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**Unraveling the Anti-Choice Supergroup  
Agenda Europe in Spain.  
A case study of CitizenGo and HazteOir**



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*IERES Occasional Papers no. 4, October 2019*  
*Transnational History of the Far Right Series*

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# **Unraveling the Anti-Choice Supergroup Agenda Europe in Spain**

**A Case Study of CitizenGo and HazteOir**

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*Cover Photo: Esteban Martinena Guerrer. Caceres, Extremadura, Spain - May 18, 2019: Attendants with flags of Spain to the meeting of Vox, the far-right Spanish party, with the presence of its leader Santiago Abascal in the Plaza de San. Royalty-free stock photo ID: 1401862631.*

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# TransHistFarRight

Transnational History of the Far Right Series  
*A Collective Research Project led by Marlene Laruelle*

At a time when global political dynamics seem to be moving in favor of illiberal regimes around the world, this research project seeks to fill in some of the blank pages in the contemporary history of the far right, with a particular focus on the transnational dimensions of far-right movements in the broader Europe/Eurasia region.



While political analysts mostly focused on the refugee crisis as a major accelerator of the current far-right resurgence in Europe, much less attention has been paid to the (re)formation of an ultraconservative axis that, in 2013, appeared under the name “Agenda Europe.”

In his detailed report on the Agenda Europe network, Neil Datta, Secretary of the European Parliamentary Forum on Population & Development, states that, in 2013, 20 U.S. and European initiatives started “strategizing ‘achievable goals’ to roll back human rights for sexual and reproductive health in Europe.”<sup>1</sup> According to Datta, this network has by now grown to approximately “100 anti-human rights, anti-women’s rights and anti-LGBTIQ organizations from over 30 European countries.”<sup>2</sup>

A leaked strategy paper from the network called “Restoring the Natural Order: An Agenda for Europe”<sup>3</sup> lays down the groundwork for overturning reproductive rights, such as abortion, assisted reproduction or contraception technologies, legal and equal status for LGBTIQ persons, including marriage for all, or even the right to divorce.

“Restoring the Natural Order” reads like a pastiche of various reactionary influences: part theological tract, part anti-communist pamphlet, part far-right conspiracy theory, and part totalitarian roadmap. All of it, however, occurs under the premise of the universality and inalterability of the (godly) “natural law” versus alterable and fallible human rights,<sup>4</sup> and the “long term strategic objective ... to

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<sup>1</sup> Neil Datta, “Restoring the Natural Order”: *The religious extremists’ vision to mobilize European societies against human rights on sexuality and reproduction* (Brussels: European Parliamentary Forum on Population & Development, 2018), 2, <https://www.epfweb.org/node/690>.

<sup>2</sup> Datta, *Restoring the Natural Order*, 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Restoring the Natural Order: An Agenda for Europe* (no publisher, 2014). Available on Agenda Europe (Blog), <https://agendaeuropa.wordpress.com/restoring-the-natural-order/>.

<sup>4</sup> *Restoring the Natural Order*, 8.

ensure that the secular legal order is under all aspects conform to the unalterable precepts of Natural Law.”<sup>5</sup>

Although a whole chapter is dedicated to the issue of the implementation of natural law, the authors do not define the term directly, but only state at other points in the text that it would imply “the fact that marriage is between a man and a woman, and that it may not be divorced”<sup>6</sup> and is also concerned with “repudiating practices like abortion, euthanasia, or homosexuality.”<sup>7</sup>

The document particularly takes issue with Marxism as the first of several “political ideologies undermining natural law,” followed by Darwinism, feminism, “homosexuality,”<sup>8</sup> gender theory, relativism, and “anti-discrimination ideology,”<sup>9</sup> whereby both feminism and homosexuality constitute just a form of Marxism.<sup>10</sup>

The authors of “Restoring the Natural Order” are also strategizing to accommodate far-right narratives in order to achieve their goals—for example, using the conspiracy theory of an impending “demographic winter”<sup>11</sup> as an argument against abortions: the nightmare of white supremacists in which the (white) West, with its decreasing birth rates, is eventually “outbirthed” by more fertile nations or, alternatively, overrun by people of color and infidels.<sup>12</sup>

As historically was the case for many reactionary Christian organizations, right-wing to far-right parties are a natural ally for an anti-choice supergroup, such as Agenda Europe, since they ultimately share the same objectives, even though their arguments may differ, that is to say, to increase the birth rate of white, Christian babies, as well as to create “Judeo-Christian” bastions, which must be defended against cultural/religious/racial dilution that presumably come packaged with immigration.

As documented by Datta, and discussed below, a large part of Agenda Europe’s member organizations and their key personnel are connected to the legacy of older, mostly ultra-Catholic structures.<sup>13</sup> Agenda Europe’s initiators, Gudrun Kugler and Terrence McKeegan, have served in representational positions at the Holy See as well as in organizations within Agenda Europe’s orbit, such as the

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<sup>5</sup> *Restoring the Natural Order*, 110.

<sup>6</sup> *Restoring the Natural Order*, 33.

<sup>7</sup> *Restoring the Natural Order*, 22.

<sup>8</sup> The document speaks of “Homosexuality [...] the novel ideology that exalts homosexuality/sodomy as ‘equal,’ and hence morally acceptable, inclination and behaviour.” See: *Restoring the Natural Order*, 14ff.

<sup>9</sup> *Restoring the Natural Order*, 11-18.

<sup>10</sup> “Just as Marxism wanted wealth (rather than poverty) for everyone, Feminism aims at masculinity for everyone.” See: *Restoring the Natural Order*, 13; “While Feminism and Homosexuality can be traced back to Marxist origins, Gender Theory is rooted in a radical liberalism, which exalts subjective emotions and personal choices to such an extent that finally they supersede every objective reality.” See: *Restoring the Natural Order*, 17.

<sup>11</sup> *Restoring the Natural Order*, 71.

<sup>12</sup> The trope of a Great Replacement of the “white race” with immigrants because of its declining demographics goes back to Jean Raspail’s *The Camp of the Saints* (1973) and Renaud Camus’ *The Great Replacement* (2011). There are different variations to this conspiracy theory, but the most common one being that due to the negative demographics in Europe immigrants would be purposefully imported by elites in order to maintain their profits, and over the short- or long-term supersede the native white population.

<sup>13</sup> Datta, *Restoring the Natural Order*, 20.

Dignitatis Humanae Institute, which have been affiliated to an ultra-reactionary faction inside the Vatican that has long been advocating not only to roll back reproductive and gender rights, but Vatican II reforms altogether. A novelty is the inclusiveness of this axis, which is no longer divided along confessions, but rather along reactionary and progressive Christians, be they Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, or Orthodox.<sup>14</sup>

Agenda Europe is also connected to a number of organizations that have been working towards anchoring the term “human dignity” in international law,<sup>15</sup> with the long-term goal to win a legal status for embryos from the day of inception; these organizations include the US Alliance Defending Freedom, European Dignity Watch, the Dignitatis Humanae Institute, and the Nova Terrae Foundation.

Since Agenda Europe has grown into such a vast structure over the past few years, with actors from a multitude of anti-choice organizations spanning the whole globe, this essay tries to shed light on the network by way of a case study that explores the Spanish entities involved—the dominant ones being the anti-choice organizations HazteOir and CitizenGo. Starting with their founder, Ignacio Arsuaga, this essay will look into the biographies of several anti-choice activists involved in CitizenGo, such as Álvaro Zulueta (Spain), Luca Volontè (Italy), Alexey Komov (Russia), and Brian Brown (USA), illustrating the organization’s transnational networking efforts. Furthermore, this paper will also examine key anti-choice organizations that have partnered up with HazteOir and CitizenGo, among them the U.S. Leadership Institute, the World Congress of Families, and the Act Right initiative, but also more informal liaisons, for example, the ultra-Catholic Mexican sect El Yunque. Special attention is paid to the close connection between CitizenGo and the Spanish far-right Vox party, as CitizenGo may act as a sort of Super PAC for the party. The last section briefly outlines the history of Agenda Europe, its central member organizations and functionaries, as well as its key strategies to influence European policy in its fight against reproductive and gender rights.

## History

### Ignacio Arsuaga

The activities of Ignacio Arsuaga (born 1973),<sup>16</sup> founder and president of both HazteOir and CitizenGo,<sup>17</sup> are essential to understanding the networking of Spanish ultra-Catholic initiatives and their collaboration with Agenda Europe and other likeminded organizations worldwide.

Arsuaga was brought up in a Catholic family, and can count, among others, Rodrigo de Rato y Figaredo, the former Vice President of Spain, and former managing director of the IMF, among his

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<sup>14</sup> Datta, *Restoring the Natural Order*, 20.

<sup>15</sup> Agenda Europe’s Facebook page is subtitled “a blog of human dignity and human rights.” See: “About,” Facebook page of Agenda Europe, [https://www.facebook.com/pg/Agenda-Europe-1510425499216614/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/Agenda-Europe-1510425499216614/about/?ref=page_internal).

<sup>16</sup> “¿Quién es Ignacio Arsuaga? Hazte oír,” *El Plural*, March 5, 2017, [https://www.elplural.com/leequid/quienes-ignacio-arsuaga-hazte-oir\\_123394102](https://www.elplural.com/leequid/quienes-ignacio-arsuaga-hazte-oir_123394102).

<sup>17</sup> Marta Borraz and Jesús Bastante, “Quién está detrás de los lobbies ultracatólicos que arremeten contra las mujeres y el colectivo LGTBI,” *El Diario*, October 3, 2016, [https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/ultracatolicos-arremeten-mujeres-colectivo-LGTBI\\_0\\_564493924.html](https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/ultracatolicos-arremeten-mujeres-colectivo-LGTBI_0_564493924.html).



extended family.<sup>18</sup> Rodrigo Rato's father was the bank owner Ramón de Rato Rodríguez San Pedro, who, in 1947, set up "Cadena Rato," which became one of the most popular radio stations in Spain during the Franco regime.

According to Arsuaga, he had his religious calling on World Youth Day in 1991 during a pilgrimage to the city of Częstochowa in southern Poland.<sup>19</sup> Subsequently, he graduated in law at the Universidad Pontificia de Comillas (ICADE),<sup>20</sup> a private Catholic university run by the Jesuits. He received his master's degree in international law from Fordham University, New York, in 1998. That year, according to his CV, he "became familiar with the American grassroots movements and studied specifically their lobbying activities and the tools they used for citizen involvement in politics and the public arena."

