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BETWEEN ABORTION TOURISM AND TRANSNATIONAL ABORTION ACTIVISM

The impact of Polish abortion legislation on the
CEE region

Zuzana Žuborová

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Abstract

This master's thesis examines the implications of current abortion legislation in Poland on civil society in neighbouring countries, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), namely the Czech and Slovak Republic. Poland recently passed a strict abortion law that has led to widespread protests and transnational activism. The thesis uses qualitative research methods, including media analysis and interviews, to investigate the ways in which civil society in neighbouring countries is affected by this legislation. This study explores the extent to which Polish abortion laws have influenced the political and social discourse and life of the society around reproductive rights in CEE and identifies forms of cross-border (transnational) activism related to abortion issues. The current findings indicate that a certain organisation aids Polish women seeking abortions in Slovak Republic but prefers to keep their activities out of the public eye due to the possible prevalence of anti-abortion protests and threats. Consequently, Slovak Republic may contribute to a lack of accessible information for Polish women. In contrast, the Czech Republic offers a more consistent and reliable provision of abortion services for Polish women. While a Slovak-based organisation exists to aid women in need, the support network in the Czech Republic appears to be led and organised by Polish women. The study also identifies several types of cross-border activism, including formation of organisations. The thesis argues that cross-border activism is an effective strategy for promoting reproductive rights and countering restrictive legislation and provides recommendations for future advocacy efforts. This research contributes to understanding of the implications of abortion laws on civil society in neighbouring countries and highlights the importance of transnational activism in promoting reproductive rights in the CEE region.

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List of abbreviations

- AWB** Abortion Without Borders
- CA** Content Analysis
- CEE** Central and Eastern Europe
- EU** European Union
- NGO** Non-governmental organisation
- TA** Transnational activist

List of tables

Table 1.: Coding scheme for qualitative content analysis of the articles based on Social Movements and Transnational Social Movements theories

Table 2.: Coding scheme/Interview Guide preview for qualitative content analysis of the interviews based on Social Movements and Transnational Social Movements theories

List of appendices

Appendix 1.: Interview Guide – Respondent version

Appendix 2.: Interview Guide – Key Respondent version

Appendix 3.: List of respondents – Case of the Czech Republic

Appendix 4.: List of respondents – Case of the Slovak Republic

Appendix 5.: List of articles – Case of the Czech Republic

Appendix 6.: List of articles – Case of the Slovak Republic

Appendix 7.: Consent Form

Glossary

Abortion Without Borders – an initiative of six organisations from multiple countries, founded on 11th of December in 2019 to assist Polish women in obtaining safe abortions in Poland or abroad. Following six organisations – Kobiety W Sieci, Abortion Dream Team, Women Help Women, Ciocia Basia, Abortion Network Amsterdam, and Abortion Support Network work together to help women access abortions at home with pills or abroad in clinics and hospitals (AWB, 2023).

Dziewuchy Dziewuchom (Gals for Gals) – organisation, which has been operating in Poland since 2018, originated as an unofficial movement in 2016 in response to a proposal to tighten anti-abortion legislation in Poland. The Facebook group Dziewuchy Dziewuchom was founded for this purpose, and it immediately expanded in popularity, with over 100,000 members. The purpose of the organisation is to promote intersectional, inclusive feminism. The majority of this subject's education is done through social media content. This organisation improves the lives of women in Poland, develops their position in society and culture, and promotes feminist attitudes as a normative worldview (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom, 2023).

Ciocia Czesia – organisation that assists Polish women seeking abortions in Czech Republic. Ciocia Czesia performs volunteer services and provides counselling, psychiatric consultations, and financial aid in the form of hospital bill reimbursement. Ciocia Czesia was formed in the fall of 2020 in response to the tightening of Polish law (Ciocia Czesia, 2023).

Cosmopolitan – belonging to all parts of the world, not restricted to any one country or its inhabitants (Tarrow, 2005).

The Czarny Protest (Black Protest) – (a protest of women dressed in black). One of the most significant phenomenon in Poland in the twenty-first century, a series of nationwide, large-scale protests, a prolonged revolution, the result of the efforts of numerous groups and projects, organised between September 2016 and 2018 against the proposal to further restrict abortion legislation in Poland. It is connected to both the past and the future. #czarnyprotest has been the most popular and influential hashtag in Poland since 2016 (Szczawinska, 2020).

Pro-Choice – advocating the legal right of a woman to choose whether or not she will have an abortion (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023).

Table of Content

1. Introduction	1
1.1. Aim and research question	3
1.2. Justification of the case selection	4
1.3. Research limitations	6
1.4. European standpoint	6
1.4.1. European scholarship contribution	8
2. Theory	10
2.1. Theory of Social Movements	10
2.1.1. Defining Social Movements	10
2.1.2. Transnational social movements, activism and activists	12
3. Background and previous research	16
3.1. Case of derivation – Poland	16
3.1.1. Polish abortion legislation	16
3.1.2. Local and transnational activism	17
3.2. Case of analysis – Czech Republic and Slovak Republic	20
3.2.1. Background of the Czech Republic case	21
3.2.2. Background of the Slovak Republic case	22
3.3. Previous research	23
3.3.1. Feminist movements and transnational feminist movements in Europe	23
3.3.2. Abortion tourism.....	24
3.3.3. Transnational abortion activism	25
4. Methodological framework	27
4.1. Choice of method	27
4.2. Case study design	27
4.2.1. Case selection – Czech Republic and Slovak Republic.....	28
4.2.2. Method of data collection	28
4.2.3. Method of data analysis	33
4.2.4. Ethical consideration	36
5. Results	38
5.1. Case of the Czech Republic	38

5.1.1. Portrayal of the Polish abortion legislation in the media.....	38
5.1.2. Citizens, society, activists. Responses to the Polish abortion legislation.....	39
5.2. Case of the Slovak Republic.....	47
5.2.1. Portrayal of the Polish abortion legislation in the media.....	47
5.2.2. Citizens, society, activists. Responses to the Polish abortion legislation.....	49
6. Discussion and Conclusion.....	56
6.1. Future directions of the research.....	64
References.....	66

1. Introduction

Nearly all states, including substate entities and organisations, globally regulate abortion through their criminal codes (Browne and Calkin, 2019). Despite the persistent efforts of various activists and organisations to decriminalise abortion, and notwithstanding the European Union's (EU) recommendations, regulations and input aimed at deterring EU member states from imposing stricter abortion laws, the ultimate authority and decision-making power lies with each nation (Kontoulis, 2022; Žuborová, 2022). Consequently, legal control of abortion remains the most contentious issue as, despite all this, some states tend to tighten their abortion legislation.

Since 2016, abortion legislation has been the object of intense discussion and focal point of social movements in Europe, especially in Poland. The Polish parliament passed the Family Planning Act in 1993 (The 1993 Family Planning - Protection of the Human Foetus and Conditions Permitting Pregnancy Termination), which included Article 4a (1)(2) related to the protection of the human foetus and the conditions under which termination of pregnancy is permissible (Article 1, Family Planning Act, 1993). This law was further tightened in 2021, and currently remains in force. As of today, the amendment proposed by the ruling Law and Justice party represents a de facto absolute ban on abortions in Poland (Delaleu, 2021).

The political mechanisms that bring about this shift are largely site-specific and are influenced by the political, cultural, and institutional environments (Browne and Calkin, 2019). Pro-choice activists (i.e. a person who advocates the legal right of a woman to choose whether or not she will have an abortion) are engaging in alternative modes of resistance that advocate for abortion reform outside of official political institutions on a global scale. Abortion regulation frequently results from broad mobilisations against and violation of existing restrictions; hence, the political backdrop for policy change is created by social movements that look beyond legislative reform to expand access (Browne and Calkin, 2019). Furthermore, access to abortion is dependent on factors other than the legal status of abortion (Browne and Calkin, 2019). In addition, it implicates not only socioeconomic but also place-based, racial, sexual, and other inequalities. The lived implications of these inequalities are most evident in patterns of abortion travel, in which women traverse large distances and political borders in quest of legal abortion. The freedom to travel for healthcare services within the EU member states has been facilitated

to a greater extent than any other political entity, primarily due to the implementation of Directive 2011/24/EU on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare (Directive 2011/24/EU). It is noteworthy that EU citizens possess the exclusive privilege to avail themselves of healthcare systems offered by other countries within the EU. An increasing amount of prior research on the topic of abortion tourism has also identified how feminist and pro-choice activist groups promote this travel through the establishment of social and financial infrastructures (Browne and Calkin, 2019).

The most recent example of this phenomenon regarding the case of Poland, is the organisation called Ciocia Czesia which considerably assists Polish women in their search for safe abortion in the Czech Republic. It is an authentic illustration of the cross-border solidarity work between Polish and Czech women (Ciocia Czesia, 2022) resulting from a variety of transnational protests and help. This group is involved in various activities and has a significant volunteer community in the Czech Republic. Formation of the Ciocia Czesia group is hence one of several implications of the present Polish legal position where abortion has become practically illegal as of 22nd of October 2020, when the Constitutional Tribunal pronounced the statute permitting abortions to be unconstitutional, effectively prohibiting the vast majority of abortions performed in Poland.

In essence, this thesis aims to examine the consequences of the Poland's current abortion legislation – both the Family Planning, Human Embryo Protection and Conditions of Permissibility of Abortion Act of 7 January 1993, and the newest decision of the Polish Constitutional Tribunal that limits the abortion legislation, on civil society in its neighbouring countries, specifically the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic. The research problem holds significant relevance owing to the acknowledgement of abortion as a fundamental human right within the legislative framework of the European Union. As a result, the implementation of abortion restrictions has the capacity to trigger new forms of social mobilisations and foster the emergence of novel cross-border structures and formations that have not been previously explored. This study comprehensively encompasses both domestic and transnational aspects, and its direction is steered by specific and delineated research questions presented in the following subchapter.

Furthermore, the research is methodologically oriented towards a qualitative approach, employing in-depth interviews with journalists, researchers and transnational activist. The

interviews are complemented by conducting a content analysis of relevant articles. This dual strategy aims to enhance the depth of insights and obtain firsthand and essential information on the subject matter.

The thesis is structured as follows; First, the aim, research question and European standpoint and scholarship contribution of the discussed issue is explained. The thesis secondly introduces the theoretical framework of social movements and transnational activism theory which support the aim and thus guide the further course of the thesis. Additionally, previous studies on transnational activism and abortion tourism point towards the need for more investigation and discussion of the research gap in the CEE region. Hence it provides a foundation of academic literature upon which the thesis has been built. In addition, the contextual background of the Polish abortion legislation case is expounded upon, as it constitutes a crucial point of derivation, alongside a succinct overview of the Czech and Slovak cases. Thirdly, the methodology based upon a multiple case study analysis is introduced, followed by the analysis using coding schemes based on theories. Fourthly, the results produced by said analysis are presented and consequently concluded and discussed. The discussion of the study's results illuminates several points of consideration for future research which are presented within the conclusion.

1.1. Aim and research question

The main aim of the research is to investigate the consequences of the Poland's current abortion legislation on civil society in its neighbouring countries – Czech and Slovak Republics. Given the fact that the right to undergo a safe abortion is recognised as a fundamental human right within the legislative framework of the European Union, the imposition of restrictions on abortion rights has the potential to stimulate the emergence of new forms of social mobilisations across EU member states. This study extensively investigates the implications of abortion rights restrictions in both domestic and transnational settings and is driven by a specific research questions outlined as follows:

Research question 1.:

- *To what extent and how does the legislation in Poland influence social activism among citizens in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, aimed at the prevention of limitations on abortion law in both EU member states?*

Research question 2.:

- *What forms of abortion-related cross-border (transnational) activism can be identified among CEE citizens?*

This transnational research, taking two nations (Czech Republic and Slovakia) as main focal points and Poland as a point of derivation, focuses on the implications of the Polish latest legislation on access to safe and legal abortion on the civil society of the two aforementioned European countries. The outputs are to be achieved through a comprehensive qualitative analysis of available data, including interviews with activists, journalists, researchers and content analysis of the media outputs. However, as mentioned previously, the research aims to identify different forms of cross-border (transnational) activism related to abortion among civil society of the two of the CEE countries. The research explores activists or the groups, as well as the challenges and opportunities they face in their efforts to promote reproductive rights and access to safe, legal abortion.

1.2. Justification of the case selection

The phenomenon of Polish women travelling to neighbouring countries, namely Slovakia and the Czech Republic, to access safe and legal abortion services has garnered media attention since 2016. However, while the issue has been widely publicised in the Czech Republic, it remains contentious and underreported in Slovakia. Consequently, the need for a comprehensive investigation of this issue and its potential effects on neighbouring countries is crucial.

Conducting research on discussed topic of Polish women seeking abortions in Slovakia and the Czech Republic is essential for various reasons. Firstly, such research can provide a nuanced understanding of the experiences and challenges that these women face. Secondly, such research can highlight the situation in neighbouring countries. Media reports suggest that transnational activism, transnational help and social movements advocating for reproductive rights and justice are more prominent in the Czech Republic. Studying the experiences of Polish women seeking abortions in this country can provide insights into the potential effectiveness of transnational activism in promoting reproductive rights across borders.

In contrast, the topic of abortion in Slovakia remains contentious, and there is a dearth of media coverage. Therefore, this research can also explore the broader implications of restrictive abortion laws and can examine the increase in demand for safe and legal abortion services and its impact on healthcare systems in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. It can also provide insights into the need for transnational activism and advocacy for reproductive rights across borders. The research on transnational abortion activism and abortion tourism in the case of Slovakia and the Czech Republic is essential to understanding the challenges faced by Polish women and the potential implications of this phenomenon on neighbouring countries.

Regarding the data collection process, the interviewees are selected from the Czech Republic and Slovakia based on their previous activism track record in reproductive and women's rights, as well as journalists according to their previous media outputs on this topic. The reason for settling with the Czech Republic and Slovakia is to determine what kind of abortion-related cross-border activism may be recognised among two neighbouring countries that are both helping foreigners (mostly Polish women) but services and numbers towards them vary greatly. Furthermore, I believe that analysing the experiences of Czech activists working in a country that has formed a group primarily to assist Polish women would differ from those in Slovakia. As previously indicated, comparisons can be made between the Czech Republic and Slovakia, but also with other countries in the future. This demonstrates the study's potential generalisability and wider application to other nations where Polish women tend to unite or to form activists' groups.

Another reason for settling with these two specific countries is that as an individual who speaks and understands both native languages, I possess a significant advantage when it comes to conducting research in a particular region or community. My ability to communicate with interviewees in their native language can foster a deeper level of understanding and trust, leading to more accurate and comprehensive data collection. Additionally, proficiency in the local language would enable me to access information during a research field trip from local sources more easily, without the need for translation or interpretation. This advantage is useful in navigating the cultural nuances and social contexts that influence research findings, allowing me to capture a more nuanced understanding of the subject matter.

1.3. Research limitations

Performing research on this topic presents several research limitations and ethical considerations that I must address to ensure the validity and integrity of the findings.

I am cognisant that the subject of abortion rights and tourism can be affected by political bias, misinformation, ideology, and religion on the opposing side. Abortion legislation and tourism is a sensitive and stigmatised topic, and official statistics or reporting systems may not fully capture the extent or diversity of the phenomenon (Žuborová, 2022). To mitigate this limitation, I aim to employ a range of data collection methods, such as interviews with a variety of individuals with different backgrounds as well as media analysis.

A related research limitation is the difficulty in obtaining information from participants. Even if participants are willing to share their experiences and perspectives, I may encounter challenges in accessing them due to logistical, ethical, or legal reasons. For example, participants may face legal or social barriers to sharing their perceptions and revealing sensitive information. To overcome these challenges, I aim to establish trust with participants, ensure confidentiality and anonymity, and comply with local ethical and legal regulations. Contextual differences between countries are another potential research limitation. The legal, cultural, and social contexts of Czech Republic, and Slovakia may differ in ways that affect the experiences and perspectives of participants. For example, the availability of abortion services, the level of stigma associated with abortion, religious landscape, and the political climate may vary across these countries. To address this limitation, I am to conduct in-depth content media analyses, semi-structured interviews and acknowledge and account for contextual factors in my interpretation of the findings.

1.4. European standpoint

The European Union does not have a unified stance on abortion laws as these are primarily the responsibility of individual European member states. Nonetheless, the European Court of Human Rights has acknowledged that access to safe and legal abortion is a human right guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR, 1950). Moreover, the EU supports access to comprehensive and safe reproductive health services, including legal and safe abortion, as a fundamental right of all women and girls (Kontoulis, 2022).

Above all stands a fact that the right to travel abroad to access healthcare, including abortion services, is based on the EU Directive 2011/24/EU (Directive 2011/24/EU) on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare. Article 7 of this directive specifically addresses the patient's right to receive cross-border healthcare services, including the right to travel to another EU member state to receive medical treatment, including abortion, if such treatment is not available in their home country or if they face undue delays in accessing it. Therefore, this Article overall allows citizens of the EU member states to travel to neighbouring and other EU countries to undergo a secure abortion service.

