

OFFENSIVE AGAINST COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION

SYNTHESIS



LE PLANNING FAMILIAL

Feminist organisation based on a pedagogical approach, Planning familial campaigned since 1956 for unconditional access to contraception, abortion and comprehensive sexuality education in France and at international level.

COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION, AN INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED CONCEPT

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) differs from traditional sexuality education in its holistic and multidisciplinary approach. Beyond biological and preventive aspects, it incorporates emotional, relational, identity and well-being dimensions. Defined by the UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and WHO, CSE aims to equip children and adolescents with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enable them to live in good health, well-being, dignity and respect for themselves and others.

Although recognised by the European Union as an essential tool for promoting health, well-being, human rights and gender equality, the implementation of CSE has faced growing resistance across Europe since the 2010s. This opposition is part of a broader “anti-gender” movement, which represents a major challenge for European democracies by destabilising the principles of equality, non-discrimination and human rights, particularly those of girls, women and LGBTQIA+ people.



DISPARATE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS AND INSUFFICIENT ENFORCEMENT

The comparative analysis of six countries (Germany, Spain, France, Hungary, Italy and Sweden) reveals significant disparities in the legislative framework and effective implementation of CSE:



France made sexuality education compulsory in 2001 (three sessions per year), but only 15-20% of pupils actually benefit from it.

A CSE programme (EVAR in primary school and EVARS in secondary school) resulting from consultations with civil society came into force at the start of the 2025 school year for pupils aged 6 to 18.



Sweden is a pioneer, with compulsory CSE since 1955 for pupils aged 6 to 18 and compulsory teacher training since 2021. The approach is interdisciplinary and cross-curricular.



In 2021, Hungary adopted the Law LXXIX, which drastically restricts CSE by prohibiting any content that does not conform to the traditional heterosexual family image and severely limiting the involvement of external organisations.



Spain and Germany present intermediate situations, with decentralised powers (via the autonomous communities in Spain and the federated states in Germany) leading to significant regional disparities in the quality and scope of programmes.