## **HazteOir**

"Based on his American experience ... Arsuaga founded HazteOir.org in 2001,"<sup>21</sup> first as an online petition platform focusing on conservative campaigns. In the beginning, HazteOir petitioned, in relatively moderate language, for greater efforts from the Spanish Government to support married couples and families. But over the years HazteOir became more overtly radical, and extended its role to the organization of mass rallies, particularly against abortions.

HazteOir, whose full name translates into "Make yourself heard, victims of the gender ideology" (*HazteOir - Víctimas de la ideología de género*),<sup>22</sup> has today grown into a powerful ultraconservative lobby with approximately 550,000 members, according to Arsuaga, who participate in the organization's various campaigns against gender and reproductive rights.<sup>23</sup>

HazteOir is networked with one of the most powerful ultraconservative platforms worldwide, the World Congress of Families (WCF), whose annual gatherings bring together prominent anti-abortion activists from various anti-choice organizations.<sup>24</sup> In May 2012, HazteOir served as co-organizer of the WCF's sixth international congress, and during the following seventh WCF congress in Sydney, HazteOir's founder Ignacio Arsuaga was awarded the title "Man of the year in defense of the natural family."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Joaquín Vera, "Ignacio Arsuaga, el líder iluminado de HazteOir contra la 'inquisición gay,'" *El Español*, March 4, 2017, [https://www.elespanol.com/reportajes/20170303/197980564\\_0.html](https://www.elespanol.com/reportajes/20170303/197980564_0.html).

<sup>19</sup> Vera, Ignacio Arsuaga.

<sup>20</sup> Ignacio Arsuaga's CV, <https://www.dropbox.com/s/flczv5k88j6ad3u/CV%20IAR%20in%20English.docx?dl=0>. Archived on September 9, 2019, <https://archive.is/Y9dl2>.

<sup>21</sup> Ignacio Arsuaga's CV.

<sup>22</sup> HazteOir.org, <https://www.citizengo.org/hazteoir>.

<sup>23</sup> Ignacio Arsuaga's CV.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example: "Speakers," World Congress of Families XIII, Verona, 29-31 March, 2019, <https://wcfverona.org/en/speakers/>.

<sup>25</sup> "Ignacio Arsuaga, 'Hombre del Año en defensa de la familia natural,'" *El Imparcial*, January 29, 2013, <https://www.elimparcial.es/noticia/117790/sociedad/ignacio-arsuaga-hombre-del-ano-en-defensa-de-la-familia-natural.html>.

In May 2013, HazteOir was declared an organization of public interest by former Interior Minister Jorge Fernández Díaz (Partido Popular),<sup>26</sup> which gave it tax and economic benefits as well as free legal aid.<sup>27</sup> Coincidentally, Jorge Fernández Díaz had his religious revelation in the same year as Arsuaga. He stated in an interview that he found God in Las Vegas: “He [Jesus] manifested himself during my encounter.”<sup>28</sup> HazteOir lost its charity status, however, after the Spanish government ruled in February 2019 that the organization would “denigrate or devalue” people of the LGBTIQ community.<sup>29</sup> The verdict referred, amongst other things, to one of HazteOir's homophobic campaigns, a bus that was touring Spain, sporting the slogan “repeal the gender laws” (*Derogad las leyes de género*), and the hashtag #StopFeminazis, along a portrait of Adolf Hitler wearing a cap with the feminist symbol.<sup>30</sup>

## CitizenGo

In August 2013, HazteOir launched its own foundation, CitizenGo, in Madrid in order to expand its scope of action beyond Spanish-speaking countries.<sup>31</sup> While HazteOir continues to cater to a national audience, CitizenGo was from the outset foreseen to operate internationally, along the line of already existing multilingual petition platforms, but with an ultra-conservative outlook.<sup>32</sup>

According to CitizenGo, the organization has “team members located in fifteen cities on three continents,” facilitating petitions in 50 countries,<sup>33</sup> while its website is available in around a dozen languages.<sup>34</sup> Petitions filed with the platform are, by and large, for opposing same-sex marriage, abortion, and euthanasia, with a clear anti-feminist and anti-LGBTIQ stance.

CitizenGo's activities, however, are not limited to petitions. The organization is involved in local campaigns directed against reproductive rights and healthcare initiatives worldwide, particularly in Africa. For example, in Kenya, CitizenGo started a campaign against the reproductive health NGO, Marie Stopes, which led to a temporary ban of the organization, preventing it from providing

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<sup>26</sup> Iván Gil, “¿Quién conduce el autobús de HazteOir? De la secta ultra El Yunque al pariente de Rato,” *El Confidencial*, March 2, 2017, [https://www.elconfidencial.com/espana/2017-03-02/quien-es-hazte-oir-autobus-transfobo-el-yunque\\_1341111/](https://www.elconfidencial.com/espana/2017-03-02/quien-es-hazte-oir-autobus-transfobo-el-yunque_1341111/).

<sup>27</sup> “La Utilidad Pública,” Fundación Gestión y Participación Social, April 18, 2011, [http://www.asociaciones.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=658&Itemid=41](http://www.asociaciones.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=658&Itemid=41).

<sup>28</sup> Vera, “Ignacio Arsuaga.”

<sup>29</sup> “El Gobierno retira la declaración de utilidad pública a HazteOir,” *El Diario*, February 2, 2019, [https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/Hazteoir\\_0\\_864763933.html](https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/Hazteoir_0_864763933.html).

<sup>30</sup> “HazteOir lanza un autobús con la cara de Hitler y el mensaje ‘StopFeminazis’ y ‘las leyes de género discriminan al hombre,’” *El Diario*, February 28, 2019, [https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/HazteOir-autobus-Hitler-feminazis-genero\\_0\\_872812962.html](https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/HazteOir-autobus-Hitler-feminazis-genero_0_872812962.html).

<sup>31</sup> Jesús Bastante and Marta Borraz, “Los ultracatólicos de HazteOir cambian de marca para limpiar su imagen,” *El Diario*, February 2, 2017, [https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/HazteOir-blanquea-vinculacion-Yunque-plataforma\\_0\\_608239475.html](https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/HazteOir-blanquea-vinculacion-Yunque-plataforma_0_608239475.html).

<sup>32</sup> Adam Ramsay and Claire Provost, “Revealed: the Trump-linked ‘Super PAC’ working behind the scenes to drive Europe’s voters to the far right,” *OpenDemocracy*, April 25, 2019, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/revealed-the-trump-linked-super-pac-working-behind-the-scenes-to-drive-europes-voters-to-the-far-right/>.

<sup>33</sup> “What is CitizenGO?,” CitizenGo, <https://www.citizenngo.org/en/node/1>.

<sup>34</sup> CitizenGo, <https://www.citizenngo.org/>.

abortion services,<sup>35</sup> and was also rallying against a civil rights campaign focused on decriminalizing homosexuality.<sup>36</sup>

The organization maintains contact with representatives of the Spanish Vox party, and other European far-right parties, among which are the Alternative for Germany, Italy's Lega, and Hungary's Fidesz.<sup>37</sup> The intricate links between the Vox party and the ultra-conservative petition platform CitizenGo, discussed below, were revealed by an investigative report by openDemocracy, which found that CitizenGo acts as a sort of SuperPAC for Vox, and as a vehicle for the party to circumvent donation limits.<sup>38</sup>

CitizenGo's influence also reaches into the European Parliament by way of its membership in larger anti-choice initiatives, such as Agenda Europe and One of US, and launches campaigns against selected EU directives. It has, for example, opposed the introduction of the *Estrela Report* which requires member states to provide comprehensive sex education in schools and ensure access to safe abortions.<sup>39</sup>

Internationally, CitizenGo maintains close ties to the US right-wing cadre school Leadership Institute (LI), whose alumni include US Vice President Mike Pence,<sup>40</sup> and which teaches "conservatives of all ages how to succeed in politics, government, and the media."<sup>41</sup> CitizenGo has helped the LI to organize training camps in Europe,<sup>42</sup> as, for example, a Facebook post by CitizenGo from July 2017 shows: "This week we set out to train 140 conservatives from around the world in a great partnership with [the] Leadership Institute International Department. Young folks join us from the US, UK, Mexico, Kenya, Nigeria, and all over Europe."<sup>43</sup> CitizenGo also liaises with the ultra-conservative World Congress of Families, as evident by Ignacio Arsuaga's continued appearance as speaker at the WCF's annual congress.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Rebecca Ratcliffe, "Kenya lifts ban on Marie Stopes abortion services after warning lives are at risk," *The Guardian*, December 21, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/dec/21/kenya-lifts-ban-marie-stopes-abortion-services-after-warning-lives-are-at-risk>.

<sup>36</sup> "CitizenGO retira una campaña contra la despenalización de la homosexualidad en Kenia," *Actual*, February 20, 2018, <https://www.actuall.com/democracia/citizengo-retira-una-campana-la-despenalizacion-la-homosexualidad-kenia/>.

<sup>37</sup> Ramsay and Provost, "Trump-linked 'Super PAC.'"

<sup>38</sup> Ramsay and Provost, "Trump-linked 'Super PAC.'"

<sup>39</sup> J. Lester Feder, "The Rise Of Europe's Religious Right," *Buzzfeed News*, July 29, 2014, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/lesterfeder/the-rise-of-europes-religious-right>.

<sup>40</sup> "WMAL Interview - MORTON BLACKWELL - 03.04.19," *Mornings on the Mall*, March 5, 2019, <https://omny.fm/shows/mornings-on-the-mall/wmal-intervie-w-morton-blackwell-03-04-19>.

<sup>41</sup> "About the Leadership Institute," *The Leadership Institute*, <https://www.leadershipinstitute.org/aboutus/>.

<sup>42</sup> Peter Montgomery, "Leadership Institute Joins ADF To Train Religious Right Activists In Europe," *Right-Wing Watch*, October 31, 2017, <https://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/leadership-institute-joins-adf-to-train-religious-right-activists-in-europe/>; Adam Ramsay and Claire Provost, "This Trump-linked super PAC is part of an 'explosive' plot to push Europe's voters into the arms of the far right," *AlterNet*, April 25, 2019, <https://www.alternet.org/2019/04/this-trump-linked-super-pac-is-part-of-an-explosive-plot-to-push-europes-voters-into-the-arms-of-the-far-right/>.

