

Gendered Advocacy Coalitions in Estonia and Lithuania

A Comparative Study about the (non-)Ratification of the
Istanbul Convention

Abstract

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, known as the Istanbul Convention, was ratified by the European Union in 2023. However, five member states have not yet ratified. This essay investigates why some European Union member states have not ratified the Istanbul Convention, focusing specifically on Estonia and Lithuania using the most similar systems design: the former has ratified the Convention, but the latter has not. This essay analyses the (non-)ratification of the Istanbul Convention by applying Gwiazda and Minkova's (2022) refined advocacy coalition framework, a perspective on (non-)ratification that accentuates the role of feminist and anti-gender advocacy coalitions. This study hypothesises that the formation of a strong feminist advocacy coalition is needed in a country for it to ratify the Convention and that non-ratification results from the presence of a strong anti-gender advocacy coalition. The essay concludes that the hypothesis could be a possible explanation for the (non-)ratification of the Istanbul Convention because the feminist advocacy coalition was likely stronger than the anti-gendered advocacy coalition in Estonia and an anti-gender advocacy coalition has been present and determined in the sphere concerning the (non-)ratification of the Istanbul Convention in Lithuania.

Keywords: Istanbul Convention, Estonia, Lithuania, Gendered Advocacy Coalitions, Women's Rights.

Words: 9 990

List of Abbreviations

DP	Labour Party (Darbo Partija)
EU	European Union
ISAMAA	Fatherland Party (Erakond Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit)
KESK	Estonian Centre Party (Eesti Keskerakond)
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer
LLRA-KŠS	Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuanian – Christian Families Alliance (Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija – Krikščioniškų šeimų sąjunga)
LP	Freedom Party (Laisvės partija)
LRLS	Liberals' Movement of the Republic of Lithuania (Liberalų sąjūdis)
LSDP	Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija)
LVŽS	Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union (Lietuvos valstiečių ir žaliųjų sąjunga)
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
REF	Estonian Reform Party (Eesti Reformierakond)
SDE	Social Democratic Party (Sotsiaaldemokraatlik Erakond)
SAPTK	Foundation for the Protection of the Family and Traditions
TS-LKD	Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats (Tėvynės sąjunga – Lietuvos krikščionys demokratai)
TT	Order and Justice Party (Partija tvarka ir teisingumas)

Table of contents

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Purpose.....	2
1.2	Research Question.....	2
1.3	Structure of the Thesis.....	3
2	Background	3
2.1	The Istanbul Convention	3
2.2	EU Membership and Gender Equality	4
3	Literature Review	5
4	Theory	8
4.1	Gendered Advocacy Coalition Framework	8
4.2	Hypothesis	10
5	Method and Material.....	11
5.1	Method	11
5.1.1	Case Selection	12
5.2	Material	15
5.3	Critical Reflections.....	15
6	Analysis.....	17
6.1	Estonia.....	17
6.2	Lithuania.....	20
7	Discussion	25
8	Conclusion	27
9	References.....	28

1 Introduction

In 2011 the *Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence*, hereafter the Istanbul Convention or the Convention, was signed. Functioning as a human rights treaty within the Council of Europe, this convention has garnered support from 45 countries along with the European Union (EU). While all EU member states have signed the Convention, only 22 have completed the ratification process. Notably, the EU ratified the convention on June 1, 2023, leading to its implementation effective from October 1, 2023 (Council of Europe, 2023a; Council of the European Union, 2023a). Nevertheless, five member states within the EU – Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Lithuania, and Slovakia – have yet to ratify the convention. Latvia was one of the non-ratifiers until recently when their parliament ratified the Convention on November 30, 2023 (Saeima Press Service, 2023).

Within the European Union, gender equality is a fundamental right and a key principle (European Commission, 2020). The European Commission's Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025 delineates policy objectives and key actions for this period. Eliminating gender-based violence is a key objective. The Commission has called upon the Council to swiftly finalise the EU's accession to the Convention and urged Member States to ratify and implement it. While the first action was accomplished with the EU's ratification in 2023, the task of ratifying and implementing the Convention remains incomplete for five member states (European Commission, 2020). The Court of Justice of the European Union emphasises that the Convention falls within both the competencies of the EU and the Member States (Court of Justice of the European Union, 2021). This is the reason the EU was able to ratify the Convention despite not being unanimous. EU's actions emphasise the Union's wish for the remaining member states to ratify the Convention.

Simultaneously, the European Parliament and the Council are in the legislative process for a directive aimed at combating violence against women and domestic violence within the EU. The proposed directive draws heavily from the principles outlined in the Convention (Council of the European Union, 2023b). This sheds even more light on the Convention and its importance within the union.

Gwiazda and Minkova (2022) studied the reasons behind the (non-)ratification of the Istanbul Convention. They offer a comprehensive comparison between Bulgaria and Poland, delving into the dynamics of non-ratification versus ratification, by using the advocacy coalition framework as their theoretical background. They hypothesize that a strong feminist advocacy coalition is needed for a country to ratify the Convention.

Gwiazda and Minkova's theory explained variation in outcomes in two Central and Eastern European EU members. They suggest that further research test the

article's hypothesis on other cases (2022, p. 19). Hence, to see if the theory is equally applicable in another context. This paper is inspired by Gwiazda and Minkova's model and explores two different countries seen from a gender advocacy coalition framework. My context will be in the Baltic, comparing the ratifier Estonia to the non-ratifier Lithuania.

1.1 Purpose

This study explores the reasons behind certain European Union member states' non-ratification of the Convention and seeks to bring attention to a critical and ongoing issue, gender-based violence. The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 concluded that 33% of women in the EU have encountered physical and/or sexual violence and 22% have experienced violence perpetrated by an intimate partner (European Commission, 2020). Addressing the question of why some countries have not ratified the Convention could yield a deeper understanding of the pressing issue of gender-based violence.

Understanding the motivations behind these countries' decisions could offer insights into how the EU's proposed legislative directive might be received and the potential implications within the member states that have yet to ratify the convention. This exploration may highlight the prospect of change in these countries in response to the directive.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a rise in domestic violence, exposing how common this serious human rights abuse is (Council of Europe, n.d., a). Despite an increasing consensus regarding the urgency of combatting gender-based violence, there is still a rising opposition to the Convention, especially during periods of democratic backsliding. For instance, the Hungarian Parliament blocked the Convention's ratification in 2020, related to fear of 'gender ideology'¹ (Council of the European Union, 2020). Turkey in 2021 decided to withdraw from the Convention. Moreover, in Poland, a withdrawal has been discussed since the Law and Justice Party came to power in October 2015 (Gwiazda and Minkova, 2022, p. 2). These instances underscore the complexities and varied perspectives surrounding the ratification of the Convention.

1.2 Research Question

The above-presented material leads us to formulate the following research question:

- Why have some European Union member states not ratified the Istanbul Convention?

¹ The concept of 'gender ideology' will be further discussed in the Literature review chapter.

2 Background

This chapter aims to introduce the topics covered in the essay. First, information about the Istanbul Convention is presented, introducing the treaty's content and the ratification process. Second, a short section about how an EU membership can affect gender equality after an enlargement will be presented.

2.1 The Istanbul Convention

The Istanbul Convention is a human rights treaty that represents a fundamental legal instrument in the fight against gender-based violence (Jurtiste and Shreeves, 2019). International treaties, like the Convention, can be used by states to demonstrate their commitment to addressing common problems (Lantis, 2009, p. 2). The Istanbul Convention is Europe's first and most comprehensive legal instrument imposing legally binding obligations and standards on state parties (Jurtiste and Shreeves, 2019).

The Convention has four aims: prevention, protection, prosecution, and coordinated policies (Council of Europe, n.d., b). Crucially, the Convention challenges the perception of violence against women and domestic violence as private matters. It mandates that states take comprehensive, integrated political actions to implement the four aims. Through its legal mandates, the Convention sends a resounding political message to society, unequivocally declaring that violence against women and domestic violence is unacceptable and obliges ratifying governments to adopt a comprehensive set of measures to end this. (Jurtiste and Shreeves, 2019; Council of Europe, 2023b, p. 4).

The Convention defines and criminalises various forms of violence against women, including physical, sexual, and psychological violence. It not only aims to prevent such violence and safeguard victims but also mandates parties to collect data on gender-related crimes. (Jurtiste and Shreeves, 2019).

The Convention introduces a distinctive definition of gender as “the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men” (Council of Europe, 2011, Article 3) challenging traditional definitions based only on the sex of individuals (Jurtiste and Shreeves, 2019). Its opponents often express concerns regarding the term gender and its implications within gender roles and stereotypes (Council of Europe, 2023b, p. 4).

The Convention came into force in August 2014 after a required number of signatures and ratification had been achieved (Council of Europe, 2023b). The ratification can be seen as the final legal confirmation by a government that agrees

to comply with the rights and duties of the treaty (Lantis, 2009, p. 2). Once a government has ratified the Convention, it must take measures to implement its provisions aimed at preventing and combating violence against women (Council of Europe, n.d., b).

In a study requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality, the FEMM Committee, the implementation of the Convention was studied (Meurens et al., 2020). The report aimed to understand the Convention's value, and see different arguments against the ratification, among other things. The report concluded, *inter alia*, that the act of ratifying the Convention has led to a positive effect on legislation to combat violence against women (Meurens et al., 2020, p. 178). Results from this study will be further analysed in the analysis chapter.

2.2 EU Membership and Gender Equality

The accession to an EU membership does not automatically guarantee the adoption or complete implementation of EU norms regarding gender equality. Which emphasizes the pressing need for EU gender policies to integrate a feminist agenda. The lack of implementation of gender equality norms is connected to a significant degree of campaigning against the so-called 'gender ideology' (Juhász, 2018).

