

**CfP EWIS 2025**  
**Beyond De-Democratization: Decentering Western Frameworks in the  
Study of Anti-Gender Politics in the CEE and the SWANA Regions**

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The last decade has seen a proliferation of scholarship on anti-gender mobilizations from an international perspective. These developments are widely perceived as a threat to hard-won advancements with regard to questions of gender and sexuality, from sexual and reproductive rights to the fight against gender-based violence. The surge of anti-gender discourses and practices is a global phenomenon, and yet existing literature on this question mostly applies theoretical frameworks that reflect Western histories and patterns of democratization, backlash, and resistance. The purpose of this workshop is to decenter the Western canon in the study of anti-gender politics through the discussion of richly contextualized and empirically grounded case studies from two semi-peripheral regions: Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA). While there is an extensive literature on anti-gender mobilizations in the CEE region (i.e., Graff & Korolczuk 2022; Kuhar & Paternotte 2017; Roggeband & Krizsán 2020; Verloo & Paternotte 2018), it is only recently that scholars have started to mobilize this concept with regard to the SWANA region (Ehrhart 2022; El Rahi & Antar 2024; Griffon et al. 2021; Özbay & Can Ipekci 2024; Özkazanç 2020). Whereas comparative studies exist between Western and CEE countries, the scholarship on anti-gender politics in the CEE and the SWANA regions has developed apart from each other.

To address this gap in the literature, this workshop seeks to establish a dialogue between scholars working on these two regions with the aim of examining convergences and divergences between anti-gender mobilizations, and resistances to them, from a comparative perspective. The workshop will adopt an intersectional feminist perspective that is attuned to the ways in which gender interacts with other axes of subordination (such as race, class, ethnicity, religion, etc.) and engage with decolonial approaches in international studies. It will seek to go beyond liberal analyses that read anti-gender mobilizations as part of de-democratization processes, and propose a conceptual framework that decenters Western understandings of this phenomenon. To that end, it will focus on unraveling the complex interplay between different histories of colonialism, socio-economic realities, political regimes, and religious traditions in the two regions.

We invite participants to explore the following questions:

- How do discourses and practices travel and take on different forms that reflect particular regional, national, and local contexts in the CEE and the SWANA regions?
- What state and non-state formations participate in these dynamics or, instead, resist them?
- What transnational networks and alliances result from these engagements?

The papers resulting from the workshop will be submitted for publication as a special issue in a relevant academic journal. This work will contribute to foster comparative and cross-regional analyses and discussions of anti-gender politics beyond the Global North. Its ultimate goal is to develop more effective strategies, tactics, and tools to respond to this global challenge.