Mainstreaming, Gender and Communication in Italy

WP 5.2 Country Report

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List of Abbreviations

Fratelli d'Italia - FdI

Non una di meno – NUDM

Odiare ti costa – OTC

RAI - (Radio Televisione Italiana)

Schützenbund – SSB

About the Project

D.Rad is a comparative study of radicalisation and polarisation in Europe and beyond. It aims to identify the actors, networks, and wider social contexts driving radicalisation, particularly among young people in urban and peri-urban areas. D.Rad conceptualises this through the I-GAP spectrum (injustice-grievance-alienation-polarisation) with the goal of moving towards measurable evaluations of de-radicalisation programmes. Our intention is to identify the building blocks of radicalisation, which include a sense of being victimised; a sense of being thwarted or lacking agency in established legal and political structures; and coming under the influence of "us vs them" identity formulations.

D.Rad benefits from an exceptional breadth of backgrounds. The project spans national contexts including the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Finland, Slovenia, Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Turkey, Georgia, Austria, and several minority nationalisms. It bridges academic disciplines ranging from political science and cultural studies to social psychology and artificial intelligence. Dissemination methods include D.Rad labs, D.Rad hubs, policy papers, academic workshops, visual outputs and digital galleries. As such, D.Rad establishes a rigorous foundation to test practical interventions geared to prevention, inclusion and de-radicalisation.

With the possibility of capturing the trajectories of seventeen nations and several minority nations, the project will provide a unique evidence base for the comparative analysis of law and policy as nation states adapt to new security challenges. The process of mapping these varieties and their link to national contexts will be crucial in uncovering strengths and weaknesses in existing interventions. Furthermore, D.Rad accounts for the problem that processes of radicalisation often occur in circumstances that escape the control and scrutiny of traditional national frameworks of justice. The participation of AI professionals in modelling, analysing and devising solutions to online radicalisation will be central to the project's aims.

Executive Summary/Abstract

This report contributes to Work Package 5 "Mainstreaming, Media Literacy and Patterns of Mass Media Communication", focusing on "Mainstreaming, Gender and Communication". It looks at radicalizing collective agents engaging in anti-gendered communication targeting women and LGBTQIA+ persons, at de-radicalizing collectives offering counter-narratives, and at citizen communication also exerting a de-radicalizing power through a critical discourse analysis of posts made on social media platforms.

The report begins with an introduction to the chosen collectives, actors and items, outlining their characteristics as well as reasons for case selection. Second, the methodology used (desk-research of social media posts by radicalizing and de-radicalizing agents as well as citizen communication, critical discourse analysis of the narratives covered, focusing also on visualization) is provided. Third, the report discusses mediated hegemonic gender representation in Italy and its impact on radicalization. The developments of mediated hegemonic gender representation are discussed, stemming from private TV becoming popular in the years of the Berlusconi government to how these topics have also made their way into the new social media. Two very characteristic elements for the Italian case are identified: First, a misogynist portrayal of women as silent ornaments, which leads to increasingly vicious attacks on women who go against this stereotype and speak their minds, in particular female politicians. Second, Catholicism is very strong and very politicized in Italy, with the Vatican even increasing its influence on national politics over the last years. This solidifies hegemonic gender roles, where women are either completely sexualized and valued only for their bodies, or viewed as the nurturing, caring mothers proposed by religious bodies – both frames share a very limiting influence on women and their possibilities to live their own lives freely. Hegemonic masculinities, with models of the male breadwinner and protector of the family, are also prominently featured by the media and public figures. LGBTQIA+ persons are also impacted by these discourses, both in their not fitting into hegemonic gender roles, as well as by Catholic framing of their lives as sinful.

The radicalizing agents identified also moving within these discourses. The first item is Jürgen Wirth Anderlan's song "*Die Königin*" (the queen), in which he attacks feminists, portrays stereotypical tropes about women, and uses racist narratives, furthering perceived injustices and alienation. The Lega constitutes the second example for two discourses fostering alienation and polarization, namely its more aggressive-populist wing with Matteo Salvini (sexist representation of women) and its Catholic wing with Simone Pillon (against LGBTQIA+ rights). Third, Giorgia Meloni is analyzed as an example of "femonationalism": using women's rights narratives to further racist othering of minorities. Both the posts made by the politicians and the comment sections below show their radicalizing character, with discourse including wishes for rape and physical harm.

For de-radicalizing agents, the collectives of Arcigay, *Non una di* meno ("not one less") and *Odiare ti costa* ("hate will cost you") are looked at. Their de-radicalizing

strategies are fact-based, and do not use personalized attacks. Instead, they aim to rally their followers for peaceful demonstrations, to provide information, and to educate. They do so in an increasingly visually based way, as shown in the case of *Non una di meno's* Instagram video, which is used to raise awareness, mobilize and inform about offline events all at once. Adversarial framing is used to further collective identification, but there are no violent discourses, focusing on peaceful ways of expressing dissent instead.

Citizen communication helping de-radicalization processes is analyzed as the third set of items. Fedez, a well-known Italian rapper and his reading of the Lega's homophobic statements constitutes the first example. Second, two famous Italian TikTokers, the Lapresa twins and Luciano Spinelli, are used as examples. The Lapresa twins usually post comedy clips but have also spoken out in support of free gender expression by posing in skirts and make-up. Similarly, Luciano Spinelli came out as gay in 2021, and has since openly talked about his struggles to accept his sexual orientation. Contrary to the other posts, there are no hateful comments to the TikTok creators' posts, allowing for the assumption that younger Italians and especially Gen Z are more open to non-hegemonic gender representation. While it is stronger in the younger generation, the divide between society and politics is also slowly becoming visible across the Italian population: More progressive societal developments are not yet reflected by the discourse of the political system, leading to an alienation from traditional politics especially in the younger electorate.

1. Introduction

The present report is part of the Horizon 2020 project D.Rad (De-Radicalization in Europe and Beyond: Detect, Resolve, Re-Integrate) and presents results for Italy, one of the partner countries in the project. It focuses on "Mainstreaming, Gender and Communication" (WP5), and outlines the role of hegemonic gender roles for radicalization. After a contextualization of hegemonic gender roles in Italy, influenced by mediatization and the Catholic Church, the

report follows three strands of analysis. First, it looks at collective agents of radicalization and how extreme narratives revolving around misogyny, homophobia, sexism and/or transphobia are expressed online using visual and other communicative tools. Second, counter-narratives to hegemonic gender representation offered by collective de-radicalizing actors are analyzed. Third, citizen communication, i.e., ordinary users (activists, influencers) and their practices and digital cultures against hegemonic gender representation are outlined. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok) posts and user responses are the main sources of data, secondary literature and media reports are also used. Each of the mentioned platforms has distinct characteristics that cater to different types of discourses, narratives and visualizations of (in)justice, grievances, alienation and polarization (the I-GAP spectrum informing the project as its main theoretical framework). I-GAP grounds radicalization in perceptions of injustice which lead to grievance, alienation and polarization. Perceptions of injustice are used to turn individual grievances into collective struggles through adversarial framing, making use of the capacity of i.e., populist actors to mobilize grievances. Alienation refers to a feeling of powerlessness, leading to estrangement from the polity based on doubting the legitimacy of its institutions. Polarization is understood as the divergence of political attitudes to extremes, closing of space for dialogue and creating "us" vs. "them" identities and segregation between the in-group and the out-group.

WP 5.2 was originally tasked with analyzing the online presences of the stakeholders identified in the 3.1 reports (Zeba et. al. 2021) regarding hegemonic gender representation and its radicalizing impact. However, with the exception of the SSB, represented by its former head Jürgen Wirth Anderlan, the stakeholders identified in 3.1 do not have a strong social media presence and/or do not engage visibly on issues pertaining to gender and radicalization. This report therefore takes up different examples of radicalizing agency through hegemonic gender representation, as well as different actors offering de-radicalizing counter-narratives. However, both the added radicalizing (Lega, FdI) as well as de-radicalizing (Arcigay, NUDM, OTC) actors follow similar political and societal visions to the examples used in 3.1[1].

Jürgen Wirth Anderlan, former head of the SSB, was identified as a radicalizing anti-gender agent through his new video, "*Die Königin*" ("The Queen"), promoting in particular anti-gendered sentiments against women's rights and feminism, and contributing to the degrading and objectification of women. Simone Pillon, Senator of the Lega, is used to showcase anti-LGBTQIA+[2] radicalization, through his posts celebrating the rejection of the DDL Zan legislative proposal in October 2021. The new law would have introduced higher sentences for discrimination and hate crimes related to sexual orientation and gender identity but was rejected by the Senate after having passed the Chamber in Parliament. Both Anderlan and Pillon operate largely via Facebook, which of course also has implications on the type of audience they are able to reach. Third, Giorgia Meloni, leader of FdI (Brothers of Italy), and her Twitter posts will be analyzed. Meloni and her party have recently been successful in the 2022 local elections and are emerging as the strongest center-right force. Meloni's posts are especially interesting as they often combine anti-gender stances with racist othering, uniting different radicalizing approaches, and allowing for an intersectional analysis of radicalization patterns.

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[1] The 3.1 report looked at the following agents: Federazione Anarchica Informale – Fronte Rivoluzionario Internazionale (FAI), the New Red Brigades (NBR), Casa Pound Italia (CPI), Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS and al-Qaeda), and ethno-national right-wing extremism in South Tyrol.

[2] The present report uses the acronym LGBTQIA+ to refer to a broad spectrum of gender identities and sexual orientations, while acknowledging that different actors and organizations may prefer/use other terms. To establish coherence, LGBTQIA+ will be used throughout the report.

For de-radicalizing forces, *NUDM* ("not one less") is the first identified example. NUDM primarily speaks out against violence against women, but also promotes awareness raising on other feminist topics. Arcigay as the largest Italian organization for gay, lesbian and trans rights is identified as a de-radicalizing agent. Finally, a network on improving hate speech reporting is presented, OTC ("hating costs you"), providing users with hands-on advice on how to identify and report hateful posts. The de-radicalizing agents use different platforms (Facebook, Instagram, website). Although Facebook appears to be the one gathering the most interactions, Instagram videos are especially interesting for their primarily visual and not text-based representation of counter-narratives.

Third, citizen communication is analyzed. For this section, TikTok is particularly important, as it provides a platform for younger users, and many of the Italian TikTokers with large numbers of followers belong to the LGBTQIA+ community. Instagram with its feature to upload videos and reels is also an important framework, used by Italian rapper Fedez to criticize the Lega for its homophobia and decisions made on the above-mentioned DDL Zan. In section 2, the used methodology will be outlined, while section 3 provides an overview of the relationship between mediated hegemonic gender representation and radicalization in Italy. Sections 4, 5 and 6 look at radicalizing and de-radicalizing actors through a critical discourse analysis, followed by a concluding discussion.

2. Methodology

Data collection evaluation was carried out through a critical discourse analysis of the posts by radicalizing and de-radicalizing agents. Cross-platform variation was also an important criterion in sampling posts and data. For Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, communication by the respective agents was analyzed for the years 2020 and 2021, while for TikTok some more recent clips from June 2022 (Pride Month) were added as well. Examples were selected according to pertinence to the I-GAP spectrum. Like and repost ratios were available across platforms and constituted an important factor in measuring audience interaction. Comments were selected to showcase agreement and instances of audience radicalization, as well as trolling posts (especially in the case of de-radicalizing platforms). Posts by politicians and organizations were not anonymized, while audience reactions are revealed in an anonymized form. Country-specific mediated hegemonic gender representations (see section 3 of this report) were used to identify the most pertinent and interesting topics.

As outlined by Stuart Hall (2013: 2), language builds a mutual understanding because of its nature as a representational system. Signs and signals (whether they are sounds, written words, electronically produced images, musical notes, or objects) are used to represent our concepts, ideas and feelings – representation is therefore central to the processes by which meaning is produced. How narratives, shared codes and myths are represented and constructed and the audience's response to this representation are among the central frameworks for the report, along with placement of statements on the I-GAP spectrum.

According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997), discourse is a social practice, e.g., a form of interacting in society. Critical discourse analysis therefore implies ""a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social

structure(s) which frame it […]" (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258). Discourse is both socially constitute and socially conditioned and may help to sustain and reproduce the social status-quo as well as contribute to transforming it (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258).