While adopting EU gender equality directives and court decisions were among the conditions for accession to the Union, several Central and Eastern European countries did little to implement them once they became EU members. After the 2004 and 2007 enlargement through the accession of Countries from Central and Eastern Europe, EU gender equality goals have been further weakened (Sisson Runyan et al., 2021, p. 183). This weakening is also noted by Jacquot (2015) as she sees that gender equality policies have undergone a process of retreat from when the policies were conceived and established in the 1980s and notes that "this is not a good time for equality" (Jacquot, 2015, p. 137).

3 Literature Review

Previous studies (Krizsán and Roggeband, 2021; Burke and Molitorisová, 2019) have delved into the resistance and dynamics surrounding the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, offering diverse perspectives and insights. These studies encompass countries that had ratified the Convention, such as Croatia and Poland (Obajdin and Golusins, 2021; Skorulska, 2023) as well as those yet to ratify, like Latvia and Lithuania (Linkeviciute, 2021; Naliviké, 2021; Vizgunova and Graudina, 2020; Isaacs and Rudzite, 2021) or through comparative analyses between non-ratifying and ratifying countries (Gwiazda and Minkova, 2022).

Gwiazda and Minkova (2022) provide an insightful perspective employing the advocacy coalition framework, suggesting that gendered advocacy coalitions play a crucial role in a country's (non-)ratification of the Convention. They point out gaps in existing literature, stressing the complexity of domestic dynamics involving multiple actors with deep-seated beliefs. They note different interpretations of the Convention based on belief systems and highlight the absence of a comprehensive framework in recent gender and politics scholarship to explain the (non-)ratification phenomenon. They draw upon literature on gender politics and public policy to complement these aspects, underscoring the influence of advocacy coalitions, especially anti-gender, and feminist groups, in shaping (non-) ratification processes and highlighting the complex interactions among partisan, societal, and legal actors.

Vizgunova and Graudina (2020, p. 109) instead explore the dynamics of the absence of ratification in Latvia² by using two different models of Europeanisation: the external incentives model and the social learning model. The social learning model provides an explanation for the non-ratification that could be related to exclusive national identity and that the Convention has not gained coherence in Latvia. By using the process of Europeanisation, one can try to see how the evaluation of EU political commitments impacts national policy debates (Vizgunova and Graudina 2020, p. 112).

Various standpoints of ratification can be analysed by using a critical framework (Krizsán and Roggeband 2021, p. 2), It is usually conservative organisations, church authorities, and related organisations that oppose ratification. This can be illustrated briefly by the fact that national-conservative players in Latvia argued that the text of the Convention was not in line with Christian values (Vizgunova and Graudina 2020, p. 109). Actors oppose ratification due to the definition of gender that the Convention provides, since it, in their view, would lead to a disruption of traditional family values. Moreover, they fear that the Convention

² Latvia had not ratified the Convention by the time Vizgunova and Graudina published their article since Latvia ratified the Convention on the 30th of November 2023. However, the study is still of relevance for the essay. Hence, this creates an opportunity for further research, which will be discussed in the Discussion (Chapter 7).

would remove the distinction between male and female, thus interrupting clear dichotomies. Another concern is that the Convention will lead to the introduction of same-sex marriage due to the gender definition in the Convention (Vizgunova and Graudina, 2020, p. 111).

Recently, scholars have seen a global pushback against women's rights, since illiberalism and rising authoritarian populism endorse anti-feminist and anti-gender rhetoric. Anti-gender mobilization has made efforts to stop the ratification of the Convention (Graff and Korolczuk, 2022, p. 165, 169-170). In some Central and Eastern European countries, the Convention has been met with resistance due to it being understood as the Convention wanting states to challenge their concept of family (Stoyanova, Niemi and Peroni, 2020).

The resistance to the definition of gender has led to the creation of opponents of the term 'gender ideology' (Kuhar and Paternotte, 2017). It was initially created to foster traditional family values and as an opposition to women's and LGBTQ+³ rights activism. Moreover, it could be understood as something related to "fears about third-wave feminism and LGBTQ+ rights undermining traditional roles" (Obajdin and Golusins, 2021, p. 213) that different groups try to work against. Examples of actors that have pictured 'gender ideology' as a threat are right-wing and far-right parties (Kuhar and Paternotte, 2017). Burke and Molitorisová (2019, p. 211-213) have found that opposition to the Convention could be explained by an inconsistency between constitutional provisions and the Convention, both seen from a view of the translation of gender and the fear of 'gender ideology'.

Other groups disseminating this discourse of anti-gender belief are religious actors, as in Poland where the Catholic Church's cultural policy had a strong dominance on political actors which delayed the ratification (Szocik and Szyja, 2015; Naliviké, 2021, p. 31). The Catholic Church has been a significant political actor in the decision-making process in Lithuania (Naliviké, 2021, p. 28). Latvia⁴, like Czechia and Bulgaria, signed but failed to ratify the Convention in parliament due to intense public debate influenced by religious actors and media, revealing shortcomings in critical evaluation of news and a lack of pluralism in Latvian media space (Vienberg, 2018, p. 46).

The debate over the ratification of the Istanbul Convention could be seen from the features of culture wars where moralisation, the instrumentalization of culture and the struggle over power are being contested. It can be compared to a battle between dichotomies of sacred versus secular or liberal versus illiberal (Isaacs and Rudzite, 2021, p. 1418).

The above-presented literature is a summary of analyses from diverse studies concerning the resistance and dynamics surrounding the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. Different theories have been utilized, such as advocacy coalition framework and Europeanisation, to examine the ratification. Scholars have highlighted a global trend of pushback against women's rights, accompanied by

³ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer.

⁴ Latvia had not ratified the Convention by the time Vienberg published her article since Latvia ratified the Convention on the 30th of November 2023. However, the study is still of relevance for the essay. Like the previous studies about Latvia the opportunity for further research due to the ratification will be discussed in Chapter 7.

rising illiberalism and anti-feminist rhetoric, particularly influencing the Convention's ratification in Central and Eastern European countries. Previous studies address opposition to the Convention, primarily driven by concerns over its definition of gender and its perceived impact on traditional values, gender roles, and family distinctions. This opposition has given rise to the term 'gender ideology', propagated by right-wing parties and religious actors.

4 Theory

4.1 Gendered Advocacy Coalition Framework

Gwiazda and Minkova (2022, p. 4) propose a theoretical framework based on the advocacy coalition framework but refine it to explore gendered advocacy coalitions. The advocacy coalition framework is a theoretical framework used to understand how policy change occurs in a complex process and focuses on the interaction among various stakeholders, their beliefs, resources, and the strategies they use to influence policy (Cairney, 2020, p. 170). Gwiazda and Minkova (2022, p. 8) propose that gendered advocacy coalitions can be divided into feminist and anti-gender coalitions.

The advocacy coalition framework attempts to explain policy action within a complex policymaking system. Simplified, by turning beliefs into policy, people engage in politics. Policy actors form advocacy coalitions with actors that share the same beliefs (Cairney, 2020, p. 170). Advocacy coalition can be defined as “people form a variety of positions (elected and agency officials, interest group leaders, researchers) who share a particular belief system – i.e., a set of basic values, causal assumptions, and problem perceptions” (Sabatier, 1988, p. 139). Hence, it underscores that the formation of advocacy coalitions is composed when people share normative and causal beliefs (Sabatier, 1988, p. 133).

Additionally, the advocacy coalition framework offers a unique analysis of various aspects of policy processes. It acknowledges the significance of dominance within policy networks and subsystems, yet it contests the notion that a limited number of groups and government entities entirely control policy processes. The advocacy coalition framework emphasizes the involvement of a broader array of actors, distributed among different government levels and categories. Moreover, it underscores the role of beliefs and persuasion in shaping policy debates (Cairney, 2020, p. 171-173).

The actors, that form the coalition due to shared beliefs, are included from several sectors. The definition of actors within the subsystem extends beyond traditional views of the policy process, which typically prioritize the legislative committee, government agencies, and interest groups. Instead, these actors might stem from any level of government, private sector representatives, court members, as well as individuals from non-governmental organisations, media, academia, religious organisations, or private consulting. This broad inclusion is justified by the subsystem’s susceptibility to both direct and indirect influences (Jenkins-Smith et al. 2018, p. 139).

Gwiazda and Minkova refine the advocacy coalition framework to explore the process of ratification of international human rights treaties they draw on insights from scholars from law and society “to understand the formation of advocacy coalitions in human rights policy subsystems and to examine the types of resources that those coalitions employ to attain their policy goals” (Gwiazda and Minkova, 2022, p. 4). Suggesting that the examination of ratification should be contextualized within the wider dynamics unfolding within a society. They further elaborate that by integrating knowledge from gender politics, it becomes crucial to acknowledge the influence of gender in shaping advocacy coalitions. This incorporates an understanding that cultural and societal norms impact gender equality worldwide, and the acknowledgement that the concept of gender can carry several meanings. Both these perspectives have connections to deep core beliefs regarding the societal roles of women and the ongoing struggle between traditional and progressive ideologies and identities (Gwiazda and Minkova, 2022, p. 5).

To be able to see these beliefs, the definition of gender must be discussed. Beckwith (2005, p. 134) argues that gender can be seen both as a category and a process when conducting empirical political research, the latter referring to gender studies. Gender can both be seen as a synonym for sex and from a broader cultural perspective. Gender, as a social construction, refers to norms, beliefs, and roles associated with being a woman or a man. Gender studies can be used to provide a wider concept of political research by studying how power is related to sex, gender, and sexuality (Hawkesworth, 2013, p. 52). Gender studies is a broad field that contains many contesting issues.

