

# Symposium on Reproductive Rights in Europe

## HIGHLIGHTS

**1 December 2023**

# EDITORIAL

The controversies surrounding abortion are reignited once again as we witnessed the Supreme Court overruling *Roe v. Wade* in the United States and France constitutionalising abortion rights. Abortion rights and access continue to be debated and contested not only in countries where abortion is still restricted but also where it has been decriminalised and legalised. This symposium aimed to convene researchers from different disciplines to navigate the abortion controversy through academic inquiry. The goal is to enrich the public debate and fuel it with scientific knowledge in medical sciences but also in social sciences, discussing reproductive rights, futures, and justice more broadly.

Indeed, reproductive rights are usually discussed within the restrictive framework of health policy and have come to be confined to a medico-legal paradigm. However, researchers have also highlighted that access to contraception and abortion contributes to women's empowerment, often measured through educational attainment and labour force participation, with spillover effects across generations and broader implications for societies. The socio-economic dimension of contraceptive and abortion access has been unravelled by a burgeoning literature: starting with the seminal paper by Claudia Goldin, Nobel prize in Economics in 2023, and Lawrence Katz, *The Power of the Pill* published in 2002, followed by Martha Bailey's paper *More Power to the Pill* (2006), and Caitlin Knowles Myers on *The Power of Abortion Policy* (2017), just to mention some of the literature in economics.

While these works have broadened the scope of abortion research beyond health policy, they predominantly focus on the United States. This symposium advances this research agenda in the European context and aims to shed light on the role of reproductive rights, particularly abortion rights and access, in furthering women's economic emancipation and gender equality.

The symposium marks the starting point for further collaborations among scholars to promote reproductive rights — a research agenda that the Gender Studies Programme at Sciences Po is strongly committed to supporting.

**Hélène Périvier, economist at the French Economic Observatory (OFCE), Gender Studies Programme Director, Sciences Po**

**Hazal Atay, political scientist at the Laboratory for Interdisciplinary Evaluation of Public Policies (LIEPP), Sciences Po**

# INTRODUCTION

## What inspired the creation of this symposium ?

The landscape of reproductive rights across Europe differs greatly from country to country, creating a complicated and varied network of policies and laws to navigate, understand, and analyse. An interdisciplinary approach is essential to help understand how this topic spans across different disciplines and fields from political science and economics to gynaecology and psychology. This symposium, put on by the Sciences Po's Gender Studies Programme, highlighted research and discourse on the topic of reproductive rights spanning across different European nations and different fields and disciplines.

**Sciences Po's Gender Studies Programme** is a cross-cutting research and educational initiative initiating a multi-disciplinary approach to gender studies. It aims to embrace and address complexity that characterises gender issues through the production, discussion, and dissemination of scientific knowledge.





# MORNING SESSION

## ABORTION RIGHTS, POLITICS AND ACTIVISM

The topic of abortion access extends past the political sphere into disciplines and fields such as medicine, sociology, political science, history, gender studies and more. During the morning session the presentations are centred around the theme of abortion rights, politics, and activism. The presentations highlight the various perspectives on the topic of abortion access, hopefully encouraging collaboration between different disciplines on this topic .

### OPENING KEYNOTE: MARTHA BAILEY



#### Introduction

Martha Bailey is a professor of economics and an affiliate at the California Center for Population Research at the University of California-Los Angeles. She is also a Research Associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research and an editor at the Journal of Labor Economics as well as a participant of the editorial board at the American Economic Review. Martha Bailey holds both an MA and a Ph.D. in economics from Vanderbilt University. Her work focuses on labour and gender economics as well as analysing how various government policies and programmes have influenced the American economy.

#### Presentation Summary

- Access to proper reproductive healthcare impacts women currently but it also has **multi-generational effects** on the potential children women might have
- Women's **childbearing tendencies** are influenced by many factors such as the opportunity cost of having children, income or education level, access to quality contraceptives and marital status
- The **economic effects** of reproductive healthcare include increased time for studies, work experience, and other forms of human capital investments
- Her project **M-CARES** demonstrates how financial incentives or public policy changes can impact an individual's access to contraceptives



*Image description: Pictured above is Martha Bailey during her opening keynote speech*

#### Looking Ahead

Martha Bailey left us with some key questions regarding the future of reproductive justice:

- How do we make sure to not only consider legal access to contraceptives but also financial access to contraceptives?
- How to encourage and support “**purposeful parenthood**” so people can become parents at the most optimal times in their lives?



