in EU policy circles that the gender equality issue had lost its ‘sex appeal’.⁷ Officials looking for new challenges were sympathetic to lobby groups like ILGA (then the International Lesbian and Gay Association) and Stonewall who wanted to introduce policies combatting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation onto the EU agenda. In the 1990s and early 2000s, claims-makers’ encounters with ‘friendly elites’, linkage with existing issues and the rising resonance of human rights and the widening of the social policy agenda in the EU contributed to the salience and institutionalisation of the rights of gays and lesbians.⁸

From Gay Rights to Gender Identity

The expansion of the EU’s gender agenda to include LGBTIQ rights accelerated in the early 2000s, driven by a combination of academic theories, activist movements, and the strategic efforts of NGOs. The result is a dramatically transformed concept of gender, which no longer refers to the specific difficulties of women or even of gays and lesbians, but a more expansive agenda that includes a broad interpretation of gender increasingly divorced from biology. EU-funded NGOs have been key to driving this, as they used financial resources and strategic positioning to redefine gender in clandestine ways that align with their ideological priorities. How did this happen?

As we have seen, the concept of gender had been used by early feminists to argue that gender roles were socially constructed, not biologically determined. This meant that while biology can hold women back (for instance, when pregnancy, birth and childrearing affect work) there is no innate reason why women should not have the same rights and opportunities as men. It was this understanding of gender equality that was institutionalised into early international policymaking, including in the Amsterdam Treaty, and which was still dominant in the early 2000s. For instance, commentators across a 2003 volume published for and on behalf of the UN entitled, *Mainstreaming gender, democratizing the State?* refer persistently to women and men as the most significant categories of people, making no explicit reference to gender identity.⁹

However, the success of the gay rights movement provided a justification for expanding the gender equality and discrimination agenda to include not only women but also other marginalized groups, including LGBTIQ individuals. At the same time, academic discussions began to distance gender more and more from sex, even arguing that gender precedes sex as a cultural system of expectations arbitrarily imposed on people at birth.¹⁰ These developments paved the way for prioritising ‘gender identity’ over sex-based protections.

The increased emphasis on gender is reflected in the changing makeup of gay rights organisations in the 1990s and early 2000s. Organisations previously concerned with the rights of lesbians and gays began changing their names and adapting their missions to reflect the inclusion of trans, intersex and other groups. For example, prominent campaign group ILGA-Europe began its life in 1996 as the European branch of a gay rights group founded in 1978. By 2008 it had changed its name from the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) to ‘ILGA, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association’.¹¹ Similarly, an associated and highly influential campaign group, IGLYO was founded in 1984 as the International Gay and Lesbian Youth Organisation. By the mid-2000s, it had renamed itself the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer & Intersex Youth and Student Organisation.¹²

As issues concerning lesbians and gays also became part of the ‘normal policymaking process’, concerns for more expansive concepts of gender identity had a clearer entry point.¹³ Transgender advocacy groups’ alignment with pre-existing LGB groups accelerated after the First European Transgender Council in Vienna in 2005 and allowed them to benefit from funding earmarked for these causes.¹⁴ Intentionally avoiding public scrutiny, more contentious policies like gender self-identification (the ability to change one’s official gender without the need for surgery or other medical acts) started being bundled into many countries’ passing of policies with greater public support like gay marriage.¹⁵ In this way, the net of LGB issues was widened to include concerns for transgender people, but the populations of many countries remained largely unaware. These developments were eclipsed by policy advancements headlined by greater acceptance of gay and lesbian people.

Through these activities, concern for gay rights expanded so that it no longer meant lesbians and gay people, but also a range of other sexualities and identity categories. And the idea of gender began to expand so that it no longer referred to men and women—but a range of new gender categories at variance with biological sex.

This expanded language was able to make considerable inroads into policymaking with little in the way of public debate because the agendas were still the same: promoting gender equality and gay rights. But what was meant by these terms had changed. For example, a handbook on ‘new dimensions of gender mainstreaming’ published in 2020 warns at the outset that:

Women do not represent a homogenous group, and hence, the question of intersectionality should be of prime importance while designing strategies for women empowerment. The inclusion of *all genders including transgender* and other sexual minorities also should be taken care of to ensure sustainable development.¹⁶ (*emphasis added*)

Even the Wikipedia page for the topic ‘gender mainstreaming’ now refers to it as involving a concern for ‘all genders’ instead of its initial concern for ‘men and women’.¹⁷

These changes were driven in large part by LGBTIQ advocacy groups, which successfully leveraged a complex interplay of institutions and agendas at the European level including the European Commission, the Council of Europe (CoE), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR).¹⁸ For example, gender NGOs have used strategic litigation to reshape the European legal landscape in relation to gender. In landmark cases like *A.P., Garçon et Nicot v. France* (2017) and *X and Y v. Romania* (2021), ILGA-Europe and Transgender EU (TGEU) intervened to challenge states that required some form of medical transition as part of the process of legal gender change.¹⁹ This strategic litigation has allowed these groups to bypass national legislatures, pushing their preferred gender policies from the top-down.

What is more, through programmes like JUST EU, resources for this strategic litigation are financed by the EU itself. JUST EU works with NGOs to ‘enhance their knowledge of LGBTI fundamental rights’ as well as strengthening the ‘legal and non-legal skills’ needed by NGOs to ‘engage in strategic litigation’ at the national and EU level.²⁰ ILGA-Europe has received €7.08 million euros in funding through JUST EU over the past decade, while TGEU has received €2.93 million.²¹

Activist NGOs also took advantage of an expanded remit provided by the EU and CoE’s growing focus on social policy and social inclusion since the 1990s. They used these new channels to push for policies at the international level, again bypassing national politics and imposing their desired policies from the top down.²² For example, in 2008, ILGA-Europe and Transgender Europe (TGEU) received funding from the

European Commission to conduct research on the situation of trans people in the EU which they used as an advocacy tool,²³ kicking off what would become a powerful lobbying approach where the EU funds advocacy research used to lobby itself for an expanded trans policy agenda.²⁴