From the advocacy coalition framework, Gwiazda and Minkova (2022, p. 6-7) introduce two gendered advocacy coalitions on which they base their analysis, feminist advocacy coalitions and anti-gender advocacy coalitions. The feminist advocacy coalition’s beliefs align with Western human rights tradition rooted in women’s rights, gender equality, and empowerment. With a focus on the inclusion of international women’s rights into national legal codes. Gwiazda and Minkova define it as “liberal feminist beliefs are egalitarian, European, and pro-gender” (2022, p. 6). After this, they note that liberal feminists in Central and Eastern Europe tend to support pro-gender views due to their solidarity with LGBTQ+ people.

Anti-gender beliefs are instead “liked to traditional, nationalist, and religious deep core beliefs. They derive from conservative notions of the nation, the family, and tradition and can become ultra-conservative in their dogmatism” (Gwiazda and Minkova, 2022, p. 6). These coalitions form due to actors that share beliefs that it is important to protect traditional and Christian values of gender roles with a focus on a heteronormative perspective. They are both anti-feminist by rejecting and criticising feminism, anti-LGBTQ+ and against the notion of gender.

4.2 Hypothesis

Gwiazda and Minkova (2022, p. 16) showed that the formation of a strong feminist advocacy coalition explained the ratification in Poland, whereas the presence of a strong anti-gender advocacy coalition resulted in the non-ratification in Bulgaria, hence, their hypothesis was supported. To increase the generalisability of their hypothesis it is motivated to further test the hypothesis in a new context. Therefore, I will apply a similar hypothesis to their hypothesis on two new cases Estonia and Lithuania. The hypothesis is:

- The formation of a strong feminist advocacy coalition is needed in a country for it to ratify the Istanbul Convention. Non-ratification results from the presence of a strong anti-gender advocacy coalition.

This hypothesis can be expressed since feminist advocacy coalitions are expected to support ratification because of the aim of the Istanbul Convention. Thus, the purpose of the Convention is to “protect women against all forms of violence and [...] promote substantive equality between women and men” (Council of Europe, 2011, Article 1) This aim is in line with the beliefs of these coalitions and characterise feminist requirements. This revealed that feminist coalitions are in favour of the Convention.

Conversely, anti-gender advocacy coalitions are against the Convention since it collides with their conservative, traditional heteronormative family, and Christian values. In their interpretation the Istanbul Convention promotes ‘gender ideology’ (Burke and Molitorisová, 2019, p. 211-213; Council of Europe, 2023b).

5 Method and Material

5.1 Method

This study will draw upon Gwiazda and Minkova's (2022) research design. Their methodology contains comparative research based on the most similar system design which they combine with process tracing (Gwiazda and Minkova, 2022, p. 8-9). As I am testing the applicability of their theory to other cases, the same methodology will be applied.

Comparative methods can be used to test an existing theory on new cases. The comparison serves a descriptive function to see if a theory could be applied across different contexts. One of the advantages of using comparative studies, compared to a single country case study, is the broader horizon. When using the comparative method, one can establish that truth can work in different contexts (Halperin and Heath, 2020, p. 232-233).

This study will be based on small-N samples, which are commonly used in political research. This small-N comparative study involves the comparison of two cases. A systematic analysis of the two countries will be conducted, which will result in an in-depth analysis which hopefully will result in an answer to the research question, both in a particular and general way. A problem with small-N studies is the lack of opportunities to create bigger generalisations for other cases (Halperin and Heath, 2020, p. 237-238). Therefore, it is motivated to conduct a similar comparative study on new cases to increase the generalisability of the comparative study conducted on Poland and Bulgaria.

When conducting a small-N study it is important to have a clear justification for case selection. By paying careful attention when selecting cases, selection bias can be avoided (Halperin and Heath, 2020, p. 238). Cases can be selected based on different criteria, e.g., picking cases with variation, relevant or generalisable cases (Teorell and Svensson, 2007, p. 222). Having a design when picking cases creates a clear model to follow (Halperin and Heath, 2020, p. 255).

The most similar system design is based on selected cases that are as similar as possible but that differ in one fundamental detail. The hope is to find the explanatory variable that distinguishes these cases (Esaiasson, 2017, p. 103). The countries should theoretically share important characteristics but show different results in one thing. The most similar system design is frequently used when studying countries within a region that are similar in many important respects but still differ on one dependent variable (Halperin and Heath, 2020, p. 239). However, a potential issue with this design might arise due to difficulties in ensuring

sufficiently homogeneous cases (Esaiasson, 2017, p. 103). The cases will be chosen based on their similarities; however, there will be variations in the process of ratification.

By using process tracing, this qualitative research is complemented with a form of within-case analysis that helps address complexity, such as path dependence and interaction effects (Bennett and Elman, 2006, p. 456). Process tracing helps analyse and understand causal mechanisms and the sequence of events leading to specific outcomes or results within a particular political process. It is based on a systematic examination of empirical evidence with the hope of establishing and evaluating the causal links between certain conditions. This will be used to conduct a detailed analysis of coalition formation and actors' beliefs since process tracing is a research method that can be used to identify actors, understand how a particular set of policy decisions unfolds over time, and explain the causes of policy decisions (Beach and Pedersen, 2013, p. 2).

5.1.1 Case Selection

Six countries – Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovakia – highlighted in Table 1 (see next page). These represent the five EU member states that have not ratified the Istanbul Convention and Latvia whose parliament ratified the Convention very recently, on November 30, 2023 (Council of Europe, 2023a; Saeima Press Service, 2023). The five countries are post-communist countries located in Central and Eastern Europe. Within the region of the non-ratifying Central and Eastern European Countries, two sub-regions can be distinguished – the Baltic States and the Viségrad Group. Since Gwiazda and Minkova conducted their study comparing two countries from the Viségrad Group it creates a research gap for me to conduct the same study but within the context of the Baltic States.

The Baltic States are Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Estonia and Latvia have ratified the convention. Since Latvia's ratification was implemented at the end of November the Convention has not yet entered into force which leaves us to use Estonia as the ratifier for this study. Lithuania has yet to ratify the Convention and is hence taken as the non-ratifier for this study.

Estonia and Lithuania have been member states of the Council of Europe since 1993 (Council of Europe, n.d., c; Council of Europe, n.d., d) and both EU members since 2004. They are both parliamentary republics (European Union, n.d., a; European Union, n.d., b) with a communist legacy (International IDEA, 2023; Britannica, n.d.).

Table 1: List of Signatures and Ratification of the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe, 2023a)

State or International Organisation	Signature	Ratification
Members of the Council of Europe		
Albania	19/12/2011	04/02/2013
Andorra	22/02/2013	22/04/2014
Armenia	18/01/2018	
Austria	11/05/2011	14/11/2013
Azerbaijan		
Belgium	11/09/2012	14/03/2016
Bosnia and Herzegovina	08/03/2013	07/11/2013
Bulgaria	21/04/2016	
Croatia	22/01/2013	12/06/2018
Cyprus	16/06/2015	10/11/2017
Czechia	02/05/2016	
Denmark	11/10/2013	23/04/2014
Estonia	02/12/2014	26/10/2017
Finland	11/05/2011	17/04/2015
France	11/05/2011	04/07/2014
Georgia	19/06/2014	19/05/2017
Germany	11/05/2011	12/10/2017
Greece	11/05/2011	18/06/2018
Hungary	14/03/2014	
Iceland	11/05/2011	26/04/2018
Ireland	05/11/2015	08/03/2019

Italy	27/09/2012	10/09/2013
Latvia	18/05/2016	30/11/2023 ⁵
Liechtenstein	10/11/2016	17/06/2021
Lithuania	07/06/2013	
Luxembourg	11/05/2011	07/08/2018
Malta	21/05/2012	29/07/2014
Monaco	20/09/2012	07/10/2014
Montenegro	11/05/2011	22/04/2013
Netherlands	14/11/2012	18/11/2015
North Macedonia	08/07/2011	23/03/2018
Norway	07/07/2011	05/07/2017
Poland ⁶	18/12/2012	27/04/2015
Portugal	11/05/2011	05/02/2013
Moldova	06/02/2017	31/01/2022
Romania	27/06/2014	23/05/2016
San Marino	30/04/2014	28/01/2016
Serbia	04/04/2012	21/11/2013
Slovakia	11/05/2011	
Slovenia	08/09/2011	05/02/2015
Spain	11/05/2011	10/04/2014
Sweden	11/05/2011	01/07/2014
Switzerland	11/09/2013	14/12/2017

⁵ Latvian parliament ratified the Convention on November 30, 2023 (Saeima Press Service, 2023). However, the Council of Europe have not updated their information regarding Latvian Ratification.

⁶ Poland has announced its intention to withdraw from the Convention (Amiel, 2021). However, a denunciation has not yet been decided on.

Turkey ⁷	11/05/2011	14/03/2012
Ukraine	07/11/2011	18/07/2022
United Kingdom	08/06/2012	21/07/2022
International Organisation		
European Union	13/06/2017	28/06/2023

5.2 Material

This study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data is often associated with data that is collected by the researcher and secondary data is by contrast associated with data that has been collected by other people. When using secondary data, the researcher analyses data that have formally been collected by other people.

The disadvantages of using primary data are that it is time-consuming and costly to conduct own big studies and secondary data could be as good to answer the question being studied (Halperin and Heath, 2020, p. 190). However, a disadvantage with secondary data is the risk of not being able to tell the quality level to which the data reaches. Additionally, when using secondary data, it is important to be aware of potential bias, for example from government reports. Moreover, it is important to see the data's validity and reliability (Halperin and Heath, 2020, p. 201).

The material that has been used is information about government parties, statements made by politicians, national parliamentary bills, information from the European Union both through reports and debates, statements from Constitutional Courts, public opinion polls, press releases, news articles and information from non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Furthermore, secondary sources have included previous studies and scholarly literature.