Additionally crucial is the fact that Article 8 (ECHR, 2020) of the convention provides for the protection to private and family life, which includes the freedom to make decisions regarding one's own body and medical care. However, Article 8 does not offer an absolute right to obtain abortion services, and EU member states still have power to regulate their own abortion access on national level (ECHR, 2020). Nevertheless, any restrictions on access to abortion must be proportionate and must not impose an excessive barrier on women asserting their right to access abortion services.

The Court has frequently ruled that the right to obtain safe and legal abortion is an essential component of the Article 8 right to respect for private and family life (ECHR, 2020), and has also stressed the importance of women's access to safe and legal abortions when pregnancy poses a risk to their health or when the pregnancy is the consequence of rape or incest (*Tysic v. Poland*, 2007).

In 2020, the European Parliament passed a resolution urging the implementation of minimum standards for sexual and reproductive health and rights throughout the European Union. The resolution urged EU member states to *"provide universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights services, including modern contraception and safe and legal abortion"* (Resolution of the European Parliament dated February 12, 2020). In addition, the resolution urged member states to remove impediments to abortion access, such as required waiting periods, and to ensure that healthcare personnel are not subject to conscientious objection clauses that limit access to abortion services.

The EU also recognises that access to safe and legal abortion is a crucial aspect of gender equality and women's health and well-being. Furthermore, as of today the EU provides funding

and support to organisations and initiatives that work to promote access to safe and legal abortion and to reduce maternal mortality, especially in developing countries, and promotes the implementation of policies and laws that protect the right to access safe and legal abortion, as well as the right to information and education on sexual and reproductive health and rights (Kontoulis, 2022).

1.4.1. European scholarship contribution

The research on the implications of Polish abortion legislation on the CEE civil society, with a specific focus on abortion tourism and transnational activism in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, has the potential to make valuable contributions to European scholarship and academic research.

Firstly, and most importantly, it can address a gap in the existing literature and transnational abortion activism research by exploring the effects of restrictive abortion legislation on the movement of women seeking abortion services across borders within the European Union and the emergence of transnational abortion activism. I posit that the aspect under scrutiny holds a tremendous significance and importance due to the absence of prior research on this topic within the aforementioned countries.

The value of the information I intend to uncover, which has not been previously reported or published, confers an opportunity to bridge a gap in the literature. Further, the findings may serve as a valuable resource for future scholars in the field.

Secondly, the research can provide insights into the implications of abortion legislation in Poland on civil society of the EU, including the impact on healthcare systems (hospitals, clinics), lives of citizens and broader social and economic consequences, as well as political implications, decisions and public opinion.

Furthermore, this study can contribute to the understanding of the dynamics of transnational activism by examining how activists in one country can influence abortion policies in other countries. Moreover, it has a potential to uncover chains of transnational cooperation between individual citizens and Polish women, activists and organisations across borders.

Finally, this study's findings can inform public debate and policymaking around the issue of abortion in the CEE region and have implications for other countries grappling with similar

issues. By revealing the realities of Polish women travelling to Slovakia and the Czech Republic for abortions and exploring transnational activism in these countries, this study can provide critical insights into a complex and politically charged issue with far-reaching implications for reproductive justice and healthcare across the region. Overall, this study can contribute to a more informed and nuanced discussion around abortion rights and activism in Europe, and could be of interest to scholars, policymakers, and activists alike.

2. Theory

This thesis aims to analyse the effects on neighbouring countries of Poland deriving from its current abortion legislation as a case study to facilitate a better understanding of the forms of abortion related cross-border (transnational) activism that can be identified among CEE civil society. Therefore, the theories of Social Movements and Transnational Social Movements and activism have been identified as the most relevant approaches for analysing the phenomenon at hand and are discussed in the following sections.

In order to comprehensively understand the implications of the current abortion legislation in Poland on the civil society of its neighbouring countries, it is essential to examine social movements in Poland, including their emergence, characteristics, and potential outcomes, through the lens of social movements theory. Conceptual and theoretical clarification, description, and analysis of the characteristics and utility of social movements in specific contexts are critical. Employing social movement theories, including transnational movements and activism, can provide a more in-depth understanding of the situation in Poland, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, including the nature of protests and their underlying significance.

This chapter discusses the main theory of the social movements, transnational social movements and activism to provide a basis of understanding relevant to pursuing the aim. First, essential definitions are established through explaining what social movements are in general and what they have derived from. Secondly, building on the foundation, the following subchapter delves deeper into the social movements in Europe, transnational movements and activism which narrows the focus towards the thesis' aim. The chapter is finally distilled down by explaining the links between them.

2.1. Theory of Social Movements

2.1.1. Defining Social Movements

Social movements highlight the moral foundations that underpin the efficient functioning of not only the state and the EU, but the entire world, and its strength lies in its ability to unite diverse individuals and organisations around a shared goal (Kuumba, 2001).

Social movement theory describes how social change occurs by analysing why and under what conditions collective action emerges and grows. Further, it offers a variety of characteristics and methods that can be used to better comprehend how social change is seen (Tremblay et al., 2017). As argued by Goodwin and Jasper (2006), movements almost always emerge unexpectedly and activists protest when they think it might help them achieve their goals that they might not accomplish otherwise (Goodwin and Jasper, 2006).

Moreover, social movements are usually driven by a sense of dissatisfaction with the status quo, and seek to challenge or transform existing power structures, laws, situations, beliefs or practices. Social movements as stated by Kuumba (2001, p. 7):

“[c]an range from being highly structured and formal such as a political party to being a loosely connected group of individuals such as a community group or social network.”

The theories of social movements are diverse and employ numerous theoretical viewpoints and research techniques. Several disciplines, including sociologists, political scientists, historians, and cultural theorists, have contributed to current knowledge of the dynamics and results of social movements. More specifically, the notion of social movement has existed for over a century and continues to be disputed within sociology and other disciplines. The sociological definition of social movements described by McAdam (1982, p. 20):

“[r]ational attempts by excluded groups to mobilise sufficient political leverage to advance collective interests through noninstitutionalized means,”

is grounded in the political process model of social movements (McAdam, 1999, p. 36). Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow define a social movement as a:

“[s]ustained campaign of claim making, using repeated performances that advertise the claim, based on organisations, networks, traditions, and solidarities that sustain these activities,”

indicating that government is either the claimant or the claimant's objective in social movements (Tilly and Tarrow, 2015, p. 11). Yet, these approaches have been criticised from various angles and by a large number of academics due to the question of whether or not all the requirements are essential conditions. For instance, it appears that certain social movements do not engage governments, but instead target social norms and cultural values prior to or before policy

(Staggenborg, 2008). However, many sociologists argue that power is not centralised in the government, but rather diffused among several centres, any of which may be the location of social movements; nor do social movements need to be formed of excluded groups.

Moreover, in recent years, the term social movement has extended beyond disciplinary and sub-disciplinary borders (Chesters and Welsh, 2010). The terms 'old social movement' and 'new social movement' are valuable for a sequential comprehension. The origins of old social movements lie in the social, economic, and poetic dynamics of the nineteenth century, whereas the origins of contemporary social movements lie in the dynamics of the late twentieth century (Chesters and Welsh, 2010). Yet, the underlying processes, tactics of organisation, and intervention seen in both ancient and modern movements are quite similar. Several of the new social movements have somewhat analogous predecessors in the eighteenth century or earlier. This surely applies to feminism, the environment, and other topics. Kuumba (2001, p. 5) explains that:

“[w]hile earlier scholars attributed the rise of social movements to the irrational reactions of alienated individuals to social changes or disruptions, contemporary approaches appreciate social movements as conscious and rational activities.”

For instance, by utilising social media and public space efficiently, social movements as we recognise them today, demonstrate their ability to significantly shift public perceptions and result in substantial changes in social policy and government actions.

As mentioned above, social movements play a crucial role in shaping society by challenging the status quo and advocating for change, no matter the field. Despite originating from the same place, these classifications highlight distinct characteristics of social movement theories. This indicates that there is no single definition of social movements and that they can be examined from a variety of angles.

2.1.2. Transnational social movements, activism and activists

Transnational social movements are defined as a form of phenomenon in which actors make transnational claims and their activities concern more than one national space as they connect locally (Wojnicka, 2019). In this regard, I am referring to protests that originated in Poland and subsequently expanded to other nations, resulting in the development of activist groups that are

visible today (Ciocia Czesia - helping Polish women to search for safe abortions in Czech Republic).

According to Smith, Chatfield and Pagnucco (1997, p. 3), transnational social movements:

“[c]ontribute to the global changes by directly influencing particular policies and by affecting the context in which they are made.”

Tarrow (2005, p. 272) posited an alternative definition of transnational social movements as:

“[s]ustained contentious interactions with opponents - national or non-national - by connected networks of challengers organised across national boundaries.”

He further states that the targets of transnational social movements are subject to change and can be either national or transnational, private or public, and may involve a combination of conventional and disruptive tactics. Notably, these movements are grounded in domestic social networks and politics, while simultaneously connecting with other movements across borders through shared perspectives, informal or formal connections, and contentious relationships with their targets (Tarrow, 2022).

Transnational social movements share similar goals, cultural traits, and modes of action with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), but differ on a continuum of containment versus transgression, often leading to coordination difficulties and tensions. This is partly due to the more radical objectives of transnational movements in contrast to the more moderate objectives of NGOs, and because governments and international institutions prefer to collaborate with organisations that espouse expertise-driven demands rather than those that utilise more confrontational approaches (Tarrow, 2022).

As highlighted in the subsequent chapter of the Background and previous research, there is already awareness that transnational activism is present in Poland's neighbouring countries, specifically the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Therefore, it is critical to formulate a theoretical framework that clarifies the nature of this phenomenon, elucidates the underlying causes that drive it, and examines the reasons for its emergence.

According to Olesen (2005), transnational activism can be instigated by a local or national event or circumstance. This is evident in cases where activists respond to human rights abuses in

distant locations or address global concerns. He states that mobilisation takes place simultaneously on local, national and global levels. Transnational activism is nowadays more widespread, involves a wider range of people and elites, and addresses a broader range of domestic and international concerns (Tarrow, 2005).

The effective operation of transnational activism is contingent upon the participation of transnational activists. Rooted cosmopolitans are the individuals and groups who use both domestic and international resources and opportunities to advance claims on behalf of external actors, against external opponents, or in favour of shared goals with transnational allies (Tarrow, 2005). These individuals and groups operate within and outside their own societies and engage in transnational practices such as regular travel, foreign reading, and network formation. Tarrow (2005) argues that their activities span a range of transnational politics, including labour and global justice activism, immigrant transnationals, environmental and humanitarian aid workers, peace activists, anti-landmine campaigners, and advocates for transnational justice and religion.

According to Tarrow (2005), transnational activists (TA) belong to a particular group of rooted cosmopolitans who utilise domestic and international resources to pursue the interests of external actors or transnational allies.

The author further notes that most TAs do not start their careers at the international level and tend to emerge from domestic political or social activities. Although only a small percentage of TAs become full-time international advocates, they possess better education, networking skills, linguistic proficiency, and travel more often than their domestic counterparts. The key feature that distinguishes TAs from domestic activists is their ability to operate across different levels and leverage the expanded nodes of opportunity in a complex international society (Tarrow, 2005).

In summary, social movements and transnational social movements are interconnected by their mutual emphasis on collective action, yet they diverge in terms of scale and methodology. Transnational social movements transcend national boundaries to tackle global issues (formation of the *Ciocia Czesia* in the Czech Republic), whereas social movements predominantly concentrate on particular local or national matters (local protests in Poland).

Theoretical projections stemming from these notions encompass the dissemination of ideas, fostering global solidarity among activists, and investigating multi-level governance strategies to confront global challenges.

3. Background and previous research

3.1. Case of derivation – Poland

As mentioned previously, there are numerous reasons why social movements emerge. They present a concerted effort of groups of individuals to effect social change, frequently in response to perceived injustices (Kuumba, 2001). The basis and derivation point of this thesis - the local demonstrations that grew into transnational ones against Poland's current abortion legislation, were clearly motivated by a desire for structural change. Therefore, to achieve the purpose of this thesis, it is essential to identify the issue's background, the brief history of the Polish abortion law, and the local and transnational activism which has resulted from the current abortion situation in Poland.

3.1.1. Polish abortion legislation

The abortion regulation in Poland has not always been as restrictive as in the form it is today. In 1956, following World War II, the communist government legalised abortion in situations of rape, incest, foetal abnormalities, and the risk to the woman's life or health. This was due to the claims that unsafe abortions contributed to high rates of maternal death (Sifferlin, 2017). The government subsidised abortions if they were conducted at a government institution and abortions became freely accessible in public hospitals and private clinics. In 1993, however, following the fall of communism, a new law drastically restricted access to abortion. This was with the backing of the Catholic Church (Sifferlin, 2017). The new law only permitted abortion in cases of rape or incest, foetal deformities, or where the woman's life or health was at risk. There have been various attempts to further restrict abortion rights in Poland since 1993, including a 2016 proposal to ban all abortions unless the mother's life is in danger.

Since the conservative Law and Justice (PiS) party (the right-wing party) gained power in Poland in 2015, many attempts have been made to restrict abortion access in the country (pis.org.pl, 2023).

In the spring of 2016, Pro-Prawo do Zycia (Pro-Right for Life), a prominent representative of the anti-abortion movement in Poland, launched the Stop Aborcji campaign with the goal of imposing a complete ban on abortion in the country. They quickly amassed 450,000 signatures in support of the proposal from members and supporters of the organisation and submitted it to

the Polish Parliament (Wojnicka, 2016). To delve deeper, this proposal included a complete ban on abortion as well as the prospect of criminal prosecution for both doctors and women. Polish law already prohibited abortion, with three exceptions: when the pregnancy is the consequence of criminally proven rape or incest, when the woman's life is in danger, or when the foetus was severely deformed back then. This meant that if the new law was implemented, there would be no exceptions as the proposal said that the prosecutor might withdraw charges in unusual situations, such as if a woman's pregnancy was terminated to save her life. Resultantly, numerous specialists advised that this would occur only after a police investigation (Korolczuk, 2016). At the same time, feminist and women's initiatives began to mobilise and engage. One of the first actions of this movement was the establishment of the *Dziewuchy Dziewuchom* (Gals for Gals) initiative.

Throughout the nation, numerous women and activists asserted their entitlements and engaged in public social movements, demanding access to safe and lawful abortion services in reaction to the proposed ban. The Polish parliament ultimately rejected the proposed ban, but the government continued to advocate for tighter abortion restrictions. In 2018, the PiS party and the government proposed a bill that would have prohibited abortions in circumstances where the foetus had serious defects, thereby outlawing abortion in Poland (Hussein et al., 2018). After protests, the bill was withdrawn, but the government continued to restrict access to abortion. The Constitutional Tribunal, which was dominated with judges selected by the PiS party, declared on the 22nd of October 2020, that abortions of foetuses with grave diagnosis are unconstitutional (Amnesty International, 2020). This decision essentially outlawed virtually all abortions in Poland, as the majority of legal abortions were conducted for this reason. This meant that a woman in Poland could only request an abortion for two reasons: if her pregnancy is the result of a criminal act or if her life or health is in danger. This verdict by the court has prompted widespread protests in Poland and censure from a few European institutions.

3.1.2. Local and transnational activism

When the first proposal of a stricter abortion law was discussed in 2016, widespread protests and public upheaval were inevitable and predictable results. Women's rights groups and human rights organisations have been at the forefront of these marches, advocating for the repeal of the law and the expansion of reproductive rights for women. Internationally, the social movement has gained pace, with transnational activists and organisations joining the cause and

expressing solidarity with demonstrators around the world. This has prompted a broader discussion regarding the role of activism in determining national and international policy, as well as the efficacy of local and transnational groups in effecting social change. In this perspective, the Polish protests offer a compelling illustration of how activism can organise communities on a local, national, and international scale. This subchapter discusses the timeline of Polish protests against abortion legislation so that the local and transnational activity occurring in the country can be better understood.

3.1.2.1. Local activism spreads to transnational level

On 28th of March in 2016, leaders of the Stop Abortion Network officially declared their intention to file a civic law proposal prohibiting abortions in Poland. Tens of thousands of outraged women and men began to connect and organise online over the next few days. Stop Abortion, an anti-choice network, initiated a campaign for a total ban on abortions in March 2016 and collected over 400,000 signatures in support of the plan over a three-month period (Korolczuk, 2016). The largest grassroots network, entitled Gals for Gals, launched on April 1st as a result in the form of a Facebook page (Dziewuchy Dziewuchom), and in the first 48 hours, almost 100,000 women and men joined the group.

In May, previous feminist groups formed the alliance Ratuujmy Kobiety! (Save the Women!) to oppose the pro-life legislation with the goal of developing a civic legislation proposal that includes steps to assure access to modern contraception, comprehensive sex education, and abortion services up to 12 weeks of pregnancy (Majewska, 2018). Tens of thousands of women and men began communicating online and organising in the days that followed. From the outset, the mobilisation was a two-tiered process of forming grassroots organisations "from scratch" and forging alliances amongst existing women's NGOs, which at times also included extra-parliamentary left parties (Majewska, 2018). However, the response to the tightening of the abortion law was not only about the online communication and organising (Korolczuk, 2016).

