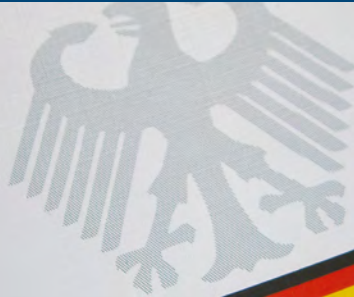




Bundesministerium
des Innern
und für Heimat

Brief summary 2022 Report on the Protection of the Constitution

Facts and Trends



GRUNDGESETZ
für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland

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2022 REPORT ON THE PROTECTION OF THE CONSTITUTION
FACTS AND TRENDS

Politically motivated crime¹

In 2022, the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) registered a total of 58,916 politically motivated crimes (2021: 55,048). Of these, 16,340 (or 27.7%) were propaganda offences (2021: 13,832, or 25.1%), and 4,043 (6.9%) were politically motivated violent crimes (2021: 3,889, or 7.1%).

Of the total number of politically motivated crimes, 35,452 (60.2%) were found to have an extremist background (2021: 33,476, or 60.8%). 8,246 (2021: 5,948) crimes with an extremist background were recorded without further classification.

Key points:

- The number of crimes with a right-wing extremist background rose by 3.8% in the reporting period; the number of violent crimes in this subset rose by 7.5%. This includes two attempted homicides.
- The extremist crimes that were attributed to “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” increased by 34.3% in the reporting period, with the number of violent offences as a proportion of these increasing by 55.4% in comparison to the previous year. This includes two attempted homicides.
- The number of crimes with a left-wing extremist background fell by 37.4%; the number of violent crimes in this subset decreased by 39%. This includes one attempted homicide. Most of these violent crimes were still targeted at the police/security authorities as well as the state, its institutions and symbols. Contrary to the overall trend, there was a slight increase (+9.3%) in the number of bodily injury crimes with a left-wing extremist background targeted at actual right-wing extremists, or people perceived as such, compared to the previous year (2022: 164; 2021: 150).

¹ Figures based on data supplied by the Federal Criminal Police Office.

- The number of crimes, including violent crimes, motivated by extremist foreign ideology rose significantly during the reporting period. In 2022, there was a particularly sharp rise in the number of offences to 1,974, an increase of 154.4% (2021: 776) with the lion's share being accounted for by the 1,229 offences recorded in Germany in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Violent crimes almost doubled (226 offences; 2021: 116).

More specifically:

The number of offences categorised as **right-wing politically motivated crime** was 23,493 (2021: 21,964). Of these, 14,132 (2021: 12,255) were propaganda offences under Sections 86 and 86a of the German Criminal Code (Strafgesetzbuch, StGB) and 1,170 (2021: 1,042) were violent crimes. As a subset of this category, 20,967 crimes with a right-wing extremist background were recorded (2021: 20,201), among them 1,016 violent crimes (2021: 945). This represents an approximate 7.5% increase in the number of violent crimes compared with the previous year. This includes, in particular, two attempted homicides.

In 2022, the number of right-wing extremist crimes motivated by xenophobia rose by 1.3% (7,484 offences, 2021: 7,389). The overall number of right-wing extremist crimes motivated by antisemitism fell by 17.1% to 2,023 (2021: 2,439), while the number of violent crimes in this subset increased by 51.4% to 53 (2021: 35).

In the reporting year, 1,856 politically motivated offences were attributed to **“Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter”** (2021: 1,330), of which 1,358 were categorised as extremist (2021: 1,011). Of these, 286 were violent crimes (2021: 184), including extortion (203) and resistance to law enforcement officers (67), as well as two attempted homicides. Coercion and threats also accounted for a considerable number of offences (555). Of the crimes attributed to “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter”, 47 were found to be motivated by antisemitism; the majority of these (40) were crimes of incitement to hatred.

The number of offences categorised as left-wing politically motivated crime was 6,976 (2021: 10,113), including 842 violent crimes (30.0% lower than in 2021: 1,203). As a subset of this category, 3,847 crimes with a left-wing extremist background were recorded (2021: 6,142), including 602 (2021: 987) violent crimes. The number of crimes with a left-wing extremist background fell by 37.4%; the number of violent crimes in this subset decreased by 39.0%

Of the violent left-wing extremist offences, 292 were categorised as violent crimes against the police/security authorities (2021: 572), a decrease of over half. The number of violent offences directed at actual or supposed right-wing extremists fell to 229 in total (2021: 264, a decrease of 13.3%), and the number of violent crimes against the state, its institutions and symbols dropped to 293, a decrease of 37.8% (2021: 471). The number of violent crimes related to “campaigns against restructuring”, or urban renewal, fell dramatically compared with the previous year (2022: 18; 2021: 290). In the reporting period, five antisemitic offences were classified as being motivated by left-wing extremism (2021: 6), including one violent crime.

In 2022, 418 extremist offences were recorded in the category of politically motivated crime – religious ideology (2021: 409). Most of these offences (361; 2021: 372) had an Islamist extremist background. Of the 418 offences motivated by religious ideology, 43 were violent offences (2021: 49, a decrease of 12.2%), including one attempted homicide and 39 cases of bodily injury. 39 extremist offences in the category of politically motivated crime – religious ideology were classified as preparation or support for a serious act of violence endangering state security (Sections 89a to 89c and Section 91 of the Criminal Code), down from 49 in 2021, and 34 were counted as membership in or support for a foreign terrorist organisation (Section 129b of the Criminal Code), compared to 43 in 2021.

The number of extremist offences categorised as politically motivated crime – foreign ideology was 1,974, representing an increase of 154.4% (2021: 776). These offences were predominantly criminal damage (19.4%), but also included 226 violent crimes (11.4%). Compared to 2021 (116), the number of

violent crimes almost doubled (an increase of 94.8%). The vast majority of these were cases of bodily injury (62.4%), while 22.1% were cases of resistance to law enforcement officers.

