

# 2018 2019 REPORT

**Right-wing Extremism  
on the Internet**

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 Live Democracy!

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Dear Readers,

in social media networks, on YouTube or in digital game worlds: For children and young people, gaming and browsing the internet play an essential role when it comes to spending their leisure time. This is exactly what right-wing extremist actors take advantage of in order to meet young people and spread their right-wing extremist propaganda. The internet enables them to achieve what they are otherwise denied: direct access to the children's rooms.



This report once again shows how deliberately right-wing extremists exploit the internet for their purposes – especially where platform operators take no or insufficiently effective preventative measures, dangerous ‘echo chambers’ arise. This is why we have to stand up to the challenge of young people’s increasingly media-driven world, more than ever. To ensure effective protection from risks online, the German government is reforming the youth media protection law this year: for more protection, orientation and an effective enforcement of the law in case of violations. Additionally, we have already implemented the federal program ‘Live Democracy!’ funding and promoting numerous initiatives to strengthen young people’s media literacy skills and to raise awareness for extremist ideas and potential dangers.

As of this year we have been funding jugendschutz.net as the national center focusing on the protection of minors on the internet under the ‘Live Democracy!’ program. With its continuous monitoring and research jugendschutz.net contributes significantly to ensuring that children and young people grow up well in a digital world. I would like to thank everyone involved for the hard work and the findings in this report.

Dr. Franziska Giffey  
Bundesministerin für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend



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# DIMEN SIONS AND TRENDS

Hatred and propaganda posted by right-wing extremists online is an everyday occurrence. The internet and specifically social media have become the core element of right-wing extremist agitation. Even more: Right-wing extremists see social media as their field of activity where they engage in public discourse, attract attention to their world interpretation and try to win over new followers. Right-wing extremist actors and groups from different spectrums use the full range and all the opportunities that social media has to offer.

While they use YouTube or Facebook to maximize their audience and roll out their whole propaganda, they dedicate their profiles on platforms like Instagram, for example, to approach young people with topics affecting their everyday lives. Right-wing extremists also like to use alternative services as 'safe havens' since these, compared to the more popular platforms, only rarely remove content and make them feel under less pressure of persecution.

jugendschutz.net's research and continuous monitoring of right-wing extremist content show that wherever there is only little moderation and community management and communication shifts into the dark, drastic content is easier to find and so-called echo chambers quickly emerge.

## **#Chemnitz: Right-wing extremist online mobilization**

Right-wing extremists exploit violent crimes that – perceived or real – refugees or migrants have committed in order to tie in with public discourses and to emotionalize. They stir up feelings and thus can use their messages to better connect with their audience. It is not uncommon for them to spread disinformation. jugendschutz.net recorded another rapid increase of fake news in the aftermath of a manslaughter in the eastern German city of Chemnitz in August 2018.

*Fake news  
shall fuel  
hatred.*

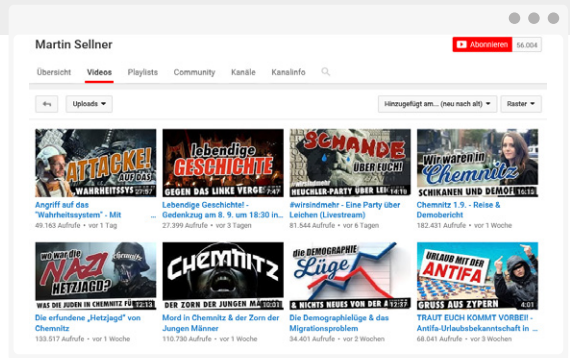


Racist hatred in rap song structure specifically popular among young people: The case 'Chemnitz' used as evidence for a 'race war'.  
(Source: YouTube, Komplott)

Right-wing extremists used the incident in Chemnitz as proof of alleged refugee violence. In their propaganda, they reinforce carefully constructed worst-case scenarios saying that refugees and migrants moving into the country pose an existential threat to all Germans.