In cities around Poland, 45 local groups of Dziewuchy Dziewuchom were established and beginning in the spring of 2016, the aforementioned groups utilised social media channels to organise local demonstrations, events, and other projects and actions, such as coordinated church walkouts (Hall, 2019). In response to an intensive campaign in the summer, the counterproposal received over 240,000 signatures and was subsequently submitted to the

legislature. The lower chamber of the Polish parliament (Sejm) rejected the counterproposal in September 2016, while the law proposing the ban on abortion was accepted for further consideration (Hall, 2019).

The majority of significant protests began when the conservative organisation Ordo Iuris Institute supported by the Roman Catholic Church submitted the total abortion ban law to the parliament on 5th of July in 2016. Two months later, on 25th of September 2016 a member of the left leaning Razem Party called on Polish women to protest the new abortion bill through a Facebook event. The call for a protest via Facebook, termed Czarny Poniedziałek (Black Monday) led to the development of local organisation committees in places around Poland. On 3rd of October, Razem Party encouraged women to take a photo of themselves wearing black clothes and post it with the hashtag #BlackProtest (Majewska, 2018). This simple yet strong idea inspired more than 150,000 Polish women, as well as women from other countries, to join the protest and wear black to mourn the loss of their reproductive rights. Tens of thousands of people in over 150 sites in Poland – towns, small villages, cities and abroad (in nine other European cities including for instance Paris, Berlin, London, Prague, Bratislava) took to the streets (Korolczuk, 2016). Polish women created worldwide alliances and continued to protest. The Black Protests later adopted the formula of large demonstrations and continued in many Polish cities and across borders in Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, and Sweden (Hall, 2019).

At the beginning of the year of 2018, the first reading of both draft laws took place. After the first reading, the Sejm draft initiative “Let’s Save Women” was rejected, while the draft “Stop Abortion” initiative was referred to a subcommittee (Hussein et al., 2018). Protests hit Poland again. According to the current legal status, abortion in Poland has become practically illegal as of 22nd of October 2020, when the Constitutional Tribunal declared the law authorising abortions to be unconstitutional, effectively banning most of the small number of official abortions carried out in Poland. This was followed by many protests in October and November in 2021.

3.1.2.2. Local help spreads to transnational level

Since Poland implemented one of the world's tightest abortion laws, several groups including many local and transnational activists have begun to establish themselves abroad in order to help Polish women. A year after the law was passed, fourteen non-governmental organisations

(NGOs) released a report describing the plight of many Polish women and arguing that the Polish Constitutional Court and its decisions are causing incalculable harm to women and girls, especially those who are poor, live in rural areas (Shemesh, 2021).

One of the most well-known initiatives that aids Polish women - Abortion Without Borders (AWB), an initiative consisting of six organisations from multiple countries, was founded on December 11th in 2019 as a result of tightening of the abortion legislation. Following six organisations - Kobiety W Sieci (Poland), Abortion Dream Team (Poland), Women Help Women (global), Ciocia Basia (Germany), Abortion Network Amsterdam (Netherlands), and Abortion Support Network (United Kingdom) work together to help Polish women to access abortions at home with pills or abroad in clinics (AWB, 2023). The AWB initiative claims that 17,000 Polish women contacted them in the half-year after the law was passed; they currently receive an average of 800 calls per day (AWB, 2023). The AWB provide a variety of information, including pregnancy options counselling, impartial and factual information about abortion with pills in Poland or abroad in clinics, the names of reputable organisations offering safe early medical abortion pills, and information on clinics in Germany, the Netherlands, England, and elsewhere in Europe after 12 weeks of pregnancy. Furthermore, they offer some advice on how to plan an abortion and travel at the lowest possible cost (AWB, 2023).

The organisation Ciocia Basia, has already its subsidiaries in additional nations, such as Ciocia Wlenia in Austria and Ciocia Czesia in the Czech Republic (WHW, 2023).

3.2. Case of analysis – Czech Republic and Slovak Republic

Because abortion is practically illegal in Poland as mentioned in the previous subchapter, women tend (are forced) to travel to neighbouring countries to seek abortions. In general, European women travelling from countries with strict abortion laws frequently travel to adjacent countries as far as legal and practical considerations allow. *“It is widely known that affluent Polish women undergo abortions abroad, most notably in neighbouring countries: Slovakia or the Czech Republic”* (Nacher, 2021).

Given that the case study of this research revolves around the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, it is equally imperative to comprehend the situation in relation to Polish legislation and its outcomes. The following information provides an overview of what is currently known

about the assistance offered to Polish women in the neighbouring countries, including support for safe abortions and the number of abortions performed on Polish women by these countries.

3.2.1. Background of the Czech Republic case

The Czech Republic is one of Poland's neighbours that assists Polish women visibly in obtaining abortions. The termination of pregnancies among Polish women in the Czech Republic is also attributable to the presence of an organisation named Ciocia Czesia which offers their aid to Polish women. This issue, however, gained considerable media attention in the media and is no longer a taboo topic. It should be noted, however, that there has been considerable controversy in the country regarding national legislation aspect, whether or not abortions on Polish women in Czech Republic are lawful.

Pursuant to the Law 66/1986 (§ 10) of the Czech National Council, which is currently in effect, artificial termination of pregnancy can only be performed on foreign nationals who have permanent residency in the Czech Republic (Sbírka zákonů Československá socialistická republika, 1986). This regulation stipulates that foreign women who are only temporarily present in the country are ineligible for abortion procedures. The law was enacted on October 20th, 1986, and remains applicable today.

However, in 2016, the Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic issued the following statement:

- The prohibition on artificially terminating pregnancies does not apply to foreign women who have obtained a residence permit in the Czech Republic pursuant to one of the interstate agreements.
- Article 21(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (formerly the Treaty establishing the European Community) provides a clear authorization for EU citizens to reside in the Czech Republic: *“Every citizen of the European Union shall have the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the member states, subject to the restrictions and conditions laid down in the Treaties and in the measures adopted for their implementation.”*
- This is also consistent with Article 4(3) of Directive 2011/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare, which states: *“Patients from other member states shall be subject to the*

principle of non-discrimination on the basis of nationality," (Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic, 2021).

Overall, under the current Czech abortion legislation, EU citizens, regardless of their duration of stay, are permitted to undergo medical termination of pregnancy in the country. Therefore, temporary residency is not considered a prerequisite for EU citizens to avail themselves of this medical service in the Czech Republic (Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic, 2021).

3.2.2. Background of the Slovak Republic case

Regarding Slovak abortion legislation, the National Centre for Human Rights drew attention to the discriminatory regulation from 1986 that affects individuals of a different nationality.

The Ministry of Health of the Slovak Socialist Republic establishes, according to § 9 (1) of the Act of the Slovak National Council No. 73/1986 Coll. on the artificial termination of pregnancy that abortion will not be performed on foreign nationals who are only temporarily present in the Slovak Socialist Republic (Vyhláška Ministerstva zdravotníctva Slovenskej socialistickej republiky, 1986).

However, as in the case of the Czech Republic, the same EU Articles apply in Slovakia as stated above: Article 21(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Article 4(3) of Directive 2011/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare. Despite the implementation of the aforementioned national abortion law and the existence of clear EU articles on the matter, the issue remains stigmatised and highly controversial within the country.

Regardless these realities, the National Centre for Health Information in Slovakia indicates that the number of abortions provided to foreign women has increased dramatically in recent years (NCZI, 2022). Officially, these numbers have always been exceptionally low, but over the past few years, they have increased significantly. In 2015, only 396 foreign women used the opportunity to undergo a safe abortion in Slovakia, whereas in 2017 the number was 1,408. Between the years of 2018 and 2022, these numbers have remained constant, hovering around 1300 on average (NCZI, 2022). However, this data is insufficient, as there is a massive disparity between the data from previous years (Žuborová, 2022).

3.3. Previous research

National social movements resulting into transnational, have the power to influence the legislation reforms in certain countries. By reaching out to society, many organisations and activists themselves tend to promote social acceptability and exert pressure on governments to take positive action. However, for this to occur, transnational activism must also involve individuals, or transnational activists, defined by Tarrow as follows: “*[i]ndividuals and groups rooted national contexts who engage in contentious political activities that involve them in transnational networks of contacts and conflicts.*” (Tarrow, 2005, p. 29). They are unquestionably a core pillar that must exist for activism to thrive and are vital to the continued presence of transnational activism in the current society. What makes them different from the local activists? Tarrow defines that it is “*[t]heir ability to shift their activities among levels, taking advantage of the expanded nodes of opportunity of a complex international society*” (Tarrow, 2005, p. 29).

Transnational activists are described in the context of this study as Polish, Czech, and Slovak women who assist other Polish women travelling to neighbouring countries to obtain medically safe abortions.

This chapter delves deeper into the topics of transnational activism, abortion tourism and transnational abortion activism, as well as presenting previous research on the subject.

3.3.1. Feminist movements and transnational feminist movements in Europe

Although citizens have always protested, fought, and desired social change, the concept of social movement in its current form known as of today is a relatively new phenomenon. Further, it wasn't until the late 1960s, with the emergence of increasingly visible and for many, surprising, forms of collective action, particularly in Europe and the United States - i.e., student, environmental, and feminist movements - that social movements were acknowledged as an empirical object of study worthy of scientific investigation (Chesters and Welsh, 2010).

One of the most significant social movements in Europe has been the feminist movement, which emerged in the late 19th century and gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s. These movements sought to address gender-based discrimination, inequality, and oppression, and more importantly, to promote women's rights and gender equality (Klandermans, 1997).

The study of feminist movements in Europe has evolved in response to both the broader context of social movement studies and the specific demands and challenges of feminist activism (Klandermans, 1997). In recent years, the study of feminist movements in Europe has expanded to include a focus on transnational and global activism. These movements have become increasingly connected across national and regional boundaries, with activists and organisations collaborating to address global challenges such as violence against women, reproductive rights, and economic inequality (Revillard and Bereni, 2016). The feminist movement has sought to address gender-based discrimination and inequality and has played a key role in promoting gender equality in European societies (Revillard and Bereni, 2016).

The emergence of transnational feminist movements, comprising a significant number of migrant activists, gained prominence on the global social scene in the 1990s. The underlying objective of their formation was to provide support and empowerment to migrant women residing in the host societies and those who remained in their country of origin, as well as to facilitate their integration into the host society. Typically, although not invariably, the activism revolves around issues of gender equality and women's rights. These movements are largely characterised by a national and/or ethnic composition, with human rights and identity serving as predominant framing categories (Wojnicka, 2019).

The delineation of transnational feminist movements holds considerable relevance in the research, given that the social movements (Black Protests) that emerged in Poland have disseminated to the global arena and neighbouring countries. Moreover, the explication of transnational activism holds equivalent importance because Polish women are no longer solely assisted by their compatriots, as elucidated in the background and previous research segment, but also by women from other nationalities, including Czech and Slovak women.

3.3.2. Abortion tourism

Abortion tourism, defined as travelling abroad to obtain abortion services that are inaccessible or restricted in one's native country, is relatively a new phenomenon. Due to the difference in abortion legislation across EU member states, abortion tourism persists and is rapidly growing (Culwell, Hurwitz and Greer, 2013).

Moreover, in recent years, it has become apparent that the phenomenon of abortion tourism is expanding, as exemplified by Malta (Kwolek, 2022). Nonetheless, Ireland remains the most

extensive and prominent case of such tourism, as elaborated upon below. Consequently, the question of abortion tourism has emerged at the forefront of conversation in Europe. This is due, in part, to the fact that Poland passed a law in 2021 effectively forbidding the act of abortion.

Researcher Cohen (2014) investigated medical tourism and the role of the Irish Church in enabling women's access to abortion services in Ireland. The research emphasises the significance of acknowledging the agency and resourcefulness of women in gaining access to reproductive healthcare services, despite legal and social hurdles (Cohen, 2014).

Another researcher, Connell (2011) has conducted a study on this phenomenon. The research sheds light on the complexities of reproductive tourism in Ireland and the difficulties faced by women seeking abortion and fertility services across borders.

In the *After Repeal: Rethinking Ireland*, (2019) an additional range of previous research on abortion tourism is presented. The book offers academic considerations of the repeal of the 8th Amendment to the Irish Constitution. It provides insights into both the campaign and the reverberations of the result, nationally and internationally, in the immediate aftermath of the vote (Browne and Calkin, 2019). It presents a comprehensive overview of the historical, legal, and social backdrop of abortion in Ireland, as well as key insights into the country's ongoing fight for reproductive rights and healthcare (Browne and Calkin, 2019).

3.3.3. Transnational abortion activism

The existing research on transnational abortion activism has predominantly centred on the reproductive health activism between Canada and the United States in the past, with a focus on studies by Palmer (2011), Rohlinger and Meyer (2006), and Sethna and Doull (2013). Furthermore, considerable attention has been directed towards Irish abortion tourism to the UK, with several scholars delving extensively into this subject. Browne and Calkin (2019) as mentioned in the previous subchapter, Gilmartin and Kennedy (2019), Duffy (2020), Nyberg (2020), Side (2016), Side (2020), Zanini et al. (2021), have all conducted research in this area, contributing significantly to the comprehension of the challenges confronted by women seeking abortions, and the endeavours made by local and transnational activists to ensure safe and legal access to reproductive healthcare.

Nonetheless, a significant research gap remains concerning regarding the transnational abortion activism in the CEE region, particularly with regard to its occurrence from Poland to its neighbouring countries. Despite some previous research conducted in Poland, the majority of studies have concentrated on national contexts and feminist activism of Polish migrants residing overseas. A group of researchers have explored the concept of abortion activism, particularly within the wider mobilisation of Polish women, often in relation to the Black Protests that occurred after 2016 (Korolczuk, 2016, 2017; Pustulka and Krol, 2018; Nawojski et al. 2019; Kubisa and Wojnicka, 2018). Furthermore, numerous research studies have employed the single case study approach to examine the phenomenon of Polish migrant (feminist) activism abroad (Falkowska, 2022; Gober and Struzik, 2018; Wojnicka, 2019). In regard to the legal dimensions of Polish women obtaining abortions abroad, the issue has been subject to examination by the following researchers (Mecinska, James and Mukungu, 2020; Sitarz and Jaworska-Wieloch, 2020). Only two recent studies have exclusively focused on the present (domestic) abortion activism. These were published by Chelstowska and Ignaciuk (2023) and Dzwonkowska-Godula (2022). Additionally, multiple comparative studies have examined the matters pertaining to abortion legislation and social practices surrounding abortion in both Poland and Ireland (Cullen and Korolczuk, 2019; Szelewa, 2020). Certain scholars have referred to organisations such as Ciocia Basia located in Berlin, Germany or Ciocia Wienia located in Vienna, Austria in their research; however, they have not yet been comprehensively investigated (Chwat, 2021; Ignaciuk and Sethna, 2022).

To this date, there has been a notable insufficiency in the scope of extensive or partial research concerning transnational abortion activism originating from Poland to its neighbouring countries. Therefore, this study bridges this gap by conducting a multiple case study on transnational abortion activism, presenting the outcomes in the Results chapter.

4. Methodological framework

4.1. Choice of method

In this research, a qualitative case study method was employed. This method involves investigating a current phenomenon in-depth within its real-world context (Gerring, 2009). The case study method could be small N, holistic, and can employ various types of evidence, therefore media analysis and individual interviews, were incorporated, with central emphasis on respondent interviews (Gerring, 2009). Given the focus on providing explanations - explanatory study, in the research, opting for a case study approach facilitates a thorough exploration of the phenomenon in its authentic setting, thus contributing to the attainment of the thesis objective.

The case study method is multiple (embedded) with multiple contexts of analysis (Gerring, 2009) - the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic being in the centre as two main elements of analysis arising from a Polish situation. Moreover, the case study methodology can identify various entities, such as an organisation, event, social movement, NGO, initiative, protest, and its interaction with society, among other things. These aforesaid “events” fit into the topic of transnational activism and the examined issue.

4.2. Case study design

The research at hand focuses on two entities, namely the Czech Republic and Slovakia, and as such, a multiple case study design is deemed appropriate. According to Gerring (2009), a multiple case study design is a research approach that involves studying more than one case or entity.

This method is employed to better comprehend the characteristics of each case individually and to compare them to determine similarities and differences. The research prioritised semi-structured interviews in both countries, as well as analysis of the articles. The use of a multiple case study design offered a valuable approach for exploring complex phenomenon and gaining a more profound understanding of the interrelationships between variables in real-world contexts.