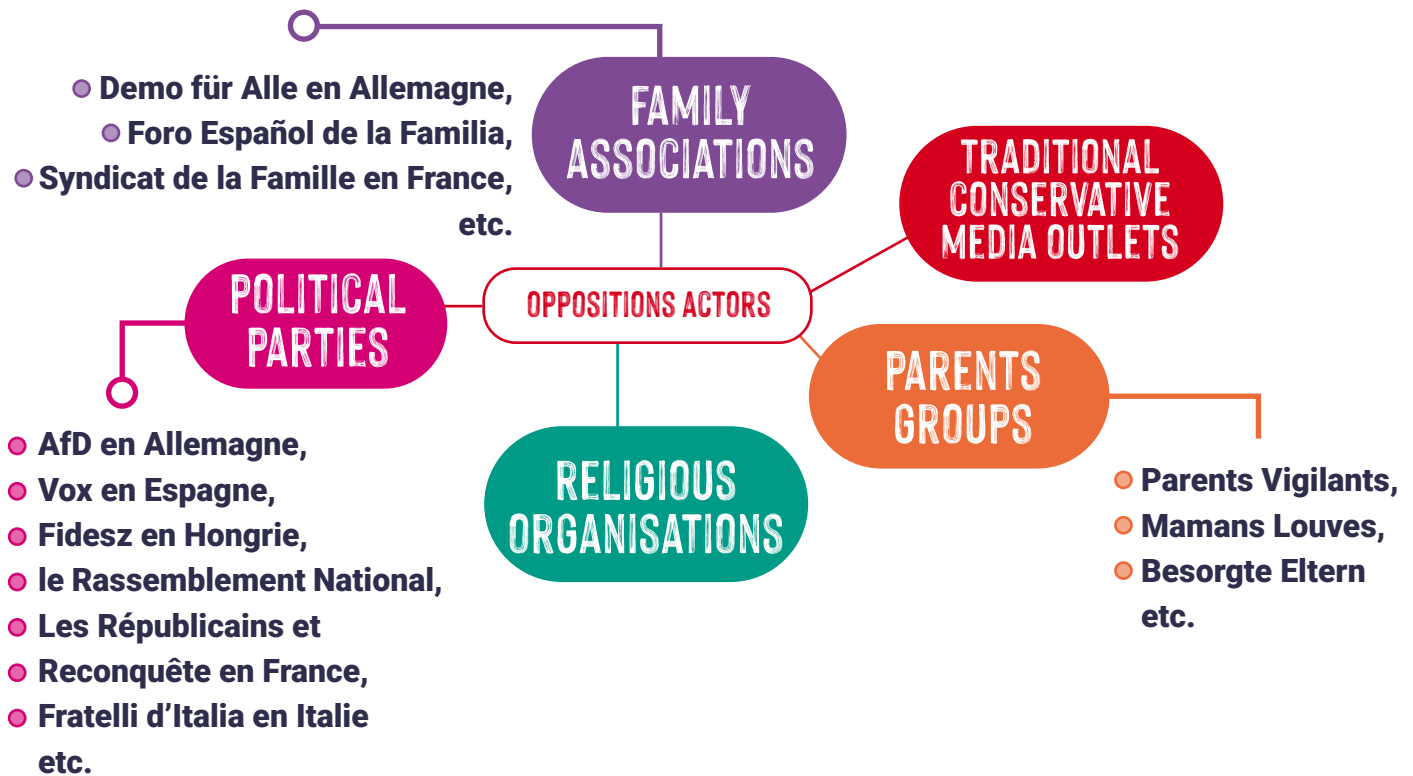


Italy has no national law making sexuality education compulsory and it is currently prohibited before secondary school. Sexual education classes or workshops remain optional, depending on the initiative of schools. Since June 2025, a decree has made parental consent mandatory for their child's participation in such a workshop, and an amendment from October 2025 proposes to ban sexual education all the way up to high school.

In every country there remains a gap between policies on CSE and their practical implementation. The main obstacles include the absence of a rigorous and robust framework to ensure the implementation of CSE, the lack of systematic training for teachers, the underfunding of CSE, the scale of the anti-CSE movement (both governmental and non-governmental), and significant local socio-cultural and religious disparities.

A STRUCTURED, TRANSNATIONAL OPPOSITION MOVEMENT

The movement opposing CSE is based on a wide array of actors:



This movement demonstrates a remarkable capacity for transnational coordination, drawing on European and international structures (World Congress of Families, Family Watch International, One of Us, CitizenGO, etc.). These organisations produce pseudo-academic reports, pool their legal and educational resources, and organise training courses for parents and policy makers.

Studies reveal that anti-gender advocacy and lobbying organisations are the largest source of funding (29% of cumulative funding between 2019 and 2023), followed by public awareness and media organisations (23%), then foundations (22%). Hungary is the leading funder at the European level, followed by France. Catholic philanthropy plays a central role in this funding, regardless of country.

EFFECTIVE DISCURSIVE AND ACTION STRATEGIES

The anti-CSE movement employs particularly effective rhetorical strategies:

- ○ **The demonisation of “gender ideology”**, a controversial concept formulated by the Vatican in the 1990s, serves as a unifying symbolic enemy. This strategy makes it possible to bring together under a single label unrelated issues (transgender identities, abortion, LGBTQIA+ rights, CSE) with no clear logical links, giving the impression of alarming social breakdown.
- ○ **The rhetoric of protecting the traditional family** elevates the heterosexual and patriarchal family model to an ideological standard. By appropriating the term “family” as a universal moral symbol, opponents accuse pro-CSE actors of being against the family and seeking to destroy conjugal, parental and filial love.
- ○ **The rhetoric of child protection systematically mobilises** the image of the “innocent threatened child”. CSE is accused of sexualising children at an early age, exposing them to pornographic content, traumatising them and even facilitating paedophile crime. CSE practitioners are portrayed as LGBTQIA+ activists who are insensitive to children’s well-being.
- ○ These narratives are amplified by **massive disinformation campaigns using social media**, Facebook groups, WhatsApp and Telegram, as well as conservative media outlets (such as CNEWS in France or the Késma group in Hungary). Shocking public poster campaigns are regularly deployed, particularly in Spain and Italy.
- ○ **Mobilising parents is a key strategy**, presenting them as the primary defenders of their children’s integrity. The discourse focuses on individual freedoms and parental rights, with slogans such as “parents are the first and foremost educators” and demands for a right of withdrawal or prior consent.
- ○ At the national level, anti-CSE **actors lobby directly with the relevant institutions and use legal channels** (appeals to the courts in France and Spain). In Hungary and Italy, institutional power itself is the main vector of opposition.