# PANELLISTS

## Hazal Atay

### Introduction:

Hazal Atay is a postdoctoral researcher at the Laboratory for Interdisciplinary Evaluation of Public Policies (LIEPP) at Sciences Po with a current focus on gender studies within Turkish politics. In addition to her research at Sciences Po, she is a consultant at the World Health Organization (WHO) and was previously a visiting student at the University of Cambridge's Centre for Gender Studies in 2019. Her past academic experience also includes having a Master's degree in Political Studies from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS). Throughout her work, Hazal Atay conveys a strong analysis on key public policies regarding women's rights and how the public or various activist groups have responded to them.

**Presentation:** Abortion and law in light of recent trends in abortion activism



### Key Takeaways

- The importance of shifting the perspective on abortion from the medical-legal paradigm to include a more multifaceted approach
- Abortion access goes beyond the question of choice and towards the framework of achieving reproductive justice
- Economics can contribute to reproductive justice framework by enabling us to establish linkages between abortion access, women's empowerment-particularly through education and labor force participation, and broader social justice

## Elena Brodeală

### Introduction:

Elena Brodeală's research brings an insightful and unique perspective to the discussion of reproductive rights and abortion access across Europe. Her educational background includes a Ph.D. in Law from the European University Institute and an LL.M. degree from Yale Law School, giving her extensive knowledge on how various legal systems operate. She is a researcher at the University of Kent, with a focus on reproductive justice from a human rights law perspective. Elena Brodeală's research spans across different countries in Europe including Romania, Switzerland, France and other countries that have had cases taken to the European Court of Human Rights. Her work undertakes an interdisciplinary approach, analysing the interplay between law and society and how it shapes power relations between different groups. In particular, her work assesses the role of law in enhancing (or hindering) reproductive justice and autonomy for individuals belonging to historically disadvantaged groups, such as women or LGBT+ people.

**Presentation:** Abortion in Post-Communist Romania: Unveiling the Gap between Legalisation and Gender Equality



### Key Takeaways

- Regulation of reproduction in communist Romania included forced gynecological check-ups, no contraception or abortions abroad, limited maternity leave
- In 1989, abortion was decriminalised but framed as a public health concern, not a women's right
- Romania is a strong example of how the decriminalisation of abortion does not equate to abortion access because even with the legal changes that have occurred in Romania, there are still many social and economic barriers to abortion access

# Elena Caruso

## Introduction:

Elena Caruso is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Waterloo and an abortion-rights activist. Originally from Italy, she earned a 5-year MA in Law from the University of Catania and an LL.M. in International Law, as well as a Ph.D. in Law, both from the University of Kent. She is an interdisciplinary scholar whose research spans law, sociology, history, and philosophy. A significant portion of her work focuses on the mutual relationship between social movements and the law. Her doctoral thesis explored how the feminist movement ‘shaped’, and was shaped by, the ‘becoming legal’ of abortion in 1970s Italy. Her current project focuses on self-managed abortion activism and the regulation of abortion in contemporary Italy.



**Presentation Title :** "How Did You Get In There and Make the Law Work?" The Feminist Occupation of the Umberto I Hospital in 1978 Rome, Italy: A Tale of Boundaries

## Key Takeaways

- The influence of historical events on contemporary legislation mustn't be overlooked
- In 1978, an abortion law passed in Italy introducing new barriers to abortion such as waiting times, gestational age limits, parental consent for minors and more
- Feminists have been at the forefront of the legalisation of abortion in Italy, not only advocating for it but also training healthcare professionals in provision of abortion care

# Selma Hajri

## Introduction:

Selma Hajri is a medical doctor in the fields of endocrinology, diabetes and reproduction with over 25 years of experience in Tunisia and other African countries. She has been involved in numerous organisations committed to researching, promoting, and protecting reproductive rights across Northern Africa and the Middle East. She has held leadership positions in associations such as the Right and Access of Women to Safe Abortion (RAWSA) Network in the MENA region. Additionally, she is a member of the advisory committee of the International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion (ICWRSA) and she was awarded the Women Have Wings award in 2021.



**Presentation Title :** Access to safe abortion in the Middle East and North Africa: the role of religion and patriarchy

## Key Takeaways

- Within the MENA region, the issue of the right to abortion remains a taboo and a subject of shame making it difficult to encourage conversations about understanding and expanding reproductive rights
- The influence of religion and patriarchy can cause many barriers to abortion such as social pressures, bureaucratic barriers and more
- Legalisation of abortion in countries such as Turkey and Tunisia are currently being undermined by social stigma and denial of care provision, which hinders access to abortion for many women

# Highlights

- Panelists discussed how both **direct and indirect barriers to abortion** can affect women differently based on their varying identities across race, class, and geographical region.
- Multiple presentations discussed that decriminalisation of abortion does not equate to proper abortion access
- The **reproductive justice framework** aims to provide a more comprehensive overview of women's right to have children, right to not have children and the right to nurture children in a safe and healthy environment





# AFTERNOON SESSION

## IMAGINING REPRODUCTIVE FUTURES: TOWARDS REPRODUCTIVE AUTONOMY AND JUSTICE

During the afternoon session of the symposium the presentations are centred around the theme of reproductive futures and reaching reproductive autonomy and justice. These presentations aim to highlight the importance of anticipating what the future of reproductive justice and abortion access could look like and how abortion laws and policies could change over time.