<sup>43</sup> Facebook post by CitizenGo, July 17, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/citizengo/posts/1423681521051314>.

<sup>44</sup> World Congress of Families XIII, "Speakers."

The CitizenGo foundation is financially supported by online donations made by its members, which journalist J. Lester Feder estimated is in the tens of thousands of euros per month.<sup>45</sup> Documents obtained from HazteOir's server in 2017 by a hacker group, which subsequently were published on the internet, seem to confirm these estimates.<sup>46</sup> Among HazteOir's donors that have been identified by journalists are executives of companies such as IBM, Eulen, and Nestlé, as well as billionaire businesswoman Esther Koplowitz and the founder of El Corte Inglés, Isidoro Álvarez, both of whom are among the most influential business people in the country. In the case of David Álvarez of Eulen, a leaked document states that the donation amounted to €20,000, while those of Koplowitz and Álvarez each amounted to €10,000.<sup>47</sup>

Although there was some press coverage concerning the leak, which the hacker group justified as payback for HazteOir's continuous attacks on the LGBTIQ community, little light has been shed on the wealth of information contained in the files. An interview with the hacker group mentions that the documents "lay out in detail the lobby's strategic planning, from internal reports, contact lists, court cases, to financial documents. There's also a great deal of private information concerning chairman Ignacio Arsuaga, including his private calls."<sup>48</sup>

### Links to El Yunque

The documents also reveal that HazteOir tried to pressure the TV broadcaster La Sexta to revoke its reports regarding the organization's links with the secretive ultra-Catholic and extreme right-wing Mexican sect El Yunque ("The Anvil").<sup>49</sup> CitizenGo's former campaign director, Luis Losada, and the organization's CEO, Álvaro Zulueta, are reportedly El Yunque members.<sup>50</sup> *El Diario* went as far to say that CitizenGo was a creation by HazteOir to rid itself of the toll that the connection to El Yunque had on its image, "so it has decided to disappear as such and be absorbed by the CitizenGo platform."<sup>51</sup>

El Yunque, originally a militant student formation, was established on the initiative of Catholic clerics, as were other main groups of the Catholic right in Mexico. Its creation can be traced back to the influence of several Jesuit priests, among them Manuel Figueroa Luna, Agustín da Silva, Valeriano

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<sup>45</sup> Feder, "The Rise Of Europe's Religious Right."

<sup>46</sup> C. Otto, "'Hackeo' masivo a Hazte Oír: sus finanzas, bases de datos y denuncias, al descubierto," *El Confidencial*, April 5, 2017, [https://www.elconfidencial.com/tecnologia/2017-04-05/hackeos-hazte-oir-ignacio-arsuaga-hormonas-yunque-acab\\_1361758/](https://www.elconfidencial.com/tecnologia/2017-04-05/hackeos-hazte-oir-ignacio-arsuaga-hormonas-yunque-acab_1361758/); Mercè Molist, "Hablamos con los 'hackers' del ataque masivo a Hazte Oír. ¿Quiénes son y cómo actúan?," *El Confidencial*, April 6, 2017, [https://www.elconfidencial.com/tecnologia/2017-04-06/hazte-oir-acab-acabgang-hackers-yonull-hackedhypapuh-y0darko-encryptcp\\_1361892/](https://www.elconfidencial.com/tecnologia/2017-04-06/hazte-oir-acab-acabgang-hackers-yonull-hackedhypapuh-y0darko-encryptcp_1361892/).

<sup>47</sup> "Per què la filtració de 15.000 documents d'Hazte Oir ha passat pràcticament desapercebuda?," *media.cat*, April 12, 2017, <http://www.media.cat/2017/04/12/que-filtracio-15-000-documents-dhazte-oir-practicament-desapercebuda/>.

<sup>48</sup> La Imilla Hacker, "HAZTEOIRLEAKS: INTERVIEWING ACABgang!," *El Desarmador*, April 7, 2017, <https://eldesarmador.org/hazteoirleaks-entrevista-a-acabgang-en.html>.

<sup>49</sup> La Imilla Hacker, "HAZTEOIRLEAKS."

<sup>50</sup> José L. Lobo, "Testigos revelan en un juicio la identidad de los miembros de la secta secreta El Yunque," *El Confidencial*, May 31, 2014, [https://www.elconfidencial.com/espana/2014-05-31/testigos-revelan-en-un-juicio-la-identidad-de-los-miembros-de-la-secta-secreta-el-yunque\\_138970/](https://www.elconfidencial.com/espana/2014-05-31/testigos-revelan-en-un-juicio-la-identidad-de-los-miembros-de-la-secta-secreta-el-yunque_138970/).

<sup>51</sup> Jesús Bastante and Marta Borraz, "Los ultracatólicos de HazteOir cambian de marca para limpiar su imagen," *El Diario*, February 2, 2017, [https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/HazteOir-blanquea-vinculacion-Yunque-plataforma\\_0\\_608239475.html](https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/HazteOir-blanquea-vinculacion-Yunque-plataforma_0_608239475.html).

Ruiz, and Jorge Vértiz,<sup>52</sup> two of whom reportedly had past experience in the organization of militant groups. Vértiz has been named<sup>53</sup> as the driving force behind a violent Catholic student group called Los Conejos (“The Rabbits”) that was active in the mid-1930s.<sup>54</sup> Figueroa Luna had arrived in Puebla, Mexico in 1951 with the idea of replicating his previous experience in Guadalajara, where he was an advisor to a Catholic and anti-communist paramilitary youth group called Los Tecos (“The Owls”),<sup>55</sup> which later became part of the World Anti-Communist League.<sup>56</sup>

Supported by Puebla’s archbishop, Octaviano Márquez y Toriz, known for his marked anti-communism, Figueroa Luna and his colleagues were strongly engaged in mobilizing opposition against the surging anti-clericalism in the Autonomous University of Puebla, firmly in Catholic hands since 1578.<sup>57</sup> This led to the establishment of El Yunque in the mid-1950s<sup>58</sup> as a secret elite nucleus of “holy warriors” under the leadership of Ramón Plata Moreno and Manuel Díaz Cid on the one hand,<sup>59</sup> and the creation of a visible front organization, the Anticommunist University Front (*Frente Universitario Anticomunista*, FUA), on the other hand.<sup>60</sup>

Figueroa Luna believed in the ideas of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, which explains why the first Anvil militants perceived their work as a “mission against the Judeo-Masonic-Communist

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<sup>52</sup> Luis Ángel Hurtado Razo, *Diferentes agrupaciones católicas de derecha en el siglo XX en México: Sociedades secretas, agrupaciones públicas que se clandestinizan, o híbridas: secretas y públicas, y públicas infiltradas por una secreta* (Master Thesis, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, January 2014), 163, [https://somee.org.mx/Documentos/concurso-tesis-2016/t\\_hurtado.pdf](https://somee.org.mx/Documentos/concurso-tesis-2016/t_hurtado.pdf).

<sup>53</sup> Edgar González Ruiz, “El Yunque: un libro sobre Ramón Plata,” *Contralínea*, September 9, 2013, <https://www.contralinea.com.mx/archivo-revista/2013/09/29/el-yunque-libro-sobre-ramon-plata/>.

<sup>54</sup> Mario Virgilio Santiago Jiménez, *Entre el secreto y las calles. Nacionalistas y católicos contra la ‘conspiración de la modernidad’: El Yunque de México y Tacuara de Argentina (1953-1964)* (Doctoral Thesis, Instituto Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora, July 2016), 84 ff., [https://www.academia.edu/37766023/\\_Entre\\_el\\_secreto\\_y\\_las\\_calles.\\_Nacionalistas\\_y\\_cat%C3%B3licos\\_contra\\_la\\_conspiraci%C3%B3n\\_de\\_la\\_modernidad\\_El\\_Yunque\\_de\\_M%C3%A9xico\\_y\\_Tacuara\\_de\\_Argentina\\_1953-1964\\_](https://www.academia.edu/37766023/_Entre_el_secreto_y_las_calles._Nacionalistas_y_cat%C3%B3licos_contra_la_conspiraci%C3%B3n_de_la_modernidad_El_Yunque_de_M%C3%A9xico_y_Tacuara_de_Argentina_1953-1964_).

<sup>55</sup> Esteban J. Palomera, *La obra educativa de los jesuitas en Guadalajara, 1586-1986: visión histórica de cuatro siglos de labor cultural* (ITESO, 1986), 333 ff. <https://books.google.de/books?id=l2wQBkQbUBcC&pg=PA333&lpg=PA333&dq=Manuel+Figueroa+Luna>; Fernando M. González, “Puebla: La sede del Frente Universitario Anticomunista (FUA) o La Orquesta-Yunque,” In: *El estado mexicano: Sociedad civil y diversidad* (CIESAS, 2005), 248, <https://books.google.de/books?id=28UWsuG2rNwC&pg=PA248&lpg=PA248&dq=Manuel+Figueroa+Luna>; Mario Virgilio Santiago Jiménez, “El Yunque de México: del periodismo a la historia,” *Nuevo Mundo, Mundos Nuevos*, January 25, 2016, <https://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/68832>.

<sup>56</sup> Los Tecos were basically the inner core and paramilitary arm of the emerging Mexican Anti-Communist Federation (FEMACO), the Mexican chapter of the Latin-American Anti-Communist Federation (CAL), which in turn was a member of the World Anti-Communist League (WACL), for several decades the main organizational platform of the “Black Fascist International.” It was particularly the Tecos of Mexico who “established League chapters throughout South and Central America in the early 1970s.” See: Scott and John Lee Anderson, *Inside the League: The Shocking Expose of How Terrorists, Nazis, and Latin American Death Squads Have Infiltrated the World Anti-Communist League* (Dodd Mead, 1986), 138.

<sup>57</sup> Jiménez, “El Yunque de México.”

<sup>58</sup> Year specifications range from 1953 to 1955.