After 2008, TGEU expanded its role as an advocacy NGO, participating in expert meetings, CoE consultations, and OSCE working groups on gender rights.²⁵ Officials and lobbyists began to develop a ‘back and forth’ relationship, where NGOs exerted a powerful influence over key issue papers at the European level, which in turn reinforced the legitimacy of their mission.²⁶ European Parliament reports that became pivotal in placing LGBTIQ issues on the European agenda were drafted by activists working as assistants within parliamentary groups.²⁷ These same activists engaged in lobby work that resulted in, for instance, Article 13 of the EC Treaty (TEC), which enlarged the EU’s competence to take action on discrimination grounds, to which they successfully added discrimination based on sexual orientation.²⁸ It is successes like these that provided clearer entry points for gender identity within the ‘normal policymaking process’ at the supranational level. For instance, as gender identity gradually became more prominent in organisations previously devoted to gay rights, ‘gender identity’ came more and more to be affixed to sexual orientation so that ‘SOGI’ (sexual orientation and gender identity) became common parlance, echoed by supportive government representatives who ‘follow this language’.²⁹

Table 1. Involvement of LGBTIQ Groups in the EU Policymaking Process³⁰

Org.	Commissioner meetings ³¹	Public consultations ³²	Roadmaps ³³	Expert Groups ³⁴	Meetings in EP ³⁵
ILGA ³⁶	42	14	16	3	10
IGLYO ³⁷	2	2	0	2	2
TGEU ³⁸	7	8	8	0	7
EL*C ³⁹	1	2	2	0	5
OII Europe ⁴⁰	2	6	2	0	8

LGBTIQ groups have moved beyond mere lobbying and have become active and integral to shaping EU policy around gender identity. For instance, the extensive involvement of ILGA in expert groups allows them to provide crucial input on the drafting and implementation of EU laws. Expert groups consist of a range of actors including NGOs, activists, academics, and national experts, giving them a powerful influence over the direction of policies. Through this close engagement with Commission officials who write initial drafts of legislative texts, they are not only able to advocate for their agendas, but they are also positioned at the very heart of the process.

In these ways, activists were successful by piggybacking LGBTIQ claims onto the women’s rights agenda, framing LGBTIQ rights as an extension of women’s demands for bodily autonomy and against rigid sex roles.⁴¹ However, these initial moves were largely framed around gay rights; piggybacking again on the salience of gay rights, the gender identity agenda was able to position itself as an obvious and necessary extension thereof. Largely shielded from public scrutiny, gender identity activists were able to embed their

demands into a range of policies at the European level, and most significantly, they were able to transform the concept of gender into a broader framework that subsumes multiple gender identities.

2. A Story of Mission Creep and Policy Capture

By framing transgender issues within the context of human rights and equality, trans advocacy groups effectively lobbied for the inclusion of gender identity into EU anti-discrimination legislation. They strategically framed their demands in terms of EU foundational principles, allowing the integration of LGBTIQ concerns into mainstream policy frameworks.⁴² One key result of these efforts is the integration of gender identity into gender equality strategies.

EU Gender Equality Strategy (2020-2025)

The most recent of these, the EU's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 'pursues a dual approach of gender mainstreaming combined with targeted actions' with 'intersectionality' as its 'horizontal principle' for implementation.⁴³ While materials associated with the strategy talk of 'women and men' and 'girls and boys', it adds ambiguously 'in all their diversity'. It is in the fine print that we learn that gender no longer refers even implicitly to sex, but rather to 'the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men.' The European Commission even commits to combatting existing gender norms, with battling gender stereotypes an explicit thread of the Strategy and with an explicit campaign launched in 2023.⁴⁴

Binary gender gave way to an expansive spectrum, reinforced through dedicated funding mechanisms and embeddedness in European institutions that seek to percolate these new ideas into member states through active campaigns to change the culture in member states. This agenda is clear for instance, from some of the key 'takeaways' of advocacy groups who participated in a workshop related to the Strategy, where existing civil society programmes are described as being promised a stronger funding push and where gender should be understood in its 'broadest sense'.⁴⁵

Policies with wide-ranging repercussions for women, children and families were made opaque through exploitation of rights frameworks so that opposition became tantamount to a denial of rights, with potential repercussions for member states who failed to follow through. Indeed, gender advocacy groups use the Gender Equality Strategy to attack member states when they develop policies that seem to reflect too much a gender binary.⁴⁶

As we will see in later sections, this strategy has had far-reaching consequences for a variety of institutions and groups, many of which only became clear after recognition of trans identities had already been institutionalised and made their way into everyday life.

LGBTIQ Equality Strategy (2020-2025)

Another key case study in policy capture, the Union of Equality: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy (2020-2025) is heavily structured around the concept of gender as a loose array of identities. The LGBTIQ Strategy is heavily influenced by intersectionality theory emerging out of the academic debates discussed above and the strategic lobbying of LGBTIQ advocacy groups who have embedded its outlook.⁴⁷ While the document takes 'intersectionality as a cross-cutting principle' defined as 'sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and/or sex characteristics' alongside 'other personal characteristics or identities, such as sex, racial/ethnic origin, religion/belief, disability and age', the concept of gender is paramount.⁴⁸ For instance, same sex attraction becomes those 'who are attracted to others of their own *gender* (lesbian, gay) or any *gender* (bisexual)' (emphasis added).⁴⁹ It shows a commitment to institutionalising this understanding further into

the Union's broader equality objectives, but more than this, it demonstrates growing suspicion toward the use of the word 'sex', for instance in the anti-discrimination policies of member state states.⁵⁰

The strategy has four pillars:

1. Tackling discrimination against LGBTIQ people;
2. Ensuring LGBTIQ people's safety;
3. Building LGBTIQ inclusive societies; and
4. Leading the call for LGBTIQ equality around the world.⁵¹

Through the demand for LGBTIQ mainstreaming, or ensuring that 'discrimination affecting LGBTIQ people as well as the promotion of equality is integrated into all EU policies, legislation and funding programmes, both internal and external',⁵² the LGBTIQ Strategy seeks to cascade its understanding of gender as a social construct with only a loose relation to biological categories through not only EU member states, but across the world through its global commitments.

This is significant as it heavily pressures member states not only to adopt a stance against discrimination, which would seem uncontroversial, but to adopt the ideological framework that affirms a broad interpretation of gender that downplays the importance of sex. Crucially, the strategy affirms that "The Commission will foster best practice exchanges between Member States on how to put in place accessible legal gender recognition legislation and procedures based on the principle of self-determination and without age restrictions."⁵³ To be clear, the LGBTIQ Strategy enshrines one of the most radical demands of Transgender activists: the principle of self-ID *at any age*.