4.2.1. Case selection – Czech Republic and Slovak Republic

In the case of investigating abortion legislation and its implications as well as transnational activism, selecting the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic as the focus of the study was a logical choice. The decision was based on several reasons. First, both countries are neighbouring Poland, where the transnational activism movement of Polish women gained media attention and public interest. Therefore, focusing on these two countries allowed for a comparative analysis of the phenomenon in different cultural and political contexts. Moreover, the lower media visibility of the transnational abortion activism in the Slovak Republic and higher in the Czech Republic made them an interesting cases for exploration. These cases are understudied, providing an opportunity to fill a gap in the academic literature, hence the study aimed to shed light on the dynamics of transnational activism and the various factors and forms that shape it.

4.2.2. Method of data collection

Firstly, **content analysis (CA) of media outputs**, specifically the articles was employed. It is a method used in research to comprehend the meaning of various forms of messages, including but not limited to, text, images, symbols, or audio data. Its primary goal is to determine the textual significance of the content (Krippendorff, 2004). In contrast to simply identifying the presence of keywords, content analysis emphasised the semantic relationships and meanings within texts. Rather than merely counting occurrences of certain words or phrases, it involved categorising texts based on their similar meanings. This approach placed greater emphasis on understanding the underlying meaning and significance of the text, as opposed to just identifying its surface-level features (Weber, 1990).

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as second method of data collection due to their ability to enable an interpretative researcher to obtain information about participants and their worldviews that would be difficult to obtain using another research approach. This type of interviewing involved a natural conversation flow with the respondent and the use of open-ended questions, allowed the participants to express their experiences and thoughts freely. Since the goal of the interviews was to gather specific information, having predetermined questions helped to achieve the main objective of the thesis, while also providing flexibility to inquire about unexpected but relevant topics.

To clarify the choice and method of data collection, due to the dearth of existing quantitative research on the subject, the focus of this study was directed towards qualitative methods. Interviews emerged as the primary choice due to their perceived relevance and potential to elicit in-depth insights. Since prior research and articles analysis indicated that non-governmental organisations, transnational activists, and journalists have the most comprehensive understanding of the situation, I directly reached out to them for participation in the study. Moreover, the articles played a pivotal role as a significant source, as they offered primary information for searching for interviewees. The combined use of interviews and articles offered valuable opportunities for exploring the dynamics of collective action in response to legislative changes and the implications across national borders. This approach facilitated a nuanced examination of the factors influencing social activism and the complexities inherent in cross-border movements.

4.2.2.1. Selection of articles and participants

The selection of articles pertaining to the topic of abortion tourism from Poland to Slovakia and the Czech Republic was not a difficult task, as there are only a few journalists who specialise on this subject in both countries. However, I was able to find several high-quality articles that contained a wealth of information previously unknown to me. In the context of the Czech Republic, a total of 34 articles were subjected to analysis, while in Slovakia, the number of articles analysed amounted to 31.

Journalistic articles from reputable sources offered a broader understanding of the legislative changes in Poland and their effects on cross-border abortion activism in Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Moreover, the articles covering transnational activism provided a broader view of cross-border efforts related to abortion within the CEE region. Journalists reported on successful cross-border partnerships in the Czech Republic, case studies of transnational movements, and policy implications of cross-border activism. The articles provided valuable insights into the topic of social movements, abortion tourism and transnational abortion activism and allowed me to identify key individuals to interview. The analysis of these articles served as a foundation for the research and provided a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

In the context of **the selection of interviewees**, it is essential to differentiate between the roles of respondents and informants. For this research, participants were selected as respondents to obtain their individual perspectives and opinions on the topic at hand.

At the beginning of the research, I had initially planned to conduct between 14-16 interviews (transnational activists and journalists), despite being aware of the sensitive nature of the topic. I believed that this was achievable, as I had identified and contacted potential participants as explained below. However, after approaching a total of **23** individuals (after selecting only specialised individuals in the topic), **9** of them agreed to take part in the research. Most of the individuals who declined cited a lack of interest or knowledge about the subject matter, while others refused outright without giving reasons. Despite my efforts to inquire further, some respondents did not provide any explanations for their refusal. Some of the participants who declined to be interviewed stated that they lacked expertise on the topic, while others mentioned practical reasons for not being able to participate. Regardless the challenges encountered during the selection process, I ultimately identified suitable participants whose perspectives and experiences were deemed valuable to the research.

This study was conceptualised as a transnational investigation with three main components, namely the Polish dimension, the Czech perspective, and the Slovak perspective. Regarding the **Polish aspect**, I contacted the organisation Abortion Without Borders, an initiative of six organisations across multiple countries collaborating to help individuals obtain access to abortions via pills or clinics abroad. My intention was to conduct at least two interviews with members – transnational activists of this group. I sent them a total of four emails, however, to this date, no one has responded to my inquiries. Later, I managed to obtain an individual email address of one member of the organisation. Despite sending three emails to this address, I received no response, and thus, this organisation was removed from my list of potential respondents.

With regard to the **Czech side**, as my content analysis revealed that only one organisation exists in the Czech Republic providing assistance to Polish women seeking abortions – Ciocia Czesia, I contacted them. After sending three emails, I finally received a response from one member (transnational activist) who expressed willingness to provide an interview and to be a part of the transnational research. However, despite my repeated attempts to conduct interviews with

other members, I was unsuccessful. As a result, I conducted an interview with only one member of this organisation.

As for journalists and researchers, I contacted six Czech female journalists and two researchers in total, five of whom agreed to participate on this research. These women have been engaged in reporting on this topic and informing the public in the Czech Republic for a long period of time.

Turning to the **Slovak side**, I reached out to both activist organisations and journalists. Since I anticipated that this topic is a controversial one in Slovakia, I contacted multiple organisations (five in total) in order to obtain as much information as possible. However, all of the organisations I contacted declined to participate in an interview and referred me to the sole organisation that actively addresses this issue and helps Polish women in Slovakia, namely *Možnosť Voľby* (Option for Choice). I contacted this organisation and after six emails with no response, I phoned them. Following this phone call, they agreed to provide an interview and I sent them the questions in advance. However, after reading the questions, they did not respond, so I sent two additional emails and phoned them again. In a subsequent phone call, they informed me that they had changed their minds and would not provide an interview. As I had suspected beforehand that such a situation might arise, given that the topic of abortion is a significant taboo in Slovakia, I informed the National Human Rights Centre about this. The Centre then contacted *Možnosť Voľby*, but even after this intervention, they declined to provide an interview. Therefore, I obtained information crucial to my research from the National Human Rights Centre.

Regarding journalists, I contacted a total of eight individuals, four of whom agreed to participate in an interview.

Despite the initial focus on conducting interviews exclusively with transnational activists and journalists, it was noted that a number of transnational activists did not respond to the inquiries, resulting in their non-participation in the research. Consequently, the pool of respondents was constrained to include only journalists, researchers, and a single transnational activist. The final list of participants is presented in the appendix 3. and 4.

4.2.2.2. Interview Guide

Developing a highly structured interview guide is a crucial aspect of the research process as it provides a framework for the interviewer to follow during the interview. The interview guide is developed based on the theories and research questions and the main objectives of the study. Moreover, it contains a set of predetermined questions that guides the interviewer throughout the interview process – namely the warm-up questions and certain topics.

The interview guide has been created in two different language versions, namely in Slovak, and Czech languages. In view of the differing levels of expertise in the topic among journalists and activists in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, two versions of the interview guide were developed, namely the **Key Respondent and Respondent** ones and are presented in the Appendices' section. The first draft of the interview guide was primarily designed for journalists, but it was slightly modified for interviews with activists to include more specific questions and to gather as many insights and important information as possible for the research. The rationale behind the creation of two versions of the interview guide stems from the findings of previous media analysis. The analysis revealed that journalists – Respondents exhibit a slightly disparate level of familiarity with the subject matter in comparison to activists and organisations – Key Respondents. As a result, in order to ensure that the interview questions accurately capture the perspectives of both groups, the decision was made to tailor the guide to suit the specific knowledge base of each cohort.

Furthermore, the open-ended questions presented in the interview guide were structured into three distinct categories presented below.

4.2.2.3. Process of data collection

The research on the topic of Polish women travelling to the Czech Republic and Slovakia involved an extensive and meticulous process of data collection. Initially, a comprehensive search for relevant articles and information was carried out.

To ensure that I had a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, I took notes of essential information, based on the coding scheme presented below. This information proved helpful during the interviews, where I asked the respondents, questions based on the insights I gained from the articles. I conducted a total of nine interviews, seven of which were done

virtually via Zoom, while the remaining two were conducted in-person. Each session lasted between 45 to 70 minutes, providing ample time for each respondent to share their experiences and views on the topic.

To ensure that the interviews were structured and well-timed, I created an interview guide that was divided into three parts. Before each interview, I informed every interviewee about the topic and sought their consent to record the conversation. While all participants agreed and even expressed their desire to have their name published, I made a conscious decision not to reveal their identity to protect their privacy.

The interviews started with warm-up questions to make the participants feel more comfortable and express their views freely. Later, I moved on to discuss three main topics, with additional questions and discussions towards the end of each session. Following each interview, I transcribed the recorded conversations manually and listened to them twice, sometimes more, to make notes and capture all the insights and information required for my research. Prior to the further analysis, I undertook the translation of all interviews into English, as I had conducted them in the Slovak language.

4.2.3. Method of data analysis

4.2.3.1. Content analysis

Firstly, and in line with the coding scheme, I conducted an analysis of different articles (34 in the case of the Czech Republic, 31 in the case of the Slovak Republic), on the current situation on abortion tourism from Poland in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The selection of the articles was based on their relevance to my research and the valuable information they provided.

The following coding scheme was designed to enable the categorisation and interpretation of the data in a manner that was both comprehensive and rigorous, aligned with the theories, ensuring that all relevant information was extracted from the articles and incorporated into the final analysis.

Consistent with the overarching research questions, the data undergone rigorous analysis, centring on major themes and concepts, particularly two pertinent theories. To streamline this analytical process, a theory-based coding scheme for articles was formulated as a preliminary

measure. This methodical approach facilitated the systematic identification and categorisation of diverse elements within the data, imparting a distinct and well-defined trajectory for the research's focus.

Code/Theme	Keywords
Social Movements	protests, social movements, Black Protests, demonstrations, abortion rights, activists, protests in Poland, local riots, Polish women, violation of women's rights.
Transnational Social Movements and activism	Abortion tourism, transnational abortion activism, abortion legislation, abortion rights, activists, abortion activists, cross-border abortion activism.

Table 1.: Coding scheme for qualitative content analysis of the articles based on Social Movements and Transnational Social Movements theories

The content analysis was conducted in a subjective manner and relied on data extraction. My objective was to obtain fundamental information from the articles (numbers, organisations, names, similar patterns, different legislation, disparities etc.) and to gain insights into the direction in which to proceed with my research. I categorised the texts based on their similar meanings – keywords (Krippendorff, 2004). Subjectivity was inherent in the analysis because I had to interpret the data and extract relevant information. The information obtained from the analysis of the articles was crucial for my research, moreover, the extracted data provided a foundation to which I could refer during interviews. The content analysis of the articles helped me to develop an understanding of the topic and to identify the key individuals and organisations to interview.

4.2.3.2. Abductive analysis

To code and identify shared patterns of the interviews and prove the theory, an abductive approach was used for analysis, specifically the method discussed by Tavory and Timmermans (2014). The abductive method provided an epistemological framework that highlighted the

interdependence of observation, theory, and method. This approach draws upon the philosophical tenets of pragmatism, and particularly the contributions of Charles S. Peirce (Tavory and Timmermans, 2014). Thus, it differs from induction (identifying new cases for existing theories) and deduction (testing an existing theory with new observations).

As Tavory and Timmermans (2014) stated, the abduction, as a mode of inference, arises when empirical findings exceed theoretical frameworks, prompting researchers to speculate on plausible alternative explanations.

To implement the theoretical framework in the empirical analysis, the first category, labelled as **Topic 1.** in the Interview Guide was dedicated to exploring the temporal context and social movements aspect of the research. The second category, denoted as **Topic 2.,** focused on examining the ramifications of the current Polish abortion legislation and its implications on civil society, encompassing the social and political spectrum in neighbouring countries. This category shed light on the social movements and transnational social movements component of the theory. Lastly, the third and final category, designated as **Topic 3.,** was designed to investigate acts of solidarity and identify various forms of local and transnational activism prevalent within Slovakia and the Czech Republic. This category was aligned with the transnational activism element of the study.

Theory narratives	Sub-categories	Findings
Local and Transnational Social Movements	Topic 1.: Time context: Social movements and Transnational activism	See the Results
Local activism and Transnational activism	Topic 2.: Consequences: Affecting citizens, social and political spectrum	See the Results
Transnational abortion activism and activists	Topic 3.: Act of solidarity: Forms of activism	See the Results

Table 2.: Coding scheme/Interview Guide preview for qualitative content analysis of the interviews based on Social Movements and Transnational Social Movements theories

Moreover, the study's findings and unexpected results prompted me to extend beyond the established theoretical framework, revealing new and stimulating information that broadened the analytical scope of the research.

Overall, this approach revealed previously unexplored dimensions of the topic and yielded significant insights for future research in this field. The analytical approach proved to be a reliable and efficient means of identifying patterns, themes, and categories in the data collected during the study. By conducting multiple reviews of the data and meticulously refining the themes and categories, I was able to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the data. This approach was particularly beneficial in investigating the intricate and unprecedented subject matter of social movements, transnational abortion activism and abortion tourism, as it exceeded the boundaries of the original theoretical framework and yielded unforeseen discoveries.

4.2.4. Ethical consideration

This study addressed specific research ethical concerns and problems. Given the sensitive nature of the subject matter, I was cognisant of the ethical considerations involved in soliciting the input of women who had undergone abortions. To preserve their privacy and avoid any potential harm, I made a deliberate decision to forgo engaging with such individuals, and instead sought out the perspectives of activists and journalists who had expertise in the field. This approach allowed for a more objective and nuanced exploration of the topic, while simultaneously safeguarding the rights and well-being of those directly impacted by the issue at hand.

Moreover, I was fully aware that the topic of abortion legislation, transnational abortion activism and tourism could encompass political bias, misinformation, ideology, and religion on the opposing side. Therefore, various factors had to be considered, such as GDPR compliance – when obtaining respondents' consent, ethical permissions of respondents, protection of participants and members of sensitive groups, data protection – in terms of probable withdrawals, and anonymity. I ensured compliance with research ethics by informing the interviewees about the purpose and subject matter of the study in advance (first contact), while

emphasising their right to decline answering questions they were uncomfortable with. In each interview, I obtained their consent to record their voices.

In addition to ethical considerations regarding information gathering, sample selection was also critical to ensure fairness, openness, and transparency. Furthermore, all participants were provided with a consent form, which they duly signed, demonstrating their informed consent to participate in the study. Throughout the research process, I adhered to the ethical guidelines outlined by relevant authorities, ensuring the protection of participants' rights and well-being. As the researcher responsible for obtaining sensitive information, I had a duty to anticipate and mitigate potential risks such as the possibility of stalking or other difficulties that could arise.

5. Results

This chapter presents an overview of the research findings and results, while utilising the framework of social movements, transnational social movements theory and transnational activism approach. Additionally, the present research employed a multiple case study methodology to evaluate the outcomes obtained from both articles and interviews. Specifically, the findings from the articles were assessed through a content analysis, and in contrast, for the interviews with journalists, researchers and a transnational activist, an abductive approach was implemented. This approach ensured a thorough analysis of the data, with careful attention given to all the factors that were previously identified as relevant. The results provide complete, extended and reliable answers into the research questions.

The analysis of articles directed me towards information and individuals whom I could later interview and served as a starting point for my research. However, interviews served as the primary source of information, providing me with in-depth information and knowledge that I would not have been able to obtain from other sources. Overall, the results of my research have filled a gap in the literature on transnational abortion activism in the CEE region, providing valuable insights into the specific challenges and opportunities faced by activists and organisations in this context.

5.1. Case of the Czech Republic

On the topic of transnational abortion activism in the Czech Republic, due to the availability of current data, today only the Ciocia Czesia, an independent organisation established in the Czech Republic and managed by a group of fifteen Polish women (Křížová, 2021; Polívková, 2023), aids and provides support to those seeking a safe abortion (Kubcová, 2021; Lauder, 2020).

5.1.1. Portrayal of the Polish abortion legislation in the media

Based on the articles (**quantity of the analysed articles – 34**), that have been analysed, it can be inferred that the Ciocia Czesia engages in a range of initiatives and has a significant volunteer community in the Czech Republic (Pluhař, 2020). The formation of the group was motivated by similar groups in Germany and Austria (Ciocia Basia, Ciocia Wienia) to provide material and psychological support to Polish women seeking safe abortions (Košler, 2021). Moreover, today the Ciocia Czesia possesses the capability to provide financial assistance for

abortion procedures to Polish women who find themselves in challenging economic circumstances (Polívková, 2023). Moreover, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, a non-governmental organisation, has published a list of prominent figures from the CEE region as well as the Balkan nations for the year 2020. Notably, the Ciocia Czesia, has earned a place on this distinguished roster for their transnational aid to Polish women (Brázdová, 2021).