Critical discourse analysis constitutes a fitting methodological approach for the present report due to its strong focus on the connection between text or media item and societal context. Additionally, the report is interested in discursive shifts, whereby a formerly fringe discourse is strategically introduced to a wider audience until it settles across the public domain and is finally "normalized", leading to a deeper change in norms of public expression (Krzyżanowski 2020: 508). Right-wing populist actors, who are among the agents of radicalization identified, are some of the main contributors to recent discursive shifts.

Starting from primary text sources, a contextualization looking at the socio-political context of the post is made, and the wider discourse the post belongs to is discussed, including its positioning in the I-GAP spectrum, relating to narratives of (in)justice, mobilizing grievances, alienation and estrangement, as well as polarization closing off space for dialogue. Intertextuality and discursive elements are established through an analysis of the comments reacting to the post, keeping Nick Couldry's (2012: 23) notion of dialectical analysis for digital media in mind: the interplay of feedback that loops on social networking sites makes them particularly well-suited to create a 'buzz'". This "buzz" is visible across platforms, although different modes (text, images, videos, performances) are used to create it and to keep the user on the site for more interaction.

3. Mediated hegemonic gender representation and its relationship to radicalization in Italy

To trace the origins of hegemonic gender representation in Italy, two main backgrounds need to be kept in mind: Italy's history as a country deeply influenced by Catholicism, and the mediatization of politics, particularly in the television sector, with former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi playing a central role. As Franziska Gilli and Barbara Bachmann phrased it the title of their 2021 book, Italian women are depicted as "whores or saints"[3], either as mere decorative objects at the disposal of men, or as nurturing mothers, connected to the Catholic idolization of the Virgin Mary (Bachmann & Gilli 2021). This polarization is also visible in the Italian media landscape, particularly in television, and more recently also on social media platforms. However, social media platforms also represent the main space for counter-cultural developments, allowing them to grow in influence and visibility over the last years.

Italian television was a monopoly until the 1970s. The RAI offered three channels, whose aim as public television was education and information (Grasso & Penati 2019: 221). In 1976, the Constitutional Court allowed private television channels to broadcast. Silvio Berlusconi entered the market with three further channels, and Italian TV became a "*tv amica*" ("buddy TV"), aimed at light entertainment and commercial marketing (Grasso & Penati 2019: 222). The rise of game shows also saw the introduction of the "*valletta*", a beautiful female assistant to the host in a mainly ornamental quiet role (Scaglioni & Sfardini 2019: 234). In the popular TV show "*Striscia la Notizia*", running on Berlusconi's *Canale 5*

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[3] All terms and quotes translated by the author.

since the late 1980s, there are always two "*veline*", dancing showgirls, one blond and one dark-haired, who are explicitly not allowed to speak even when directly spoken to (Bachmann & Gilli 2021: 13). It is therefore not surprising that a 2006 Censis report has ranked Italy, along with Greece, in the category of countries "in resistance" against a more varied and less stereotypical depiction of women in media (Censis 2006: 11). Being beautiful, passive, silent is desirable, as is the Catholic ideal of the nurturing mother; while transgressing and consciously using beauty for power is immediately linked to prostitution (Hipkins 2011: 419).

Berlusconi is influential for women's role in society not only as a media figure, but also as a political leader. He served four terms as Italian Prime Minister (1994–1995, 2001–2005, 2005–2006, 2008–2011), and his politics and appearances were frequently misogynist (e.g., allegedly calling German Chancellor Angela Merkel "unfuckable", or advising a young woman confronting him about the dire job situation in Italy to "find a rich husband"), as well as discriminatory against the LGBTQIA+ community ("it's better to be passionate about beautiful women than to be gay") (John 2018). Berlusconi's perpetration of hegemonic masculinity as a "Mediterranean male", as the strong-willed seducer, and describing his name as an anagram spelling "the only virile boss", display the stereotypical notions of masculinity present to this day (Pozzo 2013: 614). While objectification of women, discriminatory utterances against minorities and toxic masculine behavior did not impact Berlusconi's political success for many years, a real backlash ensued after the prostitution scandals that alienated the Catholic family-oriented voters (Levy 2011). In 2010, Berlusconi's relationship to Karima el Mahroug, better known as Ruby, an underage belly-dancer, was revealed, resulting in the "Bunga-Bunga" scandal, referring to the festivities with prostitutes held at Berlusconi's villa near Milan. Two of Berlusconi's closest allies, Lele Mora (a TV and showgirl manager) and Emilio Fede (news anchor on Berlusconi's channel Rete 4) were charged and convicted for favoring prostitution (Levy 2011), while Berlusconi's own trial for soliciting prostitution with a minor and for misuse of power is still ongoing after multiple appeals.

Next to sexist representations of women and stereotypical masculine roles, the Catholic Church also strongly influences gender roles and representation in Italy. Over 90% of Italians formally belong to the Catholic Church (Statista 2021), and according to a special Eurobarometer on values, 74% of Italian identify with their religion or belief, compared to 53% as the EU average (Eurobarometer 2021). The strong Catholicism influences the role of women and the importance of motherhood and makes progress in equal opportunity policy for LGBTQIA+ persons difficult. In 2016, civil unions were introduced; the law faced strong opposition from the Catholic Church, with Lega senator Roberto Calderoli mentioning that "all those who voted yes will go to hell" (Kirchgaessner 2016). In 2021, a proposal for an anti-discrimination law (the above-mentioned DDL Zan) was rejected; it would have implemented discrimination based on gender identity, sexual orientation and disability as hate crimes, punishable with higher sentences. The proposal also included an awareness raising national day against homophobia and transphobia, which sparked the opposition of the Catholic Church, as it would have been mandatory in all schools, including private church-run ones. The Vatican even diplomatically contacted the Italian government in the case of the DDL Zan – an unprecedented involvement in Italian politics (Viafora 2021). Italy represents a peculiar case also in the stance its party system takes towards Catholicism, with religion being an important frame of reference both for right- and left-wing actors (unlike the similarly Catholic cases of Ireland and Spain, for example). Moreover, the absence or inability of traditional progressive parties and forces to respond to LGBTQIA+ and feminist claims of self-determination constitute a distinctive trait of the Italian case (Lavizzari 2020: 168).

Catholicism, discriminatory practices and sexualization of women are also visible on social media. While also creating new possibilities for violent radicalization (e.g., the so-called "Manosphere[4]", Pearson et. al 2020: 254), Italian social media largely perpetuate similar gender standards to traditional media. This is exemplified by "*La Bestia*" (the beast), the Lega's social media strategy. Until recently, parties used social media primarily on the campaign trail, but this has changed to a continued use of algorithms and prediction tools monitoring public opinion, and a tailor-made posting schedule (Rociola 2018).

A 2021 study found that of all the social media posts made by Lega leader Matteo Salvini, those expressing negative emotions (sadness, fear, anger, and disgust) gathered more audience reactions (likes and comments) than positive ones (Saporiti 2021). Social media intensify so-called echo chambers: "environments in which the opinion, political leaning, or belief of users about a topic gets reinforced due to repeated interactions with peers or sources having similar tendencies and attitudes" (Cinelli et al. 2021). According to group polarization theory (Sunstein 2002), echo chambers can drive groups towards more extreme opinions. Ranking algorithms lead to filter bubbles (Pariser 2011): users are no longer exposed to dissenting opinions but continue in a reinforcement and polarization spiral. As Robert Putnam argues (2000: 178), real world interactions often force us to deal with diversity, while the virtual world may be more homogeneous. This characteristic, referred to by Sunstein (2018) as "enclave deliberation", comprises both a blessing and a curse: it allows marginalized populations to create shared safe spaces online, where they can gather and mobilize (see also the agents of de-radicalization presented below). However, it also leads to more and more polarization and radicalization in political discourse and society, with anti-vax communities as the most recent prominent example.

Next to radicalizing forces, activists and de-radicalizing actors have also discovered how to use social media for their purposes. According to della Porta and Pavan (2018: 85), new forms of digital activism have "prompted a highly interdisciplinary reflection on how increased communication possibilities intertwine with the organizational and the symbolic dimensions of social movements, but also on media practices as forms of resistance in their own rights". Social media therefore allow existing social movements to extend and represent their frame of action, to rely on more easily accessible visual impulses than on pure text material, and to foster citizen communication, as they provide everyone with an international platform for expression. Digital media thus "have becoming mobilizing tools for the expression of voice, identity and empowerment in unprecedented and innovative ways" (Gabai 2022: 36).

4. Collectives perpetrating hegemonic gender roles and extreme narratives

4.1 Jürgen Wirth Anderlan and and "The Queen" – anti-gender radicalization in a separatist context[5]

After the analysis of mediated hegemonic gender representation provided above, section 4 will now provide a critical discourse analysis of selected posts by radicalizing actors and respective audience responses. The first item is a video, posted by former SSB leader

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[4] The Manosphere refers to a loose network of misogynist online groups, including pick-up artists, men's rights activists, Men Going Their Own Way, and Incels (involuntary celibates) as the most radical and violent group.

[5] Link to the video & comment section https://www.facebook.com/wirthanderlan/videos/2848059682111139/

Jürgen Wirth Anderlan to his personal Facebook page on July 31, 2021[6]. It can be regarded as a follow-up to his December 2020 song "*Mamma Tirol*", which caused considerable public outrage, including a petition to remove the video by the South Tyrolean Provincial Commission for Equal Opportunities that reached over 7000 signatures[7], ultimately leading to Anderlan's resignation from the SSB. However, he remains active politically, as a proponent of the anti-vax movement in South Tyrol. "*Die Königin*" ("The Queen") also picks up on narratives about Covid-19 vaccines containing harmful substances, discourses of a "vaccine dictatorship" that excludes anti-vax citizens, and conspiracy theories of a hidden agenda behind lockdowns. Anderlan states that he will not follow "the decrees by the insatiables", referring to Covid-19 safety measures, and imitates provincial president Arno Kompatscher on the radio saying "you are all going to die, have you not understood that yet"[8].

The video's main focus is a backlash against those who have protested his first output "*Mamma Tirol*". Anderlan mentions that he is now in a relationship with "Ulli", referencing Ulrike Oberhammer, the president of the South Tyrolean Provincial Commission for Equal Opportunities[9]. Oberhammer is described by Anderlan as a "good cat" (a South Tyrolean dialectal way to refer to a "hot" woman, carrying a derogatory and sexist notion especially through the trope of comparing women to animals). However, she also has "hairy legs" and a "missing tooth", perpetrating the stereotype of the unkempt feminist. Anderlan raps that Oberhammer is "the queen of the women's clan", but that kids are allowed to call her a "*Klopper*", a derogatory dialect term for an angry unpleasant woman. In the song's chorus, Anderlan uses Oberhammer's name as a play upon words: in dialect, saying that something is "*oberhammer*" can also be used as an adjective to convey excitement or outrage about something.

Anderlan reinstates his transphobic and anti-immigrant views: "[…] the mayor is standing there, a good cat and his name is Waltraud", a line that can be interpreted as Anderlan ridiculing trans persons (male mayor with a female name) or women in politics, who are again reduced to their looks. Next to the mayor, there's "Ahmed from Afghanistan, waiting for Biggi from Glin-Montan" – an immigrant from a Muslim country, waiting for a South Tyrolean girl, connecting to both sexist and racist tropes of immigrants taking "our women". Anderlan concludes that he should go into politics, where he would fit well with the "mr. cleans with a permanent erection, with the hardcore-gender and know-it-alls". Anderlan positions himself as an anti-establishment person, disregarding "the system's" rules on all topics (Covid-19 measures, sexist and racist language, etc.). It is also notable that Anderlan posted the video stating "*LASST DEN STURM BEGINNEN*" ("let the storm begin", in all caps), which could be seen as a reference to Joseph Goebbels' *Sportpalast* speech in 1943, which he ended with "now, people, rise up and storm, break out" ("*Nun, Volk, steh auf und Sturm, brich los*").

Although "*Die Königin*" did not create nearly as widespread a media impact as "*Mamma Tirol*, the video received 40,000 views on Facebook, and earned 1,300 likes and 186 comments. Except for a couple of dissenting voices ("my ears are bleeding, please stop[10]" or "you must have some screws loose, or maybe it's Covid"), the comments are largely positive, including the statements of support like "Jürgen Wirth Anderlan for

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[6] As of June 2022, Anderlan has 10,200 followers on Facebook.

[7] For a detailed analysis of „Mamma Tirol" and the events after its publication, please see the 5.1 Italy report.

