

Fishing for votes with music and comics

NPD – The German right-wing party on the Internet

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In recent years, the NPD has used the Internet as a tool to approach young persons specifically offering them right-wing extremist content. jugendschutz.net has repeatedly documented content endangering youngsters; the cross-national organization for the protection of minors on the Internet continuously monitors the Internet and has just completed a research of NPD activities on the Internet, evaluated the content in terms of its relevance to youth protection and took action against illegal content.

Increasing number of websites – professional and multimedia

At present, there are more than 200 websites of NPD associations or groups and individuals with a clear relation to the NPD – e.g. special websites for elections and websites of functionaries. In the beginning of 2009, numerous websites are 'on the move' undergoing change.

Generally, most NPD associations present themselves online in a very professional and reliable way with a modern layout, corporate designs and content management systems. Many of them focus on multimedia advertising messages. Wherever the NPD has seats in political councils, being present online plays a key role in order to document their activities and to approach new potential voters. Only few associations, mostly at lower community level, step out of line and stick to their old-fashioned websites with a lot of text and no multimedia elements.

Websites targeting youngsters – comics and youth welfare

Also for the NPD, videos are an important tool to communicate their ideas. However, their websites contained only few age-appropriate contributions; jugendschutz.net could only occasionally record the direct approach of youngsters. The 'Junge Nationaldemokraten' - Young National Democrats (JN), for instance, offer the comic 'The big fight. Ducks vs. Chickens', especially for teens with xenophobic ideas, also for download on their website. According to the JN, they published several 10.000 copies of the printed version. Additionally, the JN send out materials, such as posters, flyers and stickers specifically addressing young persons. NPD websites all across Germany link to the website of the JN.

The NPD still tries to introduce youngsters to their right-wing extremist ideas using the element of music. A new edition of the so-called 'schoolyard CDs' was released right at the beginning of the new school year; it is also available for download from the NPD server. In the state of Hesse, the NPD promotes a youth welfare service offering support for finding apprenticeship positions or help they need for everyday problems at home or in school. Continually, the NPD websites relate to right-wing extremist groups and so called Autonomous

Nationalists; these neo-Nazi groups are specifically relevant to the protection of minors, because they offer leisure activities in close combination with right-wing extremist ideas and a hip and modern appearance.

The NPD in the state of Brandenburg announced a special campaign for first-time voters two weeks before the federal elections in Germany using CDs and comics to win them over. In some of the states the NPD relied on younger candidates to address a young audience by means of an online presence with interactive elements such as podcasts, or the use of social networks.

Using Web 2.0 – propaganda and mobilization

Meanwhile, Web 2.0 also plays a key role for the NPD. In major video communities jugendschutz.net documented election campaign commercials of the NPD, videos of important events and own video channels to present themselves and to disseminate their ideas. Since these services are highly frequented the propaganda clips reach a potentially huge number of users.

Specifically the microblogging service twitter is intensively used for propaganda purposes. During the research jugendschutz.net identified more than 25 microblogs of NPD associations or activists publishing messages sometimes several times a day, again and again with xenophobic or homophobic postings. The microblogs are also often used for announcing events and demonstrations or for pointing out special news such as the release of the schoolyard CD; before distributing the CD and before making it available via the NPD website the NPD published the download link on its main twitter profile.

The NPD also owns a campaign van called 'Flaggschiff Deutschland - Flagship Germany' which is also virtually on the road having an own website. Here too, a twitter service informs about the current location of the van and the corresponding activities. Additionally, the NPD uses social networks such as facebook and tries to win over potential like-minded campaigners. The NPD facebook group numbered more than 400 in August; among these party officials and members of neo-Nazi groups. Some candidates also promote their election campaigns on an own facebook site that integrates videos or upcoming events.

Harmful content – racism and distortion of historical facts

The research revealed that NPD websites still contain racist and anti-democratic theses. Anti-foreigner agitation still remains an essential element of social demagoguery. Xenophobic slogans address the prevalent fear for the future; people of different ethnic origins are blamed for all social problems. In parallel, the NPD propagates an excessive nationalism in need of protection against foreign influences.

Last summer the NPD mounted a campaign against politicians of immigrant backgrounds sending them letters declaring they should leave the country. They informed the recipients of how foreigners will be returned to their homelands based on a 'five-point plan' that they should immediately undertake. The letters were sent to numerous politicians' home addresses and were meant to inform them of the details of their trip home. The web forum of the NPD gloatingly supported this action that was also reflected on the Internet. Berlin's public prosecutor has opened an investigation into the letters for incitement to hatred.

Numerous postings distorting historical facts regarding the era of National Socialism underline the neo-Nazi focus. jugendschutz.net documented NPD websites denying the Holocaust or glorifying Nazi leaders like Rudolf Heß and also sites with antiziganistic hate content illegal under German law.

About jugendschutz.net

jugendschutz.net demands the observance of youth protection on the Internet and takes care that problematic content is quickly modified, deleted or made inaccessible to children and youngsters. The German Youth Ministries founded jugendschutz.net in 1997 as the central organization for the protection of minors on the Internet. Since 2003, jugendschutz.net is assigned to the Commission for the Protection of Minors in the Media (KJM) in order to achieve a consistent control of broadcasting and Internet.