<sup>59</sup> Rodolfo Ruiz, “Díaz Cid y los orígenes de El Yunque en 1955,” *El Popular*, May 1, 2017, <https://www.elpopular.mx/2017/05/01/opinion/diaz-cid-y-los-origenes-de-el-yunque-en-1955-162119>; Ruiz, “El Yunque.”

<sup>60</sup> Jiménez, “El Yunque de México.”

conspiracy.”<sup>61</sup> Continuous frictions between communist, masonic, or atheist professors and students on the one side, and Catholic and anti-communist students and professors on the other produced a climate of terror and social instability in the city of Puebla, and increasingly so in the rest of the country.

In a period that lasted 20 years, two governors were forced to resign, there were riots, clashes with the police, and terrorist activities, including the taking of hostages, torture, and murder.<sup>62</sup> The conflict eventually faded out with the creation of another university, the Autonomous Popular University of the State of Puebla (UPAEP), in 1973. By then, however, El Yunque’s clout had already expanded way beyond the city of Puebla. In 1961, a FUA-like organization, the University Movement of Renewal Orientation (MURO), was created in Mexico City at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and, ever since the 1980s, El Yunque has been heavily represented in the right-wing National Action Party (PAN).<sup>63</sup>

Today it is a national political force whose purpose, according to the Mexican National Journalism Prize winner and author of the book *El Yunque: The Far Right in Power*, Álvaro Delgado,<sup>64</sup> is to “combat the forces of the Revolution (the works of Satan) with all means available,” as well as establishing the kingdom of God in Mexico under the mandate of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>65</sup> This is an objective that is to be facilitated through the infiltration of El Yunque members at the highest levels of political power.<sup>66</sup>

According to *El País*, El Yunque landed in Spain during the Transition period after Franco’s death in 1977, and flourished during José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero’s time as Spain’s president (2004–2011), “capitalizing on the Catholic social discontent awakened by the marriage reforms, the educational system and abortion.”<sup>67</sup>

Links between HazteOir and El Yunque had been officially confirmed in May 2014 by a Madrid court, when Judge Lopez Castrillo stated at the time that “the relationship of members of HazteOir with El Yunque [...] is a proven and acknowledged fact.”<sup>68</sup> The verdict came after the Church of Spain had

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<sup>61</sup> Jiménez, “El Yunque de México.”

<sup>62</sup> Álvaro Delgado, *El Yunque: la ultraderecha en el poder* (Plaza Janés, 2003), 111 ff. Available on archive.org: <https://archive.org/details/ElYunqueUltraderechaEnElPoderAlvaroDelgadoPdf/page/n1>.

<sup>63</sup> Irene Ortiz, “Building the City of God: Mexico’s Ultra-Right Yunque,” North American Congress on Latin America, March 6, 2008, <https://nacla.org/article/building-city-god-mexico%27s-ultra-right-yunque>; Laurence Iliff, “Critics say secret society has infiltrated Mexican government,” *Dallas News*, July 9, 2007, <https://web.archive.org/web/20101228194753/http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/world/stories/070907dnintanvil.38f268a.html>.

<sup>64</sup> Delgado, *El Yunque*.

<sup>65</sup> “El Perfil del militante adulto. Etapa de madurez,” quoted in Delgado, *El Yunque*, 29 & 205, [https://books.google.nl/books?redir\\_esc=y&hl=nl&id=Qde3AAAAIAAJ&focus=searchwithinvolume&q=%22C+ombate+con+los+medios%22](https://books.google.nl/books?redir_esc=y&hl=nl&id=Qde3AAAAIAAJ&focus=searchwithinvolume&q=%22C+ombate+con+los+medios%22).

<sup>66</sup> Michael Forbes, “The Secret Society That Won’t Go Away,” *Guadalajara Reporter*, June 29, 2007, <https://web.archive.org/web/20120306165026/http://www.guadalajarareporter.com/features-mainmenu-95/908-features/188-the-secret-society-that-wont-go-away.html>; Iliff, “Secret society.”

<sup>67</sup> Jacobo García, “El lobby ultraderechista español que mueve los hilos del movimiento antigay en México,” *El País*, September 24, 2016, [https://elpais.com/internacional/2016/09/24/mexico/1474701661\\_252876.html](https://elpais.com/internacional/2016/09/24/mexico/1474701661_252876.html); See also Santiago Mato, *El Yunque en España. La sociedad secreta que divide a los católicos* (Madrid: Editorial Amanecer, 2015).

<sup>68</sup> García, “El lobby ultraderechista.”

ordered a private report about the role of El Yunque in the country, alarmed by the organization's growing influence. The report warned of "recruitment networks to win young people and adolescents for the organization" in various places, among them the Way of Saint James and religious schools.<sup>69</sup> When HazteOir was informed of the report, the organization contested the verdict in the framework of a lawsuit that it eventually lost. *El Confidencial* reported:<sup>70</sup>

During the trial, according to sources consulted by the newspaper, at least seven witnesses revealed the identity of the main leaders of El Yunque in Spain, including their full names. Among them, Eduardo Hertzfelder, president of the Instituto de Política Familiar; Jaime Urcelay, of Profesionales por la Ética; Liberto Senderos, of the Organización del Bien Común; Leonor Tamayo, of the Grupo de Montaña Contracorriente; the members of HazteOir Álvaro Zulueta, his wife Olga Cuquerella (sister of the former personal secretary of Iñaki Urdangarin, Julia Cuquerella), their brother Marcial Cuquerella, and Luis Losada, deputy editor of the newspaper La Gaceta of the Grupo Intereconomía, and current collaborator of 13 TV, a television channel run by bishops.

HazteOir, CitizenGo and the Instituto de Política Familiar ("Family Policy Institute") are, in turn, active in Mexico. For example, they appeared as organizers of an anti-gay march in Mexico City in 2016 that brought together a conglomerate of Mexican ultra-Catholic organizations.<sup>71</sup>

Links between CitizenGo and Mexico also concern finances, which an undercover investigation by openDemocracy revealed:<sup>72</sup>

Arsuaga told our undercover reporter that Patrick Slim, son of the Mexican oligarch Carlos Slim, gave his group €40,000, which "for him is just a very small amount," Arsuaga noted—although it is close to the maximum individual donation to a political party permitted under Spanish law (and four times [the] election campaign limits).

## Members

A closer look at CitizenGo's board members indicates that they are all well-networked with ultra-conservative circles and organizations worldwide. The CEO of CitizenGo is Álvaro Zulueta, while, as of August 2019, its Board of Trustees is composed of Ignacio Arsuaga (founder and president), Blanca Escobar, Luca Volontè, Brian S. Brown, Gualberto García, Aleksey Komov, Alejandro Bermudez, and Carlos Polo.<sup>73</sup>

### Álvaro Zulueta

Álvaro Zulueta, born in Madrid, left his job as project and risk manager at IBM in 2012, and subsequently signed with CitizenGo as a CEO, for which he would lead the international expansion

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<sup>69</sup> García, "El lobby ultraderechista."

<sup>70</sup> Lobo, "Testigos revelan."

<sup>71</sup> García, "El lobby ultraderechista."

<sup>72</sup> Ramsay and Provost, "Trump-linked 'Super PAC.'"

<sup>73</sup> "About Us," CitizenGo, <https://www.citizengo.org/en-us/about-us>.

campaign of the platform, making it available in eight languages at first.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore his job was to strengthen international alliances with likeminded civil associations and institutions.<sup>75</sup>

Zulueta is also treasurer of HazteOir and one of the key members of El Yunque in Spain, according to witness testimonies during aforementioned trial, in which HazteOir, in vain, tried to defend itself against allegations of entanglements with the sect El Yunque.<sup>76</sup> The journalist Álvaro Delgado points to Zulueta as the key interface between El Yunque, HazteOir and the “Crusaders of Christ the King” (*Cruzados de Cristo Rey*),<sup>77</sup> “a fundamentalist priestly fraternity created, among others, by the co-founder of the secret sect El Yunque in Mexico, Ramón Plata Moreno, which serves as spiritual support for its members.”<sup>78</sup>

Zulueta moves in the highest echelons of Spanish society. His wife, Olga Cuquerella Gamboa, was in direct contact with members of the Spanish royal family, and has family ties to El Yunque, “according to what sources close to the Casa del Rey and various lay Christian associations confronted with the sect have revealed to *El Confidencial*.”<sup>79</sup> She was one of the phantom employees of the criminal network woven by the son-in-law of Spain’s abdicated king Juan Carlos I, Iñaki Urdangarín Liebaert, for tax evasion purposes.<sup>80</sup> Urdangarín Liebaert is a retired Spanish handball player turned entrepreneur, and husband of Infanta Cristina, daughter of Juan Carlos I, who currently serves a six-year-and-three-month prison sentence for having embezzled approximately €6 million in public funds for sporting events since 2004 by way of his nonprofit foundation.<sup>81</sup>

Olga’s sister, Julia Cuquerella Gamboa, was a personal assistant to Iñaki Urdangarín, as well as occasionally to Infanta Cristina of Spain and, according to Olga, a member of the controversial Catholic sect, Opus Dei, which flourished under Franco’s fascist regime.<sup>82</sup> Olga’s and Julia’s brother, Marcial Cuquerella Gamboa, is director general of Intereconomía TV and presumed to be a member of El Yunque as well.<sup>83</sup> According to the testimonies collected by *El Confidencial*:

The ties of the Cuquerella Gamboas with the royal family go back several decades, and are not limited to the working relationship of Julia and Olga with Aizoon, Urdangarín’s

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<sup>74</sup> Spanish, English, Russian, Portuguese, French, German, Polish and Italian.

<sup>75</sup> “Álvaro Zulueta, nuevo director ejecutivo de Citizen-Go,” *Europa Press*, July 4, 2013, <https://www.europapress.es/comunicados/noticia-comunicado-alvaro-zulueta-nuevo-director-ejecutivo-citizen-go-20130704135715.html>.

<sup>76</sup> Lobo, “Testigos revelan.”

<sup>77</sup> Europa Press, “Álvaro Zulueta.”

<sup>78</sup> José L. Lobo, “La asistente personal y una empleada de Urdangarín están vinculadas a El Yunque,” *El Confidencial*, February 13, 2012, [https://www.elconfidencial.com/espana/2012-02-13/la-asistente-personal-y-una-empleada-de-urdangarin-estan-vinculadas-a-el-yunque\\_237725/](https://www.elconfidencial.com/espana/2012-02-13/la-asistente-personal-y-una-empleada-de-urdangarin-estan-vinculadas-a-el-yunque_237725/).

