Evidence Bite: Between Pillars and Micro-foundations. Digging Deep into Italian Anti-gender Rhetoric on Social Media

This article by CCINDLE partners elena pavan and Aurora Perego, alongside Matteo Scianna, explores how anti-gender rhetoric is produced, circulated, and normalised on social media in Italy and what this reveals about contemporary anti-gender politics. Anti-gender politics is increasingly amplified through digital platforms, and different actors in Italy (including politicians, religious organisations, and anti-trans groups) contribute to the spread of anti-gender rhetoric. The article discusses the importance of everyday online activity in normalising anti-gender ideas across platforms like Facebook and Instagram. This evidence bite offers a concise summary of its conclusions.

The **key observations** of the article include that:

1. Anti-gender rhetoric is built around a shared set of central pillars

Anti-gender discourses consistently revolve around three key themes, namely the idea that 'gender ideology' is a threat, the defence of the 'traditional family', and an opposition to trans rights. These pillars create a common narrative framework that unites otherwise disparate actors and messages.

2. A diverse 'anti-gender galaxy' produces and distributes content

The study identifies a broad network of actors that contribute to anti-gender discourse, including right-wing politicians, religious and anti-gender organisations, and anti-trans advocacy groups. These actors form an ecosystem, with varied voices reinforcing each other's messages and tailoring them for specific audiences.

3. Everyday digital activity normalises anti-gender tropes

Anti-gender politics is not just sustained through high-profile campaigns, but via constant posts, comments, and shares, the repetition of key narratives, and the blending of emotional, moral, and supposedly scientific arguments. This continuous online presence normalises anti-gender discourse and helps embed it into everyday political conversation.

The **key takeaway messages** of the article include that:

- **Social media is fundamental to contemporary anti-gender politics:** Digital platforms are not just communication tools, they are spaces where anti-gender ideas are produced and legitimised.
- **Narratives are collective yet flexible:** Shared themes create coherence, while different actors adapt messages to reach particular audiences.
- **Repetition drives normalisation:** Routine online engagements and interactions play a crucial role in shaping public discourses around gender.

This study shows that anti-gender politics operates not just through institutions and mass mobilisations, but via ongoing digital practices

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that shape what feels credible and acceptable in public debate. By understanding the networks, narratives, and everyday online activities behind anti-gender rhetoric, activists and policymakers can better identify how exclusionary ideas gain traction and develop strategies to challenge misinformation, disrupt harmful narratives, and strengthen democratic processes. You can read the article in full here for further details.

For more information on the CCINDLE project, as well as publications, evidence bites, podcasts, videos and more, please visit our website: https://ccindle.org

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