

# Annual Report 2003

## Right-Wing Extremism on the Internet



*Project of jugendschutz.net*

*Financed by the German Federal Ministry of Family, Seniors, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ)*

*within the Federal programme ENTIMON*

# 1. Introduction

With the right-wing extremism projects jugendschutz.net sets the conditions for a continuous and lasting work against right-wing propaganda on the internet.

Apart from developing and proving promising ways to take away the stage from right-wing extremists on the internet on a national and international level, the project work focuses on providing information in media pedagogical events about the phenomenon and on enhancing the sensitization for potential dangers.

Since 2002 the German Federal Ministry of Family, Seniors, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) finances the project within the framework of the 'entimon program – jointly against violence and right-wing extremism'.

The actions of the project group against extreme right-wing web content become more and more effective. During the last three years more than 350 racist and neo-Nazi sites could be shut down. This is also the reason for the drop of the total amount of right-wing web sites in German language, as stated by the federal agency for internal security.

Given the dynamic and cross-border structure of the internet with different systems of values and different judicial systems, actions taken against right-wing content on the internet is only of limited effectiveness. Making children, youngsters, parents and teachers more competent for the media becomes all the more important. During the last three years the staff of the project group held more than eighty media pedagogical work shops and events with youngsters and multipliers, where the focus was on the confrontation with content with racist and neo-Nazi ideas and arguments and the participants were encouraged to find ways of counteractions against such material on-line.

## 2. Internet Monitoring

The continuous monitoring of the extreme right-wing web presence relevant to youth protection and a special examination of web content in the field of extreme right-wing 'Kameradschaften' (right-wing comradeships), revisionism and right-wing music was an essential part of the project's work in 2003.

### ***2.1 Characteristics of the Extreme Right-Wing Scene on the Internet***

The internet is a dynamic and rapidly changing medium. Right-wing extremism on the internet, too, is no static phenomenon.

Most of the extreme right-wing web sites in German language have a relatively transient nature. The owners of such web sites are under more and more pressure and often change their providers respectively their web addresses (URLs) or the content even disappears from the net. Many web site owners use several providers and web addresses at the same time in order to scatter their web presence. Redirectors, too, are very popular in the right-wing scene for these reasons.

A relatively small number of extreme right-wing content is continuously present on the web. They exist at the same address for a longer period of time. Especially 'Kameradschaft' sites and sites within the areas of 'revisionism' and 'Neue Rechte' (New Rights) as well as sales and distribution sites are among these.

The extreme right-wing scene consolidated and expanded its own structure in order to find a steady way of spreading racist content on the internet. German and foreign scene providers have established themselves and they are very much frequented. In Germany right-wing extremists from the spectrum of the 'National Resistance' act as providers and host content of racists and neo-Nazis. In 2003, for example, widerstandnord.com hosted the internet presence of the 'Holsteiner Widerstand' (a resistance group in Northern Germany), of the 'Mädelschar' (a national socialist form of girl scouts), of the civic action group against foreigners 'Ausländerstopp' or of the 'Aktionsbüro Norddeutschland'.

Despite the clear legal status and numerous shut-downs in the past web sites in German language with extreme right-wing criminal content still continue to exist. Especially in guestbooks you can find criminal salutations and statements with incitement to hatred, often they are linked to illegal neo-Nazi sites, e.g. Top 100 Nationalist & Revisionist Sites. The fact that servers often are abroad and the registrations are made anonymously, the responsible persons cannot be held liable.

## **2.2 Web Sites of 'Kameradschaften'**

Meanwhile numerous extreme right-wing 'Kameradschaften' from all over Germany make use of the internet. In 2003 the web performances of the National Resistance belonged to the most steady and up-to-date offers of the extreme right-wing scene. In 2003 the project group had knowledge of a total of 67 'Kameradschaft' web sites.

Almost all of these home pages publish dates for local and nationwide events and mobilize like-minded people for extreme right-wing marches, demonstrations et al. With their actions they signalize: we don't just talk, we really do something. Apart from discussion fora, guest books and chats some sites also offer the possibility of approaching others via addresses, telephone numbers or on-line forms.