In 2022, there was a particularly sharp increase (154.4%) in the number of crimes with a foreign extremist background to 1,974 (2021: 776). The lion's share of these crimes driving the significant increase was accounted for by the 1,229 offences recorded in Germany in 2022 in this category in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Disregarding this newly relevant reference point for crimes in the area of foreign extremism, the total number of crimes in the other subsets was more or less on the same level as in the previous year. Even discounting the particular impact caused by this issue, there was still an increase – albeit a less significant one – in the number of violent crimes.

Right-wing extremism/terrorism

By the end of 2022, the right-wing extremist following (after subtracting multiple memberships) was 38,800 (2021: 33,900). The number of right-wing extremists classed as violence-oriented rose to 14,000 (2021: 13,500).

Right-wing extremist following¹	2021	2022
Political party membership	11,800	15,500
Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD, National-Democratic Party of Germany)	3,150	3,000
DIE RECHTE (The Right)	500	450
Der III. Weg (The Third Way)	650	700
Suspected threat: Alternative für Deutschland (AfD, Alternative for Germany) ²	-	10,200
Membership of other right-wing extremist parties ³	7,500	1,150
Membership of groups/organisations not affiliated with or independent of political parties ⁴	8,500	8,500
No membership of any right-wing extremist grouping/organisation ⁵	15,000	16,000
Total	35,300	40,000
After subtracting multiple memberships	33,900	38,800
of which violence-oriented right-wing extremists	13,500	14,000

1 Some of these figures are estimated and rounded off.

2 This includes the members of the Junge Alternative (JA, Young Alternative; suspected threat), a sub-organisation of the AfD (suspected threat); the estimated number of double memberships has been taken into account.

3 Membership of other right-wing extremist parties includes among others the members of Freie Sachsen (Free Saxons) and Neue Stärke Partei (NSP, New Strength Party). For the 2021 reporting year, the number also included members of JA (suspected threat) and Der Flügel (The Wing), which was treated as a suspected threat at the time.

4 These numbers include people affiliated with the following intelligence targets: COMPACT-Magazin GmbH (COMPACT Magazine), Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland (IBD, Identitarian Movement Germany), PI-NEWS, Institut für Staatspolitik (IfS, Institute for State Policy; suspected threat), Antaios-Verlag (Antaios publishing house, suspected threat) and Ein Prozent e.V. (One Per Cent; suspected threat) as well as those among the 1,250 right-wing extremist "Reichsbürger" (literally: "citizens of the Reich") and "Selbstverwalter" (literally: self-administrators) who belong to groups/organisations not affiliated with or independent of political parties.

5 In the reporting period, this number includes those out of a total of 1,250 right-wing extremist "Reichsbürger" and "Selbstverwalter" who do not belong to any organised group.

The total number of right-wing extremist criminal and violent offences increased by about 3.8% in comparison to the previous year (2021: 20,201; 2022: 20,967). Propaganda offences made up the largest share of right-wing extremist crime at 62.1% (13,026). Violent offences accounted for 4.8% of all right-wing extremist criminal offences. In comparison to the previous year, right-wing extremist violent offences increased by 7.5% in the reporting year (2021: 945; 2022: 1,016). At 86.5%, bodily injury offences (879 bodily injuries) made up the largest share of violent offences and remained at about the same level as in the previous year (2021: 82.9%, 783). Right-wing extremist bodily injury offences with a xenophobic background increased by 16.3% compared to the previous year (2021: 646; 2022: 751). The total number of violent offences with a xenophobic background grew as well (2021: 686; 2022: 796, 16.0%). The number of right-wing extremist offences in the category of coercion/threats decreased only slightly by 1.9% (2021: 425; 2022: 417), while those in the category of property damage decreased by 35.9% (2021: 923; 2022: 592).

In 2022, two attempted homicides were recorded (2021: two attempted homicides, one homicide).

Right-wing extremists continue to pursue the goal of gaining acceptance among mainstream democratic groups. While at the beginning of the reporting year, right-wing extremists strove to exploit the protests against COVID-19-related protective measures, they shifted the focus of their agitation in the autumn and winter to issues such as inflation and the threat of a looming energy crisis in the wake of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, following the easing of COVID-19-related restrictions. They repeatedly evoked the spectre of a "hot autumn" which would develop into a "winter of rage". Since this agitation failed to win support among the general public, also because the energy shortage did not materialise, right-wing extremists once again focused increasingly on the topic of migration. Against this backdrop, the number of right-wing extremist demonstrations increased by 65% compared to the previous year, totalling 145 (2021: 88) yet protests did not reach the same level as in the first year of the pandemic.

Following the beginning of **Russia's invasion of Ukraine**, right-wing extremists adopted a more differentiated stance on Russia, having previously taken a mostly pro-Russian position. While large parts of the scene showed support and understanding for Russia's course of action, parts of the neo-Nazi spectrum sided with Ukraine. However, these diverging views have not resulted in any schisms within the right-wing extremist scene.

As in previous years, **right-wing extremist music** played an important role in German right-wing extremism in 2022. Following the lifting of most COVID-19-related protective measures from spring 2022 onwards, the number of music events increased. The number of concerts, however, remained significantly below pre-pandemic levels. As in the years of the pandemic, there was not a single major music event with an audience of more than 500 in the reporting year. On the whole, however, the number of right-wing extremist music events in Germany reported in 2022 more or less returned to pre-pandemic levels owing to the strong increase in the number of "musical evenings" and other smaller music events.

In addition to right-wing extremist music, **combat sports** have become an established part of right-wing extremist event culture. Following the lifting of public protective measures from spring 2022 onwards, numerous smaller combat sports events such as tournaments, performances, self-defence courses and joint trainings took place within the scene once again. Following the bans and restrictions imposed on Europe's largest right-wing extremist combat sports event Kampf der Nibelungen (KdN, Battle of the Nibelungs) and its substitute events in 2019, 2020 and 2021, the organisers of KdN decided for the first time since the inception of the event in 2013 to cancel it in 2022.