[8] Lyrics to "*Die Königin*" have been transcribed and translated by the author.

[9] The Provincial Commission for Equal Opportunities is a consultative body established by the Autonomous Province of Bozen/Bolzano. It monitors gender equality in South Tyrol through reports, and regularly comments on equal opportunity issues.

[10] Comments posted below the „*Die Königin*" video on Facebook, author's translation.

Landeshauptmann[11]". Many commenters only use emojis (thumbs up, hearts) or meme gifs to show support. Ridiculing Ulrike Oberhammer is also primarily carried out via derogatory memes or laughing emojis. Other commenters praise Anderlan for his courage to freely speak his mind: "LONG LIVE THE BACKBONE".

In general, Anderlan's "anti-system" stance on all accounts appears to exert the most radicalizing influence on his community, with comments like these:

> "SVP[12] I hate you to death"

> "have experience with such gypsies from the svp, they are just the oberhammer"

> "I hope that people (taxpayers) finally understand the rat tail of the svp (lawyers destroying families, directors earning 150000, and destroying the future of all our children). honorary lawyers with 4000 extra from questionable founds etc".

The last comment in particular references women's right activists like Oberhammer, who is also a lawyer, as responsible for destroying families, taking up a motive of the radicalized feminist as someone who destroys "normal" families and refuses to put the children first. The commentators think that these developments need to stop, with posts like "It's time to go into the battle!", using a war-like violent rhetoric. Looking at the I-GAP spectrum, Anderlan prominently uses injustice narratives (e.g., his being against "the system"), and links victimization felt by his audience to an alternative vision of justice. Adversarial framing relation to persecution (by feminists, politicians and media) is also used. Grievances are visible particularly in the comments, where his followers express their frustration with their political ruling class. Anderlan feels attacked both by women demanding equal rights and non-sexist communication as well as by other societal changes. He engages in the othering of minorities, showing alienation, and uses a polarizing "us vs. them" rhetoric throughout the song – a narrative also reflected in the user comments.

4.2 The Lega – aggressive populism and conservative Catholicism

While Anderlan's impact is limited to the South Tyrolean level, the Lega reaches all of Italy and has changed political discourse with its aggressive populist communication style; two examples will be analyzed in this section. "*La Bestia*" ("The Beast") was displayed as a powerful enigmatic force by Italian media; referring to a carefully planned network of media analysts picking up trends. While party leader Matteo Salvini always denied the existence of strategic posting, social media expert Vincenzo Cosenza argues that "the beast" was likely based on a powerful "listening tool", e.g., a software used to identify trends and moods across social networks that could then be picked up in the Lega's discourse (Rociola 2018). Luca Morisi, Salvini's social media manager, secured the Lega's online lead through simple but effective strategies: "Placing blame on someone, without waiting for courts, without contextualizing, without going beyond the surface is in fact the real stylistic hallmark of these Beast years. The invention of a scapegoat to cement a community: the organization with modern tools of the oldest of urges" (Munafò 2021a, author's translation). Fostering alienation and polarization while building an exclusionary "we" and feeding into existing

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[11] Head of the provincial government.

[12] SVP, Südtiroler Volkspartei, is the governing party in South Tyrol, in a coalition with the Lega. Arno Kompatscher and Ulrike Oberhammer as the video's main targets are both SVP politicians.

grievances is thus central to the beast's strategy. In 2021, Morisi had to resign over allegations of providing drugs at his private parties, and since then, the popularity and interaction rates of Salvini's and the Lega's profiles have been plummeting, falling behind those of Fratelli d'Italia's leader Giorgia Meloni.

Salvini's tweet presented as an item here is from 2016, and thus from the "beast" years. Matteo Salvini had previously caused outrage by comparing then-president of the Chamber Laura Boldrini to an inflatable doll while posing on stage with said doll. Boldrini replied on Facebook, saying "Women are not dolls and political fighting is done with arguments, by those who have any, not with insults". As an inflatable doll is used as a sex toy, comparing a woman to it also uses sexualization and misogyny to mobilize grievances. Salvini refuses to apologize and goes back to the inflatable doll analogy in his tweet, using the hashtag #deflateboldrini[13]. The tweet used a picture of Boldrini and read:

> "Hypocrite, do-gooder, racist to Italians. Resign!!! #deflateboldrini[14]"

An "us" vs. "them" rhetoric is visible in the comment section of the tweet, denoting the presence of polarization according to the I-GAP spectrum. As the mainstream right becomes more and more radicalized, so do its discourses expressing and fostering polarization. Online technologies prominently contribute to furthering these divisions. The comments supporting Salvini's views are in the majority, although some commentators also criticize Salvini:

> "Do you think you're intelligent with these outputs? 20 thousand euros a month to say this crap"

The majority of comments present the typical narratives used against left-wing politicians and against female politicians in particular. These include misogynist attacks on her integrity, intelligence, and looks, providing a good example of perceived injustices as women make their way to powerful positions in society, as well as of adversarial framing:

> "Spends public money to make herself beautiful. Another waste with no results"

> "in fact, the female presidents of the chamber, have always been half-wits!"

Racist and especially anti-Muslim statements are also prominent and emphasize feelings of alienation leading to the othering of minorities. In this case, there is an intersectional dimension to this othering process, and a mixture of misogynist and racist tropes:

> "Mental Leftists let's send them to Africa with their cutthroat Islamic friends".

The comments show how female politicians are sexualized and how hate speech directed at them very often includes phantasies and wishes for rape and sexualized violence. While grievances resulting in calls for violence are common to radicalizing actors and their discourse, wishes for sexualized violence and sexualized hate speech are almost exclusively used on female public figures, and, to a lesser extent, on persons belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community. The comments under Salvini's tweet show a range of radicalization,

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[13] https://twitter.com/matteosalvinimi/status/757568089496100864; 705 likes, 345 retweets. Full translation of comments in the appendix of this report. As of June 2022, Salvini has 1.4 million followers on Twitter.

[14] Tweet and comments translated by the author.

from sexist comments to concrete wishes for rape and "removal" of Boldrini that can be regarded as instigations to physical and sexualized violence.

> "Is bOLDRINI a blow-up doll? No, the chick certainly doesn't inspire moments of pleasure",

> "she should take the extra-communitarians [non-EU immigrants, author's note] home with her"

> "president go get fucked maybe you like it"

> "That 'Lady' must be removed with a crowbar well if she is deflatable a pin is enough"

> "I hope Boldrini and her family get raped by a horde of Muslim Roma!!! That would be a just punishment!!!"

The comments on Laura Boldrini made below Salvini's tweet correspond to the characteristics of what Mantilla (2015: 13) refers to as "gendertrolling": graphic, sexualized and gender-based insults, rape and death threats targeting female politicians. Krook and Restrepo Sanín (2019: 741) denote that "although the technology is new, maligning a woman's character, often by reference to her sexuality, has been a recurring strategy historically to discredit women's ideas and inhibit their participation in traditionally male-dominated spaces". Non-hegemonic men and especially LGBTQIA+ individuals are also subjected to similar patterns of discreditation and abuse (Bardall, Bjarnegård & Piscopo 2019: 921). Attacks on women's and LGBTQIA+ rights are the common discourse practice that connects the Lega's more aggressively populist members to its conservative Catholic wing. Senator Simone Pillon can be regarded as the main representative of the Catholic Lega spectrum, and therefore one of his Facebook posts will be selected as a second Lega item.

Pillon has 87,000 followers on Facebook, and regularly posts on the newest political proceedings, especially on anti-gender and anti-LGBTQIA+ topics. As outlined in the background section of this report, in 2021, the DDL Zan, a draft law that would have made for more extensive punishment of hate crimes based on gender identity and sexual orientation, as well as for increased awareness of gender and diversity issues in schools, did not pass the Senate vote. Upon rejection of the legislative proposal, Pillon celebrated on his Facebook page, with a picture showing him toasting with a glass of Prosecco[15]. The post received 5,700 reactions (4900 likes, 573 love, 96 laugh, 69 care) and 1,600 comments[16]:

> "[…]
>
> A toast to the thousands of people, families, moms, and dads who have animated the squares of the standing sentinels, enduring insults and swearing to watch over freedom of speech, thought, education, and religion.
>
> […]
>
> Still we can resist the ideological invasion of gender, politically corrupt, cancel culture and all the great temptations of individualism and relativism.

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[15] https://www.facebook.com/SenatorePillon/posts/3020091691599741

[16] The full translation of the post is available in the appendix of the present report.

A toast also to Mentana[17] who, in anger, says I am the only one laughing.

In reality there are millions of us, the silent majority, toasting to freedom tonight.

#noddlzan"

Pillon's post shows his happiness over the stopping of a perceived injustice. By referring to freedom of speech being in danger, he relates to a discourse increasingly used by right-wing populist actors about cancel culture, and connects it to other adversarial concepts (gender, individualism, relativism). His use of the word "families" is also interesting, as he clearly excludes same-sex parents from his definition.

In contrast to Salvini's post, Pillon also received a large number of negative responses, especially for his open celebration of the cancellation of the draft law. Claims of injustice become visible on behalf of users in favor of the DDL Zan, who comment that Pillon is taking away protection from an already marginalized community. Pillon is also attacked for his celebratory behavior, and commentators accuse him of toasting towards the limitation of human rights:

"Will you also raise a glass to all those children battered or discriminated against simply because of their sexual orientation, will you raise a glass to those who are continual victims of violence, will you also raise a glass to those who are afraid to love freely walking down the street hand in hand because they are afraid of being beaten? Today you and your comrades patted yet another pat on the back to those who feed on violence and hatred, of course always clutching crucifixes in your hands. Between you and a Taliban I see no difference."

Opposing the negative voices were those praising Pillon. Unsurprisingly, a common Catholic background seems to be the most important force for exerting collective grievances; here, justice is seen as having served the DDL Zan rejection. Most commentators connect their approval to religious topics[18]:

"Mr. Mentana, we are not laughing-we are happy. Most Holy Mary will triumph because of our prayers, too"

However, there are also conspiracy theorists connecting gay rights to the pandemic whilst portraying antisemitic tropes like ideas about secret financial elites running the world that are closely connected to Catholicism. They express alienation in a feeling of powerlessness facing wider apparently hostile forces:

"They are made to believe […] we are still an intact nation, and not a colony in the hands of a stateless banker-robber[19] and the worst dregs of Davos[20]: to destroy us they have to make all Italians debauched, with terror generated by a false pandemic, with toxic serums, and with the blasphemy of gender. THEY WILL NOT STOP"

The comment refers to Prime Minister Mario Draghi's past as head of the European Central Bank, and connects his role, the world-economic forum Covid-19 and vaccine conspiracies

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[17] Enrico Mentana is the host of the TG (news) on the television channel La7. In a column for a newspaper, he wrote that Pillon was the "only one laughing" because of the rejection of the DDL Zan.

[18] Further translated comments can be found in the appendix of the present report.

[19] Referring to Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi's past role as head of the European Central Bank.

[20] The World Economic Forum is held in Davos.

to sexual orientation and gender issues, and airs grievances against the cultural development of society, including women's and LGBTQIA+ rights. As mainly religious commentators are present on Pillon's Facebook page, comments portraying homosexuality as an illness are also identifiable:

> "I wish the science that cures so many diseases could also cure homosexuality I pray to God for that"

However, in general, calls for mobilization remain on an implicit and structural level. This could be because radicalizing actors were in this case celebrating a political victory and did not have to rely on further polarizing and alienating conversations to manifest their grievances. Similar to the Lega, Giorgia Meloni from FdI also uses othering techniques, and relies on shared grievances for mobilization; in particular, she connects racialization of minorities with women's rights discourses.

4.3 Fratelli d'Italia – Giorgia Meloni and femonationalist racist radicalization

Giorgia Meloni, leader of *FdI* provides the next items to be analyzed; she uses a combination of populist anti-immigrant discourse and women's liberation rhetoric; feminist discourse is however only of interest to her when it can be used to other minority populations. *FdI* were conceived as a center-right party but have been moving towards right-wing populism more and more under Meloni, thus becoming the Lega's most serious competitor for votes. From February 2021 to July 2022, Italian premier Mario Draghi headed an all-party government, a political format chosen to react to the Covid-19 pandemic and its socio- economic impact in the most comprehensive way. *FdI* were the only major Italian party that remained in the opposition, which allowed them to build a profile with protest-voters and to come out very strongly in the 2022 local elections, often surpassing the Lega. This development is also reflected in their social media presence, with Meloni taking the lead in total interactions from Salvini in the second half of 2021: 16 million interactions for Meloni, 13 million for Salvini (Munafò 2021b). Meloni is leading in the current polls for the parliamentary elections, to be held on September 25th, and could head a right-wing coalition government.

