

# Annual Report jugendschutz.net

## Right-wing Extremism on the Internet

The mission of the project is to develop measures to combat right-wing propaganda on the internet, and to test media-educational concepts for working together with youngsters and teachers in this context.

The main focus was on the following issues:

### 1. Monitoring

Observing right-wing activities on the internet is an important and continuous part of the project work. This is essential in order to keep an overview, to recognize developments, and to take adequate measures.

The research of the project group showed that right-wing web sites and the disseminated content are a great potential of danger. Disguised as a wolf in a sheep's clothing right-wing extremists use their web presence in order to show themselves in a modern and attractive way. They target the young generation. They integrate elements that are interesting for youngsters and which belong to their daily life, e.g. music, games, and communication. Meanwhile there are various interfaces where youngsters get in touch with right-wing material.

#### 1.1. *Development of the Right-wing Scene on the Internet*

Generally there has been a great fluctuation in the field of right-wing web sites in German language in the last years.

Very often the host provider is changed, for instance after a web site has been blocked. As a result the web site has a new URL. Whereas some web sites disappear, many new ones develop. However, there are several right-wing web sites with a permanent location for a longer time and which seem to have a safe harbor. Besides states such as the USA, where right-wing material is protected by the first amendment, Tokelau is very popular ([www.website.tk](http://www.website.tk)) for providing redirection URLs of right-wing material at the moment. In this context right-wing providers such as Odinsrage play an important role. They provide storage space exclusively for racists.

##### 1.1.1. Functions

Homepages of right-wing extremists mainly serve as a way to easily portray themselves and to disseminate racist and right-wing material.

In the environment of right-wing comradeship and regional grouping the web presence aims at attracting right-wing oriented young internet users in order to mobilize them for local activities.

The internet is an ideal instrument for local right-wing groups to recruit 'national new blood' – they offer concrete contact possibilities and incite to join their group.

From the beginning of 2002 on the project group assessed 61 new web sites of such groupings. In 19 cases the web site presented content liable to prosecution, 14 of these were from Germany.

Generally you can say that the internet plays an important role in the right-wing scene. In addition to the central relevance of top lists and link lists, there is an active exchange of banners among the individual web sites. A relatively new trend is the existence of 'national contact agencies' a sort of dating agency within the right-wing scene. Another part of right-wing web sites aims at selling specific right-wing articles. This offers the possibility to order racist music, devotionalia or revisionist material. Numerous well-known mail-order businesses are present on the internet.

### 1.1.2. Up-to-date topics as a strategy

There is method behind right-wing extremists exploiting up-to-date events as a means of cheap propaganda. The last project report showed a close connection of extremist sites to September 11, 2001. Shortly after the terror attack, German-speaking right-wing web sites stirred up anti-American and anti-Semitic hatred and propagated a close alliance with Islamic extremists. This motive was very present in 2002 as well. Comments on the measures against the Taliban-Regime and on the threat of war against Iraq could be found such as striking parables like 'Terror is a master from America' or 'USA, UNO, NATO, IWF – the axis of evil'. In mid-2002 the web site of a regional right-wing grouping in northern Germany published a report about an amok run in a school in Erfurt where a student fired wildly into a crowd interpreting this act as a systematic implication of the permanent US imperialism and a consequential perversion of the German social system.

On numerous web sites one can find texts discussing up-to-date domestic affairs such as unemployment, cutbacks in the social welfare system or the immigration laws planned. Here foreigners referred to as 'asylum abusers' or 'social parasites' were mostly held responsible for this misery. In connection with current affairs (e.g. financial scandals, misuse of airline bonus miles) government parties were called 'criminal organizations'.

The vehement denial of established concepts are attractive to youngsters and the radical views of the far right seem to be a suitable way out of the own and the social crisis.

### 1.1.3. Layout and design

The project course in 2002 showed a trend of a professionalism on the web sites concerning the technical realisation and the multi-media based layout. More and more right-wing extremists integrated animated pictures, music or Java-applets in their sites. In many cases flash animations are used for 'animated logos' and occasionally for the design of whole web sites. An optically professional and superior design of the online presence makes these web sites especially attractive to youngsters as a target group and problematic at the same time. This attends to current reception habits. A smart design and the integration of multi-media based elements serve as a lure imparting right-wing extremist content and neo-Nazi agitation 'by the way'.

## 1.2. *Use of Various Internet Services*

### 1.2.1. Communication platform uboot.com

Communication portals are very popular among children and youngsters, because they offer many possibilities to contact others in virtual rooms. Every registered user belongs to the community. In the beginning of 2002 jugendschutz.net received a notice about uboot.com being misused as a platform for distributing racist propaganda. This gave reason to the project group to submit this portal to a careful examination.

Uboot.com is an interface between mobile phones and internet and offers numerous services around mobile phones (e.g. SMS, logo downloads). Every user can operate a free uboot-Email address and can create an own so-called nick page with guest book and texts, pictures and links individually.

In the context of this research the project group found a lot of racist material. Users integrated forbidden Nazi symbols and used typical paroles such as 'Germany for the Germans, away with anti-socials' or 'Save Hitler! Long live the SS!' in the meta descriptions of the profiles under the names of 'Niggerhater', 'Kanackenkilker' or 'Judenvernichter'. In guest book entries one came across greetings to like-minded people as well as incitement to violence towards Jews, foreigners or gays. Nickpages from all kinds of right-wing extremist subculture could be found. Overall there is a strong cross linking among individual user pages. In their profiles many right-wing users put external links to illegal and potentially harmful web sites of the right-wing scene.

The project group of jugendschutz.net pointed these investigated and documented offences out to the responsible persons of uboot.com and asked them to take counteractive measures. In particular the question was posed why clearly discriminating nicknames such as 'Kanackenkilker' and 'Niggerhater' were not banned from the beginning. In reply uboot.com gave a detailed statement informing about the steps they have taken to improve the protection of children and youngsters:

- Forbidden nicknames: uboot.com created a list of illegal words which must not be used for the registration of nickpages. The names the project group of jugendschutz.net found out were added to this list.
- Checking nickpage pictures: uboot.com makes an effort to check all nickpages for any illegal content or content breaching their general terms and conditions. Such content is removed.
- Users with a chat moderator status: uboot.com entitled 20 users to expel others from a chat or to block their access for a certain time. The uboot.com chat VIP-team is in constant contact with these moderators.
- Co-operation with the 'community': according to uboot.com, many users report illegal content and create a form of self-regulation.

jugendschutz.net looks upon this favorably. The operators of uboot.com would like to co-operate with the project group of jugendschutz.net in the field of youth protection.

### 1.2.2. File-sharing systems

#### **Development and functionality**

Concerning the expanding community of teenage users, the increasing and relatively unproblematic exchange of all kinds of material through peer-to-peer networks (p2p) poses a specific problem.

This caused the project group of jugendschutz.net to do research in this field in order to find out, if there are data files with right-wing extremist or racist content. The research included the three at that time most popular file-sharing services WINMAX, KaKaA and Edonkey.

Whereas Napster's exchange of data was managed through a central server, the succeeding systems operate completely decentralized. Decentralized systems are hardly to control and they quickly emerge to fast-selling items. If such a system is released the initiator of the service has little influence on the further development.

The results of the research showed, that meanwhile file-sharing systems are more and more used for the exchange of illegal data. Especially the right-wing extremist MP3 scene has shifted to p2p systems. Many confiscated or indicated songs which cannot be found on right wing web sites anymore, because the authorities put more pressure on the prosecution, can be downloaded from these services without any problems.

In the case of P2P pioneer Napster jugendschutz.net contacted the provider directly trying to have illegal content removed. This procedure resulted in the blocking of numerous right-wing music titles from Napster's search index. However, since decentralized systems established themselves such a contact is not promising any longer. The providers of modern P2P take the line that they have no responsibility for whatever is exchanged through their services. This point of view is presently quite understandable – there is no clear legal basis for sanctions.

Nevertheless further counteractive measures are necessary. For example, the advertising partners of the file-sharing systems could be informed about the situation. Many of the advertising companies surely would not agree to their advertising being shown whenever a user conducts a search for racist content. Such an external pressure could make the providers think differently, because they mostly finance themselves through advertisements. Another starting-point could be making users who disseminate illegal material through P2P services liable to prosecution.

## **2. Measures against Right-wing Extremism on the Internet**

In the course of the project's work jugendschutz.net implemented tried and tested procedures in the battle against right-wing web sites at home and abroad. In particular jugendschutz.net looked for a closer co-operation with German supervisory bodies and law enforcement agencies, in order to shorten standardized modes of operation and therefore to enable a faster removal of the content. In the case of content hosted abroad the direct contact with the service provider was intensified.

During this time jugendschutz.net collected 784 new addresses (URL) with right-wing content. In 354 of these cases illegal content could be found. All this was achieved through manual search in guest books, fora and top and link lists, and furthermore the hotline of jugendschutz.net. Via the hotline jugendschutz.net received 389 complaints about right-wing web sites from internet users.

### **2.1. Procedure and Success in German Cases**

Besides the consolidated co-operation with host providers, in order to have web sites with illegal right-wing content shut down, it was very important to put content providers under pressure by the initiation of criminal procedures.

If the content provider could not be determined further sanctions were concentrated on the German host provider as the secondary liable person. In such cases jugendschutz.net contacted the host provider directly asking him to block the web sites.

Up to now the project group took measures against 126 German web sites with illegal content. In 115 cases jugendschutz.net was successful in having relevant content removed from the net.

jugendschutz.net forwarded 58 cases to the competent German authorities. In 35 of these cases the web sites were completely blocked. 12 web sites with criminally relevant content were altered respectively removed. 11 web sites are currently still online.

In 68 cases jugendschutz.net contacted an internet service provider directly. In response to this all of these web sites were blocked promptly.

### **2.2. Procedure and success in foreign cases**

Whenever web sites were posted anonymously through a foreign host provider or whenever foreign web services were engaged it was the current procedure of the project group from the beginning to contact the provider directly. Referring to his terms and conditions the project group asked the provider to remove the content or to block it.

Normally the host provider reacts promptly and removes right-wing web sites. And, it was especially efficient to have a direct contact person. But even if there was no such personal contact the providers reacted timely and removed the content. This shows the increasing willingness to co-operate, capable of further development.

Only few host providers did not respond to the complaints of the project group. Specifically in these cases more pressure on the providers is indicated. In the future this could be accomplished in a joint effort on an international level within INACH.

In 2002 the project group classified a total of 198 foreign web sites as illegal. In 58 cases these contents were removed from the net.

The project group contacted 58 service providers. In 50 cases the web sites were removed completely, in two cases the criminally relevant content was removed. 6 web sites remained unchanged online.

The project group forwarded 10 cases to a partner hotline within the INHOPE Association. Here 6 web sites were shut down, whereas 4 remained unchanged online.

### 2.2.1. Chart of illegal and blocked web sites – (Jan 15, 2002 – Dec 31, 2002)

#### Measures and success concerning illegal German web sites

<i>Illegal German Web Sites</i>	<b>Forwarding to Authorities</b>	<b>Direct Contact with Host Provider</b>	<b>Direct Contact with Redirector</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>blocked</b>	35	25	43	103
<b>Relevant parts removed</b>	12	-	0	12
<b>Unchanged online</b>	11	0	0	11
<b>Total</b>	58	25	43	<b>126</b>

#### Measures and success concerning illegal foreign web sites

<i>Illegal Foreign Web Sites</i>	<b>Contact with Host Provider</b>	<b>Forwarding to Partner Hotline (INHOPE)</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>blocked</b>	50	6	56
<b>Relevant parts removed</b>	2	-	2
<b>Unchanged online</b>	6	4	10
<b>Total</b>	58	10	<b>68</b>

#### Measures and success concerning illegal web sites – total overview

	<b>Illegal German Web Sites</b>	<b>Illegal Foreign Web Sites</b>	<b>Total</b>

<b>Blocked or relevant parts removed on account of activity of the project group</b>	115	58	173
<b>Unchanged online</b>	11	10	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>194</b>
<b>Still in process at the moment</b>	9	-	9
<b>Further online</b>	-	61	61
<b>offline without any activity of the project group</b>	21	69	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>354</b>

### 3. Media-educational Projects with Youngsters and Pedagogues

From previous experiences in media-educational workshops with youngsters and pedagogues about the problem of online hate it is clear that there is a great need for further training and information. This is why the conceptual development, processing and evaluation of media-educational events is an important element of the project. The point is to develop perspectives of dealing with racist, neo-Nazi or discriminating content in a media-educational way and to show how to confront youngsters with the analysis of these topics and find good argument models.

Especially teachers are more and more confronted with the problem of right-wing propaganda. Students often run across racist content when surfing the internet privately or for school. They often know right-wing extremist music groups and relevant web sites. Teachers register this familiarity among their students, but they are at a complete loss as to what to do about this phenomenon. They do not often find students questioning the content and the source of a text. Efforts of right-wing propaganda fall on fruitful soil – young and unskilled readers accept simple arguments, typical bar-room slogans or so-called ‘revisionist’ theses concerning the history of National Socialism as historical truths and their source as reliable.

The media-educational work of the project group took the necessity of specific training for pedagogues in this field and workshops for youngsters into account. The project group carried out around 40 events for further training in 2002.

In 2001 the project group set up a very detailed and comprehensive hand out for teachers and pedagogues. In the form of a CD-ROM the research and analysis results as well as educational models and didactical methodical materials for the critical discussion of racism on the internet were put together and published on behalf of the ‘Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung’ (German Federal Center for Political Education). The first edition of 5000 copies was already out of stock in the beginning of 2002. 2500 additional copies were made. There still is a great demand for practical material. A revised and updated edition seems to be appropriate. The project group already developed initial concepts.

The new edition of the CD-ROM is planned to be published in 2003.

#### **4. International Co-operation**

The internet is an international medium with cross-border access. The more this global nature of the internet is abused publishing illegal and harmful right-wing extremist content anonymously from abroad the more an international co-operation becomes important.

Attempts are made to harmonize the legal situation in Europe. However, until now there is neither a bundling up of activities of anti-racist organizations and initiatives nor a promising approach to a practical implementation of codified agreements. Here the International Network Against Cyberhate (INACH) could play an important role in the future. Within this anti-racist network there are new ways to co-operate and exchange expertise. This could be, for instance, to standardize the classification of right-wing extremist content and procedures dealing with this content. In the cases of transnational right-wing extremist propaganda such as Gary Lauck, scene providers or revisionist web sites it is worth a try to put joint and publicly effective pressure on providers and to fight against the problem of so-called 'safe digital havens'.

#### **5. Conclusion**

The results of the project demonstrate that the right-wing extremist activities on the internet are not a temporary phenomenon. In spite of the successfulness of the project group concerning the blocking of illegal content it is obvious that long-term and coordinated measures on all relevant levels are essential in the battle against right-wing extremist web propaganda. The last two projects established the conditions and paved the way for carrying on this work successfully.