Regarding the legality of the procedures in the Czech Republic, The Czech Medical Chamber advised doctors not to provide abortions to Polish women because the legal framework is not clear (Čabanová, 2022; Lauder, 2021). The problematic point, which according to many should be best amended, is Section 10 of Act No. 66/1956 Coll., on artificial termination of pregnancy, in the current wording: *“Artificial termination of pregnancy under § 4 is not performed on foreign women who are staying in the Czech Socialist Republic only temporarily”* (Veinbender, 2020; Lauder, 2021; Houdek, 2021; Čabanová, 2022). However, The Ministry of Health has clearly taken a stance on this issue, having confirmed in 2016 that performing a termination of pregnancy on citizens of the European Union is in line with Czech law (Čabanová, 2022; Lauder, 2021). The above-mentioned law on the termination of pregnancy is followed by a decree according to which foreign women who have permission to stay under international agreements are not considered to be staying in the country only temporarily (Bernardová, 2021). Such an international agreement is undoubtedly the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Houdek, 2021).

Because of Ciocia Czesias’ efforts, Polish women now have easier access to safe abortions at the clinics and hospitals across Czech Republic (Ilić, 2022). Katarzyna Byrteková, the initiative’s spokeswoman, claims that more women are requesting help each month (Capáková, 2022; Bartošová, 2023).

5.1.2. Citizens, society, activists. Responses to the Polish abortion legislation

5.1.2.1. Time context: Social movements and transnational activism

According to Tarrow (2022), transnational social movements exhibit dynamic targets that can shift between national and transnational, as well as between private and public domains. The recent shift of transnational social movements between Poland and the Czech Republic is a vivid example of this phenomenon. These targets may be challenged through a range of tactics,

including both conventional and disruptive methods. It is noteworthy that these social movements are grounded in domestic social networks and politics, such as the Polish women's movement and the formation of the Ciocia Czesia organisation in the Czech Republic. Nevertheless, they also establish connections with other movements globally, such as the Abortion Without Borders initiative, Ciocia Czesia Basia or Ciocia Czesia Wienia through shared values and perspectives related to abortion tourism issues.

To arrive at the outcomes of the interviews, during the research, the respondents were queried regarding their perspectives on the effects of the social movements that occurred in the Czech Republic and the positive or negative outcomes they believed were achieved.

Respondent 1. described feeling a sense of helplessness when the events began unfolding in Poland, but from that feeling, and as a result they established Ciocia Czesia in Czech Republic so they could assist Polish women across borders. They believed that even negative feelings could be transformed into positive outcomes that demonstrated solidarity. Although Respondent 1. was not physically present in Poland during the protests, she felt connected to the larger movement of support that emerged in the Czech Republic and believed that the protests had a powerful sociological and psychological implications on the civil society.

Respondent 2. did not follow the protests in the Czech Republic closely, but Respondent 3. and 5. indicated that the protests had a positive impact by raising the issue's media profile and stimulating public debate. Respondent 4. further suggested that the protests created solidarity with Polish women and led to the formation of a network of support, including the establishment of the Ciocia Czesia organisation that assists Polish women with access to abortions. She concluded that the protests revealed that a supportive community existed where Polish women could seek help.

Respondent 4. noted that the transnational social movements – Black Protests in the Czech Republic were held outside the Polish embassy and at other locations but were not entirely

widespread. She suggested that the Polish protesters may have felt a sense of solidarity from the outpouring of support from abroad, including from Ciocia Czesia and other supporters.

As part of the inquiry into the research question, another question was conducted to ascertain the changes that have occurred in the Czech Republic's social and political landscape since the enactment of the Polish law in 2021.

Respondent 1. noted that one significant change resulting from the law is the realisation that no law is permanent and that things can change. As a result, people are beginning to take more responsibility for protecting their rights and fighting for them.

Respondent 4. explained that prior to the law's enactment, she believed that the issue of abortion was no longer a topic of concern in Czech society:

“Prior to the events that have unfolded, I also held the belief that the issue of abortion was no longer a topic of discussion in our society. I believed that a woman has the right to make decisions about her own body, that we have a liberal abortion law and legislation, and that the forces that sought to change these laws were marginal and lacked influence. However, my perception of this matter changed in the last two or three years. The political landscape is different, and organisations and entities have a far more significant presence and greater influence. These entities have been accumulating power for many years, and if no action were taken, they would continue to intervene in this area and gain strength.” Respondent 4.)

Moreover, Respondent 5. shared a similar perspective to Respondent 4., indicating that tightening of abortion law in Poland, has sparked a debate about the Czech abortion law in the Czech Republic. According to her, this discourse and attention helped to bring to light a previously taboo subject and made it more visible to the public.

Overall, the respondents in the **Topic 1.** offered varied perspectives on the impact of the social movements in the Czech Republic regarding the Polish abortion legislation. Respondent 1. believed that the protests – Black Protests in Czech Republic had a powerful sociological and psychological implications on the civil society and that solidarity was demonstrated even from afar. Respondent 2. acknowledged the positive impact of raising media profile and stimulating

public debate, while Respondent 3. noted the attention drawn to the law and the uncertainty surrounding its implications on foreign women seeking abortions in the Czech Republic. Respondent 4. observed that while the protests were forceful and explicit, they were not entirely widespread and that the issue of abortion has become more significant in the Czech political landscape since the law's enactment in Poland.

5.1.2.2. Consequences: Affecting citizens, social and political spectrum

Based on the results of the content analysis of the articles, I have obtained evidence suggesting that the Polish abortion law could have an implication on individuals residing in the Czech Republic. However, the analysis did not yield a conclusive answer to this question. As a result, I posed an open-ended question to the respondents: What do they think could be the implications of the law on the Czech Republic and the civil society?

Respondent 1. expressed concerns about the doctors' focus on the health of the foetus rather than her own and the perception of Poland being an unsuitable country for raising children, thereby highlighting the perceived impact of these restrictions on cross-border healthcare services.

Respondent 2. opined that the real impact of Poland's actions would manifest through high-level debates on limiting access to abortions. However, the current political priorities and society's focus on the war in Ukraine have shifted attention from this issue.

Respondent 3. emphasised the importance of safeguarding the right to abortion:

“Certainly, I believe that this situation clearly demonstrates that the right to abortion is not a given. The mere fact that we currently have this right does not mean that it will be guaranteed indefinitely. Rather, it is a subject of political, ethical, legal, and religious debate. Therefore, it is essential to safeguard this right. Moreover, this situation has alerted us to the presence of anti-abortion movements in the Czech Republic, which are relatively strong and gaining strength.” (Respondent 3.)

Respondent 4. elaborated on the possibility of a potential resolution to the situation with the aid of European legislation. The notion that women within the EU could be reduced to the status of walking incubators in some member states, thereby relinquishing control over their bodily

autonomy, stands in stark opposition to the basic principles of the EU. Hence, the EU could potentially offer a viable solution to the issue at hand. Nevertheless, there remains a concern that a comprehensive solution may not be attainable, given that individual states possess the autonomy to make decisions on such matters, similar to the situation in Malta.

Respondent 5. also remarked that the help from the EU could potentially lead to the resolution of the alarming situation regarding abortion laws in Europe:

“In my opinion, it is crucial and imperative to deliberate on whether the issue of abortions should be under the jurisdiction of each country or if the European Union should have a greater influence in this regard. Poland was able to enforce their strict abortion law without facing any consequences, and even the EU is powerless to intervene, which is concerning. Despite the fact that EU member states have regulations mandating that all women have access to healthcare, it is simply disregarded in Poland and even in our own country. It is alarming how this reinforces the principle of subsidiarity. Consequently, if similar issue were to arise in the Czech Republic, we cannot rely on the EU to assist us.” (Respondent 5.)

In summary of the **Topic 2.**, the aforementioned respondents expressed varying perspectives concerning the possible implications of Poland’s abortion legislation on the Czech civil society. Respondent 1. raised concerns regarding the effect of the legislation on cross-border healthcare services, specifically pertaining to pregnant women from the Czech Republic travelling to Poland for holidays or so. Respondent 3. underscored the necessity of protecting the right to abortion, alerting to the presence of anti-abortion movements in the Czech Republic. Moreover, both Respondent 4. and 5. suggested that a potential resolution to the situation could be initiated via European legislation; nonetheless, the concern remains about individual states’ autonomy to make decisions on such issues, similar to the situation in Malta.

5.1.2.3. Act of solidarity: Forms of activism

To address the second research question regarding abortion-related cross-border activism among CEE civil society, a dedicated topic (Topic 3) was developed with questions pertaining to this subject matter. The forms of transnational abortion activism rendered by Czech citizens include the provision of accommodation and financial aid, while the organisation Ciocia Czesia

has played a crucial role in offering significant support. Additional information pertaining to these forms of activism is elaborated in the ensuing section.

Respondent 1. claimed that there has been a significant amount of solidarity expressed towards the organisation Ciocia Czesia. In the early stages of the organisation, they collected donations through the portal called Donio on both the Czech and Polish sides. There is a large base of volunteers willing to help. Moreover, they claimed that clinics, hospitals, and medical facilities have expressed their support for Ciocia Czesia. There is also political support for the organisation too.

Respondent 2. noted that while the establishment of Ciocia Czesia involves some Polish women and men living in the Czech Republic, it is not solely dependent on Czech citizens' solidarity. Respondent 3. stated her knowledge about the engagement of Ciocia Czesia and Konsent.cz in helping with the issue of reproductive rights in the Czech Republic and highlighted that Ciocia Czesia also receives support and solidarity, which aids Polish women seeking abortions. Respondent 4. and 5. agreed and emphasised the emergence of organisations such as Ciocia Czesia, which offer practical help and collect donations to support their cause. Respondent 4. further noted that there are several organisations, such as Amnesty International, Česká ženská lobby, and Konsent, which may not offer direct assistance but participate in protests.

Regarding the current situation of the clinics and hospitals providing abortion services to Polish women, the threat of anti-abortion protests outside these facilities is not significant at present, although there are concerns that organised anti-abortion groups could become more vocal and exert pressure on these clinics and hospitals:

“The minority, those anti-abortion organisations, are becoming more vocal. They have found a new way to promote their interests. For example, this is evident in the case of the Alliance for the Family, who consistently complain about biased articles and claim that journalists write too little about their cause. When I wrote an article about the Pro-Life Movement, they repeatedly threatened to sue me and take me to court. This is a common experience for all journalists. When I write an article about abortions, I receive emails such as “What would you do if your mother had an abortion?” (Respondent 3.)

In addition to the previous questions, I included an inquiry as to whether they believe that performing abortions in the Czech Republic may be more of a question of business or solidarity towards Polish women.

Respondent 3. expressed her perspective that the motive for performing abortions in the Czech Republic is not solely rooted in business or solidarity. She acknowledged that there is undoubtedly a profit to be made in this area, but she questioned whether clinics would continue to provide abortions if they were not financially rewarded

In conclusion, the **Topic 3.** presented various forms of cross-border activism pertaining to abortion in the Czech Republic involving the offering of lodging and financial assistance, with Ciocia Czesia serving as a pivotal entity in providing substantial aid. Respondents have demonstrated considerable support for the organisation by Czech citizens, with a considerable number of volunteers willing to contribute their efforts. Furthermore, medical establishments such as clinics, hospitals, and facilities have exhibited their backing for Ciocia Czesia, and the organisation enjoys political support as well.

The opinions of Respondent 3. and Respondent 4. regarding the primary motivation behind the provision of abortions in the Czech Republic towards Polish women varied. Respondent 3. recognised the profit-making aspect of the practice while also seeing it as an expression of solidarity towards Polish women in need. Respondent 4., on the other hand, did not have a definite opinion but shared the viewpoint of a doctor who believed that performing abortions was driven by ethical considerations.

5.1.2.4. Ciocia Czesia's transnational abortion activism in practice

Based on the research findings and Key Respondent and Respondent responses on the Czech side, it was determined that Ciocia Czesia is the sole organisation providing aid to Polish women seeking abortion services in the Czech Republic.

Consequently, Respondent 1. – a member of Ciocia Czesia (transnational activist), was posed with supplementary inquiries and questions during interview to elicit further details about the operations and activities of the organisation. The insights garnered from following responses furnished both foundational and supplementary information that shed light on the distinct forms of abortion-related transnational activism among citizens of Central and Eastern Europe.

Therefore, the following subchapter presents an insight into the assistance to Polish women provided by the Ciocia Czesia organisation.

Transnational abortion activism through Ciocia Czesia lenses

Regarding the annual number of women who contact the organisation, most cases are related to missed abortions (foetus abnormality), accounting for approximately 99 percent of the cases received. The number of women seeking assistance has steadily increased over the past few years, with 30 cases reported in 2020, 829 in 2021, and 1438 in 2022. As of April 30th, 2023, over 400 cases have already been reported.

Information on how to access help is predominantly available online (www.ciociaczesia.pl), as the organisation operates solely through digital channels. There are no telephone numbers provided as the group is run by volunteers who may not be able to respond to calls at all times. It is common for women to learn about the organisation and the services it offers through recommendations from friends who may have previously utilised similar services, such as having an abortion in the Czech Republic.

In terms of the volume of communication, the organisation receives an average of 20 emails per day. However, these correspondences are ongoing and not all are new cases, as the organisation manages open cases as well.

In the context of the conscience clause for doctors in the Czech Republic, it is noteworthy that the country has such a clause and possibility. One instance occurred in which a doctor refused to perform an abortion for a patient, which is permitted under the law. However, another doctor eventually conducted the procedure.

Moreover, Ciocia Czesia acknowledged the possibility of underreporting of numbers and missing numbers in statistics, indicating that invoiced procedures are documented and reported. However, clinics that do not provide official documents do not contribute to the statistics, which may result in underreporting.

Regarding protests or disruptions by conservative groups, Ciocia Czesia reported no instances of negative actions, protests, or disruptions by conservative groups towards their operations or

in front of the clinics. However, pro-life groups have conducted separate activities, such as displaying images of fetuses on billboards, unrelated to the activities of Ciocia Czesia.

5.2. Case of the Slovak Republic

In the context of transnational abortion activism, the situation in Slovakia seems to be less publicised and more contentious. This is evident in the limited number of available articles on the topic and the relatively smaller number of journalists who cover it. Moreover, there is no official organisation in Slovakia that confirms the provision of such assistance to Polish women, which can be attributed to the efforts of certain politicians in the country to restrict abortion rights in recent years (Osvaldová, 2021; Biró, 2023; Gehrerová, 2021; Bútorá, 2021; Shemesh, 2021). As a result, Slovak society tends to prioritise the provision of support to their fellow citizens over cross-border activism.

5.2.1. Portrayal of the Polish abortion legislation in the media

Although there is no official evidence of an organisation aiding Polish women, it is suggested by articles that such aid does exist, albeit in a concealed manner. The organisation advocating for reproductive rights in Slovakia – Možnosť Voľby, held a joint demonstration (Black Protests) with Slovak citizens on April 12th in 2016, in front of the Polish Institute in Bratislava, protesting against the possible complete ban on abortions in Poland. By doing so, they showed solidarity with the right of Polish women to decide about their own lives (Možnosť Voľby, 2016; Žureková, 2016).

Another article reports on the current state of abortion law in Poland, mentioning organisation Abortion Without Borders and its help across borders. Further, the author of the article notes that the abortion legislation has faced significant opposition and protests in Poland, both local and transnational (in Slovakia) which confirms the presence of the social movements nationally as well as transnationally (Gehrerová, 2021). The article further states that some conservative lawmakers in neighbouring countries (Slovakia) are now pushing for stricter restriction on abortion laws (Osvaldová, 2021; Biró, 2023; Gehrerová, 2021; Bútorá, 2021; Shemesh, 2021).

According to the articles in the Slovak media (**quantity of the analysed articles – 31**), the number of foreign women who have reported abortions in Slovakia has increased nearly five-fold in the past decade (Krempaský, 2016-2018; TASR, 2020). In 2007, only 182 foreign

women reported having an abortion in Slovakia, compared to 873 in 2016. The articles state that most of these women come from neighbouring countries, where access to abortion is more restricted (Aktuality, 2016; ČTK, 2016; Krempaský, 2016; Wilczynski, 2020). Although Slovak hospitals and abortion clinics are required to report all abortions performed to the National Health Information Centre, the lack of data on the nationalities of patients limits the understanding of this phenomenon (Krempaský, 2018).

Natalia Broniarczyk, a feminist and co-founder of the organisations Aborcynjny Dream Team and Aborcja Bez Granic, confirms the situation in Slovakia is as follows: *“[c]urettage is performed only up to the twelfth week, and it is a mass procedure. There is a large infrastructure built by people who profit from it, including private clinics and trips for Polish women. Abortions in Slovakia are most commonly performed on Fridays from 8 am to 3 pm, and entire buses of women travel there for the procedure. Women who make this decision have different experiences, and not all of them are positive. We are concerned about providing feminist support and not sending women into the unknown.”* (Sroczyński, 2021).

