

Press release

FIZ Karlsruhe – Leibniz-Institut für Informationsinfrastruktur GmbH

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Digitally dealing and coming to terms with right-wing violence: launch of the “Right-wing violence portal”

Karlsruhe, December 9, 2024. Right-wing violence is not a new phenomenon. It runs through the history of Germany, both in the Federal Republic and, less well known, in the GDR. Events such as the NSU complex, the Oktoberfest attack or the racist riots in Rostock-Lichtenhagen are firmly anchored in the collective memory. They stand for hundreds, if not thousands, of incidents that have claimed lives, caused trauma and left deep social wounds since the end of the Second World War - and yet have often been forgotten. Many of these cases are inadequately documented or unknown to the general public.

In order to raise awareness of these dark chapters in German history, the “Right-wing violence” portal is now being created. This new platform creates a central digital location to pool, preserve and make accessible knowledge about right-wing extremist and right-wing terrorist violence. On January 1, 2025, FIZ Karlsruhe - Leibniz Institute for Information Infrastructure - will start working on this important project together with the Federal Archives and the State Archives of Baden-Württemberg.

Promoting an inclusive culture of remembrance

The “Right-wing Violence Portal” is being created as part of the Archive Portal-D in the German Digital Library (DDB). This project will make an important contribution to social reappraisal and remembrance. “In order to understand the causes of right-wing violence and promote a more inclusive culture of remembrance in the long term, it is essential to make historical and contemporary sources available digitally,” explains Matthias Razum, Vice President e-Research at FIZ Karlsruhe.

The establishment of the thematic portal is based on the coalition agreement concluded by the federal government in 2021. It states: “We are also vigorously driving forward the further investigation of the NSU complex within the federal government and are launching an archive on right-wing terrorism in cooperation with the federal states concerned.”

Objectives and challenges

The project addresses the multi-perspective analysis of right-wing violence - from right-wing extremist groups and their actions to those affected and victims. It will bring together archival materials from government agencies and civil society organizations, provide an overview of existing sources, create access for research and education and promote the digitization of relevant documents.

One of the particular challenges of the project is to correctly define “right-wing violence”. The term has only been used consciously in Germany since the 1990s, which makes the historical classification and categorization of sources difficult. In addition, the topic requires extremely careful consideration, as it is the subject of much political and social debate.

Technical support and funding

FIZ Karlsruhe will be responsible for the technical realization of the theme portal. Planned are

- a record of around 800 incidents of right-wing violence, interactively processed using a timeline and maps,
- the integration of digitized archive and metadata on these incidents and
- the adaptation of the “Simple Indexing and Access System” (EEZU) to enable small archives to provide relevant content.

The Federal Archives are responsible for the project management and the content of the portal. The State Archives of Baden-Württemberg contribute their expertise to the editorial and systematic indexing as well as to the integration of civil society archives, including their documentation center on right-wing extremism.

The development of the portal is funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media. This funding will enable the realization of a prototype by mid-2026 with in-depth information on three to four incidents of right-wing violence. There are plans to expand the content and functionalities at a later date. Overall, the project is scheduled to run for several years, with a view to permanent integration into the existing infrastructure of the German Digital Library.

FIZ Karlsruhe is contributing its experience from similar projects, including the thematic portal “Wiedergutmachung nationalsozialistischen Unrechts” (compensation for National Socialist injustice), for which it is also providing the infrastructure and technical leadership. At the same time, the workflow with the “Simple indexing and access system for small and medium-sized archives” (EEZU) will be implemented as an example. This system also enables smaller archives without their own IT infrastructure to participate in the portal and integrate their holdings.

Significance for research and society

The portal closes an important gap in historical research. It addresses topics such as the NSU murders, the “baseball bat years” of the 1990s and the right-wing extremist scene in East and West Germany. It will also serve as a resource for academia, the media and educational institutions and thus contribute to strengthening social cohesion in the long term.

About FIZ Karlsruhe

As a member of the Leibniz Association, FIZ Karlsruhe supports the digital transformation of research and society. With its expertise in the development of innovative information systems, it significantly contributes to the sustainable protection and provision of cultural and scientific data.

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