The LGBTIQ Strategy also directs attention at speech both online and offline, promising to include LGBTIQ directed hate speech and hate crime in existing initiatives focused on racism and xenophobia.⁵⁴ However, critics have argued that the concept of hate speech is often ill-defined and has a tendency to expand, endangering the right to offend and criminalising dissent.⁵⁵ Going further, the LGBTIQ Strategy states that EU funds may be suspended or withdrawn from member states that do not contribute to the furthering of its objectives. This can hold member states to ransom such as when a case was brought against Hungary for objecting to LGBTIQ education being taught to children, while Hungary argued that education came under member state jurisdiction.⁵⁶

A key mechanism supporting the LGBTIQ Strategy is the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Programme (more on which below), which directs significant funding to NGOs advocating for gender identity policies.⁵⁷ As we will see, organisations such as ILGA-Europe and Transgender Europe (TGEU) have received significant funding through this and previous programmes, using their strategic positioning and influence to shape this and other policies as well as funding advocacy research and monitoring that is used to pressure states to take up its objectives.

While the strategy aims to promote equality and non-discrimination, a key area of discord is its bypassing democratic debate and disregarding of national cultural and legal traditions encroaching on areas that are meant to fall under member state jurisdiction. The downward cascade of gender identity into diverse areas from education to women's rights has led to significant pushback from women's groups as well as member states. By embedding gender identity into the EU's legal and funding structures, profound shifts have been made without broader public consultation and with an air of disregard for the principle of subsidiarity and national sovereignty.

Wither Women? Wither Democracy?

The EU's discovery of gender is a story of extensive mission creep. The result is overarching and wide-ranging policy strategies that reflect the priorities of disconnected academics and narrow interest groups rather than the will of the people who are increasingly realising that 'transgenderism is not just another live-and-let-live "type of gay"'.⁵⁸ Ironically, given how this agenda ultimately began with a concern for women's sex-based rights, other views of gender, and especially those of gender critical feminists, have been systematically sidelined and maligned as 'harassment or violence'.⁵⁹ New drafts of these policies are currently being prepared and it is highly likely that they will only reflect the further entrenchment of gender mission creep with little input from dissenting voices nor concern for the protestations of member states.

3. Funding a Captured Policy Agenda

Policy capture is tightened by the EU's generous funding of NGOs that align with its priorities. EU funding allows these organisations to conduct research, organise campaigns, and in turn, lobby EU institutions for their desired policies, bypassing national debates to impose these policies from the top down. Funding takes the form not only of project-based funding but also operational funding for gender-based lobby groups, providing them with financial stability and allowing them to act as permanent policy influencers at the EU level.

Over the last ten years the EU has committed at least €221 million in funding to NGOs that adopt and spread gender identity ideology.⁶⁰ Of this, at least €40.5 million euros is allocated to a network of NGOs who push the most radical gender identity and transgender ideology.⁶¹ A further €64.95 million is given purely to ILGA World which pushes gender identity ideology globally.⁶²

Top beneficiaries of EU funding over the past decade includes organisations explicitly devoted to the most radical understanding of sex and gender:⁶³

- ILGA-Europe was committed €16 million and a further nearly €65 million for its international arm
- IGLYO: €6 million
- TGEU: €4.6 million
- Eurocentralasian Lesbian* Community (EL*C): €6.2 million
- Organisation Intersex International (OII) Europe: €1.2 million

The centrality of the gender agenda to the EU's own sense of its mission is illustrated by the fact that it has committed €350 million to more than 60 organisations with 'gender' in their title between 2014 and 2023.⁶⁴ However, as we have seen, gender has been redefined so that it has less and less to do with women and girls and their sex-based rights and it has become unclear precisely what agenda these groups are really serving.

Corruption of Academic Research

This funding does not include the huge number of projects to which the EU has committed funds. For instance, through Horizon, at least €26 million euros (a highly conservative figure) has been committed to projects that align with gender identity ideology over the past decade. A selection of these projects illustrates the extent to which the EU and NGOs subtly work together to infuse the gender agenda with gender identity, and to spread this ideology across borders:

G-VERSITY - Achieving Gender Diversity⁶⁵

- EU Funding: €4,106,266.48 (100% EU funded)
- Coordinated by the University of Bern, this project endorses gender ideology by focusing on sexual and gender minority groups (SGMs), encouraging employers to increase their representation in the workplace.

GENDERACTIONplus - Gender Equality Network to Develop ERA Communities To Coordinate Inclusive and sustainable policy implementation⁶⁶

- EU Funding: €2,999,814 (98.67% EU-funded)

- This project aims to coordinate gender equality and inclusiveness objectives in the European Research Area, but in doing so, it uses the language and concepts of gender ideology, aiming to reach countries and regions with lower participation in these initiatives—thus spreading the influence of gender ideology.

BeyondGenderBinary⁶⁷

- EU Funding: €2,446,001 (100% EU funded)
- This project aims to challenge the traditional binary understanding of gender by collecting data on psychological components of gender (such as psychological characteristics, gender identity, attitudes towards the sexed body, and sexuality). It explicitly seeks to explore non-binary gender and to undermine the categorisation of human beings into men and women.

RESIST - Fostering Queer Feminist Intersectional Resistances⁶⁸

- EU Funding: €2,379,425.75 (100% EU funded)
- Among other objectives supportive of gender identity ideology, this project explicitly maps movements and policies contesting the gender identity agenda, which it sees as ‘anti-gender’ politics.

Trans-End⁶⁹

- EU Funding: €215,285.40 (100% EU-funded)
- This project supports transgender ideology by advocating for the inclusion of transgender and intersex individuals in gender-based violence protections, accepting and promoting notions that male or female are too-exclusive categories that ignore other gender identities.

These projects exemplify a pattern where the EU funds research that is then used by advocacy groups to lobby the EU itself for an expanded pro-transgender policy agenda. This creates a self-referential loop where research outcomes, shaped by the priorities of these organizations, are used to justify further policy changes and funding. Under the guise of academic inquiry, these projects promote ideological activism, transforming researchers into advocates for gender self-identification, transgenderism, and intersectional politics.

Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Programme

The commitment to funding an agenda aimed at radically reshaping publics’ ideas of gender and sex has only accelerated toward the present. For example, the previously mentioned CERV Programme is the largest ever EU fund dedicated to promoting democracy, rights, and so-called European values. It was this commitment to ‘European values’ that offered a foot in the door for the LGBTIQ movement, and it continues to oversee the release of masses of funding promoting gender identity ideology. Running from 2021-2027, CERV boasts a €1.55 billion budget,⁷⁰ significantly surpassing the respective €187.7 million and €439.5 million budgets of its predecessors, The Europe for Citizens programme and the Rights, Equality, and Citizenship programme.⁷¹

CERV has four pillars:

1. Equality, Rights and Gender Equality - promoting rights, non-discrimination, equality (including gender equality), and advancing gender and non-discrimination mainstreaming
2. Citizens' engagement and participation - promoting citizens engagement and participation in the democratic life of the Union, exchanges between citizens of different Member States, and raising awareness of the common European history
3. Daphne - fight violence, including gender-based violence and violence against children
4. Union values - protect and promote Union values⁷²

Gender ideology is deeply embedded across all four of these strands—gender, as we have seen, being redefined to refer to its ‘broadest sense’. It also embeds through the programme’s tightened relationship with NGOs, with support for civil society organisations a key feature of the programme, which are supposed to promote Union values, filtering them back to member states. Under the banner of promoting human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, the EU uses financial strangleholds to enforce conformity to a set of narrowly conceived ideologies. Through funding mechanisms like CERV, the Commission ensures that those governments that resist face financial penalties and/or political pressure.⁷³

CERV represents an example of a powerful tool for enforcing ideological conformity across the EU. It finances organizations that advance EU-defined ‘European values’ that are now expanded to including gender identity politics, bypassing national democratic debates in the process. Its pronounced focus on funding NGOs ensures that the voices guiding policy align with the European Commission’s ideological agenda, itself long captured by these groups, creating a self-referential feedback loop. Dissenting voices, such as those of gender critical feminists, receive no comparable funding, effectively silencing opposition and preventing genuine democratic pluralism.

The impact of a much-expanded gender agenda is clear when looking at the list the top funded NGOs between 2021 and 2023.⁷⁴ According to the EU Financial Transparency System, over 800 NGOs received funding through CERV in this period.⁷⁵ Topping the list of those receiving the most funds we find, yet again, organisations advocating some of the most radical forms of gender identity ideology:

- The EuroCentralAsian Lesbian* Community (ELC) (ranked 1st at €6.22 million)
- The European Women’s Lobby (ranked 3rd at €4.83 million)
- ILGA-Europe (ranked 6th at €4 million)
- IGLYO (ranked 18th at €2.36 million)

Each of these organisations is explicitly devoted to an expanded version of gender equality (indeed the asterisk after Lesbian in the ELC name indicates its interpretation of ‘lesbian’ to include trans and other identities). This list does not include other NGOs who also adopt this ideology but for whom it is not necessarily a core part of their mission. Moreover, it includes groups that have undertaken some of the most controversial activities—all with EU funds that they continue to receive in large quantities. Looking at two key examples makes this particularly clear.

IGLYO

Perhaps the most controversial organisation on the list of well-funded gender NGOs is the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQI) Youth & Student Organisation (IGLYO), a network of over 125 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex youth and student

organisations in 40 countries across Europe.⁷⁶ It came to widespread public attention when a report it produced in 2019 surfaced that revealed the extent of clandestine activities promoted by trans activists—especially those aimed at children and young people.⁷⁷ The report, titled ‘Only Adults? Good Practices in Legal Gender Recognition for Youth’ sees gender self-identification or ‘allowing trans people to have their gender identity legally recognised through self-determination rather than medical diagnosis or court order’ as a key goal, even and especially for children and young people.

To this end, it summarises successful tactics used by trans organisations across Europe. It directs activists to ‘fly under the radar’ by avoiding public scrutiny and media attention, seek out sympathetic policymakers directly, get ahead of the legislative agenda and even draft legislation before opposition can form, and to bundle desired policies in with more publicly acceptable ones like gay marriage.⁷⁸ For instance, the authors approvingly describe how Irish legislation:

went under the radar [...] because marriage equality was gaining the most focus. In a way, this was helpful according to the activists, because it meant that they were able to focus on persuading politicians that the change was necessary. This is a common technique that we have seen in many of the successful campaigns, and it was very effective in Ireland.⁷⁹

Publics are described in this report as hopelessly ill-informed and change best affected through direct targeting of not only policymakers but also education systems. It advocates developing sex and relationships education and targeting schools directly by exploiting opportunities where teachers felt awkward delivering neglected but required curriculum.⁸⁰

With the help of EU funds, IGLYO has only expanded its network and activities further since that report. It continues to develop and promote educational materials and in 2022, released the second edition of its LGBTQI Inclusive Education Report which calls for mandatory LGBTQI-inclusive curricula and teacher training.⁸¹ It also continues to see parental consent for transitioning as a restrictive requirement, at least for those aged 16-18, and advocates the involvement of outside parties where parents of younger children do not consent.⁸² IGLYO also conducts and oversees advocacy research and monitoring which is then used to pressure supranational powers to push national governments to fall in line.

It is activities of groups like IGLYO and the extensive network it coordinates that go a long way toward explaining how very few seemed aware of trans issues before suddenly governments, organisations, and institutions started introducing far-reaching linguistic and even punitive measures to enforce ideological adherence. These groups intentionally bypassed national legislatures and public debate, sought to change education, institutions, and the very words that people used to describe their world—all coordinated with EU funds.

ILGA

Another of the top funded organisations, ILGA-Europe and ILGA World, its global incarnation, has used millions in EU funds to lobby for the inclusion of gender identity in EU legislation. It brings together over 700 organisations globally⁸³ and is officially partnered with the EU.⁸⁴ Since its founding in 1996, it’s grown to become the key organisation driving the EU’s LGBTIQ agenda.⁸⁵ It has been receiving core funding from the EU since 2001.⁸⁶ Indeed, ‘ILGA-Europe could not have been built up as a professional lobby organization without Commission support’.⁸⁷ This funding has allowed it to embed in policymaking

activities, positioning itself as a leading voice on LGBTIQ issues within the EU, effectively monopolizing debate and sidelining alternative perspectives.

