

CEU Professor Eva Fodor receives ERC Advanced Grant to Study How Illiberal Leaders Reshape Gender, Care and Society

VIENNA, AUSTRIA, June 23, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Central European University](#) Professor [Eva Fodor](#) has received the ERC Advanced Grant of €2.5 million EURs for her project CAREFARE: Gender, Care and Reproduction: How Do Illiberal Leaders Transform Society?, a major five-year research project examining how illiberal governments use reproduction and care policies to reshape social inequalities and consolidate political power.

Across Europe and beyond, democratic backsliding has often been accompanied by ethno-nationalist claims about population decline, and far-reaching pronatalist policies. CAREFARE will investigate how these agendas translate into lived experience: how they affect families, care work, labor markets, gender relations and intersecting inequalities of class, ethnicity and age.

The project will focus on four European countries — Hungary, Serbia, Poland and Italy — combining policy analysis, interviews, surveys, and text analysis using large language models. A central aim is to collect politically independent data in contexts where illiberal governments may restrict, distort or fail to provide reliable evidence about the social consequences of their policies.

“Illiberalism is not only a political project. It is also a deeply social one,” said Eva Fodor, Professor of Gender Studies and Pro-Rector for Teaching and Learning at CEU. “Through CAREFARE, we want to understand how governments reshape everyday life — who is encouraged to have children, who is recognized as deserving care, whose labor counts, and whose vulnerabilities are ignored. To understand how illiberal regimes endure, we have to look closely at the inequalities they create and the social worlds they build.”

CAREFARE will also develop new feminist quantitative research methods, bringing feminist theory into conversation with large-scale data analysis. The project will create new measures or studying gender justice under illiberal rule and will work with local experts, activists and affected communities to ensure that the research captures experiences often missed by conventional surveys

Professor Fodor is one of the leading scholars of gender and illiberalism in Central and Eastern Europe. Her recent work includes *The Gender Regime of Anti-Liberal Hungary* and the article “The Gendered Politics of Illiberalism” published in the *Annual Review of Sociology*. Her own

experience at CEU during the Hungarian government's campaign against the university also shaped the project's focus on the lived consequences of illiberal rule.

By placing care, reproduction and gender at the center of the study of democratic backsliding, CAREFARE seeks to show how illiberal regimes transform not only institutions, but society itself.

About CEU

Founded in 1991 and based in Vienna since 2019, Central European University (CEU) is a non-profit private university with around 1,500 students from more than 100 countries pursuing bachelor's, master's, and doctoral programs accredited both in the United States and Austria. With more than 200 outstanding faculty members and researchers, CEU maintains an excellent student-faculty ratio and consistent external recognition through prestigious research awards and third-party funded projects. CEU is committed to equal opportunity, diversity, open societies, and freedom of expression – exemplified through initiatives such as the “Invisible University for Ukraine.”

CEU maintains a research and civic engagement presence in Budapest through the CEU Democracy Institute, the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archivum (OSA), the CEU Institute for Advanced Study (IAS), and the CEU Center for Ethics and Law in Biomedicine (CELAB), as well as a wide range of public educational programs, lectures, and cultural events, organized by the Civic Engagement, Arts and Culture Unit.

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