5.3 Critical Reflections

Throughout the process of this essay, my overarching aim was to strive for intersubjectivity, emphasising transparency and recognising uncertainties as outlined by Teorell and Svensson (2017, p 279-281). Therefore, I find it important to address some different critical reflections of difficulties that I have encountered

⁷ On 22/03/2021 Turkey declared the withdrawal from the Convention, which was entered into force on 01/07/2021.

during the work of the essay. This is to provide the reader with enough background information about the research process to be able to understand the scope of the essay and the analysis.

I encountered slight difficulty in sourcing an adequate amount of material. Due to that certain of the available resources have not been in English but instead in Estonian or Lithuanian. Being a non-native speaker of those languages has made it rather challenging to read those sources. For example, limiting the usage of material from women's rights organisations or debates in national parliaments.

Strategies to enhance the problem of material being available only in Estonian or Lithuanian might involve using tools for translation, such as Google Translate or DeepL. De Vries, Schoonvelde and Schumacher (2018) showed that Google Translate could be a useful tool for research, as they conclude that machine translations and standard translations have similar outcomes. However, they suggest that this must be used carefully since specific meanings of words can be confused in translation (de Vries et al., 2018, p. 429). Consequently, I have with caution used translated content, but only employed it sparingly to expand the material. It is crucial to acknowledge that using translated texts may come with inherent limitations, such as not being able to completely verify it or meanings getting lost in translation. However, I have still utilized those tools to decipher and incorporate non-English material into my study.

Another strategy used to compensate for the challenges in accessing material for analysis has been to broaden the scope of materials examined. Thus, I integrated cases from outside my primary sample to construct a more comprehensive argument related to my study's cases. Additionally, I have tried to adapt more of an external vantage point of the study, for example, by using material from the EU. I have also contacted both the Constitutional Court and the National Parliament of Lithuania with requests to access documents related to the ratification process. However, they were unable to provide me with sufficient material.

My goal for the essay was to be inspired by Gwiazda and Minkova's comparative study and to provide an addition to their research by testing their main hypothesis in another context. Due to some limitations of the essay, I have not been able to provide the same scope of research as them, despite my best efforts, this is due to the limited time of the research, between November and December 2023, and the more limited material available to me as compared to their study, which could have hindered this research's depth and potential outcomes.

6 Analysis

The analysis will be conducted by applying the Gendered Advocacy Coalition theory to the gathered material. The analysis aims to evaluate the theory's applicability, presenting the findings obtained from this examination. The analysis is separated into two parts, one for Estonia and one for Lithuania. Throughout the analysis, material from outside the sample will be used to broaden the scope of the material and to provide more comprehensive arguments.

6.1 Estonia

The structure of the Estonian analysis will entail exploring different sides of gendered advocacy coalitions. Initially, attention is drawn to the governments for signature and ratification and their political affiliations. Subsequently, it explores various actors and initiatives within Estonia that actively supported women's rights before the ratification. Additionally, the analysis reveals actors involved in resisting the ratification of the Convention. Moreover, findings on public opinion concerning violence against women are presented, essential for understanding societal attitudes. The analysis is finalised by a possible indication of which advocacy coalition has been stronger in Estonia.

The government, when Estonia signed the Convention in 2014, was a coalition of the Estonian Reform Party (REF)⁸ and the Social Democratic Party (SDE), led by the Prime Minister, Taavi Rõivas, representing REF (Döring et al., 2022; Euractiv, 2015). REF is a liberal party, that emphasises freedom of the individual, describing themselves as having a right-liberal worldview (Riigikogu, 2023a). REF has had consistent support in Estonia for several terms and has governed both with conservatives and social democrats (Toots, 2019, p. 3-4). On the other hand, SDE has policies based on social-democratic values of justice and solidarity, emphasising the protection of civil rights and personal liberty with a left-wing worldview (Riigikogu, 2023b). Lukas Warode's visualiser of the ParlGov data⁹, places the Rõivas government slightly more to the right than left and is slightly more libertarian than authoritarian (Döring et al., 2022).

The values of the Rõivas, hence the signatory government, could be seen as affiliated with a feminist advocacy coalition since it matches the values established to align that coalition, such as liberalism and protection of the individual's rights.

⁸ A list of abbreviations and the party names in the native language could be found in the beginning of this paper.

⁹ ParlGov is a data infrastructure for political science and contains information for all EU and most OECD democracies (Döring et. al. 2022)

However, the government when Estonia ratified the Convention in 2017 was a coalition of the Estonian Centre Party (KESK), the Fatherland Party (ISAMAA) and once again the SDE (Döring et al., 2022). This time the Prime Minister, Jüri Ratas, was from the KESK, a centrism populist party (Santana, Zagórski and Rama, 2020, p. 294), describing themselves as a “people’s party with a broad voter base that focuses on values which are important for the whole population, regardless of whether these values are conservative, liberal, or social democratic” (Riigikogu, 2023c). ISAMAA, contrarily, has a defined conservative worldview with priorities such as the survival of the nation-state and maintaining Estonian family values (Riigikogu, 2023d). The Ratas government was centred both on a right/left scale and a libertarian/authoritarian scale (Döring et al., 2022).

Based on first impression the Ratas government may be more aligned with anti-gender advocacy coalition due to its conservative views, which is one of the beliefs of that. But looking at which party group in the European Parliament the Estonian parties are part of and the party groups attitude towards the Convention contradicts that impression. All three government parties are part of groups that are positive towards the ratification of the Convention. KESK is part of the liberal Renew Europe Group, ISAMAA is part of the Christian Democratic European People’s Party Group and SDE is associated with the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (European Parliament, n.d.). The positive attitudes of the party groups can be seen from debates in the Parliament where members of the European Parliament, from other countries, of the three mentioned party groups argue for support of the Istanbul Convention (European Parliament, 2023).

Estonia had before the ratification shown support for women’s rights by addressing these matters in different ways. In 2015, the then-current president, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, said that they would work to improve services for victims of violence. As well, in 2016 two different plans were adopted addressing gender equality and violence against women in Estonia (UN Women, n.d.). These could be seen as actions related to a feminist advocacy coalition since those coalition advocates for the inclusion of international women’s rights in national legislation.

The feminist advocacy coalition could also be seen when Estonia had the Presidency of the Council of the European Union during the second half of 2017. During the presidency, Estonia emphasised empowerment and protection of all citizens, which involves gender equality. This focus led to that organisation, the End FGM European Network¹⁰, calling upon Estonia to ratify the Convention (End FGM, 2017). Nevertheless, Estonia had then already made indications that a ratification would happen that year. In 2016 the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marina Kaljurand, part of SDE, stated that the plan was to ratify the Istanbul Convention in 2017 because it is a relevant tool to confront violence against women (Välisministeerium, 2016). This led to the Legal Affairs Committee of the Estonian Parliament, sending the bill for ratification of the Convention to the first reading at the plenary sitting of the parliament on 13 June 2017. The Chairman of the committee said that “domestic violence is not an internal matter of family, but a

¹⁰ A European network of organisations working to ensure sustainable European action to end female genital mutilation.

social problem that has to be addressed at the state level. The first step is to change the attitude of the people” (Riigikogu Press Service, 2017). Soon after this, the Convention could be ratified on the 26th of October 2017 (Council of Europe, 2023a).

Despite that, an anti-gender advocacy coalition was formed in Estonia and composed of partisan actors from radical right-wing and conservative forces. Before the ratification of the Convention, different understandings of gender, gender roles and stereotypes were reflected in media and during different debates. The anti-gender advocacy coalition gathered actors who thought that the ratification was part of a larger war on traditional gender roles and who believed that the Convention would be a threat to the foundations of Estonian society (Meurens et al., 2020, p. 98).

One of the actors that may have been part of the formation of an anti-gender coalition is the Foundation for the Protection of the Family and Tradition (SAPTK) (Meurens et al., 2020, p. 98). SAPTK is based on Christian teachings with a focus on family values and the protection of European cultural heritage (Whyte, 2019). The SAPTK was part of the resistance to the Convention related to the issue of gender. These above-mentioned thoughts are similar to the conflicting streams of the Convention in non-ratifying countries (Meurens et al., 2020, p. 110).

Until now the analysis has mainly focused on political and societal actors, however, the population’s opinion is also important. In particular change concerning the issues addressed in the Istanbul Convention is related to change in attitude of the people. The EU conducts opinion polls on various subjects through the Eurobarometer. The Special Eurobarometer 449 “Gender-based violence” from 2016 aimed to evaluate the opinion of EU citizens about gender-based violence.

Table 2: Table 2 displays different statements from the Eurobarometer (European Union 2016a; European Union 2016b).

	Estonia	Lithuania
<i>In your opinion, domestic violence against women is ... (percent of total answering the following statement)</i>		
Unacceptable and should be punished by law	78	78
<i>Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements (percent of totally agree and tend to agree combined)</i>		
Domestic violence is a private matter and should be handled within the family	14	22
Violence against women is often provoked by the victim	38	45
Women often make up or exaggerate claims of abuse or rape	31	42

One year before the ratification, in 2016, 78 % of Estonians thought that domestic violence against women was unacceptable and should be punished by law.

Hence, a majority believes that regulations, similar to those in the Convention should be implemented. A quite low percentage thought that domestic violence is a private matter and should be handled within the family, which relates to the statement made by the chair of the Legal Affairs Committee that domestic is a problem that should be handled at the state level. There is a clear difference between Estonia and Lithuania where Estonia has a lower percentage of people agreeing to the statement which indicates an attitude view closer to the Istanbul Convention, even though the two last have a higher percentage than the first.