Like IGLYO, ILGA-Europe sought to get ahead of the policy agenda at the European level and entirely bypass debates at the national level, making key early inroads by getting the Council of the EU to adopt toolkits and policy instruments geared towards LGBTIQ rights as early as 2010.⁸⁸ The LGBTIQ Equality Strategy (2020-2025) is the culmination of years of lobbying on the part of groups like ILGA-Europe. The group's influence is evident across documents associated with the Strategy, which are littered with reference to its advocacy research and which mirrors many of the organization's policy priorities.⁸⁹ For example, the LGBTIQ Strategy's promises to take steps toward extending the list of 'EU crimes' to cover 'hate crime' and 'hate speech' targeted at LGBTIQ people⁹⁰ reflect steps for which ILGA-Europe had extensively lobbied and they have continued to push for and applaud developments on this front.⁹¹

ILGA-Europe works closely with other NGOs like TGEU, which as we have seen above, also receives substantial funding. Together, these groups have used EU resources to push for policies that allow individuals to change their gender based on 'self-determination' without significant impediment, which is reflected in the LGBTIQ Strategy's call for member states to develop easier legal pathways toward changing gender. Perhaps more shockingly, like IGLYO, ILGA continues to express a desire to shield its activities from public scrutiny, even asking candidates in the 2024 European Elections to sign a pledge promising to keep their work 'out of the public eye whenever necessary'. Over a thousand potential candidates dutifully signed.⁹²

The Weaponisation of Civil Society

It is certain that some groups funded by CERV do a great deal of important work. ILGA and IGLYO are just two examples of LGBTIQ groups that have made transgender ideology central to their remit, but even they engage in important activities that improve the lives of many. However, while combatting discrimination against minority groups is important, the demands of these groups demonstrate considerable mission creep and encompass an injunction to accept a particular and controversial worldview. It's a worldview that can have significant impacts in practice and which at the very least warrant open public discussion and debate. For instance, gender self-ID has been raised by numerous LGB and women's groups as encroaching on privacy and rights of women and same-sex attracted people. Biology, the thing that had once been recognised as lying at the heart of women's equality, is rendered meaningless as is the concept of 'same sex' attraction. By the same token, 'hate speech' has, like gender, experienced significant expansion so that it has quickly become a way of policing public and online debates in favour of LGBTIQ preferred interpretations and language.

EU funding has propelled this extreme view of gender, has crowded out the views of other groups and brought in an iron fist that destroys dissent. The attempt to bypass democratic debate at the national level and impose a particular culture and worldview from the top down has inspired significant criticism in countries where these values are at great variance from traditional cultures. This convinces no one and only fuels further backlash. But this backlash is not interpreted as a need to open up democratic debate or take into account different perspectives, but rather as evidence for the renewed importance of these organisations' central mission and a threat to human rights. Opposition only further empowers their resolve and that of European policymakers to close down debate and impose their agenda.

The level of influence wielded by NGOs like these to shape the policy agenda across so many different countries with so many different traditions and cultures raises serious questions about the democratic legitimacy of EU policymaking. By relying on NGOs to shape its gender agenda, the EU has effectively sidelined national governments and marginalized alternative perspectives. The result is a policy framework that prioritizes the demands of activists over the needs and values of ordinary citizens. It is a deliberate attempt to weaponize civil society to punish member states who do not follow suit by funneling millions into NGO budgets that align with its ideological priorities. These groups then lobby the EU for the need for their own continued existence in a never-ending self-referential feedback loop.

4. Policy Capture in Action

The expansion of the concept of gender has had profound implications for EU policy and in turn the policies of member states in areas as diverse as education, the family and family law, education, healthcare, women's and gay and lesbian rights. As we have seen, these changes have been pursued by well-funded NGOs, often in clandestine ways, with their effects on other groups dismissed as illusions trumped up by a hate filled agenda. This is not the case, and only some of the effects bear this out.

The Family and Family Policy

The rising concern for gender identity has accelerated existing trends within the EU where the family is considered a self-evidently backward and regressive institution, and concern for the family as merely a cover for discrimination. As we described in our earlier report, *Families in Fragments*, the EU does not have a family policy so much as it has an anti-family policy: an approach that sees the family as a target for interventions aimed at solving social problems and rooting out unwanted values, beliefs, and behaviours and replacing them with new ones.⁹³ A key target of gender-mainstreaming is frequently families, seen as places where the haplessness of parents leads to the perpetuation of harmful gender stereotypes. As one text on gender mainstreaming summarises:

Knowingly or unknowingly parents condition their daughters from early childhood onwards to suffer in silence and adjust with all the injustices and atrocities directed at them and mould them to become good wives and good mothers.⁹⁴

Member states who still have family policies, as opposed to e.g. gender equality strategies, are seen as merely covering up for anti-woman and anti-LGBTIQ agendas.⁹⁵ On the other hand, policy documents and parliamentary discussions wax lyrical about 'our wonderful rainbow families'⁹⁶ and worry about the plight of 'same gender' partnerships.⁹⁷ Contrast this with the language used for the traditional family, where 'the family' is singled out in scare quotes and policy and social science scholars muse about whether the family is a passé or even 'zombie' category.⁹⁸

Parental autonomy and parent-child relationships

In this context, the family has come to be viewed as increasingly problematic and a barrier to the full realisation of gender identity in policy and practice. Organisations like IGLYO turn a disdainful eye toward parents that do not wholeheartedly embrace their children's gender transitions, even advising that 'states should take action against parents who are obstructing the free development of a young trans person's identity in refusing to give parental authorization when required.'⁹⁹ Following this lead, Scotland has made proposals to ban 'conversion therapy' that would see parents who refuse to allow their children to change gender face up to seven years in prison.¹⁰⁰ While stopping short of imposing legally binding prohibitions on member states, the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy makes similar statements regarding moves toward conversion therapy bans, through which suggestions that one's teenage daughter 'might want a surgeon to remove her breasts' for any other reason than a scientifically unproven notion of 'being in the wrong body' risk being criminalised.¹⁰¹

To say that the gender identity movement undermines parental autonomy then, would be an understatement.