Next to her growing political success, Giorgia Meloni is particularly interesting as a female right-wing party leader. She can be categorized as an example of "femonationalism" (Farris 2017), an ideology appropriating feminist discourses about gender equality to justify racist rhetoric and policies, while at the same time rejecting feminism as such. Women's rights issues are only prominently featured when they can be connected to a racialized view, denouncing non-Western societies as exceptionally sexist and focusing particularly on Muslim men as a threat. Other second-wave feminist policies (reproductive rights including access to abortion, gender education policies in schools, political representation through quota systems) are rejected, as they are regarded as a threat to heteronormative, Christian, and white family values (Arfini, Ghigi, Magaraggia 2019: 695). The Italian context is especially interesting because of two characteristics feeding into femonationalist discourse: the crucial role of the Catholic Church and its overt influence on public opinion, using a rhetoric of feminine nature and complementarity between the sexes, and the predominance of the theory of sexual difference, emphasizing a binary, ontological and oppositional view of gender which provides a favorable basis for naturalistic discourses. Gender and

"islamization" are merged as two analogous enemies of the national/"natural" order (Garbagnoli 2017: 152).

This is exemplified by the item chosen to illustrate Giorgia Meloni's femonationalist discourse. Saman Abbas, a Pakistani girl living in the Italian province of Reggio Emilia, was murdered by her family in May 2021, as she refused to accept an arranged marriage. The incident caused outrage in Italy and fostered public discussion both on failed integration as well as on a lack of help for girls and women in similar situations. In June 2021, Giorgia Meloni tweeted a video of two other girls who had been abused by their (Muslim immigrant) families[21], and said:

> "In Italy, there is more than just the story of Saman and Masuma[22] , this is proof of this.
>
> Girls who would like to be free to choose their man or take a walk with their friends without the veil.
>
> Does anyone still have the audacity to say that these barbarities are not related to Islamic fundamentalism?[23]"

Meloni thus takes up claims for female self-determination from feminist rhetoric, but immediately uses these notions to launch an attack on Islamic fundamentalism (which, interestingly, also has gender policies as its enemy, like right-wing populists). Polarization is fostered through othering, in this case of Muslims, portrayed as backward fundamentalists.

The reactions to the tweet are largely supportive. Among the most prominent themes is the femonationalist topic of Islam being incapable of integration into a modern society, and how "the left" has brought in the perpetrators of violence against women through liberal immigration policies, providing "us and them" narratives and referring to how modern Western states being "weak" and permissive has led to Islamist violence:

> "The left, the Argentine[24] and the mummy[25] have brought us the worst human expression. People who live by rules that any civilized society rejects. Sick carriers of aberrant and violent laws on women."
>
> "AND THIS WOULD BE PEACEFUL AND MULTICULTURAL ISLAM!!!BUT ONLY GOOD COMMUNIST IDIOTS DESPITE THESE DRAMATIC AND ABSURD TESTIMONIES,CAN STILL TALK ABOUT A PEACEFUL AND OPEN ISLAM!!!"
>
> "Muslim #Integration DOES NOT EXIST‼‼"

The opposing commentators mainly refer to the increased possibilities of living free self-determined lives that Italy offers immigrant girls compared to their countries of origin, and

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[21] https://twitter.com/GiorgiaMeloni/status/1405917598718570496. The tweet received 541 likes and 143 retweets. As of June 2022, Meloni has 1.2 million followers on Twitter.

[22] Masuma is a Bangladeshi girl from Bologna, who was also threatened by an arranged marriage but managed to escape her situation through contacting the authorities and now lives with an Italian family.

[23] Tweet and comments translated by the author.

[24] Referring to Pope Francis, who is from Argentina, and has been outspoken about the need to help refugees.

[25] Referring to Sergio Mattarella, the Italian head of state, criticized by opponents for his advanced age and liberal views on migration.

point out that if Meloni had her way in restricting migration, these chances would not be available to them:

> "The purpose of this tweet escapes me. Apart from prosecuting the crimes what should we do? If it were up to you these girls would not even be in Italy. You care about them and don't give a damn about those locked up in Libyan jails escaping towards freedom. You want to send them back."

> "Girls who, not fleeing from wars, without welcoming [them in Italy, author's note] would remain in their countries to submit to their husbands or get killed."

Another commentator also notes that right-wing populist parties themselves are not exactly known to be champions of women's rights, highlighting the irony in Meloni taking up this topic:

> "I do a Remind on right-wing women positions: you are not suited for math but born to care and there is too much equality in the constitution. Just as a reminder"

Indeed, looking at the idea of femonationalism outlined above, it becomes clear that Meloni is taking up the issue because it can easily be connected to a racialized notion of Muslim men as perpetrators, and because this allows her to exert collective mobilization through shared grievances and polarizing imagery. In her tweet on the International Day Against Violence Against Women (November 25th), Meloni also explicitly remembers Saman Abbas, while remaining quiet on the other femicides in Italy: In 2021, 118 women were murdered in Italy, and 70 of these women were killed by their partners or ex-partners (La Repubblica 2021). The vast majority of perpetrators were Italian men; however, remembering their victims cannot be used to create an injustice frame of Muslim violence but would instead lead to a discussion about patriarchal gender roles in Italy, something that does not exist in Meloni's discourse. Gender and feminism are employed only as frames for the othering of Muslims, and for their portrayal as violent and dangerous. Meloni's style of visualization used for her Twitter post also reflects this: She reposts a news video in which two Muslim girls speak of the abuse suffered at the hands of their patriarchal families, but Meloni shows an altered video thumbnail with the words "stabbed and abused by my family" and "the story of Masuma…shocking" at the bottom, both in all caps and with the word "shocking" in large red letters. This transports the message of her post to readers immediately, even if they do not read her statement above or watch the video: Muslims perpetrate violence against women and abuse young girls.

5. Collectives counteracting hegemonic masculinity, homophobia and transphobia

In this section, collective actors counteracting hegemonic masculinity, homophobia and transphobia will be analyzed. These collectives serve as de-radicalizing forces: Contrary to the populist opponents outlined above, their discourse focuses on facts and not emotions, and does not use personalized attacks. Adversarial framing is less prominent and used more to rally own networks and call for action and less as an exclusionary devise creating an in- vs. an out-group. Among the organizations analyzed here, *Arcigay* is the most prominent

and has been active for the longest time, representing LGBTQIA+ rights across the territory. *NUDM* is a relatively new feminist collective, inspired by the South American *ni una menos* movement; it relies on social media as its core tools for communication, and makes use of visual platforms like Instagram to portray its messages. Finally, *OTC* is a platform explicitly targeting online hate speech, allowing victims to report incidents of online bullying and offering legal advice; it therefore directly counteracts the rhetoric of populist politicians and especially personalized and sexualized attacks on women and LGBTQIA+ persons.

5.1 Arcigay and the DDL Zan

Arcigay is the largest organization promoting LGBTQIA+ rights in Italy. It is active across the country, in 73 territorial committees and member associations. Arcigay's mission is "obtain equal and full rights for LGBTI people, including in particular egalitarian marriage and recognition of LGBTI parenting; obtain legal protection against violence and discrimination against LGBTI people and the ultimate consolidation of a non-homo-bi-transphobic and non-sexist society and culture […]" (Arcigay website, author's translation). The item to be analyzed is taken from their Facebook page and responds to the rejection of the DDL Zan. Arcigay has 33,122 likes and 35,402 followers on Facebook. The post is accompanied by a picture showing the vote in the Italian Senate, and reads[26]:

> […]
>
> 😡 This Parliament has not been up to the challenges of this time, the levee to homotransfobia will continue to be laid by the country, informal networks, associations, all people of good will. Not the state, which once again turns away.
>
> 🤢We thank those who fought, to all others we hand over our shame[27.]

The post receives a relatively equal number of positive and negative comments. Many commentators express their sadness that the law proposal did not pass, and at the same time call for unity and action (e.g., demonstrations) without radicalization, demanding that LGBTQIA+ rights advocates do not "stoop as low" as their opponents. This shows that perceived injustices, collective mobilization and shared grievances may also be present in de-radicalizing agents, but that they choose official and non-violent paths (appeals, demonstrations, awareness-raising) instead of radicalization. An "us vs them" rhetoric is also used, as the commentators clearly want to distance themselves from their political opponents and their celebrations:

> "WE MUST say enough to all this crap, for them it' s a game, it' s a pissing contest; to us this crap instead affects our lives! whether we like it or not. ENOUGH!"

The dissenting commentators often use emojis or hashtags, many comment simply with #ByeByeZan and a heart emoji, which could also be interpreted as trolling, as they come to the page of an advocacy group simply to express their joy that said group has lost a political battle. The comments mix tropes used by right-wing politicians (e.g., connecting gay rights

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[26] https://www.facebook.com/Arcigay/posts/4442088329160328. The post received 179 reactions (102 likes, 51 angry, 24 sad, 1 laugh, 1 care) and 44 comments; full translation in the appendix of this report.

[27] Post and comments translated by the author.

and political correctness as their targets) and again express mainly cultural backlash-based grievances and injustice frames:

> "Republic Senators found it necessary to sink a bill that is not helpful to the country but is a real cut-throat for those who do not align with the politically correct thinking of the Gay Lobby"

Similarly, comments claim that protection should be equal for all citizens, and attack a "fictitious diversity", taking up the notion that identity politics are not a valid political topic. This could be related to alienation, and a perceived loss of agency in everyday interactions within a society that is more progressive than its policies show:

> "The law should protect everyone from hatred and discrimination, not a specific segment of the population randomly selected on the basis of sexual orientation, creating diversity from no one knows what. Fascist law, thankfully shelved. Let the law protect all and not do it differently based on fictitious diversity. All are equal."

The notion of creating inequalities through protection policies aimed at particularly vulnerable or marginalized groups is also a frequently used discourse on behalf of right-wing populist actors. This discourse works for the LGBTQIA+ community, but also for women and affirmative action measures such as quota systems to ensure representation. Radicalizing agents view affirmative action in an injustice framing; they inscribe grievance in this perceived injustice by attributing responsibility for it to others, namely the communities looking for equal rights.

5.2 Non una di meno – feminist collective fighting violence against women

While populist actors and especially the comment sections to their posts show gendered radicalization and threats of violence against women, NUDM aims to counteract these development through its online and offline actions. *NUDM* is the Italian version of the #NiUnaMenos movement started in Argentina; a fourth-wave feminist[28] grassroots movement speaking out most prominently against gendered violence, but also against the gender pay gap, everyday sexism, sexual objectification, outdated gender roles, sexual harassment and advocating for sex workers' rights, reproductive rights including abortion, and transgender rights. Their Facebook page states that it is concerned with "the legislative plan, anti-violence centers (CAVs) and paths to autonomy, education about diversity, freedom of choice and voluntary termination of pregnancy (IVG)" (*NUDM*, Facebook). The selected item is a call to join the demonstrations for the Day Against Violence Against Women, November 25th, in 2021. The post and a short accompanying video were made on Instagram:[29]

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[28] Feminism is generally looked at as a movement in four waves: Advocacy for voting rights and the right to education (1st wave, 19th and early 20th century); advocacy for equal opportunities in the workplace and reproductive rights, connected to the civil rights movement (2nd wave, 1960s and 1970s), a more international view on feminism, including the global south (3rd wave, 1990s) and intersectional (i.e., taking different categories of diversity into account) feminism relying also heavily on digital technology (4th wave, 2010s onwards).

[29] https://www.instagram.com/tv/CWn4qf3AewK/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link%20calling%20for%20action. The video was watched 11,071 times and received 899 likes and 4 comments; full translation in the appendix of this report.

"[…] 💥ON NOVEMBER 27 WE WILL BE IN A DEMONSTRATION IN ROME!
We will occupy the streets with our anger:

[…] because we want ourselves to be alive and free!"[30]

NUDM shows their intersectional approach by not only referring to physical but also to structural violence against women, and by explicitly also referring to trans women as victims of violence. They also take up the problem of migrants being mistreated, as well as cases of violence and discrimination against LGBTQIA+ persons. *NUDM* therefore views feminism as a general social justice movement, active also on issues that do not only concern women.