# PANELLISTS

## Rebecca Gomperts

### Introduction:

Originally from the Netherlands, Rebecca Gomperts is a medical doctor and founder of Women on Waves and its sister company Women on Web. Both organisations are aimed at increasing abortion access for individuals who face barriers to their reproductive rights. Women on Waves was founded in 1999 and its aims include preventing unsafe abortions and increasing education on reproductive justice and bodily autonomy. A few years later, in 2005, Rebecca Gomperts established Women on Web, an organisation focused on expanding access to safe abortion care online for individuals who face barriers to safe abortions in-person or through alternate methods. Despite many setbacks and challenges, Gomperts' work in the field of abortion access has continued to make strides towards increasing abortion access and fighting the stigma that can surround reproductive rights and justice. Her work provides information, knowledge and resources on conceptions, reproductive health and abortion access for individuals across the globe.

**Presentation Title:**  
Mifepristone, the Magic Pill



- Key Takeaways:**
- Women can face many barriers to accessing in-clinic abortions based on their income, race, household structure etc.
  - Pre-existing barriers combined with geographical restrictions can cause individuals to view telemedicine and abortion pills as the most accessible form of reproductive healthcare





## Magali Mazuy

### Introduction:

Magali Mazuy is a researcher at the French Institute for Demographic Studies (INED) with a focus on fertility, family structures, and gender-based violence. In addition to being a researcher, and the Team Director of the “Fertility, Families and Couples” Unit, at the INED Magali Mazuy is also a teacher at the University of Lyon 2 and Lyon 3 and a researcher for the Max Weber Research Center. Because the INED is heavily focused on trying to understand broad trends across the French population, Magali Mazuy’s work often observes overall population trends such as birth rates, marriage rates, socio-economic trends and more within the field of reproductive justice: sexual and reproductive norms and rights.

### Presentation Title:

Recourse to abortion in France: Characteristics and Limits, 50 years later



### Key Takeaways:

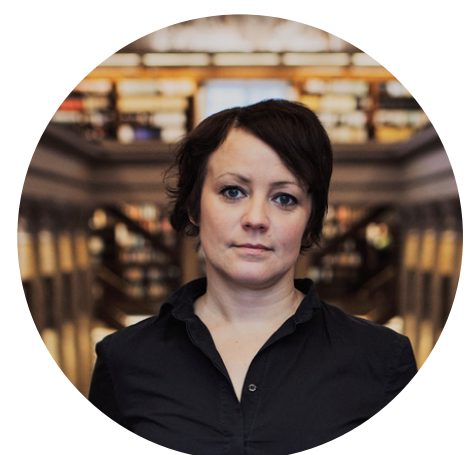
- Abortion access laws started in France in 1975 with the “Veil Law” which was adopted for a period of 5 years and it authorized abortion within 10 weeks of pregnancy
- The INED provides numerical data to analyse how legal and geographic factors impact changes in abortion/fertility trends and rates

## Riikka Homanen

### Introduction:

Riikka Homanen is an Academy Research Fellow in gender studies at Tampere University and a co-founder and leader of the Finnish Reproductive Studies Network (FiResNet). Her background includes a Ph.D. in Gender Studies and MA in Sociology from Tampere University. Her research has covered many topics in the field of reproductive justice, and her interests are focused on social relations within assisted reproduction. Riikka Homanen’s work provides strong insight into how different factors such as socioeconomic status, gender, sexuality and race/ethnicity impact practices within the field of assisted reproduction.

**Presentation Title:** The Transnational Fertility Industry and the Future of Assisted Reproduction



### Key Takeaways

- Technological advancements in the field of assisted reproduction can include time-lapse embryo monitoring, new incubator technology etc.
- There are many injustices present in the transnational fertility industry across class, income, and racial privileges



# Lucy Van de Wiel

## Introduction:

Lucy van de Wiel is a lecturer and postgraduate research director in Global Health and Social Medicine at King’s College London (KCL) where she founded and chairs the Reproduction Research Cluster. She previously was a research associate in the Reproductive Sociology Research Group (ReproSoc) at the University of Cambridge and her educational background includes a Ph.D. and Research MA in Cultural Analysis from the University of Amsterdam. Her recent book, *Freezing Fertility*, published by New York University Press in 2020 has inspired a VPRO (Dutch public broadcaster) Backlight Documentary by the same name.