Parents who act in any other way except complete acceptance of their child's transgender identity are seen as the enemy across gender identity discourses. They are warned that their children will commit suicide if they do not affirm their new identity.¹⁰² Parents who demonstrate concern over their children's transition, particularly in relation to their children's other mental health difficulties and the irreversible nature of any bodily changes, are vilified. Courts rule against them. In Switzerland, parents whose daughter began identifying as trans at 13 but who refused to support medical transition were separated from her and ordered to hand over her identity documents so that her name and gender could be legally changed.¹⁰³

Like the family more generally, parental concerns about children's transitions are communicated with scepticism, using scare quotes and other distancing and dismissive language. Trans activists call 'concerned parents' a 'trope'.¹⁰⁴ One of the most prominent trans activists in Sweden, Lukas Romson differentiates between 'real parents' who affirm their children's transition and 'so-called concerned parents' who do not.¹⁰⁵ Another critic of parental rights movements objecting to teaching sexuality and gender identity in schools dismissively states that it comes 'under the auspices' of protecting children and 'protecting parents' rights to raise children as they see fit'.¹⁰⁶

This has become particularly pronounced in relation to education. Objections to teaching gender identity in school are dismissed as driven by bigotry, the far-right, conspiracy theorists, and religious fanatics.¹⁰⁷ This is despite that numerous parents and parent groups identify as left-wing.¹⁰⁸ Parents have also objected to not being informed when their children have socially transitioned. In Portugal, children and young people are allowed to socially transition at school without informing parents, and parents who refuse to support transition risk being reported to the Child Protection Commission and even having their children removed.¹⁰⁹

ILGA-Europe and TGEU support concealment of children's shifting gender identities to parents, arguing that, 'Trans children and young people should be supported in choosing for themselves when and how to share information about themselves with their parents or guardians.'¹¹⁰ They also reject recommendations that trans-identifying youth be referred for 'clinical help and guidance' as 'dehumanising and pathologising.' Instead, ILGA-Europe and TGEU say, 'Parents and guardians should listen to trans children and young people and respect their identity and wishes. Not rush them off to a doctor's office.'¹¹¹

Lying behind many parental concerns about gender identity education in schools is the fact that some point to the schools themselves as the source of their children's seeming abrupt decision to transition, along with social media and online videos promoting transition as a solution to personal issues. As *The New York Times* reported:

Many parents of kids who consider themselves trans say their children were introduced to transgender influencers on YouTube or TikTok, a phenomenon intensified for some by the isolation and online cocoon of Covid. Others say their kids learned these ideas in the classroom, as early as elementary school, often in child-friendly ways through curriculums supplied by trans rights organizations, with concepts like the gender unicorn or the Gingerbread person.¹¹²

These latter phenomena refer to globally adopted educational materials created by the trans youth activist organisation Trans Student Educational Resources (TSER), which portray a cartoon unicorn overlaid with a variety of colourful sexualities and gender identities.¹¹³ The Gender Unicorn is an update of a similar

graphic called the ‘Genderbread Person’ which changes the latter’s earlier wording of ‘biological sex’ to ‘sex assigned at birth’.¹¹⁴

Claims that there is any element of social contagion involved in the adoption of transgender identities is dismissed by ILGA-Europe and TGEU, who released an EU-funded document claiming that the increase in people identifying as trans is simply the result of greater openness and acceptance in society.¹¹⁵ While they refer to ‘sociocultural factors’ as well as ‘biological dispositions and experience’, they state that being ‘trans is something that no one can be forced into, including children’, and ‘[p]eople know who they are’.¹¹⁶ The implication, while confused, is a claim that gender identity is somehow intrinsic, which has doubtful scientific legitimacy.¹¹⁷ But this has no impact on the decisiveness with which parents have been pursued as impediments to realising this form of ‘gender equality’.

These developments have profound implications. Parental authority is increasingly seen as a problematic barrier to be overridden by activist interventions backed by supranational powers. As schools become seen as important purveyors of new values, the role of the family as a foundational site of primary socialisation is steadily eroded and made into a problem. What emerges is an atmosphere in which parents feel iced out of key decisions about their children’s futures, and where any hesitation risks both social and institutional backlash. Dialogue, nuance and long-term considerations are all sacrificed to a single-minded approach to gender identity.

Sovereignty and subsidiarity: The Parenthood Certificate

The threat to autonomy goes beyond that of parents. The expansion of gender has also had significant implications for family law. One key barrier to imposing LGBTIQ agendas, especially where the family is concerned, is that the EU does not have competence in dictating the family laws of member states. Each state is entitled to decide for itself how it will recognise and support families. But the EU, led by a coalition of gender activists, has proven creative in evading this principle and attempting to overrule ongoing debates within member states. A proposed EU Certificate of Parenthood is a key example in this respect.

Recent proposals have been tabled for a European Certificate of Parenthood that would require member states to acknowledge the rights of same-sex parents that have been granted in another EU country—even if those rights conflict with national laws. The certificate would be obtainable in the country where initial family links were established and each member state would be obliged to accept it. This policy, heavily influenced by EU-funded NGOs like ILGA-Europe and NELFA (Network of European LGBTIQ* Families Associations),¹¹⁸ represents a significant ‘workaround’ for those member states that do not recognise LGBTIQ identities in family law. It is a policy that ILGA-Europe has been lobbying for since the early 2000s.¹¹⁹

In December 2022, Didier Reynders, the Commissioner for Justice, attempted to claim that the move would not seek to interfere with national law and what each country recognises as a family.¹²⁰ Yet it is difficult to see how it would not effectively do so in practice, since it would require the legal recognition of parents and parenthood that may not reflect what a member state has decided constitutes a family. While it would require unanimous agreement from all member states, Reynders added ominously that if the proposal was vetoed, the commission would seek to ‘strengthen cooperation’ between member states.¹²¹

This example highlights the way that policy capture can lead to pushes for top-down impositions that are in practice little impeded by formal declarations of member state autonomy. Because so many aspects of law

and policy involve complex and crisscrossing frameworks, any number of technical mechanisms at the EU's disposal can be used to impose a value change on its members. In this case it is freedom of movement that opens the door to bypassing national debates about family life, pressuring nations to redefine implicitly what they recognise as a family. There are still other mechanisms being exploited here—for instance in terms of global standards for recognising and recording vital events. In a 2013 UNICEF report, *A Passport to Protection*, referenced in documents related to the Certificate's proposal, a 'vital event' is subtly defined to include recognition of parenthood.¹²² Countries wishing to fall in line with global agendas regarding the efficient and thorough recording of statistics may find themselves vulnerable to missing what is a very basic technical benchmark if they question these subtle redefinitions.