One possible implication of this is that the population of Estonia have stronger connections to a feminist advocacy coalition. This may be due to that a feminist coalition has a focus on the inclusion of women's rights into national legislation.

In Estonia, a feminist advocacy coalition was likely stronger than the anti-gender advocacy coalition. However, both coalitions have been active in Estonia making it harder to establish a clear difference between which has been the bigger coalition. The feminist advocacy coalition is seen in the government parties and public opinion, while the anti-gender advocacy coalition was seen by some more conservative forces.

6.2 Lithuania

The structure of the Lithuanian analysis will entail exploring multiple sides of gendered advocacy coalitions. Initially, attention is drawn to different governments in Lithuania and their political affiliations. Subsequently, it explores what happened in 2018 when the Convention was voted on in the National Parliament. Additionally, the analysis sheds light on actors involved in resting the ratification, especially drawing attention to the Church's involvement. Moreover, the interpretation of the term gender is shortly discussed before findings on public opinion concerning violence against women are presented. Lastly, the analysis sheds light on actors working towards ratification in Lithuania and the recent actions made by the National Parliament and the Constitutional Court. The analysis is finalised by possible indications of which advocacy coalition has been stronger in Estonia.

In 2013, the year of the Lithuanian signature, the four parties; the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP), the Labour Party (DP), the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania – Christian Families Alliance (LLRA-KŠS) and the Order and Justice Party (TT), together had a coalition government (Döring et al., 2022). Both LSDP and DP are centre-left parties, the latter has more populist tendencies, while the former is more progressive with a focus on workers' rights and inequality (CSIS, 2020). LLRA-KŠS is a national, conservative party which sees itself as the representative of the Polish ethnic minority in Lithuania (Europe Elects, 2020a). TT was also a national, conservative party; however, it dissolved in 2020 (Europe Elects, 2020b).

The Social Democratic Prime Minister, Algirdas Butkevičius, led the government. Lukas Warode's visualiser of the ParlGov data places the Butkevičius

government slightly more to the left than right and is slightly more authoritarian than libertarian (Döring et al., 2022). The values of the Butkevičius government could be seen as affiliated with an anti-gender advocacy coalition a bit more since half of the parties' values, concerning nationalist and conservative, are aligned with an anti-gender coalition. So, the signature of this government could be seen as somewhat contradicting to what is expected by conservative governments, however, the other centre-left part of the government could have been the driving force behind the signature. Since the signature Lithuania has only had governments that are more authoritarian than libertarian (Döring et al., 2022), which could be an explanation as to why Lithuania has not yet ratified the Convention.

However, since the last election in Lithuania in 2020 the governing majority consists of the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats (TS-LKD), the Liberals' Movement of the Republic of Lithuania (LRLS) and the Freedom Party (LP) (Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas, n.d., a). Both the TS-LKD and LRLS are centre-right parties, the latter is a liberal party, while the former is conservative with Christian democratic values (TS-LKD, n.d.; CSIS, 2020). The LP is a recently formed, centre-left party and has a progressive view towards social issues, e.g., LGBTQ+ rights (CSIS, 2020). Since the formation of this government, together with the right-wing president Gitanas Nausėda, Lithuanian politics have been defined by a tension between two poles of powers, where the government have a more open view towards the Istanbul Convention and same-sex partnership, while the president has taken a more conservative position (Juchnevičiūtė et al., 2023, p. 266). This could be seen as a change regarding whether the government is aligned with an anti-gender or feminist advocacy coalition.

Before analysing what is happening presently in Lithuania regarding the Convention, one must return to 2018 when the then-current president Dalia Grybauskaitė, put forward a proposal to the Lithuanian Parliament for a ratification of the Istanbul Convention (Meurens et al., 2020, p. 117). Grybauskaitė, Lithuania's first female president and a supporter of women's rights and gender equality (President Dalia Grybauskaitė, 2023; ECA state, n.d.), submitted the Convention to the Parliament before it had been through deliberation by the Cabinet (The Baltic Times, 2018).

The debate about the Istanbul Convention could not reach a consensus in the national parliament. The Social Democrats and Liberals voted for the ratification in 2018. But it was voted down by a bigger group containing the Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union (LVŽS), LLRA-KŠS, TT and DP. The failure to secure enough members of parliament to vote for the Convention indicates the divisive nature of the ratification question (Meurens et al., 2020, p. 118).

LVŽS has been one of the actors in the anti-gender advocacy coalition in Lithuania. LVŽS has refused to ratify the Convention, arguing that it is being assessed as controversial and that Lithuania instead should focus on improving the national legislation (Jegelevičius, 2018). Additionally, according to the head of the LVŽS, the concept of gender does not recognize the human sex as a human nature, which could, in his view, endanger the family policy of a marriage between a man and a woman (Jegelevičius, 2018). This is an example of politicians' fear of the so-called 'gender ideology' (Platūkytė, 2023).

Furthermore, the anti-gender coalition was composed of partisan actors from the Catholic Church in Lithuania. Actors that have strongly resisted the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and been “publicly supporting anti-genderism ideas” (Juchnevičiūtė et al., 2023, p. 265). The Catholic Church holds a significant role in Lithuanian society, even though Lithuania is a secular state.

The church has advanced its politicisation regarding different legislative initiatives since 2000 when religious values have been threatened by the legislative cases. The Catholic Church makes statements in media and presents its view on different social and political issues (Juchnevičiūtė et al., 2023, p. 266-267). The church also interacts with politicians, political parties, and state institutions to exercise both indirect and direct influence over the political sphere. The direct political engagement is mostly from the Lithuanian Bishops’ Conference, an official meeting of religious actors in the Catholic Church and sometimes issuing official statements on different political questions (Juchnevičiūtė et al., 2023, p. 268). The Lithuanian Bishops’ Conference has had a strong voice against the Istanbul Convention (LRT, 2018). One of the right-winged political parties that have maintained relations with the Church is the LLRA-KŠS, which has supported anti-LGBTQ+ efforts and defended national traditions and Christian Values (Juchnevičiūtė et al., 2023, p. 269).

The religion’s role has been seen in other examples as well. For instance, when six leaders of Lithuania’s Christian religious communities in 2021 signed a statement that displayed strong opposition towards the ratification. They argue that national law has enough provisions, and they are concerned about how the Convention would introduce non-stereotypical gender roles (LRT, 2021a). Another religious actor, a well-known Lithuanian Catholic Priest, Allgirdas Toliatas, has called on his followers to sign petitions against the Convention (Šuliokas, 2021).

Besides religious actors being strong opponents, several civil society organisations, for example, the Free Society Institute and the National Association of Parents and Families, have been strong opponents. In their view, the Convention would introduce a ‘gender ideology’ into Lithuanian society (Švaraitė, 2017). The Free Society Institute initiated an open petition against the ratification on 8th March 2020, citing the misinterpretation of gender concepts as a primary reason for contesting the Convention (Meurens et al., 2020, p. 118).

The resistance to the term gender in the Convention is largely influenced by both its interpretation and, to some extent, how the word has been translated. Dalia Leinartė, a professor at Vytautas Magnus University, points out the problem of language translations. In some languages, such as English, dictionaries have different terms for biological sex and gender stereotypes. However, in Lithuanian, there is only one term lytis (sex) – and the term “social gender” is used in the Lithuanian translation of the convention, which in her view is inaccurate. She states that Lithuanian linguists have not done enough to “introduce a new term that would have defined stereotypes rather than biological sex without any complications” (Platūkytė, 2023). Leinartė indicates that the Convention has in Lithuania been subject to various myths which mostly come from Russian propaganda. According to her a way of fighting against Western values.

The term gender has been subject to discussion in other countries as well. In Poland, the government has wished to reserve itself to interpret the term gender in the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. This is even though they have previously ratified the Istanbul Convention (Council of the European Union, 2023c). Bulgaria has also expressed its resentment towards the translations in the Convention. In 2018 the Constitutional Court in Bulgaria adopted a decision stating that the Istanbul Convention promised concepts that intend to differentiate between “sex” as a biological (women and men) category and “gender” as a social construct (Council of European Union, 2023d).

The Council of Europe has, because of these inaccurate interpretations, made it clear that the Convention does not seek to set new standards about gender identity and sexual orientation. The Convention aims to eradicate violence against women and protect women’s rights, not to abolish differences between men and women or regulate family life (Council of Europe, 2023b).

In 2021, the office of President Nausėda commissioned a poll, asking respondents “Do you agree that Lithuania has to ratify the Istanbul Convention?”. Almost half (48.8 %) said that they disagree or rather disagree (Linkeviciute, 2021, p. 32-33). At the same time, 22.1 % said that they fully or rather agreed and 29.2 % had no opinion on the issue (LRT, 2021b). This poll was a subject of criticism since the formulation of the question was badly made. First, it does not indicate what the Istanbul Convention stands for, hence it could just be an indicator of if the respondents have heard about the document. Second, the question does not address the issues that the Convention deals with (LRT, 2021b).

However, the public opinion view regarding domestic violence could be shown in the Special Eurobarometer 449 from 2016 (European Union, 2016b). Table two, placed at the end of the analysis of Estonia, displays some of the answers to that poll. Here the opponents were asked questions about domestic violence. 78 % in Lithuania thought that domestic violence against women was unacceptable and should be punished by law in 2016. Hence, a majority believes that regulations, similar to those in the Convention should be implemented. There was thus a clash both between the two opinion polls and between the public opinion and the politicians’ actions regarding this issue.

Conversely, almost a majority think that violence against women is often provoked by the victim (45 %) and that women often make up or exaggerate claims of abuse or rape (42 %). This was higher compared to the Estonian answers. This could indicate that the attitudes of the public do not have the same progressive view as the Istanbul Convention aspires to form.