They accused government officials, state institutions and the press of not providing sufficient protection, of downplaying violent crimes committed by migrants and of sharing responsibility for acts of violence like the one in Chemnitz. Their aim was to cause distrust in the democratic society and the 'political system' as a whole.





Right-wing extremist videos disseminated on YouTube reach a broad audience. A video of the far-right rapper Chris Ares received more than 500,000 clicks within two weeks. In a video statement, he expressed his interpretation of the Chemnitz incidents, full of fake news. He even talked about daily murders and rapes committed by migrants and an alleged 'racism facing Germans'. Words like 'bestial', 'slaughtered' or 'slit' should further emotionalize.

Other right-wing extremist video bloggers also made Chemnitz an issue in their regular vlogs. Martin Sellner, the head of the 'Identitarian Movement' in the German-speaking area, posted five videos receiving hundred thousands of clicks within just a week and thus contributed massively to a right-wing extremist reinterpretation of the Chemnitz incidents.

Much content shall suggest the high relevance: The 'Identitarians' contributed to a right-wing extremist reinterpretation. (Source: YouTube, Martin Sellner)

The large-scale distribution of fake news on the internet also supported mobilization. Fake news were often linked to a call for 'resistance'. As an example, big demonstrations took place several times in Chemnitz, organized and promoted online, with numerous right-wing actors participating. This is how agitation online fueled the riots and acts of violence in Chemnitz.

## **Right-wing extremist terror: Hate online as the catalyst for violence**

Far-right hate propaganda online creates a basis of legitimacy to justify 'real' violence. Right-wing extremists try to emotionalize with memes that are popular among young people, with videos, fake news and other propaganda means. People who take a position against right-wing extremism offline as well as online and a stand for diversity and human rights are often in the line of fire of right-wing extremist hate campaigns. Extremists defame them in

comments and posts, make fun of them in derogatory memes or threaten their lives. Such hate is disseminated on almost all social media platforms. They incite to hatred in closed groups or pose threats via direct messages to those actively engaged.

The murder of the former German politician Walter Lübcke by a suspect identified as a man with contacts in right-wing extremist circles shows that 'online hate' is not only limited to

the internet. Lübcke faced hostility as a pro-immigration politician, known for actively supporting Angela Merkel's policy to welcome refugees in 2015. Right-wing extremists used a video with Lübcke's statements to fuel hatred followed by numerous posts calling for violence against him. Even in the aftermath of the murder, right-wing extremists posted content putting the murder into perspective or glorifying the action.



Following the murder of Walter Lübcke: Jubilations accompanying the right-wing extremist motivated assassination.  
(Source: VK, user page; original not pixelated)



Perfidious disrespect of human dignity: Gaming visuals are used to openly make propaganda for hatred and violence towards homosexuals.  
(Source: 8Chan)

A right-wing extremist online subculture full of hatred has grown on the internet; collectively expanding anti-Semitic theories, worshipping far-right terrorists as 'martyrs' and openly displaying their disrespect to human dignity. It makes use of the gaming and internet culture and thus ties in with the viewing and listening habits of young people.

This virtual sounding board is what encouraged the terrorist attacking a synagogue in the eastern German city of Halle in October 2019 killing two people. He made this clear in livestreaming his actions from the 'first-person shooter' perspective, calling himself 'Anon' and posting comments partially in English. This is how he directed his message towards an international audience.

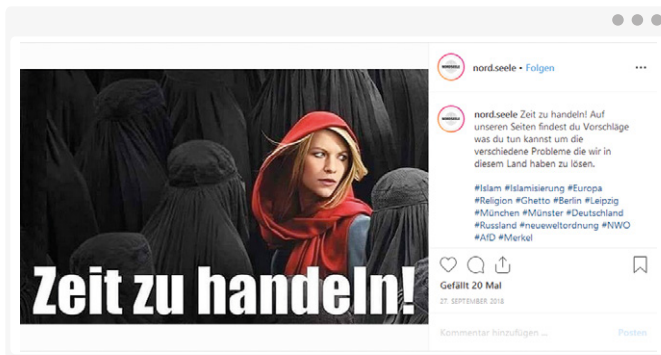
Right-wing extremist 'fringe communities' – radicalized echo chambers characterized by crossing the lines – are specifically present on platforms that allow anonymous users. Right-wing extremists from all over the world also use alternative platforms that do not remove even drastic content and thus are considered 'safe havens'. Via platforms like VK, the messaging service Telegram and image boards like 4chan, they openly exchange instructions for an armed conflict or the production of weapons and explosives. Here, they keep 'high scores' of far-right terrorists and discuss potential targets of attacks.