CONCRETE IMPACTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION

The movement opposing ECS is having tangible effects on its implementation:

- **Self-censorship by institutions:** faced with pressure from parents' groups, some schools are cancelling workshops or removing educational content.
- **Exhaustion of civil society:** pro-ECS organisations have to devote considerable resources to countering misinformation and defending themselves, to the detriment of their primary mission.
- **Compromise on content:** in France, the EVAR(S) 2025 programme has been modified following demands from opponents, postponing certain topics deemed "inappropriate" (such as gender identity in primary school or serophobia); anti-ECS actors have advocated for EVARS to become EVAR before secondary school.
- **Legislative restrictions:** in Hungary, Law LXXIX has made it almost impossible for associations to intervene in schools. In Italy, France and Spain, far-right political parties are attempting to legalise the right of parents to opt out of EVARS interventions.
- **Reduction of democratic spaces:** in Hungary, consultative bodies in the field of education have been abolished, facilitating the adoption of directives without the approval of civil society.



STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS TO EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

In light of these findings, the study makes recommendations structured around four areas:

1. PLACING CSE ON THE EUROPEAN AGENDA

- ● Integrating CSE into European social policy (shared competences) rather than education (supporting competences) ;
- ● Officially recognising the existence of an organised, transnational opposition movement against CSE ;
- ● Appointing a Member of the European Parliament as a point of contact for CSE in each Member State ;
- ● Ensuring multisectoral coordination (public health, gender equality, anti-discrimination, children's rights) ;
- ● Building partnerships with traditional and non-traditional European media.

2. BUILDING A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF CSE

- ● Incorporating the strategies of the opposition movement into this understanding ;
- ● Mapping CSE actors that comply with WHO/UNESCO standards ;
- ● Funding transnational collaborative projects for the exchange of good practices ;
- ● Creating a permanent European exchange network ;
- ● Ensuring the translation and transnational dissemination of the documents produced.

3. SECURING LONG-TERM FUNDING

- Funding transnational research without duplicating existing work ;
- Funding an EU awareness campaign for the general public ;
- Funding systematic monitoring with qualitative and quantitative indicators ;
- Creating a biannual study on the state of ECS in each Member State ;
- Developing a digital platform bringing together legal texts, reports and data ;
- Setting up an early warning system on the legislative status of ECS and attacks targeting it ;
- Prioritising projects involving local stakeholders, parents and young people.