'Freie Kameradschaften' are a low-threshold choice for interested youngsters in order to get in touch with the extreme right-wing scene. They offer the possibility to take part in special activities (e.g. evenings with 'Kameradschaften', visits to nation-wide events) without being tightly bound to only one organization. These 'Freie Kameradschaften' are very manageable and do not have a structure. This gives youngsters the possibility to participate in decision making without risking to be held responsible. At the same time the paroles published within these 'Freie Kameradschaften' and the mental attitudes which come across are the ideal basis for violent actions against different-minded people.

In 2003 the Bavarian 'Kameradschaft Süd' showed that the readiness for violence is very present. The members of this 'Kameradschaft' are under suspicion of having planned bomb attacks on various mainly Jewish facilities in the region of Munich. The 'Kameradschaft Süd' intensely used their web site for propaganda purposes and to mobilize comrades up until the point of the police investigations. One of their most important intentions was the 'elimination of all subversive and unnatural processes in our homeland'. Since the prime suspects were arrested the web site of the 'Aktionsbüro Süddeutschland' is no longer accessible.

## **2.3 'Revisionism'**

The internet has become the most important medium for the dissemination of 'revisionist' ideas. It provides the opportunity to make these ideas accessible to a large

user group world wide at low cost. Meanwhile you can find faked or relativized these concerning the history of National Socialist despotism and the cruelties of the Nazi regime on numerous web sites within the extreme right-wing spectrum.

Even on well-known internet platforms and discussion fora which especially target youngsters, you can find statements which question the cruelties of the Nazis. For example, on communication platforms like 'uboot' which is very popular among youngsters or Democracy Online Today (dol2day) there are discussions about the question 'how many Auschwitz victims really died'. In many cases 'revisionism' is the basis of arguments in these discussions.

Besides, it exists a great deal of 'revisionist' web sites such as who.org or air-photo.com. These web sites are top-ranking in the international scene and are hosted in countries where the denial of the Holocaust is not liable to prosecution. On these web sites the National Socialism is glorified and the mass murder of Jews, Sinti, Roma and other groups is denied.

Most of the 'revisionist' web sites are not attractive to young users, because they usually have no multi-media or interactive elements. These sites are more likely to be appealing to persons within the extreme right-wing scene. However, there is the possibility that users are confronted with 'revisionist' content unintentionally, for instance, whenever they search the internet for means of study. Often a search for terms relating to National Socialism also leads to 'revisionist' web sites. This is especially the case with Google or portals which use Google as their search index.

## ***2.4 Extreme Right-Wing Music***

Music and the symbolism belonging to it are central elements and important constituent parts of young lifestyle and identity. Since music can easily be downloaded from the internet former entry barriers, such as lack of contacts with the right-wing scene or just lack of knowledge of the relevant addresses for ordering such music, are now obsolete. The internet offers easy access to the whole spectrum of extreme right-wing music.

Various extreme right-wing web sites use music as a multi-media style element. This ranges from an intro when accessing a web site over background music to special elaborate flash animation with music added. Some even offer song texts, partially with notes, to make playing the same music easier. Bands out of the right-wing scene use the www for cost-saving advertising. They introduce themselves and their music and refer to mail-order addresses where their medium can be purchased. Integrating illegal or indexed songs as well as publishing corresponding song texts violates the German law.

In 2003 Hatecoretk.com was the most significant extreme right-wing music portal in German language. The site offers news from the scene and new CD tips, fanzines and magazines or CD reviews and samples. The link list refers to the web sites of extreme right-wing bands and to mail-order services. Hatecoretk takes a great share in the cross-linking of the extreme right-wing music scene on the internet. Numerous entries in the guest book and in the forum are an indicator for the high relevance.

## ***2.5 Mail-Order Business***

The mail-order business with articles from the extreme right-wing scene is a profitable business. Compared to catalog sales deals via the internet are easier and faster.