*Online  
disinhibition  
can fuel violence.*

## **Anti-Muslim racism on the internet: Enemy image Islam**

For years, Islam has been a central enemy image of right-wing extremist propaganda. Muslims are portrayed as inferior, backward and detrimental, after all. They are stigmatized as uncivilized and violent. Such hate content is even available online: comments degrading Muslims, violating their human dignity or calling for attacks on people or mosques; memes glorifying violence towards Muslims and dehumanizing them; fake news aiming at making the whole Muslim population seem 'unintegrable'.

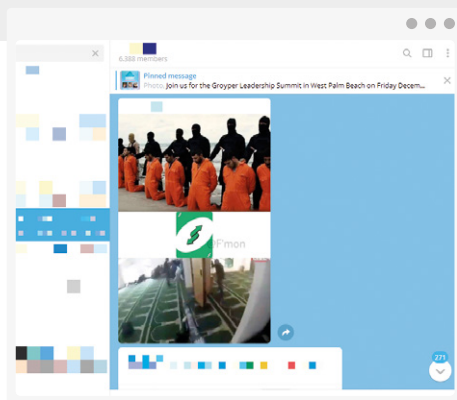
Hate content like this is omnipresent on all social media platforms. What is specifically perfidious: Right-wing extremists use content from Islamist groups in this context to put all Muslims on the same level with these. This not only includes drastic violence. Images and videos showing torture, executions or beheadings shall fuel hatred in a particularly emotive manner.



Threatening imagery: The alleged subjugation by Islam has to be stopped.  
(Source: Instagram, nord.seele)

The conspiracy myth of 'Islamization' or 'great replacement' is a common thread in all right-wing extremist circles. It assumes that Europe and specifically Germany is selectively colonized with people from a 'foreign culture' who do not want to integrate into society. This is supposed to weaken and eventually suppress the autochthonous population. This conspiracy narrative is also well received beyond the own right-wing extremist online community and meanwhile reaches a broad audience.

*'Islamization'  
is a central  
conspiracy  
narrative.*



The right-wing terror attack in Christchurch is reinterpreted as an act of 'resistance'.  
(Source: Telegram; original not pixelated)

The right-wing terrorist of Christchurch, New Zealand, referred to the perceived necessity of 'resistance' against the alleged 'Islamization'. This is why it was not accidentally that he named his manifesto 'The Great Replacement'. The video livestreaming his attack killing 51 people in two mosques was also widely disseminated in a German-speaking context. In right-wing extremist group chats, members put the attack into perspective or even glorified it. The attacker of the German city of Hanau who had murdered 10 people in a shooting rampage in February, was motivated by a deeply anti-Muslim racist mindset.

## **Anti-Semitism online: The normalization of hatred**

Anti-Semitism is an essential element of right-wing extremist ideology, but beyond that, it is nearly omnipresent online. On the internet, there is a multitude of content reproducing derogatory prejudices towards Jews, denying or glorifying the Holocaust and defaming the State of Israel as a state of terrorism. Specifically in times of the conflict in the Middle East breaking out, anti-Semitic hate speech increases. In most cases and at the center of this anti-Semitic world view, is the construction of an image of the 'evil Jew' hostile towards all other 'peoples and nations', only safeguarding their own interests and amassing power.

