

## BACKLASH IN EUROPE

### FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND SELF-DETERMINATION UNDER FIRE

The PIS government in Poland is pushing through judicial reforms which will give politicians comprehensive powers to interfere with the work of the country's courts. Orbán's government in Hungary is passing laws which will brand certain NGOs as 'foreign funded' or effectively make it illegal to help refugees. In Ireland, even in 2018, access to abortion is so restricted that the UN has described the country's attitude towards women as 'cruel, inhuman and degrading'. In Germany, the AfD parliamentary group includes Holocaust deniers who may even be designated to represent the party on the boards of organisations such as the Foundation for a Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

Everywhere in Europe, populists, nationalists and neo-conservatives are working together to undermine our fundamental rights and undo the achievements of our free and democratic society. In this way they are fuelling the social backlash whose aim is to put a brake on progressive developments and instead make authoritarian ideas socially acceptable once again. This includes revoking the rights and freedoms newly won by groups which historically have been downtrodden and strengthening the influence of authoritarian structures and elites in society. Right-wing parties in Europe are instilling new feelings of superiority in their supporters and this in turn is fostering intolerance, dogmatism and attitudes inimical to freedom. The rights of social groups who are seen as vulnerable—such as women, migrants and religious or sexual minorities are the first targets of the backlash. Ultimately, however, the backlash is aimed at everyone who wants to live in open and free societies.

## SMASH THE BACKLASH!

### THE STRUGGLES FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND SELF DETERMINATION IN EUROPE

Right-wing parties in Europe have joined forces to destroy European values. It is high time, therefore, that progressive movements in Europe joined forces to defend them. In an effort to shape the debate themselves, those campaigning for greater self-determination and against patriarchal and authoritarian power structures need to form alliances—whether on the streets or in parliaments.

#### The fight for fundamental values and civic freedoms

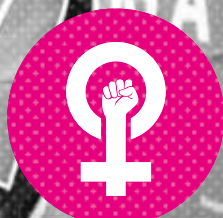
Whether in Poland, Hungary or Romania – authoritarian tendencies are on the rise. When governments start cutting off funding for NGOs, restricting freedom of association and the press, undermining the independence of the judiciary and manipulating public opinion by means of targeted disinformation campaigns, it is clear, if it wasn't before, that civic freedoms are being massively curtailed. At the same time, protests involving thousands of people on the streets of Poland and Romania are sending a message to opposition parties in parliaments, to neighbouring countries and to Brussels that we must continue to stand up for the rule of law in the EU.

#### The fight for women's rights and, in particular, women's right to have control over their own bodies

The European right has chosen women's right to have control over their own bodies as the first issue to target in launching the backlash. They are exploiting the debate on §219a in Germany or the vicious tightening-up of the abortion laws in Poland for their own political ends. Disguised as a European citizen's initiative, One of Us is lobbying ruthlessly in Brussels against any form of abortion. But the opposition is just as quick on its feet: the 'Black Friday' mass protests in Ireland and the referendum in Ireland on the removal from the constitution of the clause banning abortion in all circumstances are giving women a voice. By employing similar tactics, the women's rights organisation 'Freedom Train' in Spain has already thwarted moves to introduce a complete ban on abortion.

#### The fight for equal rights as exemplified by same-sex marriage

'Gender ideology' has become the battle cry of the European right. The mere fact that the Istanbul Convention on the Prevention of Violence Against Women contains the term 'gender' prompted Bulgaria not to ratify it. Discrimination against LGBTI people is an everyday occurrence, however. But activists are fighting back and campaigning for more rights and equality. For example, it was political pressure which led Germany and the Czech Republic to introduce laws legalising same-sex marriage.





## BACKLASH AS AN ATTACK ON THE EU THE ISSUE OF THE RULE OF LAW AND FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

The backlash being orchestrated by the European right is also an attack on the European Union, since basic values such as human dignity, equality or the rule of law are enshrined in the European Treaties and apply in all the EU Member States. The European Union has a duty to ensure that these values apply to each and every person in the European Union.