Despite the strong opposition that has been discussed above, some actors are working for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in Lithuania. NGOs, such as the Vilnius Women’s House, have campaigned outside the Parliament to call for ratification (Larišėva, 2019). The term gender in the Convention does not lead to that a country must change its family policy and nowhere in the Convention could there be found a word about the legislation of same-sex marriage (Larišėva, 2019).

The Vilnius Women’s House is a feminist organisation working for women’s human rights (Vilniaous Moteru Namai, n.d.). The Vilnius Women’s House had a

project from March to August 2023 which aimed at promoting values, aims and provisions of the Istanbul Convention displaying myths and misinformation about it among the Lithuanian general public. The nationwide campaign aiming to make Lithuania ratify the Convention reached over 1,000,000 people through social media. This campaign led to a mobilization of other NGOs, where 150 NGOs have joined together to petition members of the Parliament to initiate an appeal to the Constitutional Court to see the compliance of the convention and the constitution (Council of Europe, 2023c). This is a strong indicator of the formation of a feminist advocacy coalition in Lithuania.

In 2023, there has also been a shift in the Lithuanian Parliament. The parliament has initiated a process of submitting the Convention for examination by the Constitutional Court of Lithuania. This happened as a result of a proposal of the speaker of the parliament, the Liberal Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen (The Baltic Times, 2023a; Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas, n.d., b). The proposal passed in the Parliament and has been signed by leaders from the LRLS, LSDP, TS-LKD and the LP (The Baltic Times, 2023a). Hence, the actors that have previously shown support for the Convention.

After the passed proposal, the Lithuanian Constitutional Court¹¹ received the petition by Parliament¹² on the 4th of October 2023. The Constitutional Court is examining the compatibility of the Convention's terms with the Lithuanian Constitution. The primary term under examination will be 'social gender', the same term that was under debate during 2018 when the Convention was previously debated in the parliament (Mensah, 2023; LRT, 2023). Čmilytė-Nielsen describes the Constitutional Court as an objective actor that could answer some of the arguments or fears of opponents (The Baltic Times, 2023a). If the Constitution thinks the terms of the Convention are in line with the Convention, Lithuania is one step closer to ratifying the Convention. The final examination has on the 29 of December 2023, not been published (Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania, 2023).

In Lithuania, an anti-gender coalition has been present and determined in the sphere concerning the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. Strong actors have worked against ratification. Nevertheless, a change is likely starting to happen in Lithuania where the feminist advocacy coalition is increasing in support. But there is still a division between the supporters and opponents.

¹¹ I have been in contact with the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania with a request for Documents related to this Petition. Unfortunately, I was unable to receive any since the case is still pending and because the Constitutional Court does not have the authority to provide consultation to individuals.

¹² I have been in contact with the National Parliament with a request for documents related to the submission from the national parliament. However, they could not provide this.

7 Discussion

Taken together the observed results from the analysis could establish different gendered advocacy coalitions in the two countries studied in this analysis. From the material studied, there seem to be more actors that have been composed into a feminist advocacy coalition in Estonia. In Lithuania, on the other hand, it seems that there have previously been more actors leaning towards an anti-gender advocacy coalition, but this has started to change.

As reflected upon in the 5.3 Critical Reflections section, the somewhat limited scope of material that has been available to the research could have hindered this research's depth and potential outcome. However, it is still possible to draw certain conclusions from the analysis. Initial observations suggest that there may be a link between the formation of a strong feminist advocacy coalition and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in Estonia. The feminist advocacy coalition could be seen from the governments' political affiliation, public opinion, and initiatives within Estonia that actively supported women's rights before the ratification.

The findings from the analysis of Lithuania suggest that the presence of a strong anti-gender advocacy coalition could have affected the non-ratification of the Istanbul Convention. The process of ratifying has been under the influence of opponents such as religious actors, conservative and anti-gender parties and to some extent public opinion. However, Lithuania has recently acted towards the ratification of the Convention. The voice of actors associated with a feminist advocacy coalition has started to rise. The decision from the Constitutional Court has not yet been published when this essay is being finalised so no conclusions can be drawn. However, the observations reported in the analysis appear to support the assumption that the formation of a strong feminist advocacy coalition is needed in a country for it to ratify the Istanbul Convention. This since there needs to be actors that push against opponents and take actions towards a ratification, such as Čmilytė-Nielsen the speaker of the Lithuanian parliament, even though the actions are being met with opponents.

This study has shown indications that gendered advocacy coalitions could explain why some European Union member states have not ratified the Convention by comparing Estonia and Lithuania. However, it is recommended to further study the cases of Estonia and Lithuania. Suggesting that a broader material in the native languages of the countries being studied would likely yield more comprehensive results. For example, using material from when the Convention would have been debated in national parliaments or from a greater variety of media than provided here. News articles and social media are likely to have played a role in the formation of gendered advocacy coalitions. Previous studies have discussed the role of media regarding the ratification.

Gendered advocacy coalitions could be a likely explanation for why some European Union member states have not ratified the Convention, however, there could be other explanations that better explain the reasons. For instance, the process of Europeanisation, as discussed by Vizgunova and Graudina (2020), could play a more important role in the process of whether a country ratifies the Convention or not. Vizgunova and Graudina concluded that the social learning model within the process of Europeanisation had consequences on the previous non-ratification in Latvia because of the strong national identity that influenced the ratification process. In Lithuania, the Catholic Church has been a big influence on the national identity and an influencing actor in non-ratification, as seen from the analysis. Controversy, Estonia ratified the Convention the same year they held the presidency of the Council of the European. Hence, it would be interesting to study the process of Europeanisation related to the ratification of the Convention in both Estonia and Lithuania. Furthermore, it is also pertinent to replicate the study in Latvia, considering that the country ratified the Convention after the publication of Vizgunova and Graudina's article.

The Baltics is a region where a lot is happening right now concerning the Istanbul Convention since Latvia recently ratified and Lithuania's Constitutional Court is examining the compatibility of the Convention to the constitution. As mentioned in the previous paragraph it would be interesting to replicate previous studies in Latvia (Vienberg, 2018; Isaacs and Rudzite, 2021). Additionally, study what happens in Lithuania after the Constitutional Court publishes its examination and the aftermath.

Moreover, further research could study the research question from another theory, for instance, queer theory, which focuses on exploring and critiquing societal norms related to gender, sexuality, and identity. Regarding these concepts, queer theory wants to challenge the traditional understandings and instead seeks to deconstruct established norms and binaries that govern societal expectations. The fear of 'gender ideology' has been a factor in the resistance to the ratification of the Convention. Previous studies have seen a battle between dichotomies of sacred versus secular or liberal versus illiberal. Scholars have also seen a pushback in women's rights related to illiberalism and rising authoritarian populism which endorse anti-feminist and anti-gender rhetoric, possibly related to democratic backsliding. My analysis showed that much of the resistance to the Convention is related to traditional, national, and Christian values. Taking this together opens up further research about the gender and identity related to illiberalism, anti-gender rhetoric and the politicisation of the church. Additionally, study how much an EU membership affects gender equality.

8 Conclusion

This essay has, by using the most similar system design, attempted to provide an answer to the research question: Why have some European Union member states not ratified the Istanbul Convention? By comparing Estonia and Lithuania, the former is a ratifier and the latter a non-ratifier. From the hypothesis, a possible answer to the research question could be concluded. The analysis has shown indications that some European Union member states have not ratified the Istanbul Convention as a result of the presence of a strong anti-gender advocacy coalition. Moreover, the findings from the analysis suggest that the presence of a strong feminist advocacy coalition is needed for a country to ratify the Convention.

The research question is broad, and I have introduced one specific angle when attempting to answer it. Gendered advocacy coalitions could be a potential explanation; however, it is possible that the research question could have benefited from being studied by using other theories. Therefore, it is recommended to further research the question, for example by applying queer theory or the social learning model within the process of Europeanisation.

One in three women in the EU has encountered physical and/or sexual violence and 22% of women within the EU have experienced violence perpetrated by an intimate partner. Violence against women is a crucial issue embedded in gender inequality that has been targeted in the Istanbul Convention. It is important to keep working towards a ratification of the Convention for all the European Union member states to hopefully reach an end to violence against women.

9 References

- Amiel, S. (2021). 'Istanbul Convention: Poland moves a step closer to quitting domestic violence treaty', *Euronews*. 1 April. Available at: <https://www.euronews.com/2021/04/01/istanbul-convention-poland-moves-a-step-closer-to-quitting-domestic-violence-treaty> (Accessed: 2023-12-23).
- Beach, D., and Pedersen, R. B. (2013). *Process-Tracing Methods: Foundations and Guidelines*. University of Michigan Press.
- Beckwith, K. (2005). 'A Common Language of Gender?' *Politics & Gender*, 1(1), pp. 128–137.
- Bennett, A. and Elman, C. (2008). 'Qualitative Research: Recent Developments in Case Study Methods'. *Annual Review of Political Science*. 9 (1), pp. 445-476.
- Britannica (n.d.). *Lithuania – Government and society*. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Lithuania/Labour-and-taxation#ref37331> (Accessed: 2023-12-22).
- Burke, C., and Molitorisová, A. (2019). 'Reservations/Declarations under the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (cedaw) in Light of Sex/Gender Constitutional Debates', *International Human Rights Law Review*. 8(2), pp. 188-214.
- Cairney, P. (2020). *Understanding public policy: theories and issues*. 2nd edition. London: Red Globe Press.
- Constitutional Court of the Republic of Lithuania (2023). *List of petitions*. Available at: <https://lrkt.lt/en/petitions/list-of-petitions/371> (Accessed: 2023-12-27).
- Council of Europe (n.d., a). *Women's Rights and the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/women-s-rights-and-covid-19>. (Accessed: 2023-11-29).
- Council of Europe (n.d., b). *Key fact about the Istanbul Convention*. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/key-facts> (Accessed: 2023-12-14).
- Council of Europe (n.d., c). *Member States – Estonia*. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/estonia> (Accessed: 2023-12-22).
- Council of Europe (n.d., d). *Member States – Lithuania*. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/lithuania> (Accessed: 2023-12-22).
- Council of Europe (2011). *Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Treaty No. 210*. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/168008482e> (Accessed: 2023-12-22).