Their video shows a jar being filled with negative developments of the last years (increase in violence against women, femicides and transcides, discrimination of LGBTQIA+ persons, rise of the female unemployment rate, crisis of the eco-system and pollution, increase of the doctors refusing to perform abortions, institutional racism, budget cuts in the health sector, toxic narratives, erosion of rights and protections), until it finally overflows. This scene takes up the way of saying that "the measure/measurement cup is full" in Italian, meaning "enough is enough". Next, a flyer advertising the demonstration and different open talking mouths (insinuating "raising your voice") are shown and then complemented with pictures from past demonstrations. The background music is an upbeat drumbeat, intensifying towards the end of the video, when the call to demonstrate is ushered. Visually, the video is also striking: when femicides are mentioned, a red liquid is poured into the cup, symbolizing blood and violence. At the mention of female unemployment, coins are thrown in, crumpled leaves for the decaying ecosystem, pills and a syringe for the health care sector, and magazine cutouts for toxic narratives. The Lega and Simone Pillon are also addressed, when "discrimination of LGBTQIA+ persons" is mentioned; in fact, we see the picture of Pillon raising his glass to the rejection of the DDL Zan being put into the jar as an example of such discriminatory practice. *NUDM* thus directly connects and refers back to one of the radicalizing actors outlined in 4.2. Like Arcigay, *NUDM* also explicitly refers to pacifist ways of voice-raising, of becoming a "wave" in the streets during their demonstrations, but do not further polarize by adding ridicule or threats of violence to their political opponents. However, they   air grievances by listing the things that went wrong since the last demonstration was possible before the pandemic, and aim to mobilize through providing injustice frames.

For the video and the post, *NUDM* did not receive many comments, only some emojis (hearts, biceps for strength), which however is also due to the nature of Instagram focusing very much on visual representation and narratives that can be expressed through picture and video composition. One comment mentions the motion against violence against women, which had a very low turnout in Parliament:

"And for the motion against violence against women yesterday in the House they were present in...8. out of 630 deputies

This voices the commentator's frustration with traditional political decision-making process, expressing alienation from the political system and its actors who do not seem to be particularly interested in the topic of violence against women. Alienation can cause the individual to embrace a new and more radical sense of collective belonging; in the case of NUDM, we see this sense of belonging, but also a shift from more traditional ways of political participation to more direct activism (e.g., demonstrations, but also online).

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[30] Post and comments translated by the author.

5.3 Odiare ti costa – network against online hate speech

While *NUDM* is active both on- and offline, the next de-radicalizing actor to be is analyzed purely focuses on the online sphere and the problem of hate speech. *OTC* is a platform where hate speech can be denounced, and which will try to identify the perpetrators. The site and its corresponding Facebook page were launched by Cathy LaTorre, a lawyer who is also a strong advocate for women's and LGBTQIA+ rights and non-discrimination. Michela Murgia, a well-known feminist writer who had also been subjected to online hate speech and bodyshaming in the past, promoted and supported the site. The website allows users to denounce online hate speech, whether against the submitting person themselves or against others, including screenshots and other evidence. *OTC* "guides those who have been subjected to hate mongering and in general hate speech including in the form of defamation, cyberbullying, revenge porn, threats, violence, offenses to one's reputation and/or images on the web towards concrete means of protection." (*OTC* website, author's translation). OTC has 134,958 likes and 144,059 followers on Facebook.

The chosen item again takes up an agent of radicalization identified in part 4, this time the populist wing of the Lega as exemplified by party leader Matteo Salvini. In early 2020, Salvini had made headlines because of an action on the campaign trail, where he rang a Tunisian family's doorbell in Bologna and asked the responding man if he was a drug dealer. *OTC* respond to this incident that many people had signaled to them, and provide a legal assessment[31]:

> "Enhanced protection is provided for so-called "sensitive" or "special" personal data such as racial or ethnic origin, religious beliefs, political opinions, etc., as well as personal data revealing judicial information (such as criminal proceedings and pending charges). […] This is why we need to work to make those who populate the web understand that such gestures are not justifiable and should never be made.
>
> #hatewillcostyou"[32]

OTC exerts a de-radicalizing force by laying out the legal provisions and reasons why what Salvini did was wrong, and how to react if audience members themselves should fall victim to similar behavior. They refrain from launching personal attacks on Salvini, and instead demonstrate why they think his actions are wrong. In the comment section, respondents with opposing views react with whataboutism, i.e., trying to deflect the original post's argument through introducing another matter. They primarily refer to the case of Sinisa Mihailovic, a soccer coach, who spoke out in favor of the Lega and received considerable backlash for it, including hateful comments on his battle with cancer.

> "How come of the threats and horrible things said to the bologna coach by the leftists you say nothing? they are as bad as ever"

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[31] https://www.facebook.com/odiareticosta/posts/3391342420940477. The post received 4500 likes and 709 comments; full translation in the appendix of this report.

[32] Post and comments translated by the author.

Othering is prominently used, as are injustices frames linked to persecution, in this case of Salvini, by an adversarial left-wing audience. Besides introducing the issue of Mihailovic, unrelated to the possible privacy infringements committed by Salvini, the comment section also takes to personally attacking the creators of the OTC network, in this case the lawyer Cathy LaTorre:

> "Sorry, but I would like to point out the hate-mongering Twitter post by AdvocatA/E/I/O/U (I put all the vowels so you can choose the one you like best) La Torre about Salvini's video."

The poster reflects on the fact that to this day, female denominations for professions are not widespread and officially accepted in Italian, so that a female lawyer would still be referred to as an "*avvocato*" in the male form. Opposition to this is often met with ridicule. Italian feminists, including LaTorre, have proposed female denominations like "*avvocata*" for themselves, which were met with considerable outrage due to the still strongly patriarchal nature of Italian society and its opposition to gendered language in particular – while many countries now introduce gender-neutral forms and expressions going beyond the male-female binary (e.g., using the asterisk in German), female forms are still not accepted in Italy. "Us vs them" rhetoric and alienation from modernizing societal developments are thus featured as well.

Among those agreeing with *OTC,* many express outrage at how Salvini continues to get away with incidents like the one described in the post, expressing their alienation from the Italian political system and political culture:

> "I am beginning to think that every move he makes is intentional, or unwittingly reveals the flaws in Italian justice. He does, he dares, knowing that nothing will happen to him. We already had another one like that, a little less brazen but like that, his name was Silvio" [Berlusconi, author's note].

Other comments refer to the possibility of Salvini damaging law enforcement operations through his actions:

> "Moreover, there is also the possibility that law enforcement has been investigating the "alleged" drug dealer for some time and, with this clownery, Salvini has thwarted police operations."

This indeed turned out to be the case: In May 2022, a large anti-drug operation was carried out in Bologna, targeting the area that Salvini had visited in early 2020. The judge concluded that Salvini had caused delays to the raid, noting that "as a result of the media uproar in the Pilastro neighborhood caused by Salvini's visit and the resulting reinforced law enforcement presence, the suspects began to exercise greater caution in the conduct of their drug dealing activities" (quoted in Baccaro 2022, author's translation). This case thus well illustrates how populist activities designed to cause maximum media outreach can have impacts going beyond political discourse, taking up the concept of everyday polarization. Indeed, Salvini is not only adding to a very public mobilization of grievance (against drug dealing, positioning the "us" of the ordinary Italian citizen vs. the "them" of the criminal foreigner), but actively damaging the operation in place to stop the processes he is criticizing.

6. Citizen Communication against hegemonic gender representations

The previous sections focused on collective actors like parties and NGOs exerting radicalizing or de-radicalizing power. However, unlike traditional news media, social media platforms are egalitarian in the sense that they also give citizens the possibility to express themselves, and to even become part of the forces shaping public discourse if they have a wide enough outreach. This is the case in the examples of citizen communication analyzed in this section, featuring influencers and content creators on different social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok). The items featured here have a strong visual component, supplied with a performative side in the case of TikTok. Content creators have a very wide outreach, and can generate more interaction than both populist parties and de-radicalizing collectives, as underlined by the following comparative overview of views and likes:

Citizen Communication				
Item	watched	likes	comments	followers
Fedez	16,156,055 (Instagram video)	1,050,872 (Instagram video)	98,000 (Instagram video)	14,1 million (Instagram)
LaPresa twins	/	25,348 (Instagram post); 270 million (TikTok total)	1,401 (Instagram post)	9,2 million (TikTok); 245,000 (Instagram)
Luciano Spinelli	/	747,600 (TikTok video about coming out); 560 million (TikTok total)	22,700 (TikTok video about coming out)	7,6 million (TikTok)

Table 1: Citizen Communication

6.1 Fedez and his anti-homophobia discourse on May 1st, 2021

The Lega's populist (Salvini) and Catholic (Pillon) wings provide an excellent basis for adversarial framing. This characteristic is not limited to the collective actors outlined above, but can also be seen in citizen communication online, where Salvini and his party – together with Giorgia Meloni and FdI - are seen as the main adversaries to the design of an open, tolerant and modern Italian society. The first item to be analyzed is a speech by Italian rapper Fedez on May 1st, 2021, International Workers' Day, during one of his concerts broadcast on RAI 3. He openly attacks the Lega for its homophobia and cites examples from discriminatory discourse; his speech notably also targets both the Catholic and the populist Lega wings, who seem to be united in their rejection of same-sex couples and their rights.

Fedez is a very prominent public figure in Italy, known for his work as a musical artist, but also for being married to influencer Chiara Ferragni and their frequent public features, from being very active on their own social media channels to a reality series about the family on Amazon Prime. Most recently (June 2022), the couple's societal importance was underlined

by Shoah survivor and Senator Liliana Segre, who proposed that Ferragni should visit the Milan Shoah Memorial with her, as it would "attract many young people"; the joint visit took place on 28 June 2022. Despite not holding any kind of political office, Ferragni and Fedez are therefore important public voices; in contrast to the younger influencers and content creators that will be discussed in the next subsections, Fedez & Ferragni are also known to the general population in Italy, and not just to a younger audience on TikTok.

On May 1st, 2021, a concert featuring different Italian artists was held in Rome and broadcast on live TV. It included a speech by rapper Fedez during his concert, which he later also uploaded to his Instagram channel. The interaction rates outlined in table 1 show the wide societal reach the musician has in Italy, especially compared to the considerably lower number of clicks and likes received by both radicalizing and de-radicalizing collectives as analyzed above. Before speaking his mind, Fedez notes that the RAI does not approve of him making a political statement. He begins with an attack on Andrea Ostellari, the president of the Senate's judicial committee, who kept postponing the discussion of the DDL Zan in the Senate after it had been approved by the Chamber (Benedetto 2021) : He then proceeds to attack the Lega for its stance on LGBTQIA+ persons, citing a number of statements made by Lega politicians:

"[…]

'If I had a gay son, I would burn him in the oven,' Giovanni De Paoli regional councilor Lega Liguria.

'The gays? May they start behaving like all normal people,' Alessandro Rinaldi councilor for Lega Reggio Emilia.

'Gays victims of nature's aberrations,' Luca Lepore and Massimiliano Bastoni Lega municipal councilors.

'Gays are a disaster for reproduction and preservation of the species,' Alberto Zelger councilor for Lega Nord in Verona.

His framing refers to injustices, and in naming a number of discriminatory statements made by the Lega he aims to exert mobilizing power through collective grievances. Fedez himself is not part of the LGBTQIA+ community, and thus offers a "vicarious grievance", highlighting the struggles and suffering from discrimination of a group he does not belong to.

Fedez then uses Formigoni, a corrupt former politician for whom Forza Italia and Lega have advocated so he can continue to receive his life annuity from the Senate, to portray injustice through an adversarial frame: the Senate did not have time to discuss the DDL Zan, a bill ensuring rights and anti-discrimination, because it was busy giving money to corrupt politicians. He expresses alienation from the political system and the ruling class, who appear disconnected from the needs of their citizens. Fedez thus combines anti-establishment rhetoric with advocacy for equality. He then finally also attacks the Catholic Lega wing, including Senator Pillon:

"[…] However, the antiabortionist failed to notice that the Vatican has invested more than 20 million euros in a pharmaceutical company that produces the morning-after pill. So dear antiabortionists, dear Pillon unfortunately you wasted too much time looking for the enemy outside, and you did not realize that the enemy was at home. […] ."