In these ways, apparently neutral administrative mechanisms can be leveraged to drive ideological change under the guise of legal and bureaucratic harmonisation. By embedding contested definitions within technical frameworks, institutions can create de facto obligations that sidestep democratic debate, leaving member states with little choice but to comply or risk isolation from broader policy and regulatory frameworks.

Education

Because socialisation in the family is so frequently seen as the cause of problems, education has increasingly become central to the gender identity agenda. The goal of developing a European Economic Area (EEA) by 2025, though not yet fully realised, places gender at the core of its mission. It proposes that education and training within the EEA promote greater 'gender sensitivity', challenge gender stereotypes, and work towards a 'proper gender balance in leadership positions'.¹²³ The EU's Strategic Framework for Education and training (ET 2020) also positions schools as key sites for shaping social values and promoting its particular vision of equality. To this end, actions taken by many countries as early as preschool to 'dismantle gender stereotyping' have been praised and further steps toward 'a change of mindsets' starting 'early in the socialisation process' suggested.¹²⁴

Part of the concern for gender stereotypes is that getting more women into the workplace is seen as a key driver of economic growth. Particularly where supports for families have seen significant rollback, both parents being in work is seen by the EU as a prerequisite for having children.¹²⁵ Women who may wish to care for their children directly, or for whom other arrangements are simply infeasible, are thus a problem for policymakers and clear victims of 'gender stereotyping'.

However, as we have seen, what is actually meant by gender is more expansive than referring to just men and women. The move to 'dismantle gender stereotypes' via education represents a convergence of interests on the part of policymakers and gender identity advocacy groups. Addressing gender stereotypes is key part of both the Gender Equality Strategy and the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy, as is gender identity education in general. In addition, EU funded NGOs have pushed for the inclusion of gender identity and LGBTIQ issues in school curricula; ILGA-Europe even creates a 'Rainbow Map' showing to what degree each country lives up to its ideals—one criterion of which is the teaching of gender identity in sex education. According to their map, 75% of EU member states' education systems have some form of gender identity education.¹²⁶

Perhaps the most striking example of educational policy capture is Portugal. Genspect reports that in Portuguese public schools, children and adolescents who question their gender are allowed to socially transition without requiring parental consent.¹²⁷ These policies were introduced under the previous left-

wing government led by António Costa, who now serves as President of the European Council. The current Centre-Right coalition (PSD-CDS) is working to repeal these guidelines, responding to public opposition reflected in a petition signed by over 55,000 people. The guidelines are outlined in *The Right to Be in Schools*, a manual developed under João Costa—formerly Minister of Education and now President of the European Agency for Special Needs Education and Inclusive Education—in collaboration with the Commission for Gender Equality (CIG).¹²⁸ Seven LGBT organizations, along with two gender identity ‘specialists’, contributed to the document. The manual, which asserts that sex is non-binary and includes numerous gender identities, is implemented across all levels of education, from primary to secondary school. As described above, any parent who disagrees with these insidious policies, risks being reported to the Child Protection Commission.

The relentless push to embed gender identity ideology into education systems represents a profound overreach, again evading parental autonomy as well as nation states’ own ongoing democratic debates. By targeting children as young as preschool and dismissing dissenting parents as obstacles to progress, these policies not only undermine biological realities but also erode the very foundations not only of the family but of trust in key institutions like education.

5. The attack on Women's Rights in the name of gender identity

The effect of broadening the concept of gender identity far beyond its original remit has had perhaps the most impact on women's rights. This is perhaps most expected even if it is the most ironic outcome of a movement that began with a recognition of women's sex-based rights.

Violence Against Women Creeps to 'Gender Based Violence'

One area in which mission creep has become most palpable is in relation to violence against women, which through its recasting as 'gender based violence' has significantly shifted focus from women's sex-based protections to a much more expansive approach to violence affecting 'all genders'.¹²⁹ As key feminist critics have pointed out:

In other words, gender-based violence can be committed by anyone against anyone, and unless specified, says nothing about who the victim is. In short, it has nothing to do with women (though that doesn't stop legislators using it to brag about their feminist bona fides).¹³⁰

It is also from documents on gender-based violence that many later policies and directives take their expansive definition of gender and minimisation of the importance of sex.¹³¹ This redefinition has far-reaching effects, especially in terms of diluting resources devoted to combating specifically violence against women. In addition, around the world shelters and resources intended to protect women from men have had their funding threatened or cut for refusing to allow in or otherwise provide services to males who identify as women. This move dilutes the original intent of policies designed to protect women, undermining recognition of its grounding in sex-based inequalities and exploitation and the specific experiences of biological women.

The Impacts of Gender Self-ID

A further key threat to women's rights and privacy, moves toward gender self-identification, a central policy goal of most if not all the gender-identity focused NGOs funded by the EU, have been fiercely contested by feminists. Such moves would allow individuals to legally declare their gender with few legal or medical impediments, compromising the integrity of single-sex spaces. Women's shelters, prisons, restrooms would essentially become mixed sex spaces. Prominent recent controversies have also shown the negative effects on women's sport, where titles were grasped by men identifying as women, robbing young women of success, funding, and scholarships. It is only one of many areas of life in which biology matters greatly.

News reports have also brought forth cases of individuals like Isla Bryson in Scotland, a convicted rapist who self-identified as female and was initially placed in a women's prison.¹³² In this and many cases like it, the safety of women was an afterthought or even a necessary sacrifice to the gender identity movement. However, beyond concerns for the safety of women and girls, at the very least, the inclusion of biological males in single sex spaces violates an expectation of privacy and erodes the boundaries of women and girls. It reminds them that when they feel uncomfortable, it is the feelings of others, and especially men, that ultimately matter most. This is a tremendous rollback of progress made in relation to women and girls over the past 50 years.