*Anti-Semitism is  
omnipresent  
on the internet.*



Freely accessible online: calls for violence towards Jews.  
(Source: vk.com, personal profile)

Expressions of anti-Semitic sentiments vary widely, also online: conventional anti-Semitic hatred or Holocaust denial as well as more subtle forms. Extremists often work with codes, personifications or allusions. Excluding and attacking Jewish people as well as fueling hatred towards persons identified as 'Jews' up to explicit calls for violence are common to all expressions.



Dehumanization as a joke: anti-Semitism under the guise of humor  
 'If someone says that Jews too are human beings.'  
 (Source: Instagram, personal profile; original not pixelated)

Anti-Semitic conspiracy theories can reach a wide audience. Emotionalizing language and images, purposeful reinterpretations and subtle manipulations shall lure young people into anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. Alleged simple explanations for complex phenomena seem particularly attractive. Jewish families are blamed for global, negatively perceived developments and crises. Their names are often used interchangeably with the alleged 'Jewish world conspiracy'. Their names can be found in memes, posts and videos and suggest a clear dedication to those in the know. At the same time, this shall avoid the taboo of open anti-Semitism.

On platforms that specifically young people go for, there is not only a multitude of effective content spreading anti-Semitic conspiracy theories and reaching a wide audience. Particularly the comments section show that anti-Semitism on the internet is almost a daily occurrence. This feeds the normalization of anti-Semitic sentiments.

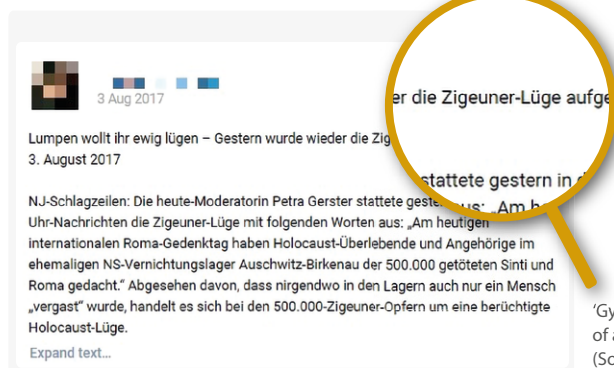
*Conspiracy theories  
are often  
anti-Semitic.*

## **Antigypsyism online: Widely distributed via social media**

There is a lot of content on the internet expressing or purposely fueling hatred towards Sinti and Roma on the one side and on the other side reproducing antigypsyist stereotypes and structures of prejudice. The term 'antigypsyism' generally refers to preconceived ideas, constructions and fantasies of persons or groups that – irrespective of the truthfulness – are projected to Sinti and Roma and others concerned.

jugendschutz.net's research and the experiences of cooperation partners, the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma and the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma show that antigypsyism is always present on the internet. Specifically with regard to relevant socio-political debates and events, antigypsyism reaches a wide audience.

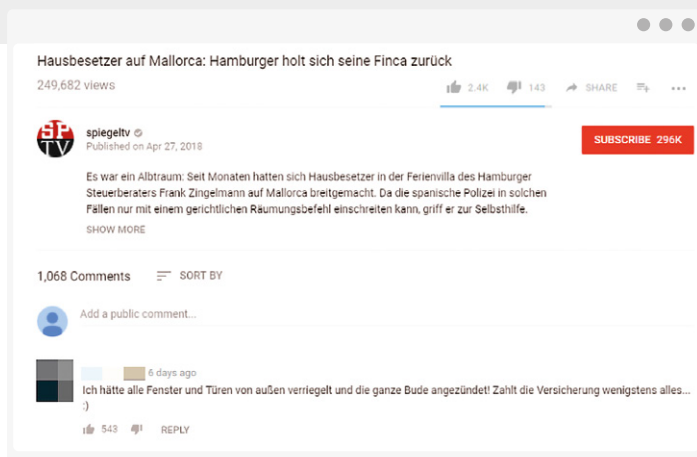
Extremists exploit reports on crimes, norm violations and poverty to denigrate and defame Sinti and Roma. They take up tendentious media content and articles on Roma in other European countries to construe them as 'inferior' and incite to hatred. Very often, they manipulate images and spread fake news. At the same time, they do not acknowledge the suffering and the discrimination of Roma and Sinti and even deny Nazi genocide.