<sup>79</sup> Lobo, “La asistente personal.”

<sup>80</sup> Lobo, “La asistente personal.”

<sup>81</sup> Martin Dahms, “Cristina von Spanien: Die Monarchie vor Gericht,” *Luxemburger Wort*, January 11, 2016, [https://www.wort.lu/de/panorama/cristina-von-spanien-die-monarchie-vor-gericht-5693bb070da165c55dc5101a?utm\\_source=de\\_daily&utm\\_medium=email-1600&utm\\_content=newsLink&utm\\_campaign=dailyNewsletter](https://www.wort.lu/de/panorama/cristina-von-spanien-die-monarchie-vor-gericht-5693bb070da165c55dc5101a?utm_source=de_daily&utm_medium=email-1600&utm_content=newsLink&utm_campaign=dailyNewsletter); Hans-Christian Rößler, “Sechs Jahre Haft für Mann von Infantin Cristina,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, February 17, 2017, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/gesellschaft/kriminalitaet/spanien-mann-von-infantin-cristina-zu-6-jahre-haft-verurteilt-14882713.html>.

<sup>82</sup> Lobo, “La asistente personal.”

<sup>83</sup> Lobo, “Testigos revelan.”



company and Infanta Cristina. Their grandfather, Navy Admiral Marboa Gamboa Sánchez-Barcaiztegui, who died in 1986, maintained a very close relationship with Juan Carlos I of Spain and was appointed by him as a royal senator in the early years of the Transition period.<sup>84</sup>

## Luca Volontè

Another CitizenGo board member is the Italian Luca Volontè, an anti-abortion and anti-LGBTIQ activist, who is the CEO of the anti-choice foundation, Fondazione Novae Terrae, and was, until recently, chairman of the Dignitatis Humanae Institute, an influential “Catholic-fundamentalist think tank.”<sup>85</sup>

Volontè was formerly a member of the Italian Parliament (1996–2013), and in 2008 was appointed president of the European People’s Party at the Strasbourg-based Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE). After a dossier by the European Stability Initiative was published in December 2016,<sup>86</sup> a large-scale investigation was launched into a multi-billion dollar money laundering scheme, subsequently dubbed the “Azerbaijani Laundromat,”<sup>87</sup> in which Luca Volontè was implicated.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, investigators said “they have uncovered 2.39 million euro[s] in payments to Volontè through British and offshore companies. ... The payments, prosecutors allege, were made in exchange for Volontè’s efforts to mute the European body’s criticism of Azerbaijan’s human rights record.”<sup>89</sup> Since December 2018, Luca Volontè has been on trial in Milan facing corruption and bribery charges, but so far no verdict has been reached.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Lobo, “La asistente personal.”

<sup>85</sup> “CDU-Politiker distanziert sich von katholischem Institut,” *Radio Vatikan*, February 23, 2017, [https://web.archive.org/web/20171110115856/http://de.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/02/23/cdu-politiker\\_distanziert\\_sich\\_von\\_katholischem\\_institut/1294208](https://web.archive.org/web/20171110115856/http://de.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/02/23/cdu-politiker_distanziert_sich_von_katholischem_institut/1294208); “Luca Giuseppe Volontè,” Associação Portuguesa de Famílias Numerosas, [https://www.apfn.com.pt/congressofamiliasnumerosas2014.pt/congresso/Luca\\_Volonte.pdf](https://www.apfn.com.pt/congressofamiliasnumerosas2014.pt/congresso/Luca_Volonte.pdf).

<sup>86</sup> “The European Swamp (Caviar Diplomacy Part 2) – Prosecutors, corruption and the Council of Europe,” European Stability Initiative, December 17, 2016, [https://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=156&document\\_ID=181](https://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=156&document_ID=181).

<sup>87</sup> “The Azerbaijani Laundromat,” OCCRP, September 4, 2017, <https://www.occrp.org/en/azerbaijanilaundromat/>.

<sup>88</sup> J. Lester Feder and Alberto Nardelli, “This Anti-Abortion Leader Is Charged With Laundering Money From Azerbaijan,” *BuzzFeed News*, April 26, 2017, [https://www.buzzfeed.com/lesterfeder/this-anti-abortion-leader-is-charged-with-laundering-money?utm\\_term=.gfA1RWY4yk#.xbYDybPYJ3](https://www.buzzfeed.com/lesterfeder/this-anti-abortion-leader-is-charged-with-laundering-money?utm_term=.gfA1RWY4yk#.xbYDybPYJ3); Claudia von Salzen, “Korruptionsvorwürfe im Europarat: Die Spur des Geldes,” *Der Tagesspiegel*, March 22, 2017, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/themen/agenda/korruptionsvorwuerfe-im-europarat-die-spur-des-geldes/19544662.html>.

<sup>89</sup> “Businessman suspected in Italian bribery case linked to Azerbaijan’s first family,” OCCRP, April 7, 2017, <https://www.occrp.org/en/investigations/6301-businessman-suspected-in-italian-bribery-case-linked-to-azerbaijan-s-first-family>.

<sup>90</sup> “Steve Bannon’s monastic academy denies monkey business,” *The Economist*, May 23, 2019, <https://www.economist.com/europe/2019/05/23/steve-bannons-monastic-academy-denies-monkey-business>.

Volontè still serves as CEO of the Nova Terrae Foundation, an Italian organization lobbying for the “natural family,” i.e. against abortions, LGBTIQ rights, and an alleged gender ideology.<sup>91</sup> The financial links between the Nova Terrae Foundation and CitizenGo have been reported by openDemocracy:

Bank statements from Volontè’s Novae Terrae Foundation in Italy, seen by openDemocracy, show that it paid CitizenGo €12,000 in 2014 – at the same time as the foundation was receiving money from entities later identified as part of a ‘laundromat’ pumping illicit cash into Europe from Azerbaijan and Russia. There is no evidence to suggest that the money paid to CitizenGo came from these illicit sources.<sup>92</sup>

Furthermore, from 2016 until mid-2019, Volontè was chairman of the powerful ultra-Catholic think tank, Dignitatis Humanae Institute (“Institute of Human Dignity,” DHI), founded in December 2008 by a group of British Catholics in Brussels under the leadership of Benjamin Harnwell and Nirj Deva, a British Conservative MEP and Sri Lankan business magnate.<sup>93</sup>

The DHI’s advisory board, until June 2019,<sup>94</sup> presided over by Cardinal Raymond Leo Burke, consists entirely of cardinals bitterly opposed to reproduction and gender rights, who are part of an arch-reactionary faction inside the Vatican pushing for a conservative turn.<sup>95</sup> The *Washington Post* calls Burke the “rebel prince” of the Catholic Church, who is “undermining Francis’s reformist, compassionate papacy, and gospel teaching ... using his position ... to legitimize extremist forces that want to bring down Western liberal democracy, Stephen K. Bannon-style.”<sup>96</sup>

The DHI places much emphasis on its connection to Steve Bannon, who is listed in the board of trustees as well as a “patron” of the organization.<sup>97</sup> According to the Christian newspaper, *Christ und Welt*, Bannon is aiming to unite the conservative forces inside the Vatican with the help of the DHI.<sup>98</sup>

The DHI’s creation coincided with the foundation of two other initiatives operating in Brussels, the so-called European Parliament’s Working Group on Human Dignity (WGHD), established by, inter alia, DHI’s co-founder Harnwell and former Irish MEP Gay Mitchell, and the International Committee on Human Dignity (ICHD), headed by Nirj Deva. Since both groups have been strategizing and

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<sup>91</sup> Fondazione Nova Terrae, <https://www.novaeterrae.eu/>.

<sup>92</sup> Ramsay and Provost, “Trump-linked ‘Super PAC.’”

<sup>93</sup> “Benjamin Harnwell,” Dignitatis Humanae Institute, <http://www.dignitatishumanae.com/index.php/about-us/benjamin-harnwell/>.

<sup>94</sup> “Cardinal Burke cuts ties with institute, citing its alignment with Bannon,” *National Catholic Reporter*, June 25, 2019, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/quick-reads/cardinal-burke-cuts-ties-institute-citing-its-alignment-bannon>.

<sup>95</sup> Organizational chart of the Dignitatis Humanae Institute, <http://www.dignitatishumanae.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Keypeople-New2-1.jpg>.

<sup>96</sup> The Economist, “Steve Bannon’s monastic academy;” organizational chart of the Dignitatis Humanae Institute, archived on August 1, 2016, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160801002410/http://www.dignitatishumanae.com/index.php/home/>.

<sup>97</sup> Organizational chart of the Dignitatis Humanae Institute, <http://www.dignitatishumanae.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Keypeople-New2-1.jpg>.

<sup>98</sup> “CDU-Politiker distanziert sich von katholischem Institut,” *Radio Vatikan*, February 23, 2017, [https://web.archive.org/web/20171110115856/http://de.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/02/23/cdu-politiker\\_distanziert\\_sich\\_von\\_katholischem\\_institut/1294208](https://web.archive.org/web/20171110115856/http://de.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/02/23/cdu-politiker_distanziert_sich_von_katholischem_institut/1294208).

lobbying against reproductive and gender rights in the European Parliament, the WGHD and the ICHD can be seen as an ideological predecessor of Agenda Europe.<sup>99</sup>

As the names of the DHI, the WGHD, and the ICHD indicate, they have been pioneers in trying to establish the concept of “human dignity” in international law, while aiming to replace human rights as a central concept—an objective that, in the meantime, has been picked up by a whole range of other organizations in the orbit of CitizenGo and Agenda Europe, including Volontè’s Novae Terrae Foundation, European Dignity Watch, and ADF International.

For example, Volontè’s Nova Terrae Foundation developed a “dignity rating” in its report *Human Dignity Global Index*, whose name appears as a thinly veiled modification of the Universal Human Rights Index, where “dignity” implies “the universal right to be born,” thus inherently opposing the right to abortion and contraception.<sup>100</sup>

That the DHI and CitizenGo continue to support each other beyond Volontè’s resignation as chairman is indicated by a CitizenGo banner displayed in the sidebar of the DHI website.

