

HazteOír: anatomy of a reactionary organisation fighting globally LGBTIQ+ initiatives

1) The HazteOír strategy of and its connections to Hispanic far-right

[HazteOír](#), founded by Ignacio Arsuaga in February 2001, is a far-right Christian conservative association in Spain. Initially established with the mission of conducting online petition campaigns primarily concerning family and educational issues from a socially conservative and traditionalist standpoint, the organisation quickly gained prominence. Furthermore, HazteOír shares close ties with Vox, a far-right political party in Spain. Both organisations have worked hand in hand to promote their agenda, with strong connections between Ignacio Arsuaga and Santiago Abascal, the leader of Vox. In May 2013, HazteOír was granted recognition as a public utility association by Interior Minister Jorge Fernández Díaz of the right-wing People's Party (*Partido Popular*), entitling it to economic advantages¹.

In 2013, HazteOír established [CitizenGo](#) – a transnational ultraconservative lobby – to expand its influence beyond Spanish-speaking countries. CitizenGo, based on the same model as HazteOír, also aims to promote the use of online petitions as a form of Internet activism. [According to historian Prof. Steven Forti](#), HazteOír, through CitizenGo, created an international platform for conservative activism, as part of a transnational network of far-right groups aiming to advance a shared agenda. This includes campaigns against laws related to sexual freedom and gender-based violence, with Vox in Spain acting as the political arm of HazteOír.



“Former Vox candidate Fernando Paz – he withdrawn over revisionist statements regarding the Holocaust and homophobic remarks – receives 2022 HazteOír Award from HazteOír President Ignacio Arsuaga” - June 28, 2022 - Photo by [HazteOir.org](#)


¹ This designation was revoked in 2019, less than a year after the election of the new left coalition government formed by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (*PSOE, center-left*) and Podemos (*left-wing*), with the Ministry of Interior deeming it incompatible due to the organisation's propensity to denigrate or undervalue alternative conceptions of the family.

The alliance between HazteOír and Vox is evident in their shared supporters, which include prominent figures like Santiago Abascal and Javier Ortega Smith, a Member of the Lower House of the Spanish Parliament for Madrid and Vice-President of Vox. Moreover, international politicians with ties to the far-right have also been associated with these groups, such as Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, former Italian Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini and Marine Le Pen, President of the far-right group in the Lower House of the French Parliament.

Furthermore, HazteOír’s activities in Spanish politics come with numerous controversies. The latest one takes place in Andalusia, where an educational guide published by the regional government reproduced transphobic messages similar to those of HazteOír’s 2017 bus campaign (see Part III below). This guide, entitled “*Affective and sexual education in the family*”, was presented during the third International LGBTI Congress of Andalusia in October 2023 in Torremolinos. It includes a survey suggesting that parents should teach their children that “*boys have a penis and girls have a vulva*”, without mentioning transgender minors. This omission has been criticised by LGBTI groups, such as [Chrysallis Andalucía](#) – an Andalusian Association of Families of Transgender Children and Young People – which considers that it makes transgender minors invisible and violates the LGBTI laws of Andalusia and the Spanish State. Since 2019, the People’s Party, known for its religious right ideology, is governing the Regional Government of Andalusia with an absolute majority, while Vox is the third political force.

Picture from page 10 of the guide “*Affective and sexual education in the family*”, illustrating the statement “*boys have a penis and girls have a vulva*” published by the Regional Government of Andalusia in September 2023.

2 CAMINANDO HACIA UNA EDUCACIÓN SEXUAL



Internet se ha convertido para nuestros hijos y/o hijas en el lugar más idóneo para resolver sus dudas e inquietudes sobre la sexualidad, con todo lo que ello conlleva. En ausencia de una educación sexual integral en la familia pueden pensar que es la única forma de aprender realmente sobre el sexo, la sexualidad, la dimensión sexual. ¿Sueles hacer esto? Marca lo que corresponda:

Supuestos	Sí	No
Dejo la película y/o serie cuando aparecen escenas 'sexuales'.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Intervengo cuando los menores hablan sobre diversidades sexuales.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Les hablo sobre la menstruación y/o polución nocturna.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Les hablo sobre medios anticonceptivos e infecciones de transmisión sexual.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Le explico que los niños tienen pene y las niñas tienen vulva.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Les explico que la sexualidad es algo más que los genitales, que son emociones, sentimientos, conductas...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Another particularly troubling aspect is the alleged connection between HazteOír and a right-wing extremist, paramilitary and secret organisation that was born in Mexico in 1953 known as “El Yunque”. This clandestine group, reportedly active within certain fundamentalist Catholic circles – including the [Spanish Episcopal Conference](#) – has been accused of promoting divisive agendas and exerting influence within the Catholic Church. Despite not being officially recognised by the Vatican, some ultra-conservative bishops have been linked to El Yunque-affiliated activities. Furthermore, along with Ignacio Arsuaga, the journalist Luis Losada Pescador is known as one of the leaders of the network, as well as Gádor Joya, Vox deputy at Spanish Parliament and spokesperson for Right to Live ([Derecho a Vivir](#)) – an organisation fighting against abortion and euthanasia. Other key figures include Eduardo Hertfelder, founder of the Family Policy Institute ([Instituto de Política Familiar](#)); Jaime Urcelay, head of Professionals for Ethics ([Profesionales por la Ética](#)); and ultraconservative medias, such as Julio Ariza’s Intereconomy conservative press group ([Grupo Intereconomía](#)). In 2010, the Catholic Church commissioned a confidential report on the activities of the sect El Yunque in Spain to assess its influence on the Episcopal Conference and its ability to “*harass, pressure and destabilise*” political power in the country. The document, [revealed in 2012 by Wikileaks](#), stated that one of El Yunque’s most common methods for gaining public presence was to create multiple associations and initiatives open to collaboration from people outside the organisation. “*El Yunque does not work by showing its identity and intentions, but rather by creating multiple labels to influence society*”, the report said, citing the blatant example of HazteOír. In 2014, a Madrid court of first instance considered the relationship between El Yunque and HazteOír to be proven and “*essentially truthful*”. The court also uncovered initial links with Vox, the party having been registered a few months earlier by a close friend of Ignacio Arsuaga’s, former People’s Party deputy Santiago Abascal.

II) The Alexey Komov case as an illustration of CitizenGo’s global network

Alexey Komov, a Russian businessman and close political ally of Vladimir Putin, has emerged as a key figure in promoting conservative values, particularly those aligned with Russian Orthodox beliefs. Alexey Komov’s involvement with CitizenGo can be traced through his role as the director of the Russian office of the [World Congress of Families](#) (WCF), an organisation that collaborates closely with CitizenGo on advocacy efforts, sharing similar objectives regarding family, women and queer rights. Besides, Alexey Komov had been listed as one of [CitizenGo’s board members](#) until March of 2022, but his name was promptly removed from the website shortly after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

As an ambassador for the World Congress of Families to the United Nations, Alexey Komov has actively promoted conservative social values across the world. His collaboration with figures

like the United Statesian activist Brian Brown from the [National Organisation for Marriage](#) (NOM) underscores his commitment to far-right causes on a global scale. Alexey Komov, whose views are violently homophobic and anti-feminist, explained in [an interview in 2019 with Steve Turley](#), a conservative YouTuber based in the USA, that “Russia should become the prime defender of faith of conservatives of the world”.



“Conference explores Orthodox Coptic Christians: Canonised Martyrs. Featuring Alexey Komov, Bishop Angaelos (General Bishop of the Coptic Orthodox Church of London) and former CitizenGO CEO Álvaro Zulueta” - April 17, 2015 - Photo by [CitizenGO](#)

Alexey Komov’s connections extend beyond activism, as he has regularly been described as Konstantin Malofeev’s right-hand man, a Russian oligarch known for his close ties to the Russian Orthodox Church and his support for conservative movements in Europe. To get a better idea of the character, Konstantin Malofeev explained during the 7th WCF in 2013 in Sydney 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”. As a result, the latter, banker and owner of the pro-Kremlin and orthodox fundamentalist television channel [Tsargrad TV](#), named Alexey Komov as the Director of International Affairs for [the Saint Basil the Great Charitable Foundation](#). Created in 2007 by Konstantin Malofeev, this organisation – notably involved in the fight against abortion directly in antenatal clinics through the [“Live, baby!” campaign](#) and in the “re-education” of Ukrainian children in the territories occupied by Russia – included in 2016 in its Board of Directors Vladimir Putin’s assistant and former Minister of Telecommunications and Mass Communications Igor Shchegolev. Furthermore, Alexey Komov and Konstantin Malofeev have facilitated collaborations among far-right groups, including political figures such as Matteo Salvini in Italy. This establishes CitizenGo as the main online hub of an unlikely coalition of the American Christian right, European Catholic activists and hard-line Russian Orthodox, including

[EU-sanctioned oligarchs](#). Their collective endeavour aims to dismantle reproductive and LGBTIQ+ rights worldwide.