'Gypsy lie': Holocaust denial in the context of antigypsyist agitation.  
(Source: VK, personal profile; original not pixelated)



Overall, it appears that also on the internet, antigypsyist prejudices and stereotypes appear in very different contexts and in different linguistic characteristics: terms coined by racism as a synonym for negative attributions, antigypsyist images and memes or explicit hate speech. Specifically in comment sections on social media platforms, again and again, there is a rapid escalation of linguistic violence.



Burning alive: This antigypsyist murder fantasy received 543 likes.  
(Source: YouTube, spiegel.tv; original not pixelated)

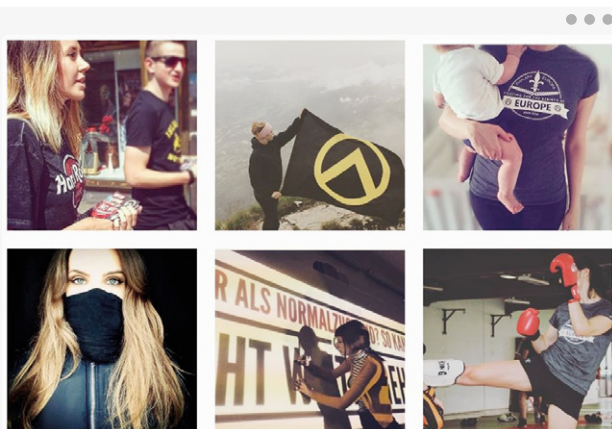
*High dynamics of hatred in the comments sections.*

One example: In the comments section of a Spiegel (German weekly news magazine) TV report about Roma referred to as squatters, with more than 500,000 views, discussions quickly escalated. Thus, the owners of the properties could go out and hire 'criminal hitters' to evict the squatters. Several users came forward to volunteer and referred to their skills, even in the use of weapons. Eventually, the discussion escalated in such a way that they exchanged fantasies and described these without leaving a doubt. Especially drastic comments received many likes. This makes antigypsyism seem socially acceptable.

## **Protecting ‘one’s own’: Right-wing extremist gender images and roles models on the internet**

Specifically for young people, gender identities and role models are fields of negotiations and marked by a search for orientation. Here, right-wing extremists link up with their online propaganda. They pick up interests, questions and fears with regard to the gender identity to answer these in line with their ideology and offer young people the possibility to identify themselves. The shared vision of natural gender roles can seem specifically attractive to them since they supposedly offer a clear structure and orientation.

Right-wing extremist images of gender roles and gender identities are characterized by a precise concept of two genders. It is clearly defined and naturally obvious what makes a man a man and a woman a woman. The question concerning the own identity, also in distinction from others, specifically preoccupies young people today. The question is mostly answered in one specific way: Supposedly, men are strong, aggressive and focused on the way they are seen; women on the other hand, are caring and primarily responsible for the family, although again and again, there also are dividing lines.



Between activism, martial arts and family:  
The right-wing extremist image of women can be full of conflict.  
(Source: Instagram, ID Girls)



The idea of how men and women are supposed to be is not only reflected in the way right-wing extremist groups and individuals stage themselves on social media. Even more, they use role models and address users in a gender-specific way to spread their own propaganda online: There is propaganda specifically targeting women and propaganda aimed at men. This is particularly obvious when it comes to platforms that are specifically popular among young people like Instagram primarily relying on images.