Self-radicalised perpetrators who operate without being affiliated to known groups or organisations of the right-wing extremist scene are a special challenge for the security authorities. Other relevant characteristics such as their ideological position have also become less clear in recent years.

Chat groups on messaging services and internet platforms as well as unregulated imageboards play an important role for right-wing extremists seeking to build up a **network online**. These platforms spread not only right-wing terrorist manifestos but occasionally also depictions of violence. This leads to the formation of digital echo chambers where radicalisation processes can be initiated and accelerated. The user group is composed mainly of anonymous individuals acting on their own who sometimes engage in cult-like veneration of right-wing extremist terrorists or solo perpetrators of killing sprees. Compared to previous years, the authorities have also identified more minors who are sometimes still below the age of criminal responsibility but express themselves in these echo chambers (at least verbally) in a way that shows their extremist attitude and inclination to violence.

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine is an example which highlights the current trends in **antisemitism** and above all in antisemitic conspiracy theories. Immediately after the attack on Ukraine, right-wing extremists started reinterpreting the current daily developments by referring to antisemitic narratives claiming that the war was part of a supposed “Jewish” strategy to control the world. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a key factor in disseminating open or coded antisemitic conspiracy theories.

In recent years, right-wing extremists from different spectra have increasingly endeavoured to **acquire land and real estate**, especially in the eastern and northern federal states. Their aim is to exert ideological influence in individual regions or towns and villages or even to take them over.

Although the **right-wing extremist parties** NPD, DIE RECHTE (The Right) and Der III. Weg (The Third Way) did not play a role in the elections held in the reporting year, their organisational structures played a key role in facilitating networking and cohesion within the right-wing extremist scene. Furthermore, two new right-wing extremist parties, namely the regional party Freie Sachsen (Free Saxons) and the very small neo-National Socialist party Neue Stärke Partei (NSP, New Strength Party), became increasingly visible.

In the reporting year, the **NPD** again did not manage to steer a clear strategic course. Following the party's consistently poor performance in elections in recent years, several reforms are planned to streamline the organisation, gain acceptance and increase its activities in the pre-political sphere. This includes efforts to increase networking with other stakeholders in the right-wing extremist spectrum and to learn from them. The NPD is thus making it clear that it no longer wishes to be seen primarily as an election party but rather increasingly as a cooperation partner in a broad-based right-wing extremist alliance.

The party **DIE RECHTE** continued the decline which had already manifested itself in 2021. Most of its branches at state level exist on paper only. In the reporting year, the party's branch in North Rhine-Westphalia, which is dominated by neo-Nazis, was the only one engaged in any relevant activities. Nevertheless and despite the problems within the party, DIE RECHTE strove to maintain its formal status as a political party.

Under the leadership of Matthias Fischer, its newly elected federal chairman, **Der III. Weg** continued in 2022 to press ahead with building up its party structures. Having established two new "bases" in Baden-Württemberg and Saxony-Anhalt, the party now has 22 of these organisational units. This development was accompanied by the opening of three new party and citizens' offices. However, the party's efforts to win new members and gain acceptance in the majority population by putting an increased focus on socially relevant topics have not produced any sustained success so far.

In the reporting year, the regional right-wing extremist party **Freie Sachsen**, which was founded in 2021, established four district associations (Erzgebirgskreis, Chemnitz, Sächsische Schweiz-Osterzgebirge and Mittelsachsen). In terms of its programme, the party keeps an indifferent profile, avoiding any hint of dogmatism that might result in division and differences. The ideological orientation of the Freie Sachsen party is therefore not so much driven by its programme but by its leading functionaries, who have a clearly extremist background, and by the way the party presents itself to the outside world.

What matters more than ideology are the strategic calculations of the Freie Sachsen party. The party considers itself a networking platform for Saxon protest movements, which is why it refuses to distance itself in any way from other right-wing extremists. On this basis, party officials regularly appear in public together with figureheads of other right-wing extremist organisations such as COMPACT-Magazin GmbH or the NPD.

In a first instance judgment of 8 March 2022, which is not yet final, the Cologne Administrative Court (North Rhine-Westphalia) upheld the decision by the Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV) to classify the **Alternative für Deutschland** (AfD, Alternative for Germany) as a suspected threat.² Statements made by the party and some of its functionaries reflect an ethno-cultural concept of the nation and of the guarantee of human dignity as well as xenophobic, anti-minority, anti-Muslim and anti-Islam positions. Within the AfD, the results of the elections to the executive board at the national party conference in June 2022 show that there is increasing support for extremist tendencies.

The party, which was founded in 2013, claimed to have a membership of 28,500 as at July 2022. However, since the AfD's membership is persistently heterogeneous, one cannot consider all party members to be supporters of the extremist tendencies within the party. In view of the election and voting results at the national party conference which was held from 17 to 19 June 2022 in Riesa (Saxony), and taking into account statements made by party functionaries, it is safe to assume that there are currently approximately 10,000 extremists or extremist sympathisers³ within the AfD.

Statements by the AfD and its representatives often reflect an ethno-cultural concept of the nation which contradicts the broad understanding of the nation enshrined in Germany's constitution, the Basic Law. Furthermore, there have been statements aimed at defaming or disparaging political opponents as well as the state and its representatives. These statements were not aimed

2 The AfD has filed an appeal against the judgment. The appeal proceedings are currently pending with the Higher Administrative Court of North Rhine-Westphalia.

3 See footnote no. 2 in the table on page 11.

at advancing a substantive discussion but rather at denigrating and deriding the political system of the Federal Republic of Germany in general.