Fedez thus marks Lega Catholics, anti-abortionists and the Vatican as hypocrites, who renounce their official values once there is money and profit to be made. As his adversaries are those claiming to be guided by strong morals and belief systems, this is the most efficient way Fedez can use to discredit them. Again, the de-radicalizing communication is fact-centered, and only inexplicitly attacks the people involved.

Most of the audience reactions on Fedez' Instagram video are positive, again due to Instagram's nature as a primarily visual platform, consisting usually not in written comments, but in emoji reactions (hearts, flames to indicate that he is "on fire" in his discourse, clapping hands).

The negative comments primarily attack Fedez for using International Workers' Day to address the issue of LGBTQIA+ rights, combining whataboutism with a portrayal of the left's struggle between its origins and its current topics:

"But in my opinion you have got the wrong day and place .....the day was the day dedicated to workers. Yes the workers, those who often lose their jobs the workers those who are paid badly and exploited, the workers those who often lose their lives to make this shitty society work and you being a leper use that stage to talk about gays?"

This shows the alienation of the left's traditional voter base from the primary topics of today, e.g., the divide between the working class – upper class cleavage and the current focus on identity politics and human rights. Perceived injustices also surface as LGBTQIA+ rights become more prominently discussed, while "traditional" aspects like the social question and income inequality lose political traction, resulting in further polarization between those supporting identity politics and those who do not.

6.2 The Lapresa twins and fighting hegemonic gender norms

The Lapresa twins are among the top 10 Italian TikTokers. They mostly do comedy videos, react and take on the different challenges going around on TikTok, and share their traveling and shopping experiences. TikTok takes up on Instagram's visual focus but supplies it with a more musical-oriented performative side; the platform allows users to upload short videos, with original sound or with soundbites taken from songs/other videos. It primarily caters to a very young audience: In Italy, 66% of TikTok users are below the age of 30, with the majority of users aged between 16 and 24 (Castagna 2021). TikTok is thus a very Gen Z-oriented platform. TikTok's orientation towards videos and performance makes it difficult to post accompanying text to an upload, as is possible e.g., with an Instagram picture. This could be the reason why the Lapresa twins' item chosen here was posted on Instagram and not on TikTok, as it does not include a performative element. The twins' Instagram channel focuses on fashion and outfit posts (245,000 followers), but also includes some political statements, e.g., in favor of the Black Lives Matter movement.

The post includes a picture of the two twins, William and Nicholas. They are posing for a picture wearing skirts, jewelry, nail polish, and make-up, showing their middle fingers in a "fuck you" gesture. The pose itself is decidedly angry but not typically masculine, with both twins leaning over and looking directly into the camera. The picture caption reads:

"I'm not good with words.. But we wanted to take a different shot than usual this time. With this somewhat provocative photo we want to send a message against gender differences! We want you to feel free to wear what you want and how you want without fear of people's judgment, because you are who you want to be and it is your human soul that makes you special not what you wear. You are special so dare and don't think about what people will

say about you but think about the fact that if you are happy because you are the way you want to be no one is allowed to judge you for that. The only gender is the human one. A kiss Lapresa Twins"

As outlined in the Instagram posts above, most comments use emojis to express their approval. Black heart emojis are used to express an especially strong sentiment of love and approval. Of the commenters that leave longer written statements, most also mention their support for the Lapresa twins' actions:

"And it's good to know that the world will one day be run by Generation Z, without prejudice, without distinction or anything else"

The negative commentators pick up on the perceived injustice of LGBTQIA+ identities getting greater everyday prominence, with some suggesting that the twins, who participated in a reality format emulating army life in earlier centuries, titled "la caserma" (the military barracks), should also be sent to a "caserma" in real life, probably because of their gender-bending photoshoot. One comment immediately connects non-hegemonic gender roles to homosexuality:

"we are in 2021 and being gay bisexual trans seems to be a fucking fashion, but where the fuck are we, if one is born male is male if one is female a is female. There may be nothing wrong with it but being gay or lesbian goes against fucking nature because a child who is born to two mothers or two fathers will never be like a child who is born to one mother and one father"

The comment immediately spins along the lines of right-wing rhetoric from non-hegemonic gender displays and unusual dress choices (make-up, jewelry, nail polish, skirts) to homosexuality, the absoluteness of biological sex and a rejection of same-sex parenthood. The chain of associations and unrelated topics linked to each other is interesting to note, as it follows populist rhetoric of alienation with cultural and societal progress. One commentator calls the twins "two little whores", aiming to be derogatory in assigning femininity to the twins as males, and combining it with a common insult to females.

6.3 Luciano Spinelli and LGBTQIA+ expression on TikTok

TikTok can be regarded as "formal innovation", or new cultural practices that push against well-established mainstream culture (Boffone 2022: 1). There is an innovative element in both its impact on societies, as well as in its influence on identity formation, especially for young people: TikTok favors "[…] algorithmic personalization that enables identities, communities, and cultures to take shape on the platform, a phenomenon that quickly spills into the analog world as TikTok content goes viral" (Boffone 2022: 7). Through increased interaction, the app gets more and more personalized, and therefore also allows users belonging to similar (sub)cultures to get in contact with each other, while at the same time excluding content that the user quickly swipes away. This community-building function, combined with the relative anonymity of social media, makes TikTok an adapt platform for LGBTQIA+ youth to connect and openly share their stories. As Alptraum (2022) argues, "[TikTok] is public enough that you can connect with strangers around the world, building community and helping one another learn and grow. And yet it's private enough that you can feel free to experiment and try on different identities as you figure out who you truly are". In their study of TikTok use among LGBTQIA+ youth during the first Covid-19 lockdowns, Hiebert & Kortes-Miller (2021) found TikTok as a supportive community as the overarching theme. Although its strong visual and performative focus might not render it political at first glance, the platform thus has considerable power especially for reaching young people in

their opinion-making. Therefore, despite having exerted bans on LGBTQIA+ content, e.g., in Arab countries or Russia, the app is used prominently by LGBTQIA+ youth in Europe and North America.

Luciano Spinelli is another prominent TikTok personality in Italy, with 7.6 million followers and 560.2 million likes. He posts short dance, comedy or POV (point of view, enactments of a person's behavior in a certain situation) clips, as well as occasional travel and cooking videos. In June 2021, not coincidentally during Pride Month, Spinelli came out as gay on his YouTube and TikTok channels. On YouTube, he drew a Manga-inspired video about his life so far and the process of finding out who he was also regarding his sexual orientation. The video received 964,513 views and 98,000 likes[33]. He also took up his coming out on TikTok, and the first pinned post (which the viewer sees highlighted on the top when visiting his channel) is a short clip announcing that he is gay[34]. In typical use of text, video and music for TikTok, the words "girls?" are shown, with Luciano shaking his head, then "boys?" to which he nods and finally the words "Yes I'm gay" and a pride flag appear[35].

His coming out, letting his followers know that it's OK to be the way they are and most recently his new relationship with his boyfriend are prominently featured themes on his channel. He also directly addressed hateful commenters, with a video featuring the text "oh my god you're gay, that's disgusting, I'm not following you anymore" and him forming a broken heart symbol with his hands only to then change into two raised middle fingers. He captions the video with "well what should I tell you love, bye"[36].

The comment section is very visually focused as is typical for TikTok, many emojis (hearts and flames primarily), and almost no disapproving comments. A few commenters express surprise, while others mention their continued support: "I.don't care if you are gay I still adore you" and others mention that they belong to the LGBTQIA+ community as well.

Further clips countering hegemonic masculinity include Spinelli showing his outfit for Pride in New York, where he is also wearing glittered make-up[37]. Unlike other platforms, the comments on TikTok are largely positive also in this case, which supports the notion of a supportive community that emerged in the ethnographic work by Hiebert and Kortes-Miller (2021). At least for Spinelli, there does not seem to be hateful trolling as was visible for the agents of collective de-radicalization described in the previous section.

Spinelli has also posted a video in which he writes a letter to his younger 13-year-old self, where he is shown typing on a colorful keyboard and mouse. He reads the following letter text:

> "I'm writing you this letter because I think you're living a moment of confusion. You're trying to figure out who you are and what you want, but at the bottom of your heart you already know it. It's not easy to grow, as it isn't easy to get to know yourself, so don't worry, you still have time. What I wanted to tell you is that you're totally okay the way you are. With time you'll learn to live without fear, you'll understand that there's nothing wrong with loving someone, and that you're

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[33] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9qP4o40UMYE&ab_channel=LucianoSpinelli

[34] https://www.tiktok.com/@lucianospinelli/video/6976227527408848133?_t=8To3wMYWSXt&_r=1

[35] TikTok videos and comments translated by the author.

[36] https://www.tiktok.com/@lucianospinelli/video/7112424262052433158?is_copy_url=1&is_from_webapp=v1

[37] https://www.tiktok.com/@lucianospinelli/video/7113928157438250245?is_copy_url=1&is_from_webapp=v1

free to fall in love with whoever you want. You're special, don't ever forget it. Yours, 22-year-old Luciano[38]."

The video is a partnership with Logitech, and therefore actually advertising, but the community still reacts with heart and teary-eyed emojis, many proposing to try to make the video go viral for its contents. As Gabai (2022: 92) argues, "[...] sharing stories with videos also offers a great potential to humanize brands, organizations and causes, tapping into emotions in creative and engaging ways". For activists and content creators, teaming with a brand could thus mean increased outreach and a growing platform, while for the brand it represents a chance to position itself as open to diversity and inclusion frameworks, something that is especially important for brand choice in Gen Z audiences (Kesten 2020).

Spinelli's message of self-acceptance seems to resonate with many of the commenters, who might just be in the same age range to his past self that he is writing to and could therefore be facing the same issues. Spinelli's social media presence focuses on a narrative of acceptance, highlighting that everyone is unique and valid in their individuality, and that it's ok to be different from the majority population or society's standards. He focuses on justice and recognition and proposes not to engage with those disapproving or openly hating e.g., homosexuals, instead relying on personal expression and happiness. His discourse is particularly appropriate for TikTok's young audience, where finding one's place in life and one's identification on different levels is one of the main struggles. Although TikTok has been heavily criticized for allowing the promotion of radicalized contents (e.g., through posters from the so-called "manosphere"), it also functions as a safe space for expression for Spinelli and the LGBTQIA+ community in Italy. This highlights the ambivalent qualities of social media regarding (de-)radicalization, as their continuous presence and growing influence could foster developments at both sides of the spectrum.

7. Discussion and conclusions

The items by radicalizing agents show that hegemonic gender representation and subsequent rigid role models are still prominent in Italy. The reasons for this development can be traced to two unique characteristics of the Italian media and societal landscape: The strong presence of mediated sexism, and the ongoing power of Catholic discourse, with the Vatican even becoming more politicized and active over the last years. These two backgrounds clearly emerge when looking at the role of women in society. Women are present in the media in subdued roles, acting as passive ornaments to the active male hosts, and showgirls or "*veline*" are still a feature of a number of shows, with "*Striscia La Notizia*" as both the most prominent and extreme case where the dancers are even strictly forbidden to answer when spoken to. Women and their bodies are quiet, pretty ornaments, who should be happy, talkative, smiling all the time, but even if they fulfill this ideal, they are described as inferior, stupid, banking on their physical appearance – the "whores" trope. On the other hand, Catholicism views women in a passive manner as well, but focuses on their characteristics as nurturing mothers and family-keepers, the "saints". Unsurprisingly, both discourses do not allow for female self-expression and self-determined lifestyles, and especially not for a framework in which women are allowed to make demands for rights, equal opportunities, and representation. This leads to a situation where misogynist ways of speaking and acting are still possible in Italy, without

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[38] https://www.tiktok.com/@lucianospinelli/video/7115068329202683141?is_copy_url=1&is_from_webapp=v1

a larger backlash as would probably ensue in other European countries (e.g., something like "*veline*" would be unthinkable for TV stations, especially public ones, in most other EU countries).