Some articles mention that there are numerous women’s rights organisations in Slovakia, including Women’s Circles (Ženské kruhy), Aspect (Aspekt), and Option of Choice (Možnosť Voľby) who engage in reproductive rights in their activist effort. However, only Možnosť Voľby focuses on the issue of Polish women who travel to Slovakia to seek for a safe abortion. This organisation is extensively interested in women’s rights issues and regularly reports on the situation in Slovakia (Možnosť Voľby, 2023).

However, there is no official organisation that supports women in accessing abortions such as Ciocia Czesia in the Czech Republic. Nonetheless, evidence and statistics suggest that abortions are available for Polish women in Slovakia, and therefore women tend to travel for such purposes to this country too (Žuborová, 2022; Aktuality, 2016; ČTK, 2016; Krempaský, 2016; Wilczynski, 2020). Regarding the knowledge of clinics providing abortions to Polish women, this topic remains both protected and controversial. Ján Krempaský – journalist at SME daily has addressed this issue in his media appearances and summarised that the private clinic called Mediklinik in Levice offers this service (Krempaský, 2016).

From a legal perspective, the situation in Slovakia with regards to transnational abortion activism remains stagnant, as there have fewer public discussions on the matter. However, it is

worth noting that The National Centre for Human Rights has highlighted the discriminatory provisions of the 1986 Slovak abortion law, which affects people of different nationalities. The Ministry of Health of the Slovak Socialist Republic has established that foreign nationals who are only temporarily present in the country cannot undergo abortion according to § 9 (1) of the Act of the Slovak National Council No. 73/1986 Coll. On the artificial termination of pregnancy (Vyhláška Ministerstva zdravotníctva Slovenskej socialistickej republiky, 1986). On the other hand, the same principles established in the Czech Republic apply in Slovakia, as outlined above. Specifically, Article 21(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Article 4(3) of Directive 2011/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare can be invoked in relation to abortion in Slovakia.

To conclude, in the context of Slovakia, the analysis of media coverage and articles revealed that the Slovak media has a stronger focus on the topic of national abortion situation compared to Polish one and the assistance provided to Polish women. This can be attributed to the tense situation in Slovakia surrounding the issue of abortion, with a draft law named the “*Assistance to Pregnant Women*” being introduced multiple times in parliament. The proposal, which was put forth by Ms. Záborská – The head of the Christian Union laws (Osvaldová, 2021; Biró, 2023; Gehrerová, 2021; Bútorá, 2021; Shemesh, 2021; Haniková, 2022; Zmušková, 2021) a member of the parliamentary group OĽaNO, aims to impose stricter limitations on access to abortion in Slovakia. While there have been several proposals to restrict access to abortion in Slovakia, it is important to note that the “*Assistance to Pregnant Women*” bill has not yet been passed into law, and the issue remains controversial and subject to ongoing debate (Mesochoritsová, 2023).

5.2.2. Citizens, society, activists. Responses to the Polish abortion legislation

5.2.2.1. Time context: Social movements and Transnational activism

According to Tilly and Tarrow (2015), a social movement is a prolonged and coordinated effort to assert a claim, which is repeatedly communicated through actions, and is based on the support of organisations, networks, traditions, and solidarities. Additionally, social movements typically arise from a sense of discontent with the present situation and aim to challenge or alter the prevailing power structures, laws, circumstances, beliefs, or practices.

Given that social movements that began in Poland in response to the tightening of abortion legislation have spread to Slovakia, I conducted an inquiry among the respondents to ascertain their perception of the protests in Slovakia. The protests, which are classified as transnational social movements and originated in Poland, have also extended to Slovakia. The Respondent 1. confirms that social movements can travel beyond national borders to the transnational level and that it has spread from Poland to Slovakia too. She claims that the National Centre for Human Rights recognised the possibility that events unfolding in Poland could have similar repercussions in Slovakia, and as a part of their monitoring of the movements of activists and organisations, they paid close attention to activism.

Respondent 2. provides a different perspective, focusing on the healthcare system and its challenges in Slovakia. In contrast to Respondent 2., Respondent 3. is distinguished by her gender and her long-standing advocacy for women's rights, claiming that she found the protests appealing. Respondent 4. reported having personally experienced the protests and provided a different perspective on the situation

During my investigation of transnational social movements in Slovakia, I deemed it necessary to explore the potential positive or negative effects of these movements. This is vital in comprehending their precise implications on Slovakia as a society and in responding to the research questions. Respondent 2. expressed scepticism throughout his response, noting that Slovakia is heavily polarised and that the protests only serve to reinforce the views of those who support women's right to choose while pushing those who oppose it to become more radical.

Respondent 3. also expressed scepticism, expressing that she feels it made sense for the bubble (people having knowledge about the abortion law in Poland) that already has a clear understanding that reproductive rights are human rights and women's rights are fundamental human rights. She further stated that transnational social movements deriving from Poland, taking place in Slovakia did not have any impact on Slovak politics in general, because the proposals for various tightening on abortion law in Slovakia persisted and continued. She believes that it did not prevent the politicians from reintroducing these laws to parliament.

In contrast, Respondent 4. provided a more positive response and mentioned that at least politicians in Slovakia see that people are still willing to fight for women's rights:

“It is good that politicians see that there is a large group of people who consider the right to abortion as inviolable. When they ignore public opinion polls, which show that most people in Slovakia consider the current state of affairs sufficient, it is good that a few thousand of them are also physically visible.” (Respondent 4.)

In the context of transnational social movements, it is crucial to examine the effects of the protests and the implementation of stricter abortion laws in Poland on Slovakia and its civil society. It is pertinent to determine whether these events have had any significant impact. According to Respondent 1., the impact is evident, as evidenced by a variety of examples.

“I believe that the conservative political spectrum in Slovakia has been strengthened, with the introduction of further proposals to tighten abortion laws. Moreover, Slovak activism has become more active, recognising the need to prevent a situation like the one that occurred in Poland. Slovakia has become more cohesive and numerous activities are being implemented, especially by civic organisations and activists that are reacting to the developments in Poland..” (Respondent 1.)

Respondent 2. presented an opposing perspective, stating that the implications of current abortion legislation in Poland on Slovak civil society is minimal. He briefly mentioned Mediklinik, a private clinic in Slovakia that provides abortion services to Polish women, and notes that the legislation affects the clinic primarily from a business standpoint.

Respondents 3. and 4., mention conservative politicians, stricter abortion legislations, and how the situation has worsened in Slovakia since the law was tightened in Poland. Respondent 3. states that the situation in Poland scared part of the population and those who would like to change the abortion laws for the worse (politicians) have been encouraged because they see that it can be achieved and will be able to manipulate public opinion enough to get closer to the results of tightening of Slovak abortion laws too.

Respondent 4. claimed that in recent years, there has been a very intense effort by some politicians to make access to abortion stricter for women in Slovakia and that for years they

have been trying to negotiate a compromise proposal that would win a majority in parliament, or to package their efforts in different language and present the bill as “help for women”.

In conclusion, the findings from the **Topic 1.** of the case study on the Slovak Republic indicate the presence of transnational social movements concerning reproductive rights, specifically in relation to Polish women. The results also suggest that the protests and tightening of abortion laws in Poland had a significant impact on the abortion laws in Slovakia.

5.2.2.2. Consequences: Affecting citizens, social and political spectrum

As mentioned previously in the theoretical framework, transnational social movements and activism strive to effect change. Such movements have proven their efficacy in successfully altering public perceptions and exerting influence on major shifts in social policies and governmental actions through the proficient utilisation of social media and public spaces.

This section centres on the repercussions of the stricter abortion law in Poland on Slovak citizens and the manners by which it affects them. Respondent 1. sheds light on the possible implications of the Polish legislation on women in Slovakia and states that abortion services in Slovakia are not sufficiently accessible as they are not adequately covered regionally. In her statement, Respondent 1. raises concerns about the accessibility of abortion services in Slovakia due to the presence of the conscience clause in the country’s laws, which allows some clinics to refuse to perform the procedure. She notes that in certain cities, finding a clinic that offers abortion services can be challenging.

In line with Respondent 1., Respondent 2. also notes that the aforementioned change may result in a worsening of the situation.

“I believe that the situation could take a turn for the worse. The impact will hinge on the makeup of the new parliament, but the greater its level of autocracy and rightward tilt, the higher the likelihood of reproductive rights being tightened, including those of women, being constrained intuitively.” (Respondent 2.)

When considering the question of how exactly Polish abortion legislation can influence the situation or citizens in Slovakia, Respondent 4. offers a contrasting perspective, pointing out that transnational anti-choice movements tend to be more connected both financially and ideologically, and can derive inspiration from each other’s policies and campaigns. This trend

is also apparent in Slovakia, as conservative Christian activists and politicians may be motivated by the success of their counterparts in Poland and strive to enact similar policies within the country:

“The situation in Poland and other countries can also serve as inspiration for conservative Christian activists and politicians in our country. This could involve more rigorous application of conscience clauses in healthcare (regarding abortion) and pharmacy (regarding the distribution of contraception), more intense attacks on human rights activists, better networking and lobbying in high politics, improved financing for anti-choice organisations and groups.”
(Respondent 4.)

To conclude the **Topic 2.**, this subchapter examined the potential effects of the abortion law in Poland on the population of Slovakia. Respondent 1. And 2. expressed concerns regarding the accessibility of abortion services in Slovakia, particularly if Polish women begin to seek out these services in Slovakia. Moreover, Respondent 4. highlighted the likelihood of conservative Christian activists and politicians in Slovakia being inspired by their Polish counterparts, which could lead to stricter implementation of conscience clauses and attacks on human rights advocates. Overall, while the direct consequences for Slovak citizens may be limited, developments in Poland and other countries could potentially stimulate changes in political and cultural aspects of life in Slovakia.

5.2.2.3. Act of solidarity: Forms of activism

In order to address the research questions, a third topic was introduced, whereby participants were asked to provide insights on acts of solidarity and visible forms of activism in Slovakia.

In relation to the question of solidarity and forms of activism, respondents provided strikingly similar responses, concurring that there is a tangible sense of solidarity in Slovakia towards Polish women. Respondent 1. stated that this solidarity is undoubtedly visible and can be attributed to the shared concern that this issue is happening in close proximity to Slovakia and could potentially occur within its borders. Similarly, Respondent 3. claimed that there is certainly evidence of solidarity towards Polish women in Slovakia. Moreover, Respondent 1. Identified “Možnosť Voľby,” an organisation that assists Polish women in Slovakia, as one of the forms of transnational abortion activism. This information is of significant value since it is

not publicly accessible, the organisation does not openly admit it, and it is not officially recognised as an organisation that aids Polish women in locating abortion services in Slovakia:

“I am personally very attentive to the activities of the “Možnosť voľby” initiative, which seeks to raise awareness about the developments in Poland. They have a helpline that can inform Slovak and Polish women about the availability of legal abortion services in Slovakia and offer other forms of support – finding a specific clinic. However, the organisation refrains from promoting this service as doing so may incite protests from anti-abortion groups outside the clinic.” (Respondent 1.)

The Respondent 2., highlighted a lack of response from certain organisations and activists in their research endeavours, which resonated with my own experiences with the same organisation – Možnosť Voľby. He indicated that despite their attempts to contact Možnosť Voľby in the past, they were unable to obtain any information as these individuals declined to engage in dialogue.

The Respondent 3. also referred to the organisation “Možnosť Voľby”, which had been previously mentioned by the Respondent 1.

Respondent 4., on the other hand, was familiar with certain organisations but was unable to provide an answer regarding clinics and referred to the aforementioned organisations, specifically the Možnosť Voľby, Nebudeme ticho, Aspekt and Povstanie pokračuje.

To conclude the **Topic 3.**, answers of the participants revealed that the evident solidarity in Slovakia towards Polish women is attributed to a shared apprehension that the issue of abortion could potentially arise in Slovakia. Nevertheless, activists in Slovakia encounter obstacles such as the need to conceal their actions due to threats. Participant 1. explicated that hospitals in Slovakia are closing down their departments that offer abortion services, while Participant 2. noted that certain organisations and activists did not provide a response when contacted. Participant 3. had knowledge of specific groups but was hesitant to disclose this information owing to concerns about privacy and possible threats to the individuals involved. Participant 4. was acquainted with certain organisations but was unable to furnish information on clinics.

According to Respondent 2., the primary reason for the lack of reporting on the issue of abortion in Slovakia is the apprehension of protests from opponents of abortion. This possibility leads to concerns among organisations and individuals who may hesitate to report on the matter.

To conclude the current situation, the underreporting of the issue of abortion in Slovakia is influenced by a combination of factors, including fear of protests from anti-abortion groups outside clinics, concerns over criminal prosecution, and financial incentives for clinics to avoid reporting or taxation. **This has resulted in limited access to information for women seeking abortions and highlights the need for increased awareness and advocacy for reproductive rights.** The reluctance of organisations to promote their services also underscores the pervasive stigma surrounding abortion and the need for a more open and informed public discourse on the issue.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The theoretical framework of social movements has garnered significance for capturing and elucidating the key components of the protests in Poland that have persisted since 2016. In this context, the Polish transnational social movements that engaged in ongoing interactions with opponents through connected networks of challenges across national borders, as explained by Tarrow (2022), have contributed to advancing the understanding of the theoretical framework. This was in light of the analysis which demonstrated that these social movements have transcended national borders and expanded over into the neighbouring countries of the CEE region – the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic (Tarrow, 2005). The concept of transnational activism, abortion tourism, and transnational abortion activism were expounded upon. Hence, the research employed a content analysis of 65 online articles and an abductive approach of 9 interviews in line with the research questions guiding the investigation.

The overarching aim of the thesis has been strengthened by the thorough and comprehensive background research (Žuborová, 2022), as well as the previous research, which have illuminated the full potential of the research. More specifically, the background research has been applied to the current findings of two cases, namely the Czech Republic (Sbírka zákonů Československá socialistická republika, 1986; Ministry of Health of the Czech Republic, 2021) and Slovakia (Vyhláška Ministerstva zdravotníctva Slovenskej socialistickej republiky, 1986; NCZI, 2022; Žuborová, 2022), in order to gain a better understanding of the context with regard to their national abortion legislations. It is worth noting that the background research has uncovered some legislative ambiguities and the resulting debate, particularly in relation to the impact of the current abortion legislation in Poland on its neighbouring countries.

Initially, it can be observed that in Slovakia, journalists tend to focus on the topic of national abortion legislation and the Slovak abortion law (Osvaldová, 2021; Biró, 2023; Gehrerová, 2021; Bútorá, 2021; Shemesh, 2021; Haníková, 2022), while also providing information about the situation in Poland, namely the transnational protests, and Polish women travelling to Slovakia to seek abortion services (Krempaský, 2016-2018; Böhmer, 2021; Zmušková, 2021; Žureková, 2016; ČTK, 2016; Paľovčíková, 2021; Shemesh, 2021; Wilczynski, 2020). In contrast, Czech media articles primarily cover topics related to providing assistance to Polish women within the Czech Republic, proudly informing civil society about the help of the Ciocia

Czesia organisation operating within and across borders (Zykmundová, 2021; Bartošová, 2023; Polívková, 2023; Pluhař, 2020; Lauder, 2020-2022; Brázdová, 2021; Capáková, 2022; Ilić, 2020; Kotvalová, 2022; Rambousková, 2022; Kubcová, 2021), while also focusing on the legal perspective of the issue (Veinbender, 2020; Lauder, 2021; Houdek, 2021; Čabanová, 2022). Moreover, the situation in Slovakia remains undeniably tense, controversial, less medialised and the topic of abortion is scarcely discussed.

In regard to the local activism and transnational activism, Slovak non-governmental organisations (NGOs), such as “Možnosť Voľby,” “Aspekt,” “Ženské kruhy,” and “Povstanie pokračuje,” primarily focus on national abortion-related issues. However, while conducting the interviews, majority of Slovak respondents referred to “Možnosť Voľby” as an only activist organisation known for aiding Polish women in Slovakia (Tarrow, 2005). This is a notable finding, as information about their assistance is not publicly available, and the organisation does not openly acknowledge their involvement, nor did they agree to be interviewed for this study. “Možnosť Voľby” operates a telephone helpline to provide Polish women with information about the availability of abortion services and clinics in Slovakia. According to Tarrow (2022), transnational activists operate both within and outside of their respective societies by offering help. This organisation, through their contact with Polish women and other transnational organisations that aid Polish women in Europe, participates in contentious political activities that involve them in transnational networks of contacts (Tarrow, 2005).

On the other hand, it is essential to distinguish the citizenship status between the assistance provided to Polish women by Slovak and Czech organisations. While Slovak women (Možnosť Voľby) aid Polish women in Slovakia, Polish women (Ciocia Czesia) provide assistance to Polish women in the Czech Republic. Therefore, the distinguishing factor between these two forms of transnational abortion activism, in terms of their intersectionality, is their respective citizenship statuses (Crenshaw, 2017).

