

Maria Kornienko

Accompanying letter

I am writing this letter as part of my application for the MA Gender Studies program at EHU and to demonstrate some of my relevant past projects.

My professional experience in journalism began in 2018 as a digital journalist at BBC Monitoring and later as a producer at BBC Russian Service. In these roles, I consistently covered the challenges faced by women, the LGBTQ+ community and religious minorities in Russia. At BBC Monitoring, I developed expertise on these topics, producing in several analytical pieces, multimedia stories and radio interviews on the persecution of minorities in the country. One piece included in my portfolio presents an analysis of public discussions on the domestic violence decriminalisation bill in Russia before its adoption. I used my knowledge of Russian mass and social media to illustrate how the debates unfolded and how both sides framed the issue.

Additionally, while in Russia, I volunteered with Nasiliu.net ('No to Violence'), supporting survivors of domestic violence. For two years, I helped produce high-quality content to raise awareness about the issue. One of my journalistic piece for Cherta, a media outlet affiliated with Nasiliu.net, focused on financial, or economic, abuse, as part of which I interviewed several survivors and legal experts. The article gained recognition among Russian feminist bloggers and was widely shared on social media. Another project for Nasiliu.net involved extensive research on global femicide rates, which I presented in the form of social media infographics. This research included data from governmental resources, local NGOs, and media reports, offering a comprehensive overview of gender-based killings worldwide.

My academic interests also at times extend beyond the topics linked to women's rights. Over the past two years, I independently completed short-term courses with Smolny Beyond Borders and Bard College Berlin. One course on *Unofficial Late Soviet Culture* led to my essay titled "Laughter and Protest in Unofficial Soviet Art of the 1970s: Irony as an Instrument of Resistance in Komar and Melamid's Sots-art." Another course, *Trauma Narratives in Contemporary Russian Literature*, resulted in a paper analysing representations of violence through the lens of narrative empathy in 21st-century literary works. I am confident that this knowledge will contribute both to class discussions and my independent research at EHU.

After several years in journalism focusing on women's and marginalised groups' rights, I am now eager to expand my academic knowledge in these areas. The MA Gender Studies program at EHU is particularly attractive to me due to its comprehensive coverage of sociological theories related to women's representation and roles in society, especially with courses like Sociology of Gender and Sexuality and Gender and Human Rights.

I believe enrolling in this program will equip me with the skills and knowledge necessary to continue my academic research on women's roles in post-Soviet societies as a PhD student in the near future.

Thank you for considering my application.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Kornienko