- Council of Europe (2023a). *Chart of signature and ratification of Treaty 210, Full list*. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=signatures-by-treaty&treatynum=210> (Accessed: 2023-10-25).
- Council of Europe (2023b). *The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention): Questions and answers*. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/istanbul-convention-questions-and-answers/16808f0b80> (Accessed:2023-11-29).
- Council of Europe (2023c). *Civil society raises awareness on the Istanbul Convention in Lithuania*. 20 October. Available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/-/civil-society-raises-awareness-on-the-istanbul-convention-in-lithuania> (Accessed: 2023-12-28).
- Council of the European Union (2020). *Reply to Parliament question – Refusal of the Hungarian Parliament to Ratify the Istanbul Convention*. Brussel: 9 October 202. Available at: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-11541-2020-INIT/en/pdf> (Accessed: 2023-11-30).
- Council of the European Union (2023a). *Accession of the EU to the Istanbul Convention – Information from the Presidency*. Brussel: 10 October 2023. Available at: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13773-2023-INIT/en/pdf>. (Accessed: 2023-11-29).
- Council of the European Union (2023b). *Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence – General approach*. Brussel: 17 May 2023. Available at: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9305-2023-INIT/en/pdf> (Accessed: 2023-12-21).
- Council of the European Union (2023c). *Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence – General approach – Statement – entered by Poland*. Brussel: 7 June 2023. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CONSIL:ST_9305_2023_ADD_2 (Accessed: 2023-11-30).
- Council of the European Union (2023d). *Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence – General approach – Statement – entered by Bulgaria*. Brussel: 16 June 2023. Available at: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CONSIL:ST_9305_2023_ADD_3 (Accessed: 2023-11-30).
- Court of Justice of the European Union (2021). *Press Release No 176/21 Opinion 1/19 Istanbul Convention*. Luxembourg 6 October 2021. Available at: <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2021-10/cp210176en.pdf> (Accessed: 2023-11-29).
- CSIS (2020). *Lithuania Parliamentary Elections*. Available at: <https://www.csis.org/programs/europe-russia-and-eurasia-program/projects/european-election-watch/2020-elections/lithuania> (Accessed: 2023-12-27).
- Döring, H., Huber, C., and Manow, P. (2022). *Parliaments and governments database (ParlGov): Information on parties, elections and cabinets in*

- established democracies. Development version.* Available at: https://lukas-warode.shinyapps.io/ParlGov_Dashboard/ (Accessed: 2023-12-22).
- ECA State, (n.d.). *Dr. Dalia Grybauskaitė, Former President of Lithuania – Faces of Exchange.* Available at: <https://eca.state.gov/dalia-grybauskaitė-printer-friendly-version.html> (Accessed: 2023-12-27).
- End FGM (2017). *End FGM writes its Recommendations to the Estonian Presidency of the Council of EU.* Available at: <https://www.endfgm.eu/news-en-events/press-releases/end-fgm-eu-writes-its-recommendations-to-the-estonian-presidency-of-the-council-of-the-eu/> (Accessed: 2023-12-28).
- Esaiasson, P., Giljam, M., Oscarsson, H., Towns, A. and Wängnerud, L. (2017). *Metodpraktikan: Konsten att studera samhälle, individ och marknad.* 5th edition. Stockholm: Norstedt Juridik.
- Euractiv (2015). ‘Estonia swears in youngest EU Prime Minister’, 8 January. Available at: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/elections/news/estonia-swears-in-youngest-eu-prime-minister/> (Accessed: 2023-12-25).
- Europe Elects (2020a). *LLRA–KŠS | Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania–KŠS | Lithuania, Parliament Election October 2020* [video online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WiU3G4gxsP4> (Accessed: 2023-12-29)
- Europe Elects (2020b). *Laisvė ir Teisingumas | Freedom and Justice | Lithuania, Parliament Election 2020* [video online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yt5vlMKf4sw> (Accessed: 2023-12-27).
- European Commission (2020). *COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS. A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.* Brussel: 3 March 2020. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152#footnote2>. (Accessed: 2023-11-29).
- European Parliament (n.d.). *MEPs, Estonia.* Available at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/search/advanced?countryCode=EE> (Accessed: 2023-12-25).
- European Parliament (2023). *Verbatim report of proceedings – Procedure: 2016/0062a(NLE).* 9 May 2023, Strasbourg. Available at: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/PV-9-2023-05-09-ITM-016_EN.html (Accessed: 2023-11-29).
- European Union (n.d., a). *Country Profiles – Estonia.* Available at: https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/country-profiles/estonia_en (Accessed: 2023-12-22).
- European Union (n.d., b). *Country Profiles – Lithuania.* Available at: https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/country-profiles/lithuania_en (Accessed: 2023-12-22).
- European Union (2016a). *Eurobarometer – Gender-based violence – Factsheets Estonia.* Available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2115> (Accessed: 2023-11-29).

- European Union (2016b). *Eurobarometer – Gender-based violence – Factsheets Lithuania*. Available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2115> (Accessed: 2023-11-29).
- Graff, A. and Korolczuk, E. (2022) *Anti-gender politics in the populist moment*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Gwiazda, A. and Minkova, L. (2023). ‘Gendered advocacy coalitions and the Istanbul Convention: a comparative analysis of Bulgaria and Poland’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, pp. 1-23.
- Halperin, S. and Heath, O. (2020). *Political Research: Methods and Practical Skills*. 3rd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hawkesworth, M. (2013). ‘Sex, Gender and Sexuality: From Naturalised Presumption to Analytical Categories’, in Waylen, G., Celis, K., Kantola, J., and Weldon, S. L. (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 31–56.
- International IDEA. (2023) *Estonia*. Available at: <https://www.idea.int/democracytracker/country/estonia> (Accessed: 2023-12-22).
- Isaacs, R. and Rudzite, L. (2021). ‘Conceptualising Culture Wars in the Post-Communist Space: Latvia, the Istanbul Convention and the Struggle for Power’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 73(8), pp. 1418–1440.
- Jacquot, S. (2015). *Transformations in EU Gender Equality, From Emergence to Dismantling*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jegelevičius, L. (2018). ‘Lithuania procrastinates ratification of Istanbul Convention’ *Baltic News Network*, 31 May. Available at: <https://bnn-news.com/lithuania-procrastinates-ratification-of-istanbul-convention-185695> (Accessed: 2023-12-27).
- Jenkins-Smith, H. C., Nohrstedt, D., Weible, C. M., and Ingold, K. (2018). ‘The Advocacy Coalition Framework: An Overview of the Research Program’, in Weible, C. M. and Sabatier, P. A. (eds.) *Theories of the Policy Process: Volume 1*, 4th edition. London: Routledge. pp.135–171.
- Juchnevičiūtė, E., Ališauskienė, M. and Pocė, G. (2023). ‘The Christian Right in Contemporary Lithuania: Key Actors and Their Agendas’, in Mascolo, G. L. (eds.) *The Christian Right in Europe: Movements, Networks, and Denominations*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, pp. 265–278.
- Juhász, B. (2018) *Backlash in Gender Equality and Women’s and Girl’s Rights, FEMM Committee, European Parliament, 2018*. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/604955/IPOL_STU\(2018\)604955_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/604955/IPOL_STU(2018)604955_EN.pdf) (Accessed: 2023-11-29).
- Jurviste, U. and Shreeves, R. (2019). *At a glance the Istanbul Convention: A tool to tackle violence against women and girls*. European Parliamentary Research Service, EPRS. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2019/644183/EPRS_ATA\(2019\)644183_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2019/644183/EPRS_ATA(2019)644183_EN.pdf) (Accessed: 2023-11-29).
- Krizsán, A. and Roggeband, C. (2021) *Politicizing Gender and Democracy in the Context of the Istanbul Convention*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Kuhar, R. and Paternotte, D. (eds.) (2017) *Anti-gender campaigns in Europe: Mobilizing against equality*. London: Rowman & Littlefield International.
- Lantis, J. (2009). *The life and death of international treaties: double-edged diplomacy and the politics of ratification in comparative perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lariščeva, M. (2019). ‘Stambulo konvencijos likimas Lietuvoje: kodėl ji vis dar nėra ratifikuota?’, *Alfa*, 25 October. Available at: <https://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/50404450/stambulo-konvencijos-likimas-lietuvoje-kodel-ji-vis-dar-nera-ratifikuota/> (Accessed: 2023-12-28).
- Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas (n.d., a). *Political Groups in the Seimas*. Available at: https://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=35342&p_k=2 (Accessed: 2023-12-27).
- Lietuvos Respublikos Seimas (n.d., b). *Speaker of the Seimas*. Available at: https://www.lrs.lt/sip/portal.show?p_r=35302&p_k=2 (Accessed: 2023-12-30).
- Linkeviciute, J. (2021). ‘The Perception of the Istanbul Convention in the Lithuanian Mainstream Media: Is “Gender Ideology” on the Rise?’, *Political Sciences / Politické Vedy*, 24(4), pp. 16–37.
- LRT (2018). ‘Vyskupai: Stambulo konvencijos ratifikavimas nepadėtų sumažinti smurto prieš moteris’. 13 June. Available at: <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/215959/vyskupai-stambulo-konvencijos-ratifikavimas-nepadetu-sumazinti-smurto-pries-moteris> (Accessed: 2023-12-28).
- LRT (2021a). ‘Lithuania’s religious leaders voice opposition to Istanbul Convention and same-sex partnership’ 9 March. Available at: <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1361423/lithuania-s-religious-leaders-voice-opposition-to-istanbul-convention-and-same-sex-partnership> (Accessed: 2023-11-30).
- LRT (2021b). ‘President’s poll on Istanbul Convention draws criticism – it doesn’t add clarity’ 29 April. Available at: <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1398678/president-s-poll-on-istanbul-convention-draws-criticism-it-doesn-t-add-clarity> (Accessed: 2023-11-29).
- LRT (2023). ‘Lithuania’s Constitutional Court to be asked to examine Istanbul Convent’ 28 June Available at: <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/2023539/lithuania-s-constitutional-court-to-be-asked-to-examine-istanbul-convention> (Accessed: 2023-11-30).
- Mensah, E. (2023). ‘Lithuanian Constitutional Court to Examine Istanbul Convention Compatibility’ *BNN Breaking*, 13 October. Available at: <https://bnnbreaking.com/politics/lithuanian-constitutional-court-to-examine-istanbul-convention-compatibility/> (Accessed: 2023-12-27)
- Meurens, N., D’Souza, H., Mohamed, S., Leye, E., Chowdhury, N., Charitakis, S., and Regan K. (2020). *Tackling violence against women and domestic violence in Europe. The added value of the Istanbul Convention and remaining challenges*. FEMM Committee, European Parliament, 2020. Available at: [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/IPOL_STU\(2020\)658_648](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/IPOL_STU(2020)658_648) (Accessed: 2023-10-20).