Based on the analysis of 31 Slovak media articles, it has been revealed that the number of foreign women who have reported undergoing abortions in Slovakia has increased by almost five times over the past decade, with 873 women reporting the procedure in 2016 as compared to only 182 in 2007 (NCZI, 2022). Moreover, despite the fact that Slovak medical institutions are mandated to report all cases of abortions to the National Health Information Centre, the

absence of detailed information on the patients' nationalities constrains the comprehension of this occurrence (Krempaský, 2018).

By examining 34 articles on the Czech side, it can be inferred that Ciocia Czesia is involved in various initiatives and has a significant number of volunteers supporting their cause in the Czech Republic (Košlerová, 2021). The findings revealed that Ciocia Czesia activists, who hold a citizenship of Polish individuals, offer assistance to women by aiding them in identifying appropriate clinics and providing interpretation assistance (Lauder, 2021). Moreover, the organisation maintains that they also extend financial support for the treatment, which is financed through public collections.

To sum up the discussion about the results from the articles, it can be observed that in Slovakia, journalists tend to focus on the topic of national abortion legislation and the Slovak abortion law, while also providing information about the situation in Poland, protests, and Polish women travelling to Slovakia to seek abortion services. The information regarding assistance provided to Polish women and the *Možnosť Voľby* organisation is not readily available. In contrast, media articles in the Czech Republic predominantly discuss topics related to aiding Polish women within the country and proudly mention the Ciocia Czesia organisation.

The observed differences between the two cases of the CEE region can be attributed to a multitude of factors. These factors were identified through interviews, which constituted the cornerstone of the research, as the information gathered directly from individuals was not present in the articles that were analysed. Nonetheless, one factor that may explain this situation is the statistical data obtained from the statistical offices of both countries during the research, which indicated that the larger number of Polish people residing in the Czech Republic could cause differences between the Czech Republic and Slovakia in terms of the formation of activist groups. According to ČSÚ (2022), there were 17,936 Polish residents in the Czech Republic in 2021, compared to slightly over 6,000 Polish residents in Slovakia in 2020 according to ŠÚ SR (2022).

Regarding transnational social movements, the findings of this study illustrate that Slovak organisation *Možnosť Voľby* organised a demonstration in 2016, in front of the Polish Institute in Bratislava to protest against the potential complete ban on abortions in Poland. These findings confirm that social movements can transcend national borders (Tarrow, 2005) and

reach the transnational level, as the movement spread from Poland to Slovakia. Furthermore, the National Centre for Human Rights recognised the potential for similar repercussions in Slovakia and monitored activism closely, examining civil associations to determine their democratic space to engage in activist work and protests, as well as their access to sufficient funding. This situation is similar to that in the Czech Republic, where transnational protests were held outside the Polish embassy and at other locations. The protests in the Czech Republic were forceful and explicit, using powerful symbolism such as blood and shoulder straps, which was unusual for protest actions in the country.

However, this research also shows that Slovakia is heavily polarised, and the protests may reinforce the views of those who support women's right to choose while pushing those who oppose it to become more radical. The findings also reveal that transnational activism taking place in Slovakia, did not have any significant positive impact on Slovak politics in general, as proposals for tightening abortion laws persisted and continued. However, I consider the protests to have an equivalent impact precisely because Slovak citizens and politicians witnessed what was happening in Poland and did not intervene. Additionally, the conservative political spectrum in Slovakia has strengthened with the introduction of further proposals to tighten abortion laws, making access to abortion stricter for women in Slovakia.

To answer the first research question on the *how legislation in Poland does influence social activism among citizens in the Czech Republic and Slovakia*, the study highlights that the protests had a positive **implications on the civil society**, as Slovak activism became more active in recognising the need to prevent a situation like the one that occurred in Poland. Slovakia has become more cohesive, and numerous activities are being implemented, particularly by civic organisations and activists who are reacting to the developments in Poland. Similarly, to the situation in the Czech Republic, the protests had a positive impact by raising the issue's media profile and stimulating public debate. The study's results show that the protests created solidarity with Polish women and led to the formation of a network of support, including the establishment of the Ciocia Czesia organisation that assists Polish women with access to abortions (Tarrow, 2022). The transnational movements revealed that a supportive community existed where Polish women could seek help, and negative feelings were transformed into positive outcomes that demonstrated solidarity after the protests were held.

Regarding the implications of Polish abortion legislation on the civil society in the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic, there are varying findings, as well as some shared aspects. One example of a differing finding is that Czech women express concerns about the potential dangers of travelling to Poland while pregnant, as doctors' focus is on the health of the foetus rather than the mother's well-being and overall health. The results also revealed a constant worry among Czech citizens that the right to abortion is not a given, and that it is not guaranteed indefinitely and can change overnight. Additionally, this situation has alerted Czech citizens to the presence of relatively strong and gaining strength anti-abortion movements in the Czech Republic.

Similarly, the findings in the Slovak Republic indicate that transnational anti-choice movements tend to be more connected both financially and ideologically, and they do affect civil society. The results in the Slovak Republic also show that Polish abortion legislation led to a more rigorous application of stricter abortion laws and the distribution of contraception in Slovakia. Moreover, it led to the formations of conservative Christian activists and politicians being inspired by the Polish situation, more intense attacks on human rights activists, better networking and lobbying in high politics, and improved financing for anti-choice organisations and groups.

On the other hand, there is a positive aspect to the findings in the Czech Republic, indicating that the Polish legislation does not currently affect the daily lives of Czech women, rather it is more related to political and legislative debates. However, this raises a concern that the Czech population might feel affected in the future. Conversely, there has been no mention of a lack of effect on Slovak citizens.

Regarding the second research question, the study focused on the **forms of abortion-related cross-border (transnational) activism** in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The findings indicate that in Slovakia, there is currently no organisation of Polish women assisting their counterparts in seeking accessible and safe abortions. The only existing organisation is *Možnosť Voľby*, which is operated by Slovak women. The findings of this study reveal that various forms of cross-border activism regarding abortion in the Czech Republic exist, including the provision of accommodation, transportation, material aid, and financial support. While some organisations, such as Amnesty International, Česká ženská lobby, and Konsent, do not provide direct assistance, they engage in protests to advocate for reproductive rights. In

contrast, the Ciocia Czesia organisation plays a pivotal role in providing significant aid and boasts a large volunteer community ready to provide assistance with various needs, such as accommodation and transportation. Additionally, medical establishments, including clinics, hospitals, and other facilities, have expressed their support for Ciocia Czesia, and the organisation has received political support as well. These findings clearly demonstrate a distinct approach in the Czech Republic compared to the situation in Slovakia.

Regarding transnational activism (Tarrow, 2005) in Slovakia, the information obtained from the National Human Rights Centre indicates that Možnosť Voľby is the only organisation that helps Polish women in Slovakia. The organisation established a helpline for the provision of information to both Slovak and Polish women about the accessibility of legal abortion services in Slovakia, as well as for rendering assistance in locating a particular clinic. Nevertheless, this organisation is hesitant to advertise its helpline service publicly, as such an act may potentially trigger protests from anti-abortion groups, which may threaten the safety and well-being of women seeking abortion services outside the clinic. However, since information from this organisation is not publicly available, it is difficult to gain an accurate understanding of their situation and the assistance they provide to Polish women. Furthermore, the research revealed that journalists, experts, and organisations experience email and telephone attacks from anti-choice, conservative and anti-abortion organisations, as well as ordinary people who threaten them with unpleasant consequences

The issue of clinics and hospitals providing assistance to Polish women in Czech and Slovak Republics has also emerged as a significant aspect of cross-border activism. While the threat of anti-abortion protests outside hospitals and clinics is currently not significant in the Czech Republic as compared to Slovakia, there are concerns that organised anti-abortion groups may become more vocal and exert pressure on these clinics and hospitals. The minority of anti-abortion organisations is becoming more vocal, and they have found a new way to promote their interests, such as the Alliance for the Family, which consistently complains about biased articles and claims that journalists write too little about their cause.

Regarding clinics and hospitals, Ciocia Czesia works with medical institutions in Ostrava, Brno, and Frýdek-Místek. In contrast, in Slovakia, the private clinic called Mediklinik in Levice and another clinic in Banská Bystrica were identified as facilities that provide abortions. Concerningly, the Mediklinik in Levice presents itself as a cosmetic surgery clinic but also

performs abortions. The majority of its patients were found to be of Polish nationality, and the clinic was found to cooperate with websites hosted on Polish domains.

These findings suggest that the Czech Republic exhibits a greater degree of openness, lesser conservatism, and a stronger association with abortion activism and social movements (Cohen, 2014; Connell 2011). Conversely, Slovakia appears to be more closed, more conservative, more controversial, and more focused on abortion tourism (Culwell, Hurwitz and Greer, 2013).

The underreporting of the issue of abortion in Slovakia occurs primarily due to the fear of protests from opponents of abortion, as mentioned earlier. This situation highlights the need for increased awareness and advocacy for reproductive rights and a more open and informed public discourse on the issue. The reluctance of organisations to promote their services also underscores the pervasive stigma surrounding abortion. Furthermore, the current situation concerning abortion in Slovakia is influenced by a combination of factors, including fear of protests from anti-abortion groups outside clinics, concerns over criminal prosecution, and financial incentives for clinics to avoid reporting or taxation. This has resulted in limited access to information for women seeking abortions.

To conclude the discussion about the results and its unexpected findings, this research filled a significant research gap concerning transnational abortion activism in the CEE region, particularly with regard to its occurrence from Poland to its neighbouring countries, the Czech and Slovak Republics. While previous studies have examined the phenomenon of Polish migrant feminist activism abroad, primarily through single case studies (Falkowska, 2022; Gober and Struzik, 2018; Wojnicka, 2019), this study has taken a broader approach by conducting multiple case studies of migrant activism in the CEE region, namely the Czech and Slovak republics, both being neighbouring countries of Poland.

The legal dimensions of Polish women obtaining abortions abroad were also explored, and certain legislations in the CEE region were examined, contributing to a nuanced understanding of the topic in the media. Although previous comparative studies have explored abortion legislation and social practices in Poland and Ireland (Cullen and Korolczuk, 2019; Szelewa, 2020) and some scholars have referenced organisations like Ciocia Basia in Berlin and Ciocia Wlenia in Vienna (Chwat, 2021; Ignaciuk and Sethna, 2022), this research uncovered

information about the previously unstudied Ciocia Czesia organisation operating in the Czech Republic, and yielded unique results and information that are not available elsewhere.

Additionally, this study has uncovered the presence of a Slovak organisation that provides support to Polish women yet chooses to keep this information confidential. Such information has not been previously documented and warrants further research. It is worth noting that these unique findings have significant implications for academic research, as they contribute to the understanding of transnational abortion activism in the CEE region and shed light on the dynamics and forms of cross-border assistance provided to Polish women seeking abortions (Tarrow, 2005).

To finally conclude the results of the transnational abortion activism research, specifically with regards to the impact of Polish legislation on both countries, there are both positive and negative outcomes to consider. On a positive note, the implementation of restrictive abortion laws in Poland has led to increased activism and collaboration among citizens, promoting greater cohesiveness and support for weaker groups. This activism has become more visible, and citizens have recognised the importance of fighting for their rights, demonstrating a greater sense of humanity and social responsibility.

However, there are also negative implications to consider. The threats and attacks from opposing anti-abortion groups have proven to be effective in fulfilling their strategic objectives, leading to less discussion and public discourse on the topic. This reduction in discourse and accessibility of information can affect both domestic citizens and Polish women, who may struggle to access reliable information on the topic and must instead seek it out from specialised organisations.

Conclusively, an important question arises from the entire research:

What is the extent to which reduced discussion and public discourse on abortion from Poland to the countries of CEE region is beneficial, considering its impact on the right to information for Polish women and the right to abortion within EU countries?

The restriction of access to information and services related to abortion in neighbouring countries for Polish women could raise yet other concerns about the impact on women's health and rights. The EU law guarantees the right to freedom of movement for EU citizens, including

access to healthcare services, and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex, including in the provision of healthcare services (ECHR, 1950; ECHR, 2020; Directive 2011/24/EU; Resolution of the European Parliament, 2020). Therefore, it is crucial to address the issue of limited access to information and services related to abortion in Poland to ensure that Polish women can fully exercise their rights and access safe and legal abortion services, both in Poland and in other EU countries.

6.1. Future directions of the research

Despite only being able to conduct half of the planned interviews, I was able to answer both research questions and filled the research gap. Nevertheless, I strongly believe that a more extensive and in-depth study would provide many more benefits, as it would enable the researcher to gain access to a wider range of institutions and acquire a greater amount of information. Regarding the Czech side, I suggest that research be conducted on the same topic of the transnational abortion activism, but with more respondents, including more members of Ciocia Czesia organisation, as some members declined to be interviewed. I am confident that with a larger sample size, a more comprehensive understanding of the issue could be obtained. Additionally, conducting interviews with clinics and hospitals in collaboration with Ciocia Czesia would provide a more complete understanding of their situation, as it was indicated that anti-abortion groups activities and threats may impact media coverage and reporting of the matter.

However, on the Slovak side, I acknowledge that conducting research may prove more challenging, as the topic of abortion is highly sensitive and controversial in the country. As such, a more extensive study is warranted, involving both organisations and individuals, with particular attention to the perspectives of those within the Možnosť Voľby organisation. Furthermore, I recommend conducting research with hospitals and clinics to gain insight into their perspective, enabling academia and researchers to better understand and acknowledge their views on the matter.

The number of new and controversial responses on the topic of transnational abortion activism and abortion tourism generated by this topic exceeded my expectations. Therefore, I strongly advocate for further research, so that we all may provide assistance to organisations, clinics, and hospitals, albeit to a limited extent. By conducting further research, we can begin to unravel

the complexities of this issue and explore possible solutions that may benefit all transnational activists involved.

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Glossary, Introduction, European standpoint

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Theory

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Guide – Respondent version

Research question: *How does current abortion legislation in Poland affect citizens in neighbouring countries? What forms of abortion-related cross-border activism can be identified among CEE citizens?*

Warm-up questions

- What is your perspective on the current state of abortion rights in Poland and its recent imposition of stringent restrictions?
- What motivated you to initiate efforts to advocate for the advancement of reproductive rights and women's rights in Slovakia/Czech Republic?

Topic 1.: Time Context: Social movements and Transnational activism

- What were your reactions and perceptions regarding the emergence and mobilisation of protests (2016), such as the Black Protests in Poland in response to the aforementioned legislation?
- What was the nature and progression of protests in Slovakia/Czech Republic, and what positive outcomes do you attribute to them?
- What are the significant changes that have transpired in Slovakia/Czech Republic since the enforcement of the Polish legislation?

Follow-up questions

- From your perspective, is the general public adequately informed about this particular issue?
- If not, what are some potential strategies that could be employed to rectify this lack of awareness and knowledge among the populace?

- To what extent are you personally involved in the endeavour to enhance public understanding and awareness of this issue, and what specific contributions have you made towards this effort?

Topic 2.: Consequences: Affecting citizens, social and political spectrum

- What repercussions have occurred or are likely to occur for Slovak/Czech citizens as result of the restrictive abortion law recently implemented in Poland?
- How might Slovak/Czech citizens experience the effects of these changes in their daily lives, and what are the tangible manifestations of these effects?
- In what specific domains, including political circumstances and legal developments, do you believe that the situation in Poland could influence events in Slovakia/Czech Republic, and what are the potential mechanisms of implications?

Follow-up questions

- What measures do you think could be implemented to facilitate an improvement in this situation, and what specific actions are necessary to achieve this?

Topic 3.: Act of solidarity: Forms of activism

- Have you noticed any instances of solidarity demonstrated by Slovak/Czech citizens towards Polish women following the enforcement of the current abortion legislation? If so, what forms have these solidarity actions taken?
- Are you familiar with any organisations or activists, either as individuals or groups, who are aiding Polish women residing in Slovakia/Czech Republic in their search for safe abortion clinics? If yes, what are the common types of aid being offered?
- Could you identify any of these organisations and elaborate on the specific initiatives and efforts they are undertaking in support of Polish women?

Follow-up questions

- What methods are utilised by these organisations to provide assistance, and to what extent is the collaboration between Slovak/Czech and Polish women perceptible or discernible? If it is noticeable, what form does this collaboration take?

Extra questions (discussion with a respondent)

- Are you aware of any healthcare facilities or hospitals in Slovakia/Czech Republic that offer abortion services to Polish women? If your answer is affirmative, kindly specify the names of these facilities and provide an overview of the current situation.
- Which region appears to have the highest concentration of clinics providing abortion services to Polish women, and what factors contribute to this concentration?
- Regarding the situation in these clinics, do you believe that primary motivation is profit-oriented or focused on providing assistance and help to those in need (Polish women)?

Appendix 2.: Interview Guide – Key Respondent version

Research question: How does current abortion legislation in Poland affect citizens in neighbouring countries? What forms of abortion-related cross-border activism can be identified among CEE citizens?

Warm-up questions

- What is your perspective on the current state of abortion rights in Poland and its recent imposition of stringent restrictions?
- What motivated you to initiate efforts to advocate for the advancement of reproductive rights and women's rights in Slovakia/Czech Republic?

