

EUGENDEM

Support for and opposition to EU's ratification of the Istanbul Convention in the European Parliament

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EUGenDem

- European Research Council (ERC) Consolidator Grant (2018-2023), team of 6 researchers, PI: Prof. J. Kantola, based at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere University, Finland
- Provides systematic gender analysis of European Parliament's political groups practices and policies
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Context

- EU signed the Convention in June 2017
- EP has supported ratification since 2014 with various resolutions
- EP often regarded as a strong supporter for gender equality
- Like other gendered issues (i.e., sexual harassment; reproductive rights), the Istanbul Convention is contested in the EP
- After 2019 elections = approx. 30% MEPs anti-gender (Zacharenk 2020) and increase of RRP groups, more polarization (Kantola and Lombardo 2021)

Our approach

- Empirical analysis of the discourses around the EU's ratification to the Istanbul Convention in the European Parliament (EP)
- Attention paid to differences between and amongst political groups
- Understanding the mechanisms involved in norm contestation and opposition to gender equality
- Opposition to the Istanbul Convention is understood as part of a broader project to deligitimize EU's gender equality norm

Key findings

Support for the content	Support for supranational ratification
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbolic frames • Commitment to gender equality • Stress the text as progressive • Gendered power imbalance • Intersectional approach • Define GBV as a violation of human rights <p>“a strong commitment to protect women across Europe” (S&D, EP 2017)</p> <p>Pro-equality groups (S&D, ALDE/Renew, GUE/NGL, Greens/EFA), few from EPP (some delegations)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strict assessment of EU competences • Assessment of ratification on its limited but real scope • Ratification limited to some provisions • Support ratification by highlighting how it falls within EU competences <p>Pro-equality groups (S&D, ALDE/Renew), also few from EPP and ECR</p>



Berthet, V. 'Norm under fire: support for and opposition to the EU's ratification of the Istanbul Convention in the European Parliament.' International Feminist Journal of Politics, 2022.

Key findings

Oppose supranational ratification	Oppose the content
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illegitimacy and redundancy frames • Oppose supranational ratification • Protection best achieved at national level • Commitment to subsidiarity principle • Ratification by EU not necessary because national legislation already in place (i.e., gender equality is already achieved) • Disguise opposition to gender equality behind Eurosceptic arguments <p>Mostly Eurosceptic groups: EFDD, ENF/ID, ECR & some EPP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most explicit form of opposition • Contest the moral validity of the norm • Define the Convention as a “gender ideology” • Contestation is gendered and racialized • Objective: distort, reverse and empty the norm of its content <p>“Whoever agrees to this nonsense is probably on drugs” (EFDD, EP 2016a) “a mental framework” (ECR MEP M 36:24) “too militant, too political” (ECR MEP M 36:24)</p> <p>Mostly groups on the far-right</p>



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Concluding remarks

- Opposition to gender equality in the EP should not be underestimated
- Building consensus around gender-based violence policies is difficult
- Many contest gender equality policy by contesting the EU as a supranational actor: it raises questions about EU's democratic deficit, legitimacy...
- So far, only non-binding resolutions: What if EP is asked to vote on ratification/new directive?

**Thank you for
your attention!**

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