The **Junge Alternative für Deutschland** (JA, Young Alternative) was founded in 2013 and was classified by BfV as a suspected threat in January 2019. The Cologne Administrative Court (North Rhine-Westphalia) confirmed this categorisation in its judgment of 8 March 2022 which is, however, not yet final.⁴ According to the court, there are facts indicating that the JA's main political aim is maintaining the ethnic purity of the German people and excluding people of other ethnicities wherever possible. The court ruled that such a nationalist and racist concept of the nation represented a violation of human dignity. Leading functionaries of the JA continue to express such views, propagating them despite the administrative court's ruling.

The JA is the AfD's official youth organisation. In the reporting year, it comprised 16 regional associations and claimed to have some 2,000 members. In the reporting period, the JA's personal and structural interconnections with organisations and central figures of the extremist **Neue Rechte** (New Right) were expanded. The increasing consolidation of extremist positions within the JA is not only reflected in its existing ties with New Right organisations and its continued propagation of their political positions but also in the results of the elections to the JA's national executive at the organisation's national congress which was held in Apolda (Thuringia) in October 2022. The composition of the JA's new national executive reflects the dominance of the "patriotic solidarity" camp⁵ within the JA. None of the newly elected members of the party's executive can be counted among the moderate camp within the JA.

The name **Neue Rechte** (New Right) refers to an informal network of groups, individuals and organisations, from nationalist conservative to right-wing extremist, which work together to promote their sometimes anti-liberal and anti-democratic positions in society and the political sphere. The parliamentary and extraparliamentary movements and metapolitical theory and practice

⁴ Cologne Administrative Court, judgment of 8 March 2022 – 13 K 208/20.

⁵ "Patriotic solidarity" (solidarischer Patriotismus) refers to a nationalistic approach to social policy. The "patriotic solidarity" camp within the JA has a racist and nationalist orientation and overlaps in many areas with right-wing extremism.

which the network uses to seek to influence the pre-political sphere and lay the groundwork for successful political realisation of their antidemocratic positions are closely intertwined with their use of protests and demonstrations. The figureheads of the New Right are well connected with each other, fulfilling different and sometimes complementary roles within this network to bring about a “cultural revolution from the right” by addressing different target groups. In this context, they operate as strategists (Institut für Staatspolitik – IfS, Institute for State Policy; suspected threat⁶), networkers (Ein Prozent e.V., One Per Cent; suspected threat⁷), publishers (Verlag Antaios, Antaios publishing house; suspected threat) or activists (Identitäre Bewegung Deutschland – IBD, Identitarian Movement Germany). The COMPACT-Magazin (COMPACT Magazine) is a New Right actor with a broad reach which tried to propagate the narrative of a “hot autumn” to mobilise people against the Federal Government as well as to organise and support protests denying the legitimacy of Germany’s government.

6 In April 2023, BfV classified the IfS as a confirmed right-wing extremist initiative.

7 In March 2023, BfV classified Ein Prozent e.V. as a confirmed right-wing extremist initiative.

“Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter”

The category of “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” (literally, “citizens of the Reich” and “self-administrators”) spans a broad range of individuals and organisations with very different ideologies. This category includes individuals not affiliated with any organisational structure, small to very small groupings, groups active across different regions, and virtual networks.

“Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” comprise groups and individuals who, for various reasons, deny the existence of the Federal Republic of Germany and reject its legal system.

In some cases, it is difficult to draw a clear distinction between “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter”. “**Reichsbürger**” invoke the continued existence of some kind of “German Reich” and reject the Federal Republic of Germany. By contrast, “**Selbstverwalter**” believe that they are not part of any state at all. They claim they can secede from the state by making a declaration to that effect and that they are therefore not bound by its laws.

A small percentage of “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” are also clearly right-wing extremists. These movements have some ideological overlap with right-wing extremists in terms of territorial and historical revisionism, völkisch and to some extent National Socialist ideology, and antisemitic patterns of thought. However, the vast majority of “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” display few, if any, elements of right-wing extremist ideology.

In 2022, the scene was thought to comprise about 23,000 individuals nationwide (2021: 21,000). Of these people, 1,250 can also be considered right-wing extremists (2021: 1,150). About 2,300 “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” are thought to be **violence-oriented** (2021: 2,100). In the reporting year 2022, this increase remains largely attributable to the demonstrations against government measures to contain the pandemic which “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” took part in – but without playing a high-profile, leading role in them.

Demonstrations related to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and its political and economic impacts also contributed to this increase.

When “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” engage with the topic of the Russian war of aggression, they predominantly espouse narratives taken from Russian state propaganda. Some members of these movements – both individuals and organisations – display a keen affinity for the Russian Federation and therefore take strongly pro-Russian positions.

A growing tendency to network and intermingle with other types of extremists (right-wing extremism, “anti-constitutional delegitimation of the state”) is also evident. This has also increased the numbers of “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter”. These scenes are tied together by their penchant for conspiracy theories and by the hostility to government and democracy which they exhibit to varying degrees. Networking among them takes place, for example, at demonstrations and in shared Telegram groups.

The tactic of **flooding government agencies and offices with large numbers of long letters** remains popular among the “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter”. These letters contain obscure or muddled arguments or claims and dubious interpretations of the law. Statements in the letters range from simple rejection of official activity all the way to extortion, insults and coercion, sometimes accompanied by threats of violence.

Activities which earn some “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” considerable revenue from others in the scene are also important. Both individuals and groups within the scene, for example, sell invalid fantasy documents such as “driving licenses” and “licence plates” to others. They also offer expensive seminars, “legal advice” and lectures for which fees are charged.

In 2022, the “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” group **Königreich Deutschland (KRD, Kingdom of Germany)** expanded its infrastructure by acquiring real estate in the federal state of Saxony. The group continues its large-scale campaign to attract financial contributors to its “village projects”. Interested

parties are asked to sign capital transfer contracts or to pay money directly to the sellers of properties.