Topic 1.: Time context: Social movements and Transnational activism

- What were your reactions and perceptions regarding the emergence and mobilisation of protests (2016), such as the Black Protests in Poland in response to the aforementioned legislation?
- How did you (your organisation) respond and experience the situation? What measures did you take to support Polish women affected by the law?
- What was the nature of the reproductive rights protests that emerged in Slovakia/Czech Republic, and did you play a role in organising or participating in them? What were your expectations for the protests, and what outcomes did they achieve?
- How did the situation surrounding the protests for reproductive rights in Slovakia/Czech Republic develop in the subsequent months and years?
- What positive impacts do you think the protests have had, and what negative implications have they had?
- Since the implementation of the Polish abortion law in 2021, what changes have taken place in Slovakia/Czech Republic?

Follow-up questions

- From your perspective, is the general public adequately informed about this particular issue?
- If not, what are some potential strategies that could be employed to rectify this lack of awareness and knowledge among the populace?

Topic 2.: Consequences: Affecting citizens, social and political spectrum

- What potential implications do you foresee the current situation and the recent abortion law in Poland having on civil society in Slovakia/Czech Republic?
- How might these changes be experienced by citizens in their daily lives, and what specific effects might they have?
- In what ways might these changes impact your work and the assistance you provide to women?
- What specific events, life issues, or aspects of the political situation do you think could be influenced by the situation in Poland, and to what extent might they be affected? (e.g. changes to laws or policies?).

Follow-up questions

- What measures do you think could be implemented to facilitate an improvement in this situation, and what specific actions are necessary to achieve this?

Topic 3.: Act of solidarity: Forms of activism

- Have you observed any instances of solidarity by Slovak/Czech citizens towards Polish women following the implementation of the Polish law?
- If so, what form have these taken?
- Are you familiar with any other entities, be they organisation, activists or individuals that offer support to Polish women?

Follow-up questions

- If affirmative, could you provide details regarding the specific types of assistance that are most commonly offered, as well as the manner in which this aid is provided?

Extra and Numerical questions

- As the sole organisation we are aware of in Slovakia/Czech Republic providing aid to Polish women, could you provide an approximate figure of the number of Polish women who seek your assistance annually? (yearly)
- Through what channels do Polish women become informed about your organisation's services and activities? How do they access information regarding safe abortions?
- What are the most common methods of contact employed by Polish women in reaching out to you? Furthermore, what is the approximate volume of email and phone communication you receive on a daily, weekly, monthly and annual basis?
- Could you provide a detailed account of the process involved in providing assistance to these women? Specifically, what steps are taken and how do you provide support to them?
- What are the expenses that the women are required to cover themselves, and how much is the typical cost of the entire service in Slovakia/Czech Republic?
- At what point (when exactly) did you experience the highest level of interest from Polish women seeking your assistance?
- What motivates your organisation to maintain a low profile (medializing) with regard to its assistance to Polish women in Slovakia/Czech Republic? Is there a particular reason for this, and if so, what is it?
- In what capacity do you cooperate with clinics and hospitals in Slovakia/Czech Republic, and which institutions specifically?

- Could you provide information on the clinics or hospitals, with respect to their locations (regions or cities), that attract the largest number of Polish women seeking assistance and elucidate the reasons underlying this trend?

Follow-up questions

- What is the rationale behind the absence of reporting on the numbers of Polish women undergoing an abortion in Slovakia/Czech Republic? Is there no necessity for such action, or why so?
- Regarding the situation in these clinics, do you believe that primary motivation is profit-oriented or focused on providing assistance and help to those in need (Polish women)?

Appendix 3.: List of respondents – Case of the Czech Republic

Respondent 1.: *A member of the Ciocia Czesia organisation in the Czech Republic – transnational activist.* A member who co-founded the Ciocia Czesia organisation with other Polish women and has been volunteering in the organisation since its inception. She holds a Polish nationality, has been living in the Czech Republic for several years and is fluent in Czech language.

Respondent 2.: *Researcher at the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences.* A Czech expert in cultural history, works as a researcher at the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences (ICH, 2023).

Respondent 3.: *Journalist at the Czech radio iRozhlas.cz.* She has been collaborating with foreign media outlets, including the Guardian, BBC, Al Jazeera, The Scotsman, and VICE World News for many years, and focuses on human rights issues (iRozhlas.cz, 2023).

Respondent 4.: *Journalist at the Czech newspaper Respekt.* At the beginning of her career, she focused on domestic politics, but expanded her scope to polarizing topics related to the position of women (and men) in society, sexual violence, or the situation of the LGBT+ community. In 2013, she won the Journalism Award of the Open Society Fund for an insightful piece on the history of the Romani Holocaust. In 2018, she received the Františka Plamínková Award (Respekt, 2023).

Respondent 5.: *Researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences.* Her individual research interests are concentrated on topics pertaining to the sociology of private life, parenthood and caregiving, as well as the analysis of social policies. As part of the FEMCIT project (6th EU Framework), her previous research focused on the topic of the female body and examination of how women's rights to bodily integrity and self-determination were treated in Czechoslovakia during the past century (Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, 2023).

Appendix 4.: List of respondents – Case of the Slovak Republic

Respondent 1.: *Head of Policy and International Affairs at The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights.* At the Centre, her role is to oversee compliance with fundamental human rights and freedoms in Slovakia, ensuring that national laws and policies meet global human rights standards (SNSLP, 2023).

Respondent 2.: *Journalist at the Slovak newspaper SME daily.* He primarily focuses on healthcare reporting and issues. In 2010, he was awarded the Journalistic Award for a series of articles on bedsores in Slovak hospitals (Denník SME, 2023).

Respondent 3.: *Journalist at the Slovak newspaper Denník N daily.* In 2006 she relocated to Israel, from where she has been covering not only the Middle East but also has been writing about women's rights, feminism, gender issues, family and social phenomenon. She has been nominated for the Journalist Award several times, winning it in 2008 for a series of columns on life in Israel (Denník N, 2023).

Respondent 4.: *Journalist at the Slovak newspaper Denník N daily.* She has been a reporter for Denník N since its inception, with a primary focus on domestic issues, women's and minorities rights (Denník N, 2023).

Appendix 5.: List of articles – Case of the Czech Republic

<i>List of articles – Case of the Czech Republic</i>				
No.	Title of the article	Author	Media	Year
1.	Ať mohou Polky zdarma na potrat i do Česka, vyzývají europoslanci	B. Zykmondová	FTV Prima	2021
2.	Byrtek: Interrupci v Polsku provede i doktor, který ji oficiálně odmítl. Záleží, kolik dáte	L. Bartošová	Aktuálně	2023
3.	Ciocia Czesia už tři roky pomáhá Polkám s bezpečnými interrupcemi	E. Polívková	Přítomnost	2023
4.	Česká iniciativa pomáhá Polkám s potraty. Dostala se na balkánský seznam osobností roku	F. Pluhař	Radio Wave	2020
5.	Česká Teta jde na pomoc Polským ženám. Zákon o interrupcích má však sporný výklad	S. Lauder	Respekt	2020
6.	Česko Polkám s interrupcemi nepomůže	S. Lauder	Respekt	2021
7.	„Český zákon je znepokojivý,“ říká polský tajemník uprostřed střetu o potraty	Not given	Seznam Zprávy	2021
8.	Češky pomáhají Polkám s potraty. Probojovaly se na seznam osobností roku	G. Brázdová	Pozitivní zprávy	2021
9.	Do cizí země na potrat. „Zažívají stres i úlevu,“ říká Byrteková, která pomáhá Polkám s interrupcí v Česku	V. Capáková	Hospodářské noviny	2022

10.	Eva Ptašková: Bojím sa, že situácia v Poľsku dôjde do bodu, keď sa ženy budú báť chodiť ku gynekológovi	B. Ilić	Heroes	2020
11.	Interrupce je zdravotní péče. Hrozí konec legálních potratů i u nás?	L. Klimeš	Heroine	2022
12.	Interrupce pro Polky jsou podle ministerstva v Česku legální. Úřad se omlouvá za zmatky	S. Lauder	Respekt	2021
13.	Interrupce v České republice: zápas o ženská těla	R. Dudová	Sociologický ústav AV ČR	2012
14.	„Jako bychom se připravovaly k boji.“ Jak funguje organizace pomáhající Polkám s interrupcemi	L. Kotvalová	Refresher	2022
15.	Kolektiv dva roky pomáhá Polkám s legálními potraty v ČR. „Změna přijde až s novou vládou,” říká spoluzakladatelka	B. Rambousková	Hate Free	2022
16.	Ministerstvo popřelo svůj původní výklad, Polky mohou v Česku na potrat	Not given	Radio Prague International	2021
17.	Nejasný český postoj ztěžuje situaci polských žen	A. Čabanová	Tribune	2022
18.	Ombudsman: Potraty pro Polky jsou v souladu s českým právem	S. Lauder	Respekt	2021
19.	„Opovažte se dělat potraty Polkám!“ Česko se otočilo zády k ženám, jimž vlastní stát drasticky omezil právo na interrupci	P. Houdek	Deník N	2021
20.	Polky jezdí za potraty i do Česka. Ne všude jim vycházejí vstříc	K. Veinbender	E15	2020

21.	Polky se bojí otěhotnět, potrat řeší v Česku, říká mluvčí Ciocia Czesia	E. Černá	idnes	2022
22.	Polský zákaz potratů: Ministerstvo zdravotnictví ustoupilo tlaku veřejnosti i Pirátů a umožní Polkám interrupce v Česku	Not given	Pirati	2021
23.	Potratová turistika Polska do Česka je zcela legální. Zákrok stojí jen pár tisíc	L. Palata	Denik	2021
24.	Potrasy občanek EU jsou v Česku legální. Ví to Senát?	M. A. Bernardová	Právní prostor	2021
25.	Potrasy Polek v Česku. Žena musí do zahraničí, aby byla respektována její práva, říká členka organizace	V. Lichnovská	Zena-in	2021
26.	Potrasy v Česku: Počet zákroků klesá a častěji je podstupují ženy s dětmi	S. Lauder	Respekt	2021
27.	Sehnat peníze a tajně odjet. Za interrupcemi cestují do českých nemocnic stovky polských žen	A. Košlerová	iRozhlas	2021
28.	Spojilo je naštvání, dnes z Prahy pomáhají k potratu tisícům Polek ročně	E. Soukeníková	Seznam Zprávy	2022
29.	„Teta Češka“ už rok pomáhá Polkám s potraty za hranicí. Je jich čím dál víc	K. M. Kubcová	ČT24	2021
30.	Trauma doma i za hranicemi. Jaké překážky čekají na polské ženy, které se snaží v Česku podstoupit interrupci?	D. Kubištová, M. Válek, L. Kabrhelová	iRozhlas	2021
31.	Umožněte Polkám interrupce v ČR, vyzvali Piráti vládu	Redakce Tiscali	Tiscali	2020

32.	Varšavský soud odsoudil Polku, která pomohla jiné ženě při potratu. Jde o první takový případ v Evropě	ČTK	iRozhlas	2023
33.	Vyjasnění podmínek interrupcí pro Polky se opět odkládá	S. Lauder	Respekt	2022
34.	Že se Sněmovna nepřipojila ke kritice polské vlády, byla varovná vlaštovka, máme se lidských práv zastávat, říká nová poslankyňe	B. Mašát Janáková	Deník N	2021

Appendix 6.: List of articles – Case of the Slovak Republic

<i>List of articles – Case of the Slovak Republic</i>				
No.	Title of the article	Author	Media	Year
1.	Ak Záborskej návrh uspeje, časť lekárov prestane robiť interrupcie zo zdravotných dôvodov, hovorí lekár a právnik Kováč	R. Gehrerová	Denník N	2021
2.	Akú používate antikoncepciu? Záborská opäť rieši interrupcie a prichystala pre ženy dotazník	L. Osvaldová	Denník N	2022
3.	Ani o jednu viac, kričali Poliari. Po Izabele zomrela v piatom mesiaci tehotenstva aj Ania	K. Böhmer	Denník N	2021
4.	Anna, daj už pokoj, kričal dav ľudí pred parlamentom počas protestu proti sprísneniu interrupcií	R. Gehrerová	Denník N	2021
5.	Čierny pondelok: Feministi v Bratislave podporili poľské ženy	M. Žureková	SME	2016
6.	Anna Záborská chce opäť pretlačiť obmedzenie interrupcií. Čo ešte poslanci priniesli do parlamentu	M. Biró	Aktuality	2023
7.	Gynekológ Martin Redecha: Slovenskí lekári sú nútení robiť interrupcie rizikovejším spôsobom	Z. Hrubá	SITA	2020
8.	Kým srdce plodu bije, nemôžeme nič robiť. V Poľsku zomrela tehotná žena, údajne pre prísny zákon o potratoch	K. Böhmer	Denník N	2021

9.	Mali by mať Poľky na Slovensku bezplatné interrupcie? Proti sú aj liberálni europoslanci	B. Zmušková	EURACTIV	2021
10.	Mladí ľudia z Česka a Slovenska premýšľajú inak, Slováci omnoho viac odsudzujú interrupcie aj registrované partnerstvá	R. Gehrerová	Denník N	2021
11.	Ostali by sami, bez peňazí, zručené. Taký komplexný pohľad na interrupcie tu už dávno nebol	M. Žureková	SME	2022
12.	Počet interrupcií na Slovensku sa vlani mierne zvýšil	TASR	SME	2023
13.	Poľky chodia kvôli potratom na Slovensko: Som telom, ktoré je povinné rodiť	ČTK	Hospodárske noviny	2016
14.	Poľky priznali, že chodia na Slovensko na interrupciu	Not given	Aktuality	2016
15.	Poľky protestujú proti plánom na sprísnenie zákona o interrupciách	TASR	TASR	2016
16.	Pomáha Poľkám pri interrupcii: Na dôvody sa nepýtame	B. Paľovčíková	SME	2021
17.	Potraty Poliek u nás naše štatistiky nevidujú	J. Krempaský	SME	2016
18.	Prečo nemocnice nerobia interrupcie: v Brezne rozhodol podnet cirkví, inde tradícia i vedenie nemocnice	R. Gehrerová	Denník N	2021
19.	Prečo sa počet interrupcií stále znižuje: Už nie sú vnímané ako antikoncepcia, no môže ísť aj o nedokonalú štatistiku	R. Gehrerová	Denník N	2022

20.	Pred rokom v Poľsku takmer úplne zakázali potraty, dnes chcú ísť niektorí ešte ďalej	J. Shemesh	Denník N	2021
21.	Protestovali sme	Možnosť Voľby	Možnosť Voľby	2016
22.	Sme liberálni a lacní. Poľky k nám chodia na potraty	J. Krempaský	SME	2016
23.	Správy z patriarchátu	B. Holubová	SME	2022
24.	Sprísnenie interrupcií životy nezachráni. Poľky budú ďalej cestovať aj na slovenské kliniky	K. Wilczynski	SME	2020
25.	Také nerobíme, povedali žene žiadajúcej interrupciu. Ako sú na tom nemocnice na východe?	L. Haniková	SME	2022
26.	V zahraničí stúpol počet žiadostí o pomoc od tehotných Poliek	TASR	SME	2020
27.	Za bojom proti interrupciám bol aj v minulosti skôr nacionalizmus a rodinná politika ako záujem o práva žien a detí	M. Szabó	Denník N	2021
28.	Začali hlásiť potraty cudziniiek, stúpili takmer päťstonásobne	J. Krempaský	SME	2018
29.	Zastavia sprísnenie interrupcií kritické hlasy?	M. Bútora	Denník N	2021
30.	Záborskej dejà vu a prečo si vydýchnuť len opatrne	J. Shemesh	Denník N	2021

31.	Záborskej návrh, ktorý komplikuje interrupcie, v prvom čítaní v parlamente uspel	R. Gehererová	Denník N	2021
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Appendix 7.: Consent Form



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN STUDIES (CES)

CONSENT FORM

BETWEEN ABORTION TOURISM and TRANSNATIONAL ABORTION ACTIVISM

The impact of Polish abortion legislation on the CEE region

I _____ agree to participate in the research project titled '**Between abortion tourism and transnational abortion activism. The impact of Polish abortion legislation on the CEE region**' conducted by **Zuzana Žuborová – student of the University of the Gothenburg, European Studies – Social Science** who has discussed the research project with me.

I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this research and I understand the general purposes, risks and methods of this research.

I consent to participate in the research project and the following has been explained to me:

- the research may not be of direct benefit to me,
- my participation is completely voluntary,
- my right to withdraw from the study at any time without any implications to me,
- the risks including any possible inconvenience, discomfort or harm as a consequence of my participation in the research project,
- whom I should contact for any complaints with the research or the conduct of the research,

- I am able to request a copy of the research findings and reports,
- security and confidentiality of my personal information including my audio-visual recording.

In addition, I consent to:

- my audio-visual recording of the interview,
- publication of results from this study on the condition that my full name will not be revealed.

Name:

Signature:

Date: