

Racist agitation against refugees

Far reach in social web services, need for multidimensional counter strategies

Oktober 2015

The refugee debate is currently the number one topic right-wing extremists pick up to send their messages. From the perspective of youth protection, lowered inhibitions and agitation becoming more and more radical are specifically problematic.

On Facebook, for example, a culture of discussions and communication is meanwhile well established, not only on clearly right-wing extremist pages: Foreigners, Muslims, Jews or Sinti and Roma are, as a matter of course, made responsible for social grievances revealing the well-known scapegoat mechanism. Right-wing extremists exploit this climate in order to light up the dynamics with their propaganda.



Malicious comments about drowned refugees.

Here, jugendschutz.net has also noticed a rise in reports from internet users. Alone in terms of hate content on Facebook, the number of reports tripled during the second half of 2015 (nearly 100 reports during the first half of the year; from July to October already 300).

Radicalization: Blatant incitement to hatred and violence

Many users feel anonymous and safe from prosecution, are not afraid to post racist content and incite to violence. For example, jugendschutz.net recorded postings calling for 'heating the ovens' once again, shooting 'foreigners' or burning down refugee shelters.



'I have a bullet for every refugee'.

Hate comments increasingly convey an anti-democratic attitude and aim at persons in politics and civil society. Here too, an ongoing mix between the right-wing extremist scene and the so-called 'mainstream of society' can be noticed. Anti-democratic slogans and open agitation towards politicians or people engaged in supporting refugees have long left the right-wing extremist circles and seem socially acceptable online.



Das Wort zum Sonntag! Ge habt euch wohl



Agitation and cheap propaganda also against democracy and politics.

Confrontation: Drastic depictions of violence as means of propaganda

In the course of refugee debates, jugendschutz.net recorded numerous posts and comments evoking fears of a potential future Islamization by using violent scenes or depictions of jihadist atrocities like executions in detail, terrorists posing with severed heads or mutilated bodies. This is supposed to prove the threat posed by Muslim refugees and their alleged 'natural' propensity for violence and cruelty.



Shocking depictions of violence shall legitimize hatred.

Specifically problematic: In the social web, the violent scenes suddenly appear in search results, in timelines or in auto-suggestions. It is barely possible to put these depictions in the right context. Especially children and young people could be shocked and disturbed, and hatred towards Muslims can also be further increased.

Counter strategies: Multidimensional approach is necessary

In the course of the current anti-refugee agitation jugendschutz.net recorded violations of youth protection laws specifically on social web platforms (Facebook, YouTube and Twitter). As a rule, jugendschutz.net immediately asks the platform operators to delete illegal content; during the third quarter 2015 (July to September) in 230 cases.

180 cases (80 %) were punishable under criminal law (incitement to hatred, Holocaust denial, using symbols of unconstitutional organizations); these also violated the platform operator's terms of service. The platform operators took action in 60 % of the cases and deleted the content or blocked it for German users. Whenever a German person is responsible for the content, jugendschutz.net passes on the case to the Commission for the Protection of Minors in the Media (KJM) for further proceedings.

The ongoing heated debate shows quite clearly that we have to increase efforts to raise awareness and provide information. Furthermore, counter speech is an important sign to show that racism and social exclusion will not be accepted and to send a signal of solidarity with the victims. We specifically have to strengthen the skills of young users to think critically when dealing with inhuman and anti-democratic content.

Gefördert vom



im Rahmen des Bundesprogramms

Demokratie **leben!**