### **Alexey Komov**

Another board member of CitizenGo is the Russian Aleksey Komov, an associate of the ultra-Orthodox oligarch Konstantin Malofeev, who runs an influential right-wing TV channel (*Tsargard TV*) and think tank (*Katehon*), and “has been targeted by US and European sanctions for allegedly propping up the pro-Russian breakaway republic in eastern Ukraine.”<sup>101</sup> During the 2013 WCF congress in Sydney, Komov’s benefactor, Malofeev, reportedly said that “Christian Russia can help liberate the West from the new liberal anti-Christian totalitarianism of political correctness, gender ideology, mass-media censorship and neo-Marxist dogma.”<sup>102</sup>

According to Komov, he had started working towards this end over a decade ago when he spent some time in Colorado Springs in the United States,<sup>103</sup> nicknamed “the Evangelical Vatican” because of its large influx of particularly Evangelical Christians,<sup>104</sup> and “would help advance his vision of conservative Christians from around the world working together more closely.”<sup>105</sup>

Komov also works for the World Congress of Families as the organization’s main Russian liaison and is associated with the WCF’s Russian website.<sup>106</sup> Komov, as well as Ignacio Arsuaga, were

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<sup>99</sup> Dignitatis Humanae Institute, “Benjamin Harnwell.”

<sup>100</sup> “Human Dignity Global Index,” Fondazione Novae Terrae, 2018, <https://www.novaeterrae.eu/en/publication-list/1730-human-dignity.html>.

<sup>101</sup> Ramsay and Provost, “Trump-linked ‘Super PAC.’”

<sup>102</sup> Peter Montgomery, “Religious Right’s Russian Ally Alexey Komov Praises Rise of Anti-Globalist Right-Wing Populists,” Right-Wing Watch, May 7, 2019, <https://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/religious-rights-russian-ally-alexey-komov-praises-rise-of-anti-globalist-right-wing-populists/>.

<sup>103</sup> Colorado Springs is the HQ of the extreme right-wing Focus on the Family, an evangelical christian organization, and a major structure in the US Alt-Right. The father of Blackwater’s founder Eric Prince was a major founder of Focus on the Family, as was his sister Betsy DeVos, now Trump’s Secretary of Education.

<sup>104</sup> James Ridgeway, “Day eight: Sunday morning in the ‘evangelical Vatican,’” *The Guardian*, October 20, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/uselectionroadtrip/2008/oct/20/uselections2008>.

<sup>105</sup> Montgomery, “Religious Right’s Russian Ally.”

<sup>106</sup> Всемирный Конгресс Семей (“World Congress of Families”), <http://worldcongress.ru/>.

speakers at the latest 2019 WCF congress in Verona, Italy, as was Italy's former Deputy Prime Minister, Matteo Salvini of the far-right Lega party.<sup>107</sup>

Komov has been in the orbit of Lega (formerly Lega Nord) since December 2013, when he gave a speech at the Lega Nord congress in Turin, during which Salvini was elected as the leader of the party. There, Komov introduced the mascot of the World Congress of Families for the following year: a Russian *matryoshka*, or rather *patryoshka* doll, whose outer doll is a man instead of a woman, while inside the woman are five children, since, according to Komov, "god created woman from a man."<sup>108</sup>

Komov seems to be very active in Italy, where he appears as co-founder and honorary president of the Lombardy–Russia Cultural Association (*Associazione Culturale Lombardia Russia*, LRCA), a Russian-Italian business platform<sup>109</sup> that, according to historian Anton Shekhovtsov, was essential to Lega's breathtaking successes in recent years.<sup>110</sup> In an article that tries to unravel Malofeev's manifold business relations, the LRCA is described as aiming to promote "Russia's aggressive foreign policies in Italy, including attempts at building business relations between Italian businessmen and businessmen in Russia-annexed Crimea."<sup>111</sup>

The LRCA is led by one of Lega's Russian liaisons, Gianluca Savoini, who was recently at the center of a massive scandal in Italy. A tape appeared that proves Savoini had attended a meeting in October 2018 with a group of unidentified Russians in Moscow, to discuss the possibility of an oil deal, which, according to the agreements, should provide black funds for the electoral campaign of the Lega party in the 2019 European elections.<sup>112</sup> A dossier by the Italian *L'Espresso* came to the conclusion that the Russian company Avangard Oil & Gas planned on "selling 3 million tons of diesel fuel ... to an Italian state company, Eni, that Salvini as interior minister can help manage."<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Kara Fox and Valentina Di Donato, "In Italy's city of love, global far-right groups join forces under a 'pro-family' umbrella," *CNN*, March 31, 2019, <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/03/31/europe/verona-world-congress-of-families-intl/index.html>; "Speakers," World Congress of Families XIII, Verona, 29-31 March 2019, <https://wcfverona.org/en/speakers/>.

<sup>108</sup> Lega Salvini Premier, "Congresso Federale Lega Nord 2013 - Ambasciatore Russo Nazioni Unite Alexey Komov," YouTube video, December 18, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsgJtcNZZwQ>.

<sup>109</sup> "How the World Congress of Families serves Russian Orthodox political interests," Southern Poverty Law Center, May 16, 2018, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/05/16/how-world-congress-families-serves-russian-orthodox-political-interests>.

<sup>110</sup> "Since the beginning of 2014, the LN [Lega Nord] has been extremely active in carrying out pro-Kremlin efforts in Italy, in particular through the Associazione Culturale Lombardia Russia." See: Anton Shekhovtsov, "The Italian far right Lega Nord builds closer ties with Moscow," Anton Shekhovtsov's blog, March 6, 2017, <http://anton-shekhovtsov.blogspot.com/2017/03/the-italian-far-right-lega-nord-builds.html>.

<sup>111</sup> "Profile: Konstantin Malofeev," Underminers, December 4, 2017, <https://www.underminers.info/publications/2017/12/5/profile-konstantin-malofeev>.

<sup>112</sup> Alberto Nardelli, "Revealed: The Explosive Secret Recording That Shows How Russia Tried To Funnel Millions To The 'European Trump,'" *BuzzFeed News*, July 10, 2019, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/albertonardelli/salvini-russia-oil-deal-secret-recording>.

<sup>113</sup> Giovanni Tizian and Stefano Vergine, "Esclusivo - La trattativa segreta per finanziare con soldi russi la Lega di Matteo Salvini," *L'Espresso*, February 21, 2019, [http://espresso.repubblica.it/inchieste/2019/02/20/news/esclusivo-lega-milioni-russia-1.331835?refresh\\_ce](http://espresso.repubblica.it/inchieste/2019/02/20/news/esclusivo-lega-milioni-russia-1.331835?refresh_ce); Barbie Latza Nadeau, "An Italian Expose Documents Moscow Money Allegedly Funding Italy's Far-Right Salvini," *Daily Beast*, February 22, 2019, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/an-italian-expose-documents-moscow-money-allegedly-funding-italys-far-right-salvini?ref=scroll>.

Savoini, identified as Lega's Russia "fixer" in this alleged kickback scheme, has longstanding ties to preeminent figures of the Russian far right. Savoini had reportedly stated that he has known the fascist ideologue Alexander Dugin for over 20 years,<sup>114</sup> and has also been contributing to Orthodox billionaire Konstantin Malofeev's think tank, Katehon.<sup>115</sup> It may be no coincidence that Avangard Oil & Gas is located in the same building as Malofeev's Tsargrad TV channel. According to the *Daily Beast*:

L'Espresso claims that the troika behind all of the dirty dealing is Komov, Savoini and Aleksandr Dugin, a political influencer who has Putin's ear and who was appointed as an honorary president of the Russia-Piedmont association, a sister organization to Savoini's Russia-Lombardy association, which gives him easy access to Italy. Dugin has, coincidentally, also been working for Malofeev's foundation with Komov, according to L'Espresso.<sup>116</sup>

Komov also has ties to the aforementioned Dignitatis Humanae Institute, which gathers some of the most powerful figures of the Vatican's ultra-reactionary faction. He spoke at the inaugural conference of the DHI's Rome office in 2012, with a focus on denouncing socialism, both historically and in its presumed current forms.<sup>117</sup>

### **Brian Brown**

Brian Brown, another CitizenGo board member, is a well-known US anti-LGBTIQ activist, who has been president of the International Organization for the Family,<sup>118</sup> responsible for staging the annual World Congress of Families. He also serves as president of the National Organization for Marriage.<sup>119</sup> According to openDemocracy,<sup>120</sup>

Arsuaga told our reporter that he met Brown at a WCF meeting in Madrid in 2012 and that CitizenGo gets advice "every couple of months or so" from a "senior expert" in fundraising and technology who is "paid by Brian Brown." This expert is Darian Rafie, Brown's partner at an American organisation called ActRight, which describes itself online as a "clearinghouse for conservative action."

In a previous version of CitizenGo's website, the banner included the slogan "member of the ActRight family," which is still included in the CitizenGo banner on the DHI website.<sup>121</sup> According to

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<sup>114</sup> Alberto Nardelli and Olga Tokariuk, "Here's A Totally Incredible Story About Pro-Russian Mercenaries And A Close Aide To Italy's De Facto Leader," *BuzzFeed News*, September 13, 2018, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/albertonardelli/matteo-salvini-russia-gianluca-savoini>.

<sup>115</sup> "Gianluca Savoini," Katehon, <http://katehon.com/person/gianluca-savoini>.

<sup>116</sup> Nadeu, "An Italian Expose."

<sup>117</sup> Edward Pentin, "What Christians Should Do in the Public Square," Dignitatis Humanae Institute, July 5, 2012, <http://www.dignitatishumanae.com/index.php/what-christians-should-do-in-the-public-square/>.

<sup>118</sup> International Organization for the Family, <https://www.profam.org/>.

<sup>119</sup> Miranda Blue, "NOM Praises Roy Moore For Standing Against 'Judicial Tyranny' On Marriage," Right Wing Watch, February 2, 2015, <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/nom-praises-roy-moore-for-standing-against-judicial-tyranny-on-marriage/>.

<sup>120</sup> Ramsay and Provost, "Trump-linked 'Super PAC.'"