According to a report by the European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights that analyses the origin of the money that feeds European anti-gender groups, it is estimated that, during the period 2009-2018, these groups received 707.2 million dollars from a total of 54 organisations distributed among NGOs, foundations, religious organisations and political parties. A vast majority of these funds comes from three geographical areas: Europe, Russia and the USA. 81.3 million dollars came from the United States, either from NGOs, conservative think tanks or Christian right and far-right groups. The Russian Federation contributed 188.2 million dollars to anti-LGBTIQ+ and anti-feminist causes, particularly through Konstantin Malofeev. Finally, European funding makes up the largest part of the anti-gender piggy bank, with 437.7 million dollars. Indeed, according to [a hack of 17,000 documents related to CitizenGo and HazteOír published by Wikileaks in 2021](#), financial support for HazteOír comes from various sources, especially wealthy individuals, including David Álvarez, founder of the multinational Eulen; Isidoro Álvarez, CEO of El Corte Inglés from 1989 until his death in 2014; and Esther Koplowitz, one of Spain's wealthiest women. Additionally, contributions come from international figures such as Mexican billionaire Patrick Slim, the son of Carlos Slim – the country's richest man.



“Photomontage of three of HazteOír’s major Spanish financial backers: Esther Koplowitz (Marquise and, among others, Senior Vice-Chairwoman of the FCC Group), Isidoro Álvarez (Late CEO of El Corte Inglés) and Juan Miguel Villar-Mir (CEO of the construction company Obrascón Huarte Lain)” - August 8, 2021 - Made by [LÚH! NOTICIAS](#)

As the graph below illustrates, Ignacio Arsuaga has manoeuvred CitizenGo’s funding by raising funds from Europe, the United States and Russia in exchange for a seat on the organisation’s board, all with the aim of supporting identitarian and anti-queer parties in Europe. Consequently, Vox aligns closely with Vladimir Putin’s worldview, centered around principles of sovereignty, identity and conservative values. Santiago Abascal finds resonance in the narrative that the Russian President has been defending for two decades, spanning from ultra-nationalism to scepticism of multilateralism and the European Union, from opposition to feminism and queer rights to advocacy for the traditional family structure.