During the reporting year, the group **Geeinte deutsche Völker und Stämme (GdVuSt, United German Peoples and Tribes)**, which has been banned since March 2020, made growing efforts to form a successor organisation. On 4 May 2022, multiple properties of the GdVuSt were searched. As part of this action, an arrest warrant for the group's main leader was enforced. In November 2022, she was convicted of offences including violation of an association ban (Section 85 of the Criminal Code (Strafgesetzbuch, StGB)) and incitement to hatred (Section 130 of the Criminal Code).

During the reporting year, various action was also taken under labour and civil service law against public employees with ties to the “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” scene.

In October 2022, a retired civil servant was arrested on suspicion of leading a terrorist organisation (punishable under Section 129a of the Criminal Code). She is also accused of having taken part in preparing a high treasonous undertaking against the Federal Government (Section 83 (1) of the Criminal Code). The group sought to bring about civil war-like conditions in the Federal Republic of Germany by committing attacks on critical infrastructure and thereby causing a massive blackout. They also planned to abduct Federal Minister of Health Karl Lauterbach, with the expectation that they might have to kill Lauterbach's bodyguards.

At least since November 2021, the existence of a group surrounding **P. Heinrich XIII of R.** has made clear the seriousness of the threat posed by “Reichsbürger” who are current or former public employees. This group sought to overthrow the German government and replace it with their own power structure. On a planned “Day X”, the group intended to use their own military wing, which they had developed specifically for this purpose, to violently topple the German state. The group's membership and ideology were extremely heterogeneous; they drew on conspiracy narratives typical of the “Reichsbürger”

scene such as QAnon⁸ and the S.H.A.E.F.⁹ conspiracy theory, as well as elements of right-wing extremist ideology and New Age beliefs. As a result of federal prosecutors' investigation into the group, large-scale enforcement measures were ultimately carried out on 7 December 2022, with charges against them including the formation of a terrorist organisation under Section 129a of the Criminal Code. The suspects include active and former police officers and members of the Bundeswehr.

In 2022, this group was the most prominent example of the **emergence of a new, violence-oriented mixed milieu**. This case shows that a particular potential threat arises from the “Reichsbürger” scene’s ability to connect with different kinds of extremists.

The **high level of potential violence** among the “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” is also evident in their dramatic resistance against government measures, which in some cases includes brandishing weapons. During a traffic check in February 2022, for example, a member of the “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” scene ran over a police officer with his car, injuring the officer severely. In April 2022, a man known to be a “Reichsbürger” fired a weapon at police while they were searching his home for the purpose of securing weapons. The man shot at the special operations team conducting the search and injured two of them.

The **affinity for weapons** of many “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” also continues to pose a threat. By the end of 2022, the weapons permits of at least 1,100 “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” had been revoked. As of the end of 2022, about 400 “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter” still had at least one weapons permit.

8 This conspiracy theory is based on the idea that a secret elite, often described as Satanists and paedophiles and referred to as the Deep State, is striving to establish a global dictatorship or “new world order”.

9 Followers of this conspiracy theory refer to the laws of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (S.H.A.E.F.), which held the supreme command of the Western Allied Armed Forces in Europe during the Second World War and was dissolved after the end of the war. The theory claims that S.H.A.E.F. is still the legitimate administrative power in Germany and its laws are still in effect.

“Anti-constitutional delegitimation of the state”

Those who are active in the area of “anti-constitutional delegitimation of the state” aim to abolish basic constitutional principles or to impede the ability of the government or its institutions to function. They malign democratic decision-making processes or call upon others to ignore the orders and decisions of courts and public authorities. Their actions undermine the democratic order by weakening trust in the government system on the whole, thereby endangering its ability to function. Only such systematic delegitimation reaching a considerable level of significance is of relevance in a domestic intelligence context. These activities stand in opposition to basic constitutional principles, especially the principles of democracy and the rule of law.

Nationwide, some 1,400 people were identified as belonging to the delegitimation milieu during the reporting period, some 280 of whom are considered **violence-oriented**. Unlike with other forms of extremism, in this area fixed and permanent structures are the exception; rather, those who are involved often act solely as individuals or in loosely structured groups.

The delegitimation spectrum includes a broad range of people; in some cases, regional particularities are evident. The different groups and individuals are tied together by their categorical rejection of the existing system of government, which they regard as unsuitable and undemocratic.

The formerly high-profile “**Querdenker**” movement has declined significantly in importance, due not least to the June 2022 arrest of its top leader on suspicion of fraud and money laundering. Its activities are now largely limited to the local level. During the reporting period, there was no organisation in the delegitimation spectrum that was of nationwide relevance.

The extensive rollback of the governmental measures to fight the pandemic and the legislative failure in April 2022 of the proposed general vaccination requirement drained much of the movement’s ability to mobilise support

through the COVID-19 issue. This was reflected in a dramatic decrease in the numbers of participants at demonstrations from spring 2022 onward.

In response to this trend, a new discourse emerged within the delegitimation milieu about new issues that could potentially be used to mobilise support. The possible new areas of focus that were discussed included agitation against government climate policy measures as well as the debate surrounding the economic and political impacts of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. However, at no point during the year did the demonstrations against inflation and the energy crisis organised by those active in this milieu achieve a level of attention comparable to that generated by the earlier demonstrations related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Those active in this area are characterised by their sustained agitation against democratically elected representatives of the government. This particularly enables them to connect with right-wing extremists and with “Reichsbürger” and “Selbstverwalter”.

The Telegram chat groups of the “**Vereinte Patrioten**” (**United Patriots**) included individuals from the delegitimation milieu as well as “Reichsbürger” and right-wing extremists. In the chat groups, members discussed the goal of overthrowing the government system in a “Day X” scenario as an act of resistance against the government measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. The group planned to bring about civil war-like conditions by causing a large-scale blackout through attacks on critical infrastructure. Investigations into the group by the public prosecutor’s office in the city of Koblenz in the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate led to police action against multiple members of the group across Germany on 13 April 2022. The suspects are accused of preparing a serious violent offence endangering the state (Section 89a of the Criminal Code (Strafgesetzbuch, StGB)) and of violating the Weapons Act (Waffengesetz) and the War Weapons Control Act (Kriegswaffenkontrollgesetz).