<sup>121</sup> "CitizenGo," archived on June 28, 2014,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20140628080718/http://www.citizenngo.org/>.

openDemocracy, ActRight had also paid for a CitizenGo staff member in 2013, and is a key campaigner for the US Republican Party:<sup>122</sup>

ActRight's Rafie is an experienced political consultant in the US who has played key roles in a number of companies that have worked for the Republican National Committee and the Republican party in Ohio and Michigan; received payments from a Super PAC supporting Texas Republican Ted Cruz (as did ActRight in 2015); and worked with the Tea Party group Think Freely Media.

Speaking to our undercover reporter, Rafie said he "did a lot of fundraising politically with Trump," through political action committees (PACs) but also "directly with the campaign... [and] directly with the party," and that he expects one of his companies to be working "in the majority of states" in the 2020 election campaigns.<sup>123</sup>

Rafie produced some damning and scary revelations to an openDemocracy reporter about the use of collected mobile phone data, for example, during political rallies, which would be used to directly get in contact with the participants:<sup>124</sup>

"There is a lot of stuff to be done with mobile phones and geo-fencing areas [...] Say there's a rally somewhere, one of these big Trump campaign rallies. What we'll do is we'll draw a Polygon around that event and then we'll register all the phones that were there. Then we follow those phones home, then we know who they are, and what they do, and now I know what your Netflix unique ID is, and I've got your Facebook unique ID, so then I can communicate with you through a whole variety of ways." Rafie said "you can do that in Europe," too, though "it's a little more limited ... because the privacy laws are better, for the consumer." He said: "It's actually really scary, when you peek beneath the covers, and realize that this phone that you're carrying around with you is leaking everywhere all of your information" which can be correlated with personal data "very quickly." In the US, he explained, "all of the data is routinely collated and correlated and available for sale."

### **Support of the far-right Vox party**

OpenDemocracy conducted an undercover investigation in Spain that revealed intimate links between CitizenGo, HazteOir, and the far-right Spanish Vox party.<sup>125</sup> A Vox official that CitizenGo's president, Ignacio Arsuaga, connected with openDemocracy's reporter notes that they are "actually currently totally aligned." That there might be a connection between Vox and CitizenGo from the outset is suggested by the fact that both were set up shortly after each other in 2013.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Ramsay and Provost, "Trump-linked 'Super PAC.'"

<sup>123</sup> Ramsay and Provost, "Trump-linked 'Super PAC.'"

<sup>124</sup> Ramsay and Provost, "Trump-linked 'Super PAC.'"

<sup>125</sup> Ramsay and Provost, "Trump-linked 'Super PAC.'"

<sup>126</sup> CitizenGo's foundation date is August 22, 2013, the foundation date of the Vox party December 17, 2013.

These links go well beyond Arsuaga's public endorsement of Vox,<sup>127</sup> since Arsuaga had admitted to meeting senior party officials to discuss common strategies, and also described how CitizenGo would "indirectly" support Vox.<sup>128</sup>

Although Arsuaga dismissed the suggestion that money would be transferred directly to Vox itself, he added "you could give to any foundation that doesn't mind ... to forward the money, to Vox ... that would be a good option."<sup>129</sup>

Arsuaga explained that there exist no such limits for NGOs, such as CitizenGo, and that such donations would be private. By donating to CitizenGo, Arsuaga assured that the organization would use the resources, among other things, for poster and ad campaigns against Vox adversaries in favor of abortion or LGBTIQ laws.<sup>130</sup>

The Vox official that Arsuaga put openDemocracy's undercover reporter in touch with stated that Spanish political parties would be "very, very regulated," but this would not be the case for "the equivalent of Super PACs in the United States, those institutions or organisations that give airtime or advertising in support of causes or candidates or political parties."<sup>131</sup>

When it comes to donating to Vox directly, the official stated that there were other ways of circumventing donation limits and to guarantee a donor's privacy. These would include splitting off donations exceeding the maximum amount allowed by Spanish party donation laws among several donors, while the official assured that donors would only be required to specify their full name and address. While Super PACs do not officially exist in Europe, he stated that "there are movements to create those and I think they are unregulated" and "Ignacio's organization, that's kind of that."<sup>132</sup>

This was not the first time Vox has been accused of shady monetary operations and unsavory political alliances. For example, Vox's vice president, Víctor González Coello de Portugal, was condemned for "accounting irregularities" in one of his companies, and had been banned for three years from handling party finances.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, Vox reportedly received donations to the tune of €800,000 from the extremist Iranian opposition group Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MeK) for its 2014 European elections campaign.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Jesús Bastante, "Las conexiones de Vox con HazteOir, los 'kikos' y una docena de obispos españoles," *El Diario*, December 7, 2018, [https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/conexiones-Vox-grupos-ultracatolicos\\_0\\_843766322.html](https://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/conexiones-Vox-grupos-ultracatolicos_0_843766322.html).

<sup>128</sup> Ramsay and Provost, "Trump-linked 'Super PAC.'"

<sup>129</sup> Ramsay and Provost, "Trump-linked 'Super PAC.'"

<sup>130</sup> Ramsay and Provost, "Trump-linked 'Super PAC.'"

<sup>131</sup> Ramsay and Provost, "Trump-linked 'Super PAC.'"

<sup>132</sup> Ramsay and Provost, "Trump-linked 'Super PAC.'"

<sup>133</sup> José María Irujo, "El vicepresidente de Vox, condenado por 'irregularidades contables' en una de sus empresas," *El País*, December 14, 2018, [https://elpais.com/politica/2018/12/13/actualidad/1544725635\\_533915.html](https://elpais.com/politica/2018/12/13/actualidad/1544725635_533915.html).

<sup>134</sup> "Grupo terrorista MKO financió a la ultraderecha de España," *HispanTV*, January 13, 2019, <https://www.hispantv.com/noticias/espana/408488/vox-terroristas-dinero-muyahidin-jalq-iran>; Saeed Kamali Dehghan, "Who is the Iranian group targeted by bombers and beloved of Trump allies?," *The Guardian*, July 2, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/02/iran-mek-cult-terrorist-trump-allies-john-bolton-rudy-giuliani>.

Furthermore, the party has links to the controversial Francisco Franco Foundation, which glorifies Spain's former dictator.<sup>135</sup> It was Arsuaga himself, who referred to links of Vox to Franco's former fascist party Falange: Arsuaga told the openDemocracy undercover reporter that Vox's General Secretary Javier Ortega Smith, "comes ... from the hard right, like Falangists ... Franco's movement—but nobody knows, it's a kind of private thing."<sup>136</sup> Ortega Smith, as also revealed by Arsuaga, was the key attorney behind Vox's legal prosecution of Catalan independence supporters.

## European anti-choice agenda

CitizenGo and HazteOir are not only nationally teaming up with reactionary political forces, but are by now also networking on a European level. For example, both organizations support the pan-European anti-choice initiative, One of Us, whose members include likeminded associations from almost every European country.<sup>137</sup> When, in 2012, the European Commission established the so-called European Citizens' Initiatives (petitions on an EU level), One of Us was among the very first to register.<sup>138</sup> Founded by a "group of Italian conservatives," it proposed to "ban and end the financing of activities which presuppose the destruction of human embryos, in particular in the areas of research, development aid and public health."<sup>139</sup>

The initial funding for One of Us came from the Italian Fondazione Vita Nova, the Spanish Fundación Provida de Cataluña, and the Fundación Valores y Sociedad, with combined funding amounting to over €150,000.<sup>140</sup> The initiative started a petition with the subject matter "Juridical protection of the dignity, the right to life and of the integrity of every human being from conception in the areas of EU competence in which such protection is of particular importance."<sup>141</sup> The petition gathered over 1.7 million signatures in roughly 18 month, and was thus reaching the threshold where the EU Parliament and Commission had to discuss the issue.

CitizenGo's and HazteOir's president, Ignacio Arsuaga, is among One of Us' most active supporters, and also appears on the organization's member list.<sup>142</sup> In 2017, Arsuaga stated during an interview for an *Arte* documentary that "One of Us was the beginning of a far-reaching lobby, which wants to exert influence in the European Union."<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> "Hundreds of thousands of Spaniards call for ban on Franco foundation," *The Guardian*, November 23, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/nov/23/spaniards-call-ban-franco-foundation>.

<sup>136</sup> Ramsay and Provost, "Trump-linked 'Super PAC.'"

<sup>137</sup> "Members," One of Us, <https://oneofus.eu/about-us/members/>.

<sup>138</sup> European Citizens' Initiatives, <https://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/welcome>.

<sup>139</sup> Bruno Kaufmann, "The European Citizens' Initiative Pocket Guide," The Green European Foundation, November 2012, [https://gef.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ECI\\_Pocket\\_guide\\_updated\\_edition\\_web\\_02.pdf](https://gef.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ECI_Pocket_guide_updated_edition_web_02.pdf).

<sup>140</sup> "One of Us," The European Citizen's Initiative, European Commission, June 28, 2012, <https://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/initiatives/successful/details/2012/000005>.

<sup>141</sup> The European Citizens' Initiative, "One of Us."

<sup>142</sup> Alexandra Jousset & Andrea Rawlins-Gaston, "Avortement, les croisés contre-attaquent," Documentary, *Arte France*, 2017, [15:23], <https://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/075221-000-A/avortement-les-croises-contre-attaquent/>.

<sup>143</sup> Jousset and Rawlins-Gaston, "Avortement," [17:48].



According to Neil Datta, Secretary General of the European Parliamentary Forum on Population & Development, “One of Us is only the visible side of the anti-choice movement, the politically correct one,” whereas “behind it there is a bigger, more militant group, with representatives from 30 to 40 countries.”<sup>144</sup>

That other, more secretive, group has been labelled “Agenda Europe” after an eponymous blog and the strategic document, *Restoring the Natural Order: An Agenda for Europe*, which appeared in 2013 and 2014 respectively.<sup>145</sup> During the group’s first meeting in London in January 2013, “approximately 20 pro-life leaders and strategic consultants ... from North America and Europe” came together “to network and discuss two main issues: developing a Christian-inspired European think tank, and developing strategies for the pro-life movement in Europe.”<sup>146</sup> Since then, members of the Agenda Europe network, by now comprising more than 100 anti-choice organizations, meet in private during an annual summit.