## Presentation Title:

Imagining Reproductive Futures: New Technological, Financial and Regulatory Horizons in Assisted Conception

## Key Takeaways:

- The number of in vitro fertilisation (IVF) cycles has been increasing steadily nearly every year for multiple countries across the world
- Increased investments in the assisted reproduction industry has resulted in multiple mergers and consolidations across reproduction clinics

# Annabel Sowemimo

## Introduction:

Annabel Sowemimo is a writer, activist and researcher in the field of reproductive justice and racial inequities in the healthcare field. Currently she is a PhD candidate at King’s College London and has previously obtained her MD from University College London (UCL). She is also the founder and former co-director of the Reproductive Justice Initiative (formerly known as Decolonising Contraception) which is aimed at increasing education, advocacy and research towards health care inequities and racial disparities. Earlier in 2023 her book, *Divided: Racism, Medicine and Why We Need to Decolonise Healthcare*, was published exploring the histories and past practices in the field of medicine that still influence how healthcare looks and operates today.



## Presentation Title:

Reproductive Injustice: How the Caring Role of Black Women in Britain Takes a Toll on Their Reproductive Lives

## Key Takeaways:

- The U.K. healthcare system can have disproportionately negative effects on individuals from marginalised backgrounds and identities
- It is very difficult to discuss the reproductive futures without first understanding the reproductive past





# Highlights

## Assisted Reproductive technologies

- Lucy Van de Wiel and Riikka Homanen discussed different economic and technological changes in the field of assisted reproduction, such as increased mergers, new time lapse monitoring, facial matching software, AI automation and more

## Legal and Geographic Context

- Rebecca Gomperts and Magali Mazuy provided insight on how various legal contexts can impact abortion and fertility trends as well as what role the state and government plays in the field of assisted reproduction and reproductive rights

## Historical Impact

- Annabel Sowemimo and Rebecca Gomperts discussed how past historical events and practices influence present-day, and potentially future, actions in the field of reproductive justice
- Other confounding variables that contribute to reproductive justice outside of fertility (healthcare, housing, economic opportunities, etc.)

## The Importance of Education

- Nearly all the presentations touched on the importance of increased education on reproductive rights and health
- This could include increased education and awareness on how to extend or delay fertility and how to take control of one's reproductive future in general

## CLOSING KEYNOTE: DELPHINE O



### Introduction:

Delphine O is ambassador-at-large and Secretary General for the Generation Equality Forum (Beijing+25). She led the organisation of the largest international summit for women's rights since 1995, convened by UN Women and co-chaired by France and Mexico. She was previously a Member of Parliament for La République en Marche, elected in Paris. A member of the Foreign Relations Committee and chairwoman of the France-Iran friendship group at the French National Assembly, she authored a report on the strategic stakes in the South China Sea. Delphine O graduated from the *École Normale Supérieure* and the Harvard Kennedy School. After working at the French embassy in Seoul, the Consulate General in New York and the Stimson Center in Washington, she moved to Iran and cofounded the information website "Persian Letters". She is a French-American Young Leader 2019, Munich Young Leader 2019, member of the Council at the Council on Foreign Relations, member of the Strategic Orientation Board of the German Marshall Fund France and a board member of *Institut des Relation Internationales et Stratégiques*.

### Presentation Summary

- Delphine O has experienced a shift in her professional career from expanding human rights to now having to defend pre-existing human rights that are under the threat of being removed
- There are many connections and links between different anti-rights movement events around the world and the types of influences one region can have on another
- There are many important angles to consider in the reproductive rights movement including the ideological, moral, and legal angles towards the movements
- Reproductive rights is foundational to many other movements towards gender equality
- To learn more, check out Delphine O's book: *La diplomatie féministe est un sport de combat*



# CONCLUSION



Through hosting this symposium, Sciences Po's Gender Studies Programme was able to encourage and inspire increased collaboration with the study of reproductive rights. Maintaining an interdisciplinary and international approach to the field of reproductive rights is imperative to advancing research.



## What Comes Next?

Here are 3 key takeaways from the symposium to consider for future research projects, public policies analysis and more

<div>Collaboration</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintaining an interdisciplinary approach helps to highlight multiple perspectives in the reproductive justice movement that vary across field of expertise and geographical region</li></ul></div>	<div>Education</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased education helps individuals feel more empowered to take control of their reproductive health and futures</li><li>• Encourage women to ask questions and find unique solutions that works for them</li></ul></div>	<div>Exploration</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The landscape of reproductive justice is always changing and there are countless new technologies and practices emerging</li><li>• It's important to understand and challenge what the future of reproductive justice and rights could look like</li></ul></div>
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## Contact



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