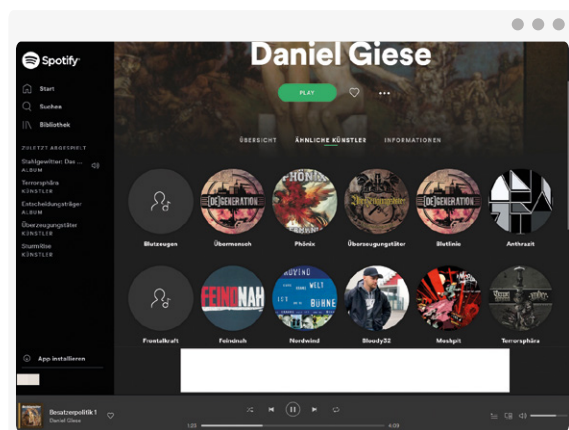
Hatred as a business model: Degrading transgender people paired with provocation.  
(Source: pc-records.com)

Degrading alternative gender roles and gender identities as well as hatred towards their (alleged) representatives are closely linked to right-wing extremist gender images. Feminism, for example, is pictured as a special strategy of destruction. Women who speak out in public as feminists quickly become victims of targeted hate campaigns. However, even people who do not comply with right-wing extremist ideas like homosexuals or transgender people can easily become targets. Anti-feminism, hatred towards homosexuals and transgender people as well as racism go hand in hand on the internet. A very common narrative: The alleged 'becoming gay' of men because of feminism and 'gender madness' paired with women who do not want to fit into traditional roles weaken the 'manly courage' and throw the doors to an alleged 'Islamization' wide open.

### Completely hammered by hatred: Right-wing extremist music online

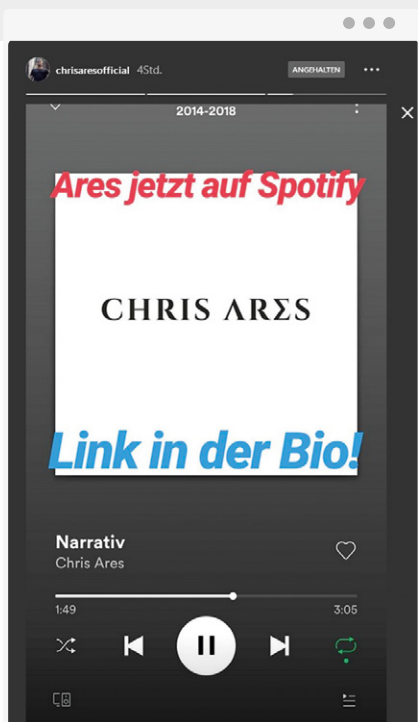
In online propaganda, right-wing extremist music helps create a variety of seemingly attractive things to do and see. Right-wing extremist labels, online shops, organizers of far-right rock music festivals and concerts as well as right-wing extremist music 'stars' use the multitude of channels that social media has to offer for (self-)promotional reasons reaching thousands of users. Right-wing extremists borrow from the many different styles of popular music to tie in with the listening and viewing habits of young people in particular. With their mixture of subtle hate propaganda and explicit violence, they reach a wide audience.

In recent years, right-wing extremist music on the internet has changed in a variety of different ways just like the whole scene. For a long time, classical 'far-right rock music' has not been the only variety any more although it remains important. Hard core punk or black metal are also popular music genres of right-wing bands. Likewise, they use neo folk or electronic music. Eventually, rap music, one of the most popular music genres among youth culture today, has found its way into right-wing extremist propaganda.



Right-wing extremist music on Spotify: The feature 'similar artists' recommends other far-right rock music bands.  
(Source: Spotify; original not pixelated)

There are many different ways of distribution on the internet. In addition to very professional marketing with right-wing extremist labels as well as producers, increasingly, the artists themselves and their fans take care of spreading right-wing music. The possibilities to upload own audio (visual) content – a central feature of most social media services – are widely used. There is content referring to right-wing extremist music on almost all platforms. Whereas some platforms like YouTube, SoundCloud or Spotify play an important role when it comes to the direct dissemination of right-wing extremist music, other social media services are used for networking and self-promotion.