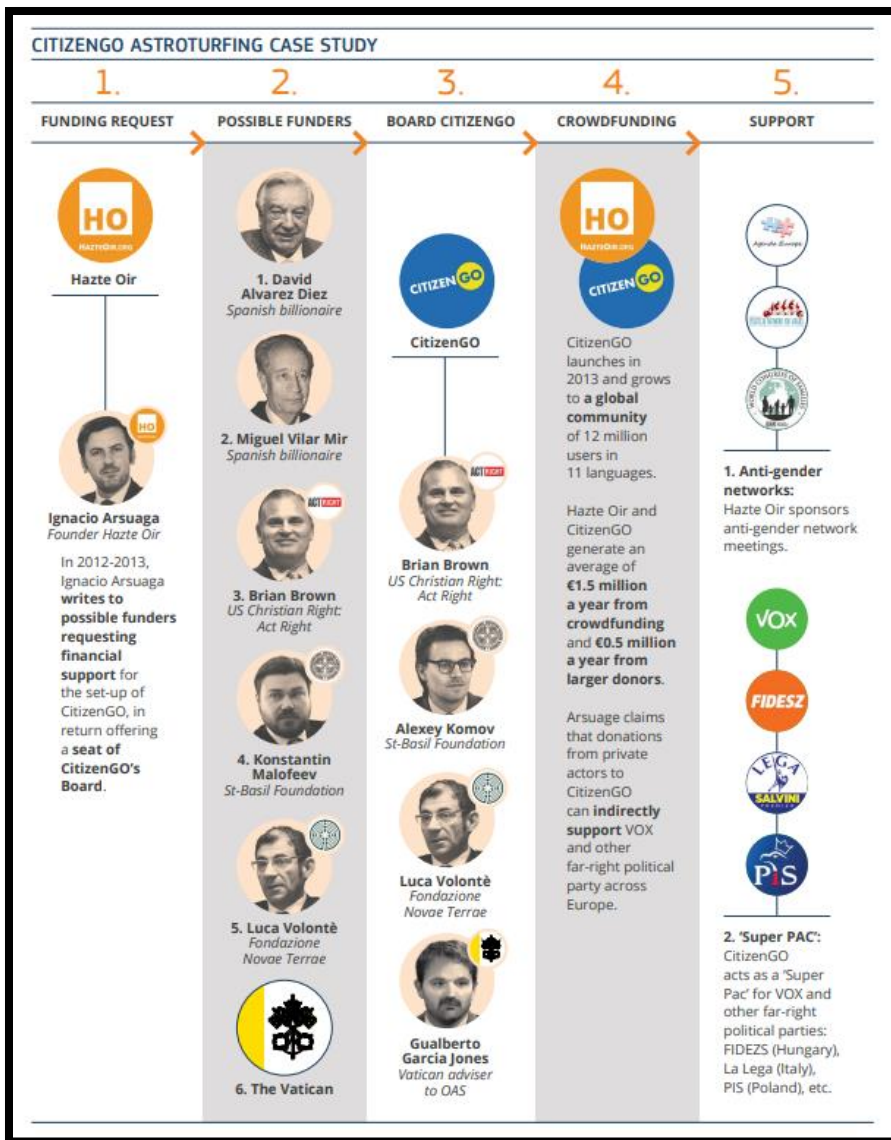


Image from page 79 of Datta Neil's report ["Tip of the Iceberg: Religious Extremist Funders against Human Rights for Sexuality and Reproductive Health in Europe 2009 – 2018"](#), published by the European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights - June 2021

Despite his reactionary views on issues like LGBTIQ+ rights and feminism, Alexey Komov remains influential within global conservative circles, leveraging his connections to advance a shared agenda rooted in traditional values and spreading massive misinformation. [In an interview given in 2022 to The Bureau of Investigative Journalism](#), Nelly Munyasia – the executive director of [Kenya's Reproductive Health Network](#) – CitizenGo is conducting a campaign of massive misinformation and intimidation that constitutes *"transnational opposition to reproductive rights across the globe"*. For instance, CitizenGo orchestrated digital campaigns, political lobbying and ground protests targeting reproductive and LGBTIQ+ rights in Kenya and Ghana. In this manner, the far-right lobby claimed victory when legislation to extend access to abortion in Kenya was blocked and played a key role in pushing [a bill in Ghana](#) that would have imposed lengthy prison sentences for LGBTIQ+ people – still pending today due to a legal challenge in the Supreme Court.

III) HazteOír’s growing exposure in the justice system for hate speech

In 2023, the Spanish advocacy group HazteOír faced a hefty fine imposed by the Generalitat de Catalunya for its controversial bus campaign in Barcelona. The campaign, marked by slogans such as “No a la mutilación infantil” (No to child mutilation), “Las mujeres no tienen pene” (Women don’t have a penis) and “Que no te engañen. Si naces hombre, eres hombre. Si eres mujer, seguirás siéndolo” (Don’t be fooled. If you are born a man, you are a man. If you are a woman, you will remain a woman), has been deemed transphobic by the Catalan authorities saying that “these demonstrations created a risk of harm to trans and non-binary people”. [The Generalitat’s resolution](#) underscores the gravity of HazteOír’s actions, imposing a fine of €20,000 due to the significant risk of harm posed to transgender and non-binary individuals. Indeed, while the organisation claimed that its campaign targeted [the transgender bill](#) – published on March of 2023 and facilitating the legal change of the gender – authorities considered that the messages explicitly denied the personal identities of the LGBTIQ+ community.

“The orange transphobic bus sponsored by HazteOír in Spain” - February 28, 2017 - Photo by [HazteOír.org](#)



Saúl Castro, a specialised LGBTIQ+ rights lawyer and president of [No Es Terapia](#) (It’s Not Therapy) – the organisation that filed the complaint – hailed the Generalitat’s decision as a positive precedent, highlighting the importance of holding accountable those who propagate discriminatory discourse. According to him, such actions cannot be tolerated under the guise of freedom of expression.

This recent sanction is not the first time HazteOír has faced legal repercussions for its bus campaigns. In 2017, a similar initiative in Catalonia resulted in a fine of €1,700 under the region’s LGTBI law. Although HazteOír successfully appealed this decision in 2019, the

organisation now faces a different legal landscape with the imposition of fines under the regional equality law.

Moreover, another bus campaign by HazteOír in Madrid drew attention and controversy, coupled with the dissemination of homophobic leaflets to more than 16,000 schools in the Spanish capital. Even though No Es Terapia has lodged a complaint with the Regional Ministry of Family, Youth and Social Policy based on two regional laws – the trans law and the LGTBI law of Madrid, both passed in 2016, and since December 2023 [largely weakened by the People's Party and Vox](#) – the Madrid court ruled that the messages on the bus fell within the scope of freedom of expression and dismissed the prosecution's complaint.

The wider implications of these cases resonate beyond Spain, reminding us of the limits of freedom of expression, in line with philosopher Karl Popper's paradox of tolerance. In a society founded on the principles of equality and respect for diversity, actions that promote discrimination cannot be tolerated and must have appropriate legal consequences. Unlimited tolerance can lead to the disappearance of tolerance itself. Therefore, to maintain a tolerant society, it is necessary to be intolerant of intolerance, ensuring that freedom of expression does not become a tool for promoting hate and violence.

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