The inaugural meeting had been convened by the Austrian Gudrun Kugler and the American Terence McKeegan, both Catholic lawyers who have been working for the Holy See in several functions.<sup>147</sup> Kugler, a lecturer at the Vatican-led International Theological Institute (ITI),<sup>148</sup> had, among other activities, organized events for the Pontifical Council for the Family, and had been a Representative of the Holy See at an OSCE conference.<sup>149</sup>

McKeegan, a veteran activist against sexual and reproductive rights, has served as a legal adviser for the Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the United Nations and, before his engagement for Agenda Europe, had worked for, among others, the anti-choice organizations Alliance Defense Fund, the European Center for Law and Justice (ECLJ), and the Center for Family and Human Rights (C-FAM).<sup>150</sup>

Some of Agenda Europe’s member organizations already have longstanding experiences lobbying within the European Parliament and the European Commission, among them the Dignitatis Humanae Institute, ADF International (formerly Alliance Defense Fund),<sup>151</sup> and European Dignity Watch.<sup>152</sup> But although the process of institutionalizing the battle against international human rights under the catch phrase of “human dignity” began over a decade ago, it has intensified considerably with the emergence of Agenda Europe as anti-choice “supergroup.”

While the general direction of Agenda Europe is concisely outlined in its strategic documents, a certain division of labor makes use of the member organizations’ particular strengths. For example, Ignacio Arsuaga, having longstanding experience with digital campaigns, has an advisory function on

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<sup>144</sup> Jousset and Rawlins-Gaston, “Avortement,” [20:00] & [20:55].

<sup>145</sup> Agenda Europe (Blog), <https://agendaeurope.wordpress.com/>.

<sup>146</sup> Agenda Europe, Programme of Strategic Retreat, London, January 2013. Quoted in Datta, *Restoring the Natural Order*, 6.

<sup>147</sup> Curriculum Vitae of Gudrun Kugler, International Theological Institute, [https://iti.ac.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/user\\_upload/Academic-Life/Academic\\_CV\\_KUGLER\\_Gudrun\\_Web.pdf](https://iti.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/user_upload/Academic-Life/Academic_CV_KUGLER_Gudrun_Web.pdf).

<sup>148</sup> International Theological Institute, <https://iti.ac.at/>.

<sup>149</sup> Datta, *Restoring the Natural Order*, 20.

<sup>150</sup> Datta, *Restoring the Natural Order*, 20.

<sup>151</sup> ADF International, <https://adfinternational.org/>.

<sup>152</sup> European Dignity Watch, <http://www.europeandignitywatch.org/>.

issues such as crowdfunding and mass mobilization, whereas his organization HazteOir is implementing Agenda Europe directives locally.

Another key Agenda Europe organizer, and one of the network's most important lobbyists in Brussels, is Sophia Kuby, who simultaneously works for the anti-choice lobby groups ADF International and European Dignity Watch.<sup>153</sup> Kuby is an expert in EU public affairs as well as EU law and policy, and has been giving lectures on Agenda Europe summits in those areas. She also networks with CitizenGo and HazteOir, since both appear among the supporting organizations of European Dignity Watch's open letter, signed by Kuby, to Jean-Claude Juncker in 2014, rallying against the implementation of the European *Directive implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation*.<sup>154</sup>

Other key players of Agenda Europe have been involved in European politics directly. CitizenGo board member Luca Volontè had been a member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) from 2008 to 2013. Affiliated with the center-right European People's Party (EPP), he was eventually elected chair of the Europarty's group within the PACE. Due to corruption and bribery allegations against him and other PACE members, Volontè had to prematurely quit his political mandates, and is still on trial for his alleged involvement in the "Azerbaijani Laundromat," a large-scale money-laundering operation, as well as for "Caviar Diplomacy," that is to say, having received bribes from Azerbaijani sources, particularly to mitigate potential criticism towards the country's human rights violations.<sup>155</sup> Two other former PACE delegates active in the Agenda Europe network are the EPP-affiliated Valeriu Ghiletschi, Vice President of the Moldovan Parliament, as well as the anti-choice activist, Ronan Mullen, an independent Irish Senator and member of the European party European Christian Political Movement (ECPM).<sup>156</sup>

Agenda Europe's lobbying efforts also extend to the United Nations (UN), for example, by way of the network's co-initiator, Terrence McKeegan, a legal advisor for the Holy See's Permanent Observer Mission to the UN. McKeegan became acquainted with UN circles during his work for the lobby group C-FAM,<sup>157</sup> which, according to *Reuters*, was established "to affect policy at the UN to align with conservative Catholic views."<sup>158</sup> Another of Agenda Europe's UN experts is Sharon Slater, co-founder of the US anti-choice NGO, Family Watch International,<sup>159</sup> which, as in the case with C-FAM, has a consultative status within the UN. Slater had shared her UN experiences on an Agenda Europe summit in 2015 under the framework of a lecture entitled "UN Resource Guide."<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> "Sophia Kuby," ADF International, <https://adfinternational.org/advocacy-team-and-advisory-council/sophia-kuby-bio/>.

<sup>154</sup> Open letter to Jean-Claude Juncker, *Ordo Iuris*, December 2, 2014, [www.ordoiuris.pl/sites/default/files/inline-files/Open%20Letter\\_Juncker\\_ETD\\_full\\_0.pdf](http://www.ordoiuris.pl/sites/default/files/inline-files/Open%20Letter_Juncker_ETD_full_0.pdf).

<sup>155</sup> "Businessman suspected in Italian bribery case linked to Azerbaijan's first family," OCCPR, April 17, 2017, <https://www.occrp.org/en/investigations/6301-businessman-suspected-in-italian-bribery-case-linked-to-azerbaijan-s-first-family>.

<sup>156</sup> European Christian Political Movement, <https://ecpm.info/>.

<sup>157</sup> Search results for "McKeegan" on the C-FAM website, <https://c-fam.org/?s=mckeegan>.

<sup>158</sup> Yasmeen Abutaleb and Joseph Tanfani, "Special Report: As Trump rewrites health rules, Pence sees conservative agenda born again," *Reuters*, May 30, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-pence-hhs-special-report-idUSKCN1T0176>.

<sup>159</sup> Family Watch International, <https://familywatch.org/>.

<sup>160</sup> Datta, *Restoring the Natural Order*, 9.

By now Agenda Europe has reached an importance comparable to its sister organization, the World Congress of Families, and both share a pool of supporters and speakers at their annual meetings that appear to overlap to a large degree. For example, the WCF “Budapest Family Summit” of May 2017, whose opening speech was delivered by Hungary’s Prime Minister, Victor Orbán, brought together many of the key actors of the lobby group, among them Ignacio Arsuaga, Sophia Kuby, and Luca Volonté.<sup>161</sup>

Since there are no numbers available concerning the funding of Agenda Europe, all considerations in this regard can only be speculative. It is known, however, that there are several high net-worth individuals and aristocrats in the orbit of the people attending the annual Agenda Europe summits, some of whom had appeared as supporters of the WCF and CitizenGo in the past.

Vincente Segu, head of the Mexican anti-choice organization Incluyendo Mexico, who had attended the inaugural Agenda Europe summit in 2013,<sup>162</sup> is an associate of the Mexican billionaire and anti-abortion activist Patrick Slim, who had reportedly donated a considerable sum to CitizenGo. A prominent exponent of European aristocracy, the multimillionaire Archduke Imre of Hapsburg-Lorraine, had also turned up at the 2013 gathering.

The following year, the summit included Alexey Komov,<sup>163</sup> board member of CitizenGo and the WCF’s main Russian liaison, who works for the ultra-Orthodox Russian billionaire Konstantin Malofeev, known for having provided support and funds for reactionary and nationalist causes in Europe in the past. For example, Malofeev had helped the leader of the French far-right party Rassemblement National, Marine Le Pen, to receive a €2 million loan from Russian sources,<sup>164</sup> and has been appearing among the co-sponsor of the WCF.<sup>165</sup>

Although more research is needed to establish the financial support structure of Agenda Europe, the evidence that has been gathered on the Spanish networks CitizenGo and HazteOir indicates that their sponsors include a rich and powerful clientele, reaching into the highest strata of society.

## Conclusion

In summary, while seeing anti-choice movements gaining such momentum under a united banner is already disturbing, their alignment with financial and aristocratic elites, as well as reactionary political forces, should definitely be a wake-up call to progressive actors, women’s rights and LGTBIQ

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<sup>161</sup> Budapest Family Summit, World Congress of Families XI,, 26 – 27 May 2017, Budapest Congress Center, <https://web.archive.org/web/20171112075326/https://www.budapestfamilysummit.com/en/may-26-friday/>.

<sup>162</sup> Datta, *Restoring the Natural Order*, 24.

<sup>163</sup> Datta, *Restoring the Natural Order*, 24.

<sup>164</sup> Marine Turchi and Mathias Destal, “Investigation: Le Pen-Putin friendship goes back a long way,” *EU Observer*, April 22, 2017, <https://euobserver.com/eu-election/137629>.

<sup>165</sup> “The Kremlin Builds an Unholy Alliance With America’s Christian Right,” *Medium*, July 13, 2014, <https://medium.com/war-is-boring/the-kremlin-builds-an-unholy-alliance-with-americas-christian-right-5de35250066b>; “Anti-LGBT hate group World Congress of Families to gather in Moldova this week, reveals details at the last second,” Southern Poverty Law Center, September 12, 2018, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/09/12/anti-lgbt-hate-group-world-congress-families-gather-moldova-week-reveals-details-last>.

activists as well as society at large. Agenda Europe and its associated organizations are a living example that reproductive rights and healthcare services, which have been fought for long and hard, are not to be taken for granted, but achievements that need to be continually defended.

Sophie in 't Veld, member of the Committee for the Rights of Women, described her extremely negative contact with the lobby inside the European Union as follows:

I never use the expression “pro-life.” These people are anti-choice. I am for life and for free choice. They are permanently using terms such as “dignity,” “justice,” “peace,” “freedom,” “life,” “family.” It sounds great, like peace, happiness, and bliss, but that is not the case. These people take away all options from women. At times they even behave awfully. Extremely anti-democratic, and anti-pluralistic.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Jousset and Rawlins-Gaston, “Avortement,” [16:24].