Not least, the **conspiracy narratives** that are prevalent within the delegitimation milieu present a dangerous potential to radicalise individuals.

In September 2021, such a **radicalisation process** culminated in the murder of a petrol station employee in Idar-Oberstein in the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate. The perpetrator's motives and political and ideological convictions place him within the delegitimisation milieu, but he does not belong to any group or organisation in the milieu. On 13 September 2022, he was sentenced to life imprisonment by the Bad Kreuznach Regional Court in Rhineland-Palatinate.

Such radicalisation tendencies are particularly aggravated by communication on **social media**. It has repeatedly been observed that users express agreement with ideas of violence against or even of murder of office holders and elected representatives or that they voice their intention of making plans to that effect. When viewed in the aggregate, the large number of such threats, which are directed not only at representatives of government institutions but also at figures in the academic and business communities, indicates an increased coarsening of the public debate and also illustrates the vagueness of the notion of the imagined enemy that emerged during the demonstrations and remains relevant today.

Left-wing extremism

The **left-wing extremist following** (after subtracting multiple memberships) rose by 5.2% to a total of 36,500 individuals in 2022. More than one in four of all left-wing extremists can be classed as violence-oriented.

Left-wing extremist following ¹		
	2021	2022
Violence-oriented left-wing extremists	10,300	10,800
of which, from the autonomist scene	8,000	8,300
Non-violent strictly ideological left-wing extremists and other left-wing extremists	25,500	27,600
Total	35,800	38,400
after subtracting multiple memberships	34,700	36,500
1 Some of these figures are estimated and rounded off.		

Left-wing extremists seek to do away with the existing state and social order, and therefore the free and democratic constitutional system. With this in mind, issues such as “anti-fascism”, “anti-repression” or “anti-gentrification” are, depending on the circumstances, relevant but ultimately interchangeable areas of action which only serve to advance left-wing extremists’ ideological notions.

The number of **criminal offences motivated by left-wing extremism** fell by 37.4% to 3,847 in 2022 (2021: 6,142). The number of **violent left-wing extremist offences** decreased by 39.0% to 602 (2021: 987). However, individual particularly serious attacks, a consistently large number of bodily injuries and high losses that regularly result from arson offences or property damage show that the potential threat posed by violence-oriented left-wing extremism is still great. Contrary to the overall decline, direct physical violence against actual or supposed right-wing extremists slightly increased. One attempted homicide (2021: 1) and 164 cases of bodily injury (2021: 150) clearly show that left-wing

extremists still have a **high propensity for violence**. At 1,968 cases (2021: 3,419, a decrease of 42.4%), property damage remains the most common category of left-wing extremist offence. However, as was the case for the 62 arson offences recorded (2021: 159, a decrease of 61.0%), the number of property damages fell significantly. Nevertheless, left-wing extremism continued to cause **millions of euros of damage** in 2022.

The potential threat posed by left-wing extremism is still high. The radicalisation of segments of the violent left-wing extremist scene, which had increased over recent years, stayed at a consistently high level. **Violent left-wing extremists** continue to attack the physical integrity of individuals on a regular basis and to cause high losses. **Attacks on infrastructures** such as cable pits, telecommunications equipment or railway facilities are crimes and violent acts motivated by left-wing extremism that can potentially affect large parts of the population. The situation continues to be particularly relevant in left-wing extremist strongholds such as Berlin, Hamburg and Leipzig. But in other cities and federal states, too, small groups are becoming radicalised and isolating themselves from the rest of the scene to commit crimes (including violent crimes) in a clandestine, systematic and highly organised way. If this is not stopped, it could lead to a **spiral of radicalisation** and ultimately to terrorist structures.

The brutality and willingness of left-wing extremist segments to use violence is particularly visible in their **“anti-fascist struggle”**. Professionally organised small groups commit serious attacks against supposed “fascists”. In 2022, the trial against Lina E. and three other defendants before the Dresden Higher Regional Court continued to be particularly important for the left-wing extremist scene, resulting in regular demonstrations of solidarity and criminal offences. The defendants are believed to belong to a violent left-wing extremist group and accused of committing serious bodily injury against several actual or supposed right-wing extremists.

The left-wing extremist scene regularly labels actual or supposed right-wing extremists as “fascists”. This term is also applied to the state, its free and

democratic constitutional system and the persons representing it. For violence-oriented left-wing extremists, crimes and violence are key elements of their “anti-fascist struggle”. Crimes in this context range from **exposing opponents** to threats, damage or destruction of property, to setting cars or meeting places on fire, to brutal physical attacks on supposedly “fascist” people, often in their private sphere. For left-wing extremists, even serious violence against individuals constitutes a legitimate and necessary element of their “anti-fascist struggle” and is justified by the government bodies’ alleged failure to fight against “racists” and “fascists”. The point of regularly threatening to use or actually using violence against the “right-wing” and right-wing extremist scene is to create a permanent sense of fear.

Violence-oriented left-wing extremists see the **police** as their greatest enemy in the fight against the state they so vehemently oppose. The majority of left-wing extremist violent offences are directed at the police: at police officers, their vehicles, facilities or institutions. Violent left-wing extremists in particular disparage police officers as “murderers in uniform” and “pigs” and think that they deserve to suffer physical violence solely because of their career choice. **Members of the judiciary** representing the “repressive state” are also increasingly the focus of violent left-wing extremists. In addition to attacks in connection with demonstrations or other events, there are also criminal offences directed at individual police officers and members of the judiciary in their private environment. These targeted attacks, which are sometimes extensively planned, show the considerable criminal energy of the offenders.