There have also been significant impacts on lesbian spaces, technologies and organisations. For instance, the development of a lesbian dating app, *L'app*, drew criticism when it attempted to employ technologies to keep the service exclusive to women.¹³³ Elsewhere, a transgender woman sued a women-only social media platform for discrimination after being barred from the site.¹³⁴

Worse, the replacement of biological sex with gender identity risks making lesbian-only spaces effectively illegal and required to admit individuals on the basis of gender identity rather than sex—a complete challenge to the underlying reality for many gay and lesbian people who consider that their sexuality means they are exclusively same-sex (as opposed to ‘same gender’) attracted.

Far Reaching Consequences

These are just some of the consequences of EU-funded policy capture and mission creep. The healthcare sector could be another. What matters is the expansion of the concept of gender has had profound and far-reaching implications for EU policy, family law, education and women’s and gay rights in important ways. The cases described above illustrate the dangers of the EU’s reliance on NGOs to shape its gender agenda. By funding organizations that advocate for a specific ideological agenda, the EU has created a self-reinforcing cycle of policy capture that bypasses democratic processes and sidelines alternative perspectives.

While EU-funded NGOs have succeeded in pushing through a wide range of policies that reflect their ideological priorities, they have done so at the expense of democratic legitimacy and public trust in institutions and civil society.

6. Conclusions

This report has described the significant mission creep of ‘gender equality’ and how when ‘gender’ is evoked, it is no longer at all clear what is really being said. These developments have had a number of highly ironic outcomes. The overtaking of movements originally aimed at gender (in the sense of the relationship between women and men) and sexuality has led to a backlash against *all of* these movements. In other words, capturing nearly the entire gender policy agenda to further the rights of a minority interpretation has meant a backlash against the rights of the majority. Another irony is that the vision of identity relentlessly pursued had once emphasised the fluidity of gender categories and the freedom of individuals. But it has become inflexible and rigid and pursued by authoritarian means.

This is not about equality. It is a demand for ideological adherence which sees the vast majority—who pay for the budgets that ultimately fund NGOs—as the enemy. It is a demand that member states recognise conceptualisations of gender (and even of sex) that are at wide variance with what the tax paying public knows to be true. Those who ask questions are not bigoted. There are simply too many questions that remain unanswered, too many effects on too many groups, and authoritarian moves to impose acceptance will only lead to further backlash.

Gender identity needs to be debated on its own merits, away from important concerns regarding biological sex. In spite of the view that most people are bigoted and require top-down impositions and educational social engineering, the majority do think that “live and let live” should be a guiding principle. Unfortunately, this passive acceptance has been used as a Trojan Horse for a much more far-reaching agenda with much deeper effects on everyday life, language and the rights and freedoms of other groups.

The growing public backlash against the EU’s gender policies reflects a broader crisis of legitimacy. By allowing a small group of well-funded NGOs to shape its agenda, the EU has alienated large sections of its population and fuelled a growing sense of resentment and distrust. Ironically, by trying to create greater unity by manufacturing the values of the people of Europe, the EU has only made them more divided. Its top-down approach raises serious questions about the respect that governing structures have for real diversity: the diversity of views, cultures and values enjoyed by member states.

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²⁹ Ibid., 31.

³⁰ The data on this table is gathered from the individual entries for each organisation in the EU Transparency Register. This register lists those NGOs, lobbyists, or other entities which seek to engage and influence the EU institutions. While the Transparency Register is voluntary, if an organisation is not listed on it, the EU institutions will not hold official meetings or invite them on to official internal technical groups. European Union, “Transparency Register,” January 23, 2025, https://transparency-register.europa.eu/index_en.

³¹ Official meetings with an EU Commissioner, a record of which must be publicly published. This record can be found in the entry of an individual organisation in the [Transparency Register](#), or (along with the minutes) published on the [website of each individual Commissioner](#) under the “Transparency” subheading.

³² Before the Commission produces a final legislative/non-legislative text, they publish a call for public feedback, which allows any individual or organisation to submit their thoughts on the initiative. These submissions will be considered and may influence the future initiative to be written. The number of submissions by an organisation to a public consultation can be found in their individual entry in the [Transparency Register](#), or the official Commission website for public consultations is called “[Have your say](#)”.

³³ A Roadmap is an EU project plan that sets out ideas for new legislative or non-legislative initiatives, or for evaluations and fitness checks of existing ones. It operates almost exactly the same way as the public consultation, with feedback sought to help shape the plan and direction of future EU laws and initiatives. The number of submissions to a roadmap by an organisation can be found in their individual entry in the [Transparency Register](#), or the official Commission website for roadmap submissions is called “[Have your say](#)”.

³⁴ Expert Groups are internal high-level meetings of specifically invited and approved experts, academics, national experts, and organisations, with Commission staff that will be involved in the writing of legislation. Expert Groups have a huge influence on the Commission before a more concrete proposal is written. The number of Expert Groups an organisation can be found in their individual entry in the [Transparency Register](#), or the official Commission website for Expert Groups can be found on this [register](#).

³⁵ Meetings in the European Parliament usually refer to meeting with individual MEPs who hold a key position such as “rapporteur”, whose job it is to write, negotiate and help EU legislation, proposals, and other reports get adopted by the Parliament. These meetings with rapporteurs are a way to lobby and influence the legislation as it passes the European Parliament phase of adoption. The number of meetings an organisation has in the European Parliament can be found in their individual entry in the [Transparency Register](#), or on the [European Parliament website](#).

³⁶ ILGA (Europe) entry in the Transparency Register: https://transparency-register.europa.eu/searchregister-or-update/organisation-detail_en?id=11977456675-84

³⁷ IGLYO entry in the Transparency Register: https://transparency-register.europa.eu/searchregister-or-update/organisation-detail_en?id=394013515467-95

³⁸ TGEU entry in the Transparency Register: https://transparency-register.europa.eu/searchregister-or-update/organisation-detail_en?id=384028912403-82

³⁹ EL*C entry in the Transparency Register: https://transparency-register.europa.eu/searchregister-or-update/organisation-detail_en?id=523642244314-94

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⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.* These groups were selected as they meet one or more of the following characteristics: take for granted and/or promote notions of gender radically divorced from sex, endorse concepts like non-binary gender identity, support the demotion of the significance of sex in national accounting and statistics.

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