Cross-linking on the internet also makes products available worldwide. Due to a less restrictive legislation, especially salespersons from the USA and the Scandinavian countries offer mail-order products which are prohibited or indexed in Germany.

Whereas mail-order business in the USA is dominated by big providers such as Mice-trap, Panzerfaust Records or Resistance Records, the scene in Germany is split. German mail-order businesses are mainly operated by activists within the environment of the extreme right National Democratic Party Germany (NPD) and the comradeships, to some extent 'the movement' is financed with the sales revenues.

The offerings of the salespersons have a wide range. They do not only offer CDs of extreme right-wing bands, but also memorabilia and T-Shirts, pins and buttons, knick-knacks with runic symbols or similar items. With the help of integrated fora (e.g. Wik-ingerversand, Rocknord) or additional (hosting) offerings such as guest books (e.g. Aufruhr-Versand) they try to make their web site more attractive and to pin their costumers down for a long time.

## ***2.6 Peer-to-peer file sharing***

In 2002 the project group of jugendschutz.net examined the three p2p-systems WinMX, KaZaA and eMule which were the most popular ones up to then. The results showed that extreme right-wing data files were extensively exchanged in these peer-to-peer services.

In 2003 a great increase of extreme right-wing data files, which were especially swapped in the eDonkey networks, could be observed. The explanation for this could be that more and more users out of the right-wing scene are acquainted with this technique and have discovered file sharing systems as a good source for extreme right-wing music. But also the increased pressure from law enforcement when it comes to the dissemination of relevant music could be a reason for using the badly controllable file sharing systems.

After the meanwhile first police actions against offerers of extreme right-wing data files in peer-to-peer services, the right-wing scene now makes use of internal peer-to-peer networks where the extremists organize the exchange of their material in closed circles.

## **3. Measures against Extreme Right-Wing Internet Content**

Based on the positive experience in the previous years the project group in cooperation with the authorities and through direct contacts with service providers took actions against 184 illegal extreme right-wing offerings. In 154 cases (84 %) these actions resulted in the removal of the web content.

The project group assessed 736 new web addresses (URLs) with extreme right-wing content in the time period of January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2003. 60 % of these through manual search on the internet, 40 % through reports via the jugendschutz.net hotline and partner hotlines from abroad. 296 cases were classified as illegal. 135 of these cases were German offerings. In 161 cases the content was posted on the internet from abroad and no responsible person from Germany could be identified.

In 104 cases the project group contacted a German host provider or other German service providers. In all of these cases the URLs were shut down immediately or the

relevant content was removed. In 17 cases the URLs were forwarded to the competent authorities for further supervisory actions. 3 of these URLs are meanwhile shut down or the relevant content was removed.

In 53 cases host providers from abroad were contacted, 10 URLs were forwarded to partner hotlines. In 47 cases the content from abroad was shut down or the relevant parts were removed from the net.

	Illegal German Web Sites	Illegal Foreign Web Sites	Total
Blocked or relevant parts removed on account of actions of the project group	107	47	154
Unchanged on-line	14	16	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>184</b>
Still in process	4	/	4
Further on-line	/	73	73
Off-line without actions by the project group	10	25	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>296</b>

### **Overview of Measures and Achievements in terms of Illegal Web Content in Germany and Abroad**

<i>Illegal German Web Sites</i>	Forwarded to Authorities	Direct Contact with Host Providers	Total
Blocked	1	94	95
Relevant parts removed	2	10	12
Unchanged on-line	14	/	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>121</b>

### **Measures and Success concerning Illegal German Web Sites**

<i>Illegal Foreign Web Sites</i>	Contact with Host Provider	Forwarded to Partner Hotline	Total
Blocked	38	4	42
Relevant parts removed	5	/	5
Unchanged on-line	10	6	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>63</b>

### **Measures and Success concerning Illegal Foreign Web Sites**

## **4. International Cooperation - INACH**

Since September 2002 exists the International Network Against Cyber Hate (INACH), a network of anti-racist hotlines. The network was co-founded by jugendschutz.net and could be expanded last year. In 2003 further requirements for an infrastructure (joint data base, web site, starters package) were met, in order to make INACH fit for work and to expand INACH to a cross national network.

