



## Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence GRADUATE STUDENT EU RESEARCH GRANT Interview with grantee Ernesto Fiocchetto



*Ernesto Fiocchetto is a Ph.D. Candidate in International Relations at the Department of Politics & International Relations, Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs, Florida International University. This year, he received the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence Graduate Student EU Research grant for his research "LGBTIQ+Human Trafficking: EU Policy and the Impact on South American LGBTIQ+forced Migrants."*

*He sat down with Christine I. Caly-Sanchez, Associate Director of the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence, to answer a few questions about his research.*

### **MFJMCE: Can you tell us a little bit about yourself and what studies you pursued at FIU?**

I am Ernesto Fiocchetto. I am a sociologist from Argentina. I arrived at FIU in 2017 and earned two Masters: Religious Studies in 2019 and International Relations in 2021, and a graduate certificate in Latin American studies. I am about to defend my dissertation to get a Ph.D. in International Relations. My research interests and publications center on forced migration of LGBTIQ+ Latin American individuals in the US and Spain and the role of non-state actors (especially faith-based organizations) in the reception and integration of these refugees and asylum seekers. During these years at FIU, I've focused on several issues related to the EU, and I co-authored a book with Dr. Markus Thiel on "The Politics of Social In/Exclusion in the EU." Recently, I started to explore the links between forced migration and the human trafficking of LGBTIQ+ individuals.

### **MFJMCE: Can you tell us in a few words what the focus of your EU research project is?**

By considering the intersections of social, legal, and political aspects, this project aims to explore to what extent the evolution of the EU policy is beneficial for the growing number of South American LGBTIQ+

individuals who are victims of human trafficking for sexual exploitation in Spain, Italy, France, and Germany. I argue that the securitization dynamics in the EU borders regarding forced migration of South American LGBTIQ+ individuals result in a dyad—illegal migrants versus prostitutes and suffering bodies, or criminals versus victims—that instead of contributing to the fight against human trafficking, generates conditions to foster it. In this situation, the agency of civil society organizations (CSOs), and particularly faith-based actors, is critical for the security of the victims.

### **MFJMCE: What are your plans for the research you are conducting?**

The project involves mixed qualitative techniques, including policy and legal analysis of the EU and the four case studies: Spain, Italy, France, and Germany. It also entails semi-structured in-depth interviews with CSOs in those countries. As part of the research, two venues of discussion and collaboration are included: a Workshop with the Chair of Refugees and Forced Migration at Comillas University in Spain and a Workshop with the Department Against Transnational Organized Crime (DTCO) of the Organization of American States (OAS) on Latin American and EU Policy on human trafficking.

### **MFJMCE: How do you hope your research will contribute to the field of International Relations?**

The study aims to produce two reports on EU policy and the four case studies. In addition, it seeks to examine the role of CSOs in detecting and assisting





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South American LGBTIQ+ victims of human trafficking. It will contribute to several understudied areas in International Politics, including the effects of EU policy on South American LGBTIQ+ forced migrants and victims of human trafficking and the contribution of CSOs and FAs in that context.

**MFJMCE: Why do you think this research is essential to conduct at the present time? Once completed, this project “will help foster...”**

In the global report on human trafficking, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime indicated an 11% decrease in this crime worldwide by 2023. However, this does not necessarily mean that there are fewer victims. On the contrary, this decline is related to the lack of institutional capacities to identify the victims of this crime. In the case of LGBTIQ+ persons trafficked for sexual exploitation, the data are even more complex because laws, policies, research, and public opinion have typically identified trafficking victims as cisgender women and girls. However, the trans, gay, lesbian, and other queer migrant population are particularly vulnerable and hardly appear in official data. Meanwhile, CSOs constantly report a growing number of LGBTIQ+ persons trafficked for sexual exploitation that they aid. It is therefore critical to know to what extent the evolution of the EU policy is beneficial or not to solve this problem and how the work of the states with civil society may foster more effective solutions to this open wound in the body of contemporary society. I hope that this exploratory study will serve as a basis for future discussion and research on this topic.

**MFJMCE: Do you have any last thoughts to share?**

I want to thank the Miami-Florida Jean Monnet Center of Excellence for this grant. I also extend my particular thanks to Dr. Markus Thiel and Madame Christine Caly. I've been part of the JMCE for four years, and it has been instrumental to my journey at FIU. I hope you can continue this work for many years because it largely contributes to academic excellence.

*By Christine I. Caly-Sanchez*

