

COST Action Training School 2025 – “Collective Action in Times of Culture Wars”
18–21 August 2025, Comenius University, Bratislava (Slovakia)

The 2025 Training School, organised by Working Group 3 titled “*Rethinking activism and forms of opposition with a focus on unexpected allies*”, brought together an international group of junior and senior scholars to critically examine political mobilisation in the context of ongoing contestations of (gender) equality norms in Europe and beyond.

Over four days, 11 trainees, 2 in-person trainers, and 3 online trainers—representing academic institutions from 11 EU and non-EU countries (BA, BE, BG, ES, CZ, IT, LV, PL, RS, SK, UK)—met at the Faculty of Education, Comenius University. Together, they explored diverse forms of collective action, opposition, and alliance-building.

Discussions were enriched by scholarly contributions from both trainees and trainers, who highlighted country-specific dynamics while also drawing attention to cross-regional similarities and contradictions. The range of presentations—from Master’s students, doctoral candidates, and early career researchers—demonstrated the growing academic engagement with the study of contentious politics focused at women’s rights, LGBTQI+ persons’ rights and generally reproductive and sexual rights, over the past decade. Contributions analysed strategies, resources, framings, and actor constellations at the heart of these mobilisations, employing approaches grounded not only in political science but also in sociology, anthropology, or even humanities. This disciplinary diversity underscored the potential of the Training School, and of the COST Action more broadly, to foster interdisciplinary and cross-regional academic exchange.

The Training School also created space for reflecting on the challenges of conducting research “*in times of culture wars*”. Sessions addressed questions of researcher positionality, ethical dilemmas, and methodological obstacles, as well as the precarities faced by early career scholars navigating both the academic field and the labour market. Trainers’ personal reflections on conducting research in contested and insecure contexts sparked valuable collective discussions on strategies for resilience, collaboration, and critical engagement.

Beyond the seminar room, the evening programme offered participants an opportunity to connect with local feminist and LGBTQI+ activism. Visits included a local counselling centre for LGBTQI+ persons and an exhibition on Slovak feminist writer Hana Gregorová at the Bratislava City Museum. These encounters provided an important local grounding for the broader debates of the Training School, linking theoretical discussions with lived experiences of advocacy and resistance in the region of Central and Eastern Europe.

Link to photos on Microsoft SharePoint: [Photos](#)