The second international INACH Conference took place in Mainz (October 24<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>, 2003) and was organized by the project group. Organizations from seven European States and representatives from the USA and the European Commission participated.

At present, next to jugendschutz.net the Dutch foundation Magenta, the Aktion Kinder des Holocaust (AkdH) from Switzerland, the Belgian Center for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, and the Anti Defamation League from the USA are members of the INACH Association. Other organizations in Poland (Nie Wieder), Sweden (EXPO) and Denmark (DRC) plan to establish an on-line complaints bureau and to join INACH in 2004. Organizations from Ireland (NCCRI) and Russia (Tolerance Foundation) are interested in joining, too.

## **5. Media Pedagogics**

The demand for media pedagogical workshops and training regarding right-wing extremism on the internet still is very high. Especially teachers in schools, but also pedagogs in the extracurricular education have a great need for information. The project group took this into consideration and created comprehensive handouts and organized numerous events. For the first time media pedagogical workshops with educators in extracurricular care institutions were held with children and youngsters.

### **5.1 Media Pedagogical Workshops and Seminars**

In 2003 the project group held 32 media pedagogical workshops with multipliers and youngsters all over Germany. The feedback was consistently positive.

A major part of the 'real life' workshops was to try out special actions against racism and xenophobia with the means of the internet. Very often the helplessness concerning the courage to stand up for one's beliefs could be overcome through opening up new perspectives and jointly implementing concrete forms of actions. The latter is an important part of the projects work and youngsters and adults always experienced these active forms of standing up for equity and human rights as positive.

## **5.2 CD-ROM Right-wing Extremism on the Internet**

The focus of the project group's work in the field of media pedagogics was on the revision of the CD-ROM 'Right-Wing Extremism on the Internet'. The CD-ROM was created in cooperation with the 'Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung' (German Federal Center for Political Education) in 2001 and it aims at educational multipliers offering assistance for their pedagogical work (e.g. worked out seminar concepts). The CD-ROM also provides background information and material (e.g. mirrored web sites, music samples, power point presentations).

All texts and materials are based on research results and practically approved seminar concepts from 2002/2003 and were compiled by the project group. External authors, e.g. Prof. Albert Scherr, Dr. Thomas Pfeiffer, Anton Maegerle or Margret Cahtwin covered different issues. The revised CD-ROM is available in German language through the 'Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung'.

## **6. Conclusion and Perspective**

Right-wing extremism on the internet is no temporary and static phenomenon. More and more right-wing extremists make use of all kinds of internet services for the purpose of propaganda and networking. Right-wing extremists are very fast in taking advantage of new technologies and communication services for their own purposes. In order to keep an eye on this development and to establish prompt and appropriate counteractive measures it is essential to monitor the scene on a steady basis.

There is a duty to take action against extreme right-wing web content. A two-fold strategy makes sense, trying to withdraw the platform for right-wing extremism as far as possible and at the same time making users able to tackle racist content, all this on a national and international level. Both approaches are closely connected and are necessary for a successful work in this area.

Lasting contacts with internet providers, exchange of expertise and information with relevant stakeholders, and the promotion of a stable cooperation with European and non-European partner organizations turned out to be good starting points for combating extreme right-wing content in an effective way. These contacts have to be extended and stabilized under the inclusion of search engines.

The experience of the project's work shows that it is necessary to combine counter measures with raising awareness regarding the phenomenon of right-wing extremism on the internet. The sensitization of the public is as important as the promotion of knowledge and media literacy through workshops and guidelines. In order to conduct workshops all over the country the work with multipliers has to be intensified. In addition universities and pedagogical institutions should impact related didactical skills for the work with children and youngsters on these issues. Furthermore the subject racial hatred on the internet and all related topics should be part of curricula in schools.