Self-promotion via Instagram:  
Followers pushed Chris Ares into the charts.  
(Source: Instagram, chrisaresofficial)

On Instagram, for example, right-wing extremist musicians staged themselves as stars who are attainable and approachable to their audience. In YouTube livestreams, they answer questions from their fans; in their Telegram channels, they offer allegedly exclusive glimpses from their private lives. Here, they even started campaigns to join in: With his followers' support, for instance, the German rapper Chris Ares could quickly enter the download and streaming charts – in some cases even hitting number one – and thus could increase his degree of popularity beyond his own circles.

## ‘Dark Social’: Right-wing extremists intensively use messaging services like Telegram

Caused by removals, but also because of increased pressure from law enforcement, right-wing extremist content moves to other platforms allegedly free from prosecution and less public, to the so-called dark social. Here, the messaging service Telegram increasingly gains relevance to the right-wing extremist media strategy. With their propaganda via messaging services, right-wing extremists also take up young users’ online behavior.

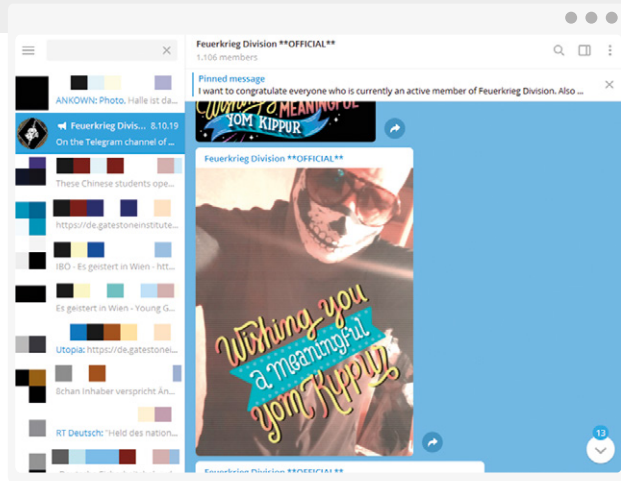
*Telegram is a central alternative platform.*



Meanwhile jugendschutz.net observes more than 300 right-wing extremist channels and groups producing more than 2,000 pieces of content a day. The channels with the biggest audience have more than 35,000 members. The key function of channels is to disseminate content undisturbed. Channel members can like posts, comment on them and participate in surveys, but cannot send post themselves. In groups, however, they interact with other users by direct contact.

The 'Identitarian Movement' on Telegram: Alleged exclusive content shall encourage new followers.  
(Source: Instagram, personal profile; original not pixelated)

There is a difference compared to other communication channels on social media platforms with regard to group chats. Here, there is much less counter speech and objection, resulting in a growing risk of so-called echo chambers. Additionally, shared content gets more credibility since groups like these give a feeling of familiarity. Furthermore, there is the permanent availability and the possibility to interact directly with right-wing extremist groups and leaders, even across borders.



The day of the Halle attacks:  
Right-wing extremists celebrate on Telegram.  
(Source: Telegram, 'Feuerkrieg Division'; original not pixelated)

In group chats like these there is also particularly radical content: instructions for an armed fight, openly dehumanizing memes and videos showing explicit violence. Direct interaction quickly makes discussions become highly emotive. Right-wing extremists reassuring each other of their world view generate echo chambers free from any inhibitions where provocation prevails and they surpass each other in sharing drastic content.

*Drastic forms  
of agitation  
specifically takes  
place in groups.*

# ILLEGAL CONTENT AND ACTIONS TAKEN



Right-wing extremist content on the internet can be dangerous for children and young people or harmful to their future development. For their protection, quick and effective measures are essential. This is why jugendschutz.net reaches out to platform operators and providers in Germany and abroad and asks them to remove content violating youth protection laws. Whenever there is a German person responsible for the content or the content should be added to the list of media harmful to minors, laid out by the BPjM, the Federal Review Board for Media Harmful to Minors, jugendschutz.net forwards the case to the Commission for the Protection of Minors (KJM). In cases of imminent danger, jugendschutz.net calls in the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA).