Left-wing extremist-motivated arson attacks or damage to vehicles, machines or infrastructure belonging to **private businesses** cause millions of euros of losses in Germany every year. Left-wing extremists try to provide an ideological justification for their actions by embedding their attacks in the context of “anti-militarism”, “anti-repression”, “anti-gentrification” and their ostensible support for the climate protest movement. In addition to construction and energy companies, left-wing extremists focused again on the armaments industry in the context of “anti-militarism” in 2022.

The majority of the left-wing extremist scene strongly condemns **Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine**. However, some left-wing extremists do not exclusively see Russia as the aggressor, but rather "imperialism". They claim that the "imperialist" ambitions of Russia, NATO, the United States and "the West" are to blame for the attack on Ukraine. Violent left-wing extremists use the war of aggression to organise campaigns, but also to commit crimes against defence companies, the Bundeswehr and established political parties. These crimes include paint attacks, property damage and sometimes even arson attacks and are linked with other issues such as the left-wing extremists' ostensible support for the climate protest movement.

Strictly ideological left-wing extremists explain and assess the war events according to their worldview. The majority condemns the war as a "fight between brothers", claiming that workers are pointing guns at each other rather than fighting the actual enemy – their "own ruling class" – and ending the escalation of imperialist ambitions between Russia, Ukraine and NATO. At present, various strictly ideological left-wing extremists are also regularly using the rejection of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine to draw attention to themselves and recruit young people.

Through their alleged commitment to **climate action**, left-wing extremists attempt to manipulate democratic discourse in order to add their own ideological positions, radicalise social protest and question the legitimacy of the state and its institutions. Violence-oriented left-wing extremists also use alliances to attempt to influence protests. Given that climate activists still consider the climate situation urgent, climate protests have a potential for escalation that is useful to left-wing extremists. Overall, the climate protest movement is an attractive target of left-wing extremists from different spectra, because many protesters are young and the protests attract considerable public attention. However, there are currently no indications that left-wing extremists have a controlling influence on the climate movement.

The alliance Ende Gelände (EG), which is influenced by the post-autonomist **Interventionistische Linke** (IL, Interventionist Left), plays a key role. Ende

Gelände updated its “consensus of action” to organise a “mass action of civil disobedience” in Hamburg from 9 to 15 August 2022 by explicitly including **acts of sabotage**. Another element of climate protests was the fight against the eviction and demolition of the village of **Lützerath** (North Rhine-Westphalia). As early as summer 2022, Ende Gelände started to use the slogan “Ende Gelände goes Lützerath” to mobilise participants for protests on what they called “Day X” (the day when Lützerath would be evicted and demolished). On social media, left-wing extremists called for “resistance” and organised “skill-sharing camps”, “unevictable festivals”, “Sunday walks” and vigils. There also were individual confrontations with the police and the security staff of the open-cast mine operator. In addition, left-wing extremists attacked the mining infrastructure in the Rhenish lignite mining region and offices of several established political parties across Germany.

Actions which are also used by left-wing extremists in the context of climate protests include blockades/occupations targeting energy infrastructure facilities and companies, which are labelled as “**civil disobedience**”. By using this term, their deliberate and sometimes violent resistance to the democratic and constitutional state monopoly on the use of force is conflated with human and civil rights movements that use non-violent means to protest against injustice. Further concepts such as “**civil disobedience plus**” and “**peaceful sabotage**” were also discussed in connection with the “mass action of civil disobedience”. These concepts serve to justify the sabotage of critical infrastructure and to establish it as a form of action.

In order to attract young people, strictly ideological left-wing (youth) organisations (e.g. REVOLUTION (REVO), Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterjugend (SDAJ, Socialist German Workers Youth), REBELL (Rebel)) increasingly spread their ideology and try to recruit young people in front of schools, businesses and universities. The protagonists often do not use the name of the organisation they belong to in order to avoid being immediately recognised as part of strictly ideological left-wing extremist parties and organisations. At the same time, they try to exploit democratic movements, as is currently especially the case at events of the climate protest movement.

Creating networks with individuals from Germany and abroad that share the same ideology is an inherent feature of left-wing extremism and has a long tradition. In 2022, as in other years, both anarchist and autonomous left-wing extremists from Germany tried to make as many contacts as possible, which may provide strategic approaches for cooperation at different levels. As a result of this cross-border networking, violence-oriented left-wing extremist scenes in other countries regularly demonstrate their solidarity with left-wing extremists in Germany, in particular those facing government measures. In 2022, a large number of such demonstrations of solidarity and criminal offences were recorded, in particular with regard to anarchists detained in Greece and Italy.

With some 13,100 members and about 50 local groups throughout Germany, **Rote Hilfe e.V.** (RH, Red Aid) is the largest and one of the most important groupings of left-wing extremists in Germany. Its member numbers have increased sharply in the last four years (2021: 12,100; 2020: 11,000; 2019: 10,500; 2018: 9,200). Its main activity is supporting left-wing extremist offenders both during criminal proceedings and when in prison. The organisation provides political and social backing and gives legal and financial support. RH works to maintain a nationwide network and ensures broad cohesion among the different currents within the movement, providing legitimacy for its members to commit criminal and violent offences.

Left-wing extremists need to attract public attention in order to spread their ideology. Violence-oriented left-wing extremists also require a public platform where they can explain the necessity of their violent acts and push their demands. The **left-wing extremist website de.indymedia** is currently the most important information and propaganda channel for left-wing extremists in German-speaking countries. Many posts on de.indymedia relate to left-wing extremist violence and offences, and in some cases the content itself constitutes a criminal offence. For instance, self-incriminating posts are regularly published alongside calls to commit further offences. In addition, opponents are frequently exposed on the website.