4. SUPPORTING MEMBER STATES IN IMPLEMENTING CSE

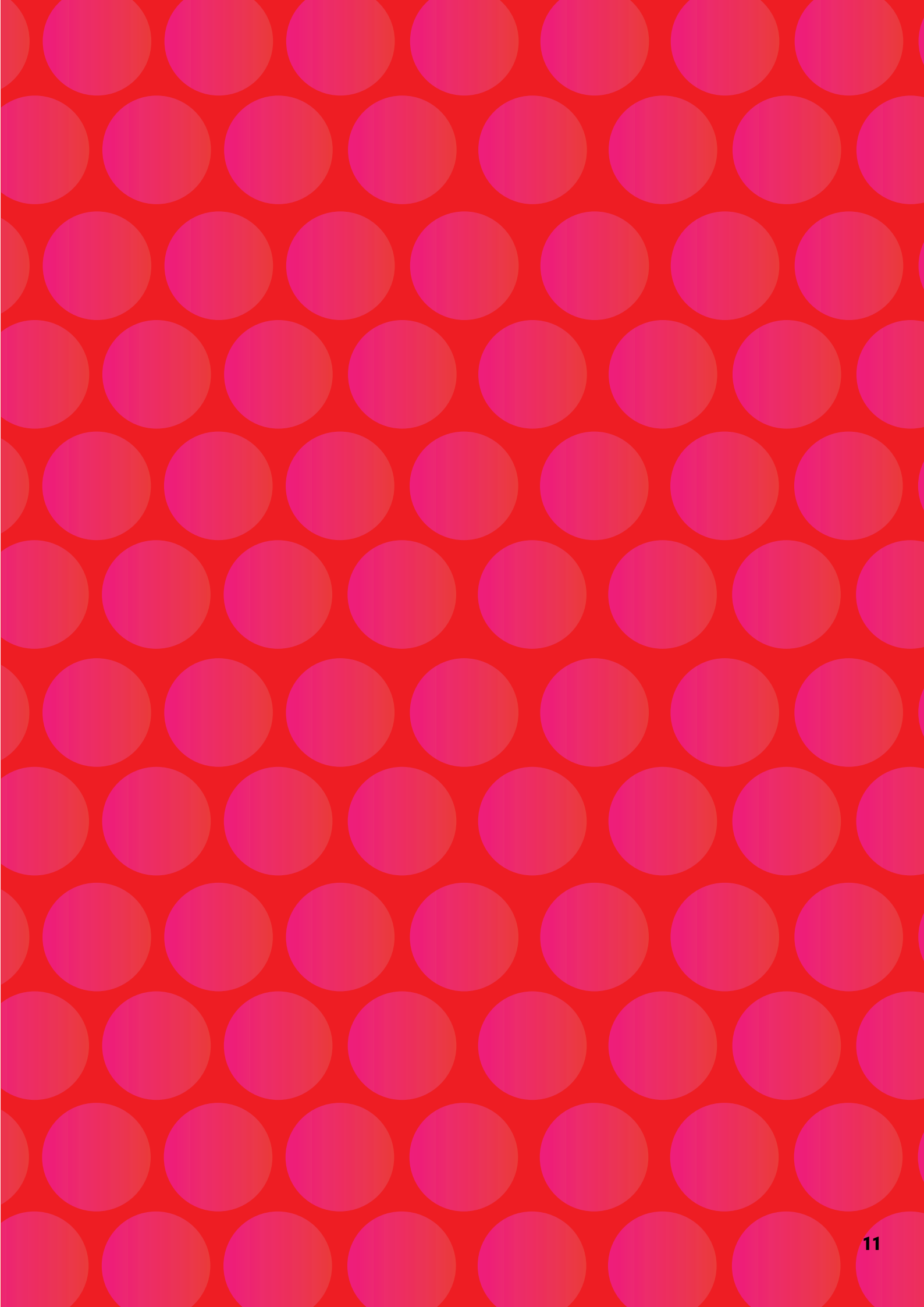
- Legislating for a compulsory school subject dedicated to CSE, aligned with WHO/UNESCO standards, taught continuously throughout schooling ;
- Legislating the mandatory creation of partnerships between educational institutions and associations specializing in ECS ;
- Providing guidance to parents (education on content, discussions with staff) ;
- Providing compulsory training for all school staff via a culturally adapted European curriculum ;
- Appointing a CSE contact person for each school.

CONCLUSION

Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Europe faces structured, financed, transnational and effective opposition that successfully influences public debate and political decisions. Far from being a marginal phenomenon, this ideological offensive mobilises considerable resources, coordinates its actions across borders and manages to slow down or even block the implementation of programmes that are recognised as essential by European and international institutions.

In response to this situation, a coordinated response at European level is needed, combining political recognition, sustainable financial support, transnational coordination and rigorous monitoring mechanisms. The issue goes beyond sexuality education alone: it touches on the foundations of European democracy, gender equality and fundamental human rights.







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