This also applies to the radicalizing agents identified in this report: Openly making sexist comments about female politicians, sexualizing them through inflatable doll comparisons, cheering to the rejection of LGBTQIA+ protection are all openly possible, although counter-narratives and dissenting voices are increasingly gaining a platform, especially through the use of social media. Women's rights are only prominently featured by right-wing populist actors if they can be used for the othering and blaming of minorities, especially Muslims, as shown by Giorgia Meloni and her discourse on Samman Abbas, while they fall silent on the femicides committed by Italian men and other gendered inequalities. In the Lega's discourse, aggressive sexist populism and Catholic narratives both have their space, catering to different parts of the party's audience, while Wirth Anderlan combines anti-establishment separatist rhetoric with both racism and misogyny. The radicalizing agents share a communication strategy that uses othering and alienation, a framing of perceived injustices that mobilizes grievances, and a rhetoric that deliberately contributes to a further polarization of society through an "us and them" discourse. Opposing views and discussion are not something that is of interest to them, instead, they rely on personal attacks and gendertrolling to defend their arguments.

The de-radicalizing agents discussed in the report counteract this personalization of politics by providing fact-oriented statements and rhetoric. Although perceived injustices are also an important mobilizing framework for these collectives, their counter-narratives are usually based on societal problems and not on personalized attacks against their political opponents. Representation is another very important issue for de-radicalizing agents, both Arcigay and NUDM rely on both offline (demonstrations) and online (posts, videos) actions designed to get further visibility. For OTC the situation is slightly different, as the platform is explicitly focused on the online sphere. However, all three organizations also share a strong educational aspect, and aim to not just identify perceived injustices and air their grievances, but to also provide necessary information on their topics for audiences to get engaged and gain a better understanding of their cause. All organizations provide flyers, videos, longer discussions, fact sheets, and OTC offered a video tutorial on hate speech reporting, also raising awareness on the issues that constitute such online behavior. De-radicalization thus also occurs through collective action based on adversarial framing, but transparency and information are of prime importance as well. The power of more visual media like Instagram becomes especially imminent in this case, with e.g., the NUDM Instagram video embodying characteristics of political rallying cry, manifesto and flyer for a demonstration all at once, wrapped in a visually appealing short clip accessible in a low-threshold way. For de-radicalizing agents, social media have become central channels for their communication, perhaps even more so than for the radicalizing collectives discussed here, who have more access to traditional news media.

Finally, citizen communication posits quite clearly that while the political field seems to be split between radicalizing and de-radicalizing agents, society's views are advancing faster than the political system's (e.g., on women's rights, but also on LGBTQIA+ representation and fighting against hegemonic gender roles). Influencers with millions of followers have become important agents shaping public discourse, and Italy is no exception in this regard. Fedez is probably the most well-known of the three actors/items discussed in the report, as he is known also to an older audience. Things shared and discussed on his platform are therefore likely to be picked up by a wider societal discourse, and he is aware of this, not refraining from political

statements. For his critique of the Lega and its homophobia, he used a concert being broadcast on live TV, extending the audience for his statement even further. Similar to collective de-radicalization agents, he refrains from highly personalized attacks, but instead recites statements made by Lega politicians, letting their own words speak for themselves. He also points out that the societal discourse is more progressive than the political one and voices his frustration and alienation with the political system over this fact. The two other items of citizen communication taken up by this report, the Lapresa twins and Luciano Spinelli, are prominent TikTok personalities, who are not primarily known for their political statements. Both reach a younger audience than Fedez, and while the rapper faced some derogatory and hateful comments, the Lapresa twins' Instagram post and Spinelli's TikToks were not met with these reactions but primarily with encouragement. This supports the notion that younger Italians, particularly those belonging to Gen Z, are progressing beyond hegemonic gender roles and anti-LGBTQIA+ radicalization. Both gender fluid fashion, make-up and openly declaring your sexual orientation on a social media platform are accepted and might gather some surprised comments but no hateful opposition, with an audience moving on swiftly to the next video afterwards. In this regard, TikTok's strong visual focus works well to present short and poignant messages and easily establishes audience connection, creating a shared sense of community that is often even devoid of adversarial framing. We can therefore conclude that while radicalizing agents are still successful in Italy with their discourse rooted in misogynist and Catholic views on gender roles and representation, society is already moving in a more progressive direction, as underlined in particular by the communication of Gen Z on TikTok. Social media therefore play an ambivalent role in radicalization and de-radicalization, as they can be used to further radicalizing, violent discourse, and echo chambers, but on the other hand constitute important tools for raising awareness for diversity and enabling its expression.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Items by Radicalizing Agents (screenshots)

Jürgen With Anderlan/SSB –Facebook

Lega/Matteo Salvini - Twitter

Comments to Salvini's post:

"communist rich billionaire scumbag cesspool"

"boldrini you represent the garbage of our beautiful Italy resign"

"one who says Muslims are good people look who is talking nonsense between you and me"

"she should go to the muslims"

Lega/Simone Pillon – Facebook   Fratelli d'Italia/Giorgia Meloni-Twitter

Translation of Pillon's post, October 27th, 2001:

"A toast to Italy, which in difficult times knows how to find its best.

A toast to the thousands of people, families, moms, and dads who have animated the squares of the standing sentinels, enduring insults and swearing to watch over freedom of speech, thought, education, and religion.

Here's to our kids being able to grow up free from gender indoctrination.

A big thank you to the thousands of people who prayed for this to happen.

And a big hug to the 20 million families who every day, in silence, make our Italy great.

Still there is hope, for our country.

Still we can resist the ideological invasion of gender, politically corrupt, cancel culture and all the great temptations of individualism and relativism.

A toast also to Mentana[39] who, in anger, says I am the only one laughing.

In reality there are millions of us, the silent majority, toasting to freedom tonight.

#noddlzan"

Comments to Pillon's post:

"Here's to the holy long live Christ in his angels and saints hallelujahaa"

"Revelation is long, the wicked and foolish are many, and this is only one battle. But God is with us. And his is the victory!"

Comments to Meloni's post:

"With this speech he confirms that Islam is more than 600 years behind. Inquisition began in 1478 and Its most renowned inquisitor was Torquemada"

"TERRIFYING ... we need a special law that allows the restriction of the basic rights of these people-beasts and kick them out with permanent ban on re-entry."

"obviously on the left and from feminists no signal 😳🤔😐🥺🤐"

"Where are the strawmen of hypocritical and shitty communist feminism?"

"Need to integrate... 😂😂😂😂 Still the leftists think there is a chance???"

---

[39] Enrico Mentana is the host of the TG (news) on the television channel La7. In a column for a newspaper, he wrote that Pillon was the "only one laughing" because of the rejection of the DDL Zan.

Appendix 2 – Items by de-radicalizing agents (screenshots)

Arcigay ☑
October 27, 2021 · 🌐

✚✚✚ Omotransfobia, il Senato affossa il ddl Zan. Arcigay: "Classe politica omofoba" ✚✚✚

😡😡😡

😡 I numeri della votazione con cui il Senato ha affossato questa mattina il testo Zan contro l'omotransfobia sono inesorabili: la nostra classe politica è in larga maggioranza omofoba

😡 Il margine con cui la maggioranza del Senato si è espressa, va ben oltre i confini delle destre, dei finti liberali di Forza Italia o dei cinici arrampicatori di Italia Viva. Ci sono responsabilità anche all'interno delle forze politiche in cui militano i parlamentari primi firmatari del testo. Insomma: c'è una responsabilità diffusa della politica, che ne esce fotografata in maniera implacabile.

🤡 Questo Parlamento non è stato all'altezza delle sfide di questo tempo, l'argine all'omotransfobia continuerà a porlo il Paese, le reti informali, le associazioni, tutte le persone di buona volontà. Non lo Stato, che ancora una volta si gira dall'altra parte.

😟 Ringraziamo coloro i quali si sono battuti, a tutti gli altri consegniamo la nostra vergogna.

🔍 Qui il comunicato stampa completo ----> https://bit.ly/3jGRCW1

Riepilogo votazione

Seduta: 0371		Data: 27/10/2021		Votazione: 1	
Tipo: SEGRETA			Fase: ESPOSIZIONE		
Oggetto:					

Risultati

Fonte	Presenti	Votanti	Favorevoli	Contrari	Astenuti
Emiciclo					
Tribune					
TOTALI AULA	288	287	154	131	2

IL SENATO APPROVA

Seguito dell

👍😡😢 179   44 Comments 102 Shares

Arcigay – Facebook

Translation: Homotransphobia, Senate scuttles Zan bill. Arcigay: "Homophobic political class" ✚✚✚✚

😫😫😫

😡 The numbers of the vote by which the Senate scuttled the Zan text against homotransfobia this morning are inexorable: our political class is overwhelmingly homophobic

😡 The margin by which the Senate majority voted goes far beyond the borders of the right-wingers, the fake liberals of Forza Italia or the cynical climbers of Italia Viva. There is responsibility even within the political forces in which the parliamentarians who first signed the text are militating. In short: there is a widespread responsibility of politics, which comes out unrelentingly photographed.

🤡 This Parliament has not been up to the challenges of this time, the levee to homotransfobia will continue to be laid by the country, informal networks, associations, all people of good will. Not the state, which once again turns away.

🤢We thank those who fought, to all others we hand over our shame

Comments:

"GUYS I'M LOOKING EVERYWHERE, because I honestly can't do it myself, organizations already in place to go to #roma , one thing done right.. without stooping to the bottom like these assholes want."

"If we fight for the rights of all, we must become aware that we have MORAL DUTIES such as putting our faces out there, going to the streets UNITED and making our voices heard. Raise the fucking voice that one is always afraid to raise."
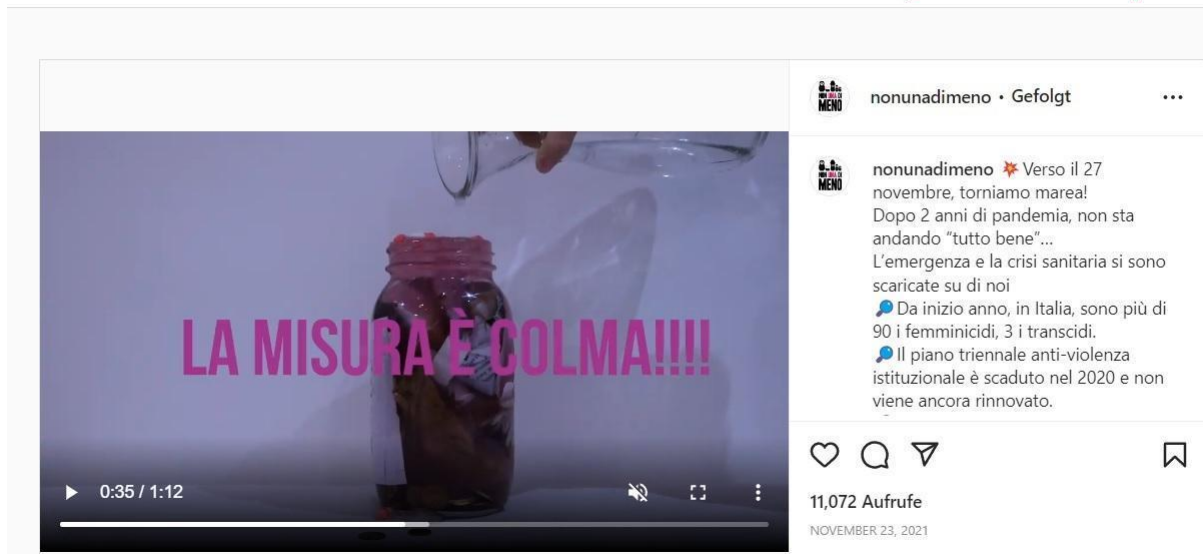
Non una di meno – Instagram

Translation:

"💥November 27, let's become a tidal wave again!

After 2 years of pandemic, it's not going "alright..."

The emergency and the health crisis have descended on us

🔎Since the beginning of the year, there have been more than 90 femicides in Italy, 3 transcides.

🔎The three-year institutional anti-violence plan expired in 2020 and is still not renewed.

🔎The freedom income for women escaping violence sums up a hypocritical policy: 400 euros a month for 12 months that cannot guarantee autonomy.

🔎Migrant women and men continue to suffer violence: they die at sea and in detention centers in Libya or on the borders of Eastern Europe

🔎Cases of discrimination and violence against trans, queer, and LGBTQIAP*+ people continue to increase

...The measuring cup is full! [Italian phrase that means "enough is enough", author's note]

💥ON NOVEMBER 27 WE WILL BE IN A DEMONSTRATION IN ROME! We will occupy the streets with our anger:

because we reject a recovery that erases the causes and effects of the pandemic on our lives!