If pluralism or gender equality are being disregarded, the EU must act. Politicians should take their cue from the activists who defend fundamental values and be just as committed in their advocacy of the rule of law – at European, national and regional level. The rule of law and democracy are non-negotiable in our European Union.

### IMPRESSUM

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Layout: ALEKS & SHANTU

#### Terry Reintke fights for equal rights

As member of the European Parliament Terry Reintke stands up for our free and open society with equal rights for everyone regardless of gender, religious or sexual orientation or origin:

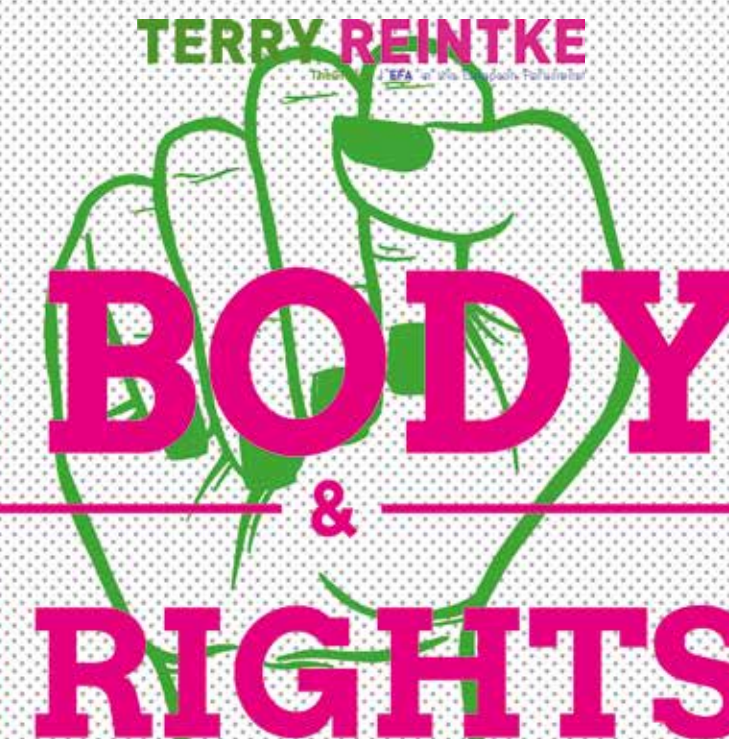
«Democracy does not only mean the right to live a free and self-determined life but also to take over responsibility and to defend our common values.»

 /TerryReintke

 /terry.reintke

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TERRY REINTKE  
Member of the European Parliament



MY BODY  
&  
MY RIGHTS

 The Greens | European Free Alliance  
in the European Parliament

## STRATEGIES AGAINST THE BACKLASH IN PARLIAMENT, ON THE STREETS AND IN THE PUB

More and more often right-wing populists and extreme right-wing parties are securing electoral successes in Europe. The strategies they use are similar: whilst parties still go to some lengths to make their leaders and programmes seen moderate, fringe elements are pushing political discourse further and further to the right. The universal consensus which prevailed until recently in parliaments – on the issues of human rights, tolerance and pluralism – is gradually being eroded. The driving forces behind this process are the AfD in Germany, the Front National in France, the FPÖ in Austria or the Freedom Party in the Netherlands. If we are to halt this right-wing resurgence, we need to stand up for what we believe, not only in parliaments, but also on the streets and in the pub.

The **#metoo debate** has made the public aware of the scale of the problem of sexual harassment and sexual assault in society. At the same time, it has become clear that social power structures deprive many women of the right to retain control over their bodies and their sexuality. A debate of this kind must be socially inclusive and must not be left to the right to conduct, so that it also leads to practical action. In this way public pressure builds on decision-makers to put women's rights and the rights of LGBTI people at the top of the political agenda. In the European Parliament, for example, this gave rise to cross-party cooperation on measures to combat sexual harassment in the European institutions – a practical response to the backlash.