Again, in 2018 and 2019, the majority of the right-wing extremist propaganda jugendschutz.net recorded was on social media platforms abroad like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Content violating the laws was specifically stated in comments and individual posts on right-wing extremist profiles. Right-wing extremist groups usually refrain from disseminating criminally illegal content in order to escape legal proceedings.

From the perspective of youth media protection, alternative platforms in particular and moving all communication to less public channels, pose a major challenge. Here, on the one part, extremists spread specifically drastic content whereas on the other part, platform operators rarely take protection measures and only respond to reports insufficiently.

In 2018 and 2019, jugendschutz.net documented 1,401 cases referring to right-wing extremism and took 2,248 measures. Most of the illegal content concerned the use of symbols of unconstitutional organizations and incitement of the people. jugendschutz.net achieved removal or blocking of the content in 80 % of the cases.

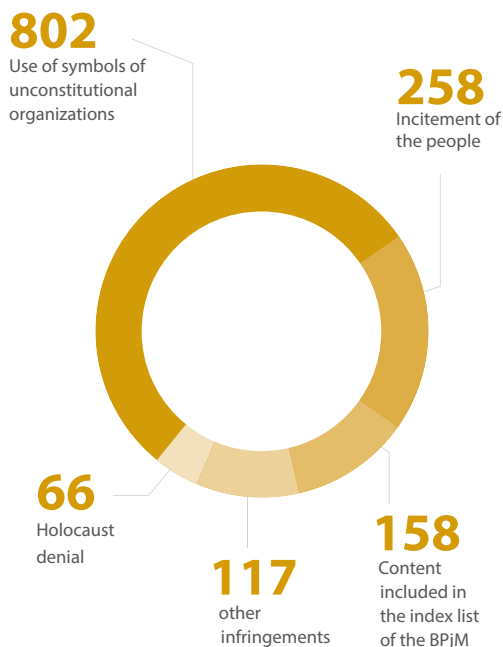
## Right-wing extremism online in detail

**Social media services are the central means for disseminating right-wing extremist propaganda: Here, jugendschutz.net discovered more than 90 % of all cases.**

Number of infringements and cases:

**1,401**

Drastic infringements clearly predominate:



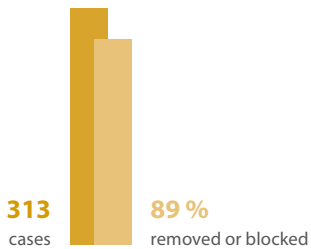
**Measures taken against  
illegal content**

**MEASURES**

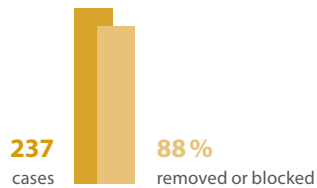
**2,248**

In total, in **80 %**  
of the cases direct contact with providers  
leads to removal or blocking of the content.

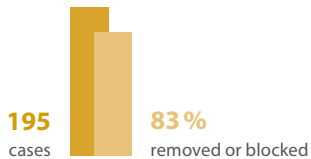
**YouTube**



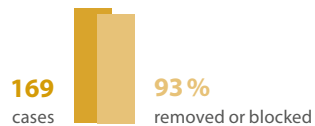
**Facebook**



**Twitter**



**Instagram**



**Other measures:**

**Media supervisory measures**

**53** cases

**Forwarding to the BKA**

**10** cases

## **Allow children and young people to grow up well in a digital world**

As the German center at federal and state level  
concerning the protection of minors on the internet.

jugendschutz.net looks closely at risks in internet  
services specifically attracting young people and  
urges providers and platform operators to design  
their content in a way that allows children and  
young people to use the internet free of troubles.

jugendschutz.net operates a hotline accepting  
reports about illegal and harmful content and takes  
appropriate action to have this content removed as  
quickly as possible.

Internet users can report problematic content to:  
[hass-im-netz.info/melden](https://hass-im-netz.info/melden)  
[jugendschutz.net/hotline](https://jugendschutz.net/hotline)