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because we are the high and fierce cry of those who no longer have a voice!

because we want ourselves to be alive and free!"[40]

Odiare ti costa – Facebook

Odiare ti costa
January 22, 2020

LEI SPACCIA?

Abbiamo ricevuto in queste ore una valanga di segnalazioni del video in cui il senatore Matteo Salvini suona al citofono di una casa nella periferia di Bologna, chiedendo a un cittadino tunisino se fosse uno spacciatore, e diffondendo dati sensibili su di lui.

La pubblicazione di dati personali online è una forma di diffusione che deve rispettare una serie di requisiti per essere legittima. La diffusione di nomi, cognomi e indirizzo di residenza di persone fisiche per essere lecita deve ricevere il consenso degli interessati dietro il rilascio di un'informativa; senza tali requisiti la diffusione viola la normativa in materia di protezione dei dati personali.

Una protezione rafforzata è prevista per i dati personali cosiddetti "sensibili" o "particolari" quali origine razziale, etnica, convinzioni religiose, opinioni politiche eccetera, nonché per i dati personali che rivelino informazioni giudiziarie (quali procedimenti penali e carichi pendenti). Senza il rispetto dei requisiti previsti dagli artt. 9 e 10 questi dati personali non possono essere trattati.

Cosa fare in questi casi? La strada migliore è segnalare l'episodio al Garante per la Privacy per violazione degli artt. 6, 7 e 13 del Reg. UE 2016/679. Solamente il diretto interessato può invece proporre reclamo al Garante.

Purtroppo in questi anni fatti del genere accadono sempre più spesso sul web, per questo è necessario conoscere gli strumenti per tutelarsi.

Ovviamente il problema non riguarda solo la violazione della privacy (che comunque comporta un alto rischio di minacce e intimidazioni per le persone coinvolte), ma è innanzitutto un problema etico. Per questo occorre lavorare per far comprendere a chi abita il web che gesti del genere non sono giustificabili e non dovrebbero mai essere compiuti.

#odiareticosta

4.4K   709 Comments 715 Shares

45

Translation:

ARE YOU A DEALER?

We have received an avalanche of reports in recent hours of the video in which Senator Matteo Salvini rings the intercom of a house on the outskirts of Bologna, asking a Tunisian citizen if he was a drug dealer, and disclosing sensitive data about him.

Publishing personal data online is a form of disclosure that must meet a number of requirements to be legitimate. The disclosure of names, surnames, and residential addresses of individuals to be lawful must receive the consent of the individuals concerned behind the disclosure; without those prerequisites, the disclosure violates data protection law.

Enhanced protection is provided for so-called "sensitive" or "special" personal data such as racial or ethnic origin, religious beliefs, political opinions, etc., as well as personal data revealing judicial information (such as criminal proceedings and pending charges). Without meeting the requirements of Articles 9 and 10 these personal data cannot be processed.

What to do in such cases? The best course is to report the incident to the Privacy Guarantor for violation of Articles 6, 7 and 13 of EU Reg. 2016/679. Only the affected person, on the other hand, can file a complaint with the Guarantor.

Unfortunately, in recent years such incidents happen more and more often on the web, so it is necessary to know the tools to protect yourself.

Of course, the problem is not only about the violation of privacy (which in any case carries a high risk of threats and intimidation for the people involved), but it is first and foremost an ethical problem. This is why we need to work to make those who populate the web understand that such gestures are not justifiable and should never be made.

#hatewillcostyou"[41]

Comments:

"We expect the same stance and lawsuits that you will make alongside Sinisa Mihajlovic."

"To you who are so self-righteous I would like to ask what you think about all the insults that the Bologna coach has received????? Surely all that nastiness is not coming from the side of those you hate. I haven't heard any of you complaining about that how come?????"

---

[41] Post and comments translated by the author.
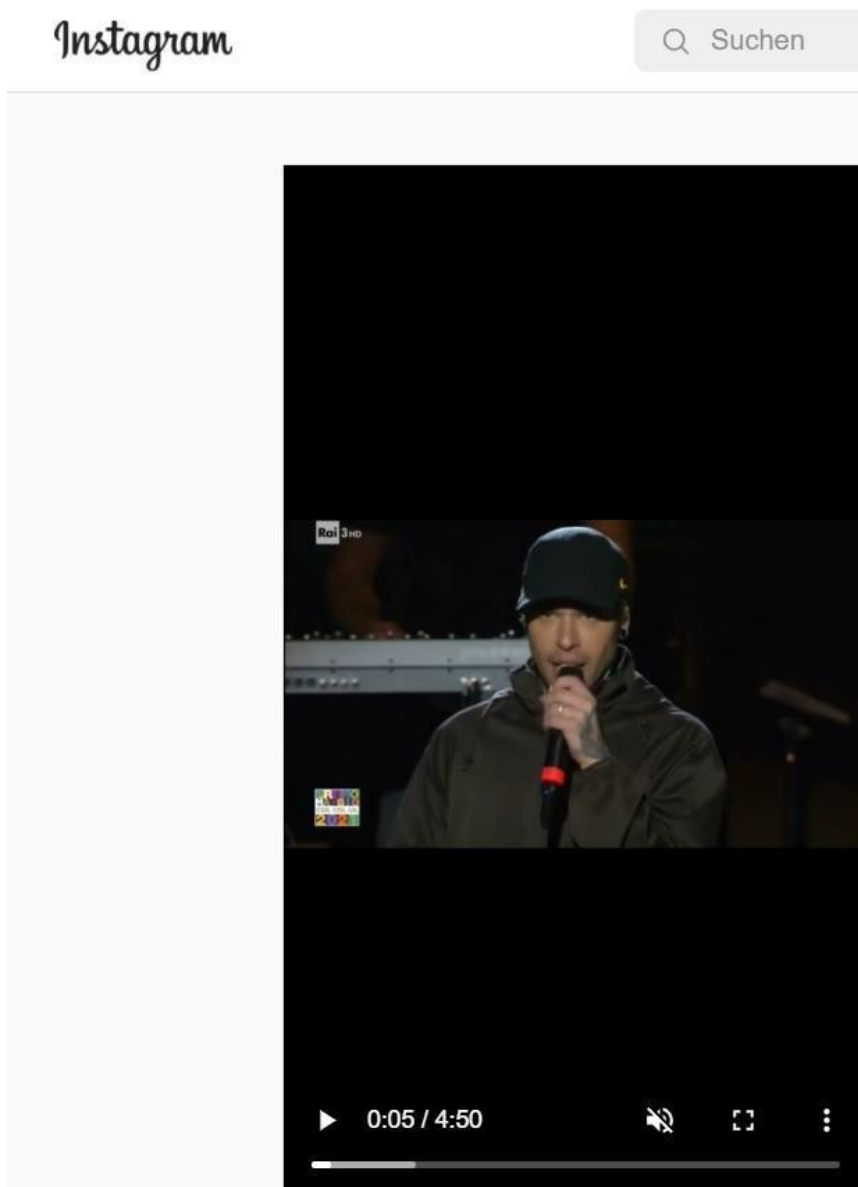
Fedez - Instagram

Translation:

"Two words about the man of the moment, the somnolent Ostellari. Here is Ostellari, he decided that a bill of parliamentary initiative therefore the highest expression of the people, which has already been approved in the Chamber, such as the Zan ddl can safely be blocked by the desire for protagonism of an individual. That is, himself ."

He then proceeds to attack the Lega for its stance on LGBTQIA+ persons, citing a number of statements made by Lega politicians:

"But then again, Ostellari is part of a political line-up that has distinguished itself over the years for its great fight for equality, I would like to decant some of their aphorisms.

'If I had a gay son, I would burn him in the oven,' Giovanni De Paoli regional councilor Lega Liguria.

'The gays? May they start behaving like all normal people,' Alessandro Rinaldi councilor for Lega Reggio Emilia.

'Gays victims of nature's aberrations,' Luca Lepore and Massimiliano Bastoni Lega municipal councilors.

'Gays are a disaster for reproduction and preservation of the species,' Alberto Zelger councilor for Lega Nord in Verona.

'Gay marriage leads to the extinction of the race,' Stella Khorosheva Lega candidate.

'They give injections to children to make them gay,' Lega candidate Giuliana Livigni."

"Someone like Ostellari said there are other priorities at this pandemic moment than the Zan ddl and so let's see those priorities: the Senate had no time for the Zan ddl because it had to discuss Wine Labeling; the reorganization of Coni ; the bilingualism allowance to Bolzano police officers; and not to be missed, the reinstatement of Formigoni's life annuity. So according to Ostellari probably the right to Formigoni's life annuity is more important than the protection of the rights of everyone and people who are discriminated against daily to the point of violence".

"But speaking of the right to life, the president of the Pro-life association, the ultra-Catholic and anti-abortionist Jacopo Coghe who is a friend of the leghist Pillon in recent months has been the first voice to rise against the Zan ddl. However, the antiabortionist failed to notice that the Vatican has invested more than 20 million euros in a pharmaceutical company that produces the morning-after pill. So dear antiabortionists, dear Pillon unfortunately you wasted too much time looking for the enemy outside, and you did not realize that the enemy was at home. What a bad story."

Lapresa twins – Instagram

Comments:

"You had my curiosity,but now you have my attention."

"emh. I have no words for what I have seen and read there...I love it!"

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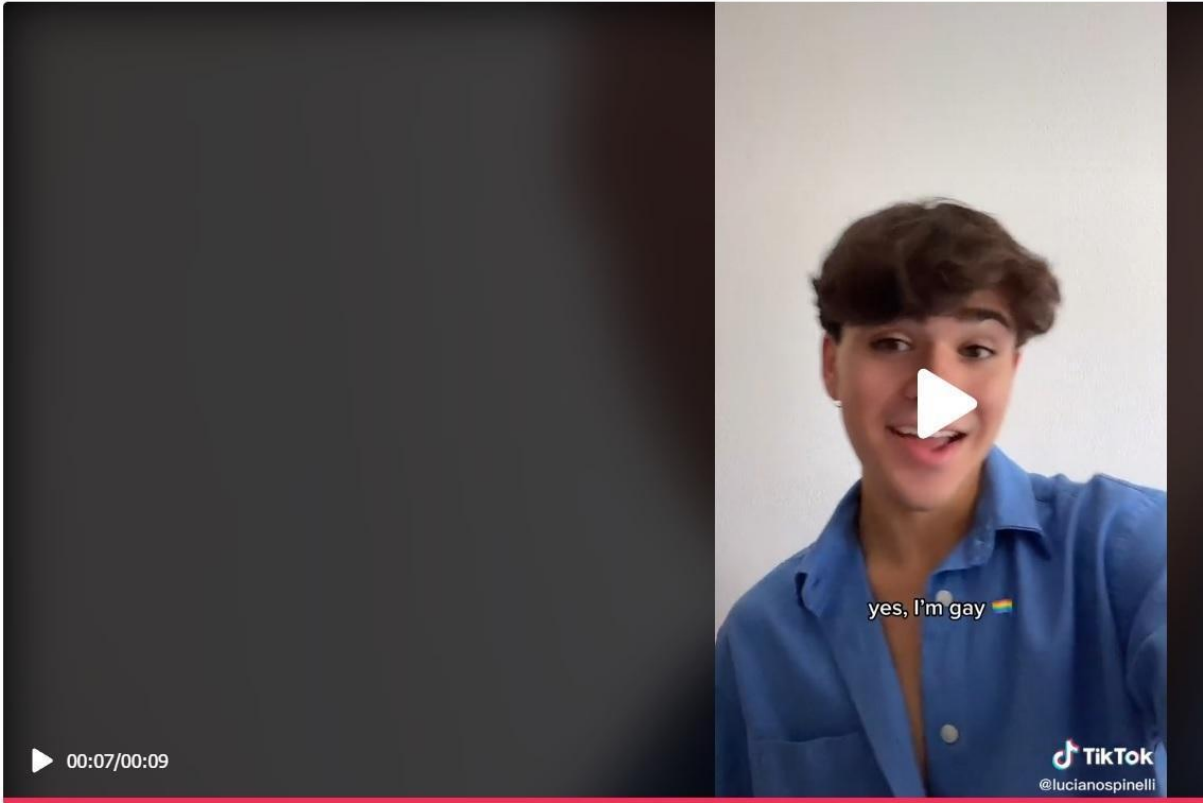Luciano Spinelli – YouTube

Yes, I'm gay 🏳️‍🌈
Luciano Spinelli – TikTok