- Nacyte, L. (2018) ‘Debating the Istanbul Convention in Lithuania: The Term ‘Gender’ is not Alien’, *IntLawGrrls*, 13 July. Available at: <https://ilg2.org/2018/07/13/debating-the-istanbul-convention-in-lithuania-the-term-gender-is-not-alien/> (Accessed: 2023-12-28).
- Nalivaikė, A. (2021). ‘Religion and Gender Politics in Lithuania: The Catholic Church’s Efforts to Hinder the Ratification of the Istanbul Convention’, *Baltic Worlds*, 14(3), pp. 27–36.
- Obajdin, D. and Golušin, S. (2021). ‘Narratives of Gender, War Memory, and EU-Scepticism in the Movement Against the Ratification of the Istanbul Convention in Croatia’, in Milošević, A. and Trošt, T. (eds) *Europeanisation and Memory Politics in the Western Balkans. Memory Politics and Transitional Justice*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 205–230.
- Platūkytė, D. (2023). ‘EP ratifies Istanbul Convention – what does it mean for Lithuania?’, *LRT*, 17 May. Available at: <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1990138/ep-ratifies-istanbul-convention-what-does-it-mean-for-lithuania> (Accessed: 2023-11-30).
- President Dalia Grybauskaitė (2023). *President Dalia Grybauskaitė: About*. Available at: <https://grybauskaite.lrp.lt/en/institution/president-dalia-grybauskaite/20797> (Accessed: 2023-12-27).
- Riigikogu (2023a). *Estonian Reform Party Parliamentary Group*. Available at: <https://www.riigikogu.ee/en/parliament-of-estonia/parliamentary-groups/estonian-reform-party-parliamentary-group/> (Accessed: 2023-12-25).
- Riigikogu (2023b). *Social Democratic Party Parliamentary Group*. Available at: <https://www.riigikogu.ee/en/parliament-of-estonia/parliamentary-groups/social-democratic-party-parliamentary-group/> (Accessed: 2023-12-25).
- Riigikogu (2023c). *Estonian Centre Party Parliamentary Group*. Available at: <https://www.riigikogu.ee/en/parliament-of-estonia/parliamentary-groups/estonian-centre-party-parliamentary-group/> (Accessed: 2023-12-25).
- Riigikogu (2023d). *Isamaa Parliamentary Group*. Available at: <https://www.riigikogu.ee/en/parliament-of-estonia/parliamentary-groups/isamaa-parliamentary-group/> (Accessed: 2023-12-25).
- Riigikogu Press Service, (2017). *The Legal Affairs Committee sent the bill against domestic violence to the first reading*. [Press release] 2017-06-05. Available at: <https://www.riigikogu.ee/en/press-releases/legal-affairs-committee-sent-bill-domestic-violence-first-reading/> (Accessed: 2023-12-28).
- Sabatier, P. A. (1988). ‘An Advocacy Coalition Framework of Policy Change and the Role of Policy-Oriented Learning Therein’. *Policy Sciences* 21: 129–168.
- Saeima Press Service (2023). *Saeima ratifies Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence*. [Press release] 2023-11-30. Available at: <https://www.saeima.lv/en/news/saeima-news/32945-saeima-ratifies-convention-on-preventing-and-combating-violence-against-women-and-domestic-violence> (Accessed: 2023-12-14).
- Santana, A., Zagórski, P. and Rama, J. (2020). ‘At odds with Europe: explaining populist radical right voting in Central and Eastern Europe’, *East European Politics*, 36(2), pp. 288-309.

- Sisson Runyan, A., Verma Williams, R., Mhajne, A., & Whetstone, C. (2021). 'Feminisms in Comparative Perspective', in Naples, N. A. (eds) *Companion to Feminist Studies*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd. pp. 175-192.
- Skorulska, O. (2023). 'Combating and preventing domestic violence in Poland: Why do we need the Istanbul Convention?', *Temida*, 26(1), pp. 95–115.
- Stoyanova, V, Niemi, J & Peroni, L (eds) (2020) *International Law and Violence against Women: Europe and the Istanbul Convention*. Routledge.
- Šuliokas, J. (2021). 'Inquisition' of the church? Celebrity priest in Lithuania ignites controversy over Istanbul Convention', *LRT*, 3 March. Available at: <https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1355935/inquisition-of-the-church-celebrity-priest-in-lithuania-ignites-controversy-over-istanbul-convention> (Accessed: 2023-11-30).
- Švaraitė, I. (2017). 'Stambulo konvencija: baimės ir kaip yra iš tiesų', *Mano Teises*, 23 June. Available at: <https://manoteises.lt/straipsnis/stambulo-konvencija-baimes-ir-kaip-yra-tiesu/> (Accessed: 2023-12-28).
- Szocik, K. and Szyja, A. (2015). 'Poland: A Dark Side of Church Cultural Policy'. *Studia Humana*, 4(4), pp. 13–22.
- Teorell, J. and Svensson, T. (2007). *Att fråga och att svara*. Malmö: Liber AB.
- The Baltic Times (2018). 'Lithuanian PM keeps mum on his Istanbul Convention vote'. 8 June. Available at: https://www.baltictimes.com/lithuanian_pm_keeps_mum_on_his_istanbul_convention_vote/ (Accessed: 2023-12-27).
- The Baltic Times (2023a). 'Lithuanian PMs start debate on constitutional Court petition over Istanbul Convention'. 4 July. Available at: https://www.baltictimes.com/lithuanian_mps_start_debate_on_constitutional_court_petition_over_istanbul_convention/ (Accessed: 2023-12-27).
- The Baltic Times (2023b). 'Saeima passes bill on ratification of Istanbul Convention'. 30 November. Available at: https://www.baltictimes.com/saeima_passes_bill_on_ratification_of_istanbul_convention/ (Accessed: 2023-12-28).
- The Baltic Times (2023c). 'Over 100 People protest against the Istanbul Convention at the Saeima building'. 9 November. Available at: https://www.baltictimes.com/over_100_people_protest_against_the_istanbul_convention_at_the_saeima_building/ (Accessed: 2023-12-28).
- Toots, A. (2019) *2019 Parliamentary election in Estonia*. Available at: <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/baltikum/15260.pdf> (Accessed: 2023-12-25).
- TS-LKD (n.d.). *Partija*. Available at: <https://tsajunga.lt/partija/> (Accessed: 2023-12-29).
- UN Women, (n.d.). *Estonia commits to reduce the gender pay gap and protect against discrimination under the first national gender equality action plan (updated)*. Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/get-involved/step-it-up/commitments/estonia> (Accessed: 2023-12-27).
- Veinberg, S. (2018). 'Unfamiliar concepts as an obstacle for critical thinking in public discussions regarding women's rights issues in Latvia. Reflective thinking in the "fake news" era', *ESSACHESS*, 11(2), pp. 31–49.

- Vilniaous Moteru Namai (n.d.). *About us*. Available at: <https://www.vmotnam.lt/about-us/> (Accessed: 2023-12-28).
- Vizgunova, E. and Graudina, E. (2020) ‘The Trouble with “Gender” in Latvia: Europeanisation through the Prism of the Istanbul Convention’, *Baltic Journal of Law and Politics*, 13(1), pp. 108–139.
- de Vries, E., Schoonvelde, M. and Schumacher, G., (2018) ‘No Longer Lost in Translation: Evidence that Google Translate Works for Comparative Bad-of-Words Text applications’, *Political Analysis*. 26. pp. 1-14.
- Välisministeerium, (2016). *Closing remarks by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia at the conference “Are we there yet? Assessing progress, inspiring action - the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017*. Available at: <https://www.vm.ee/en/news/closing-remarks-minister-foreign-affairs-estonia-stock-taking-conference-are-we-there-yet> (Accessed: 2023-12-28).
- Whyte, A. (2019). ‘Traditional family rights group demands the return of Tarand compensation money’, *EER News*, 1 July. Available at: <https://news.err.ee/957408/traditional-family-rights-group-demands-return-of-tarand-compensation-money> (Accessed: 2023-12-27).