In addition to de.indymedia, there are various platforms which relate to specific cities or regions in German-speaking countries and which are also used by left-wing extremists. These platforms include kontrapolis.info (Berlin), tumulte.org (Bremen) and knack.news (Leipzig). Posts from de.indymedia are also published on these websites, but they also contain exclusive content with regional relevance. The content published on these and other German, Austrian and Swiss platforms used by left-wing extremists can also be accessed on **radikal.news – Nachrichten von Unten (news from below)**. This website describes itself as “a network of self-organised information pages” for German-speaking countries. The aim is to fill the gap left by linksunten.indymedia, a left-wing extremist internet platform that was banned and shut down in 2017, and to protect the websites from potential government measures by offering a wider range of content.

Islamist extremism/terrorism

Compared to the previous year, the Islamist extremist following decreased by around 2.9% to a total of 27,480 individuals in 2022 (2021: 28,290).

Following in the field of Islamist extremism/terrorism ¹		
Organisations	2021	2022
Salafist movements	11,900	11,000
Islamic State (IS) Al-Qaeda Core Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQM) Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) Al-Shabab	no confirmed figures	no confirmed figures
Hezb-e Islami-ye Afghanistan (HIA)	160	160
Hezbollah	1,250	1,250
Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya (HAMAS)	450	450
Turkish Hezbollah (TH)	400	400
Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT)	700	750
Muslim Brotherhood (MB) / Deutsche Muslimische Gemeinschaft e.V. (DMG)	1,450	1,450
Tablighi Jama'at (TJ)	550	550
Islamisches Zentrum Hamburg e.V. (IZH) (Islamic Centre Hamburg) and other Shia extremist organisations	no confirmed figures	no confirmed figures
Millî Görüş movement and affiliated associa- tions (IGMG)	10,000	10,000

Furkan Gemeinschaft (Furkan Community)	400	400
Kalifatsstaat (Caliphate State)	700	700
Others²	330	370
<p>1 Figures refer to Germany; they are partly estimated and rounded off. 2 Other organisations whose membership figures/figures of adherents are to be taken into account as regards the Islamist following.</p>		

The **threat posed by Islamist terrorism in Germany** and to German interests and institutions worldwide persists although the Islamist extremist threat has been overshadowed by other challenges in recent years such that it has attracted somewhat less public and media attention. The threat continues to emanate primarily from lone actors with jihadist motivations who use instruments of crime that are easy to obtain. Their attacks are directed primarily against “soft” targets. Often, it remains unclear whether the perpetrators are driven by Islamist extremist motivations or mental illness. Preventing such offences is a special challenge, since these attacks are committed at short notice, involving only a short planning phase and little organisational effort, and often without relying on any relevant network or communication structures.

In 2022, Germany did not see any attacks that could clearly be defined as being motivated by Islamist extremism. This development is similar across Europe, where the number of Islamist terrorist attacks recorded in the reporting period was in the low single-digit range. On 25 June, for example, there was a firearms attack against a night club primarily frequented by members of the LGBTQ scene in the Norwegian capital, Oslo. As in previous years, German and European security authorities succeeded in thwarting a number of planned attacks in 2022. This shows that jihadist ideology is still present. Germany and Europe remain in the focus of terrorist organisations such as al-Qaeda and Islamic State (IS) which shape and spread this ideology, propagating its enforcement.

In 2022, **IS** and **al-Qaeda** lost several leaders. IS lost two caliphs while al-Qaeda lost Aiman al-Zawahiri, its long-time leader and a companion of Osama bin Laden. For this reason, the organisations involved in global jihad are not only

under increasing pressure to boost their profile but also faced with the strategic challenge of having to define the role that the former core structures can play within the system of regionally focused sub-organisations in the future.

In 2022, as in previous years, many people around the world were killed as a result of Islamist extremist attacks. Local, regional and globally operating jihadist groups are active in many parts of the world. They are often parties to conflicts in unstable states and civil war regions. Islamist extremist attacks were mostly focused on conflict regions in Africa where state structures are weak, e.g. Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria or Somalia. Most attacks were committed on behalf of al-Qaeda or IS.

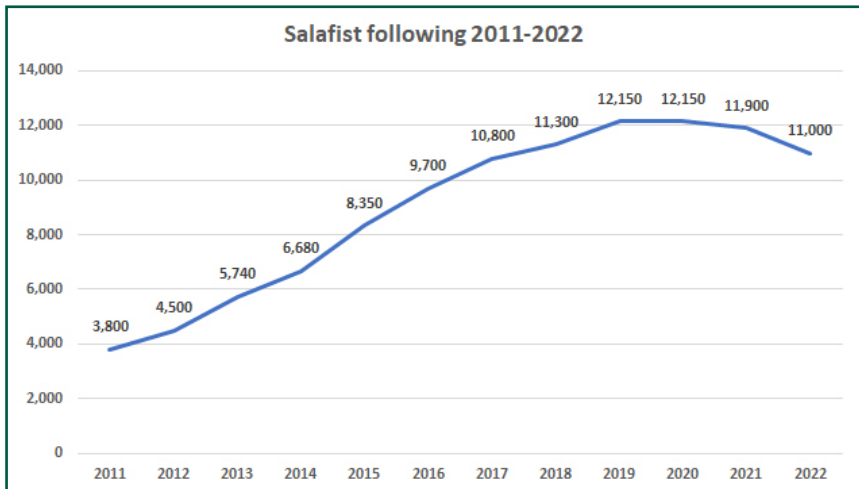
Also in Afghanistan and in neighbouring Pakistan there have been repeated attacks, for most of which the **Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP)** claimed responsibility. In future, ISKP might even perpetrate attacks abroad (including in Western countries) that are planned in or directed from Afghanistan. From ISKP's perspective, this would increase the organisation's standing among its followers while challenging the authority of the Taliban in Afghanistan, putting them under increased international pressure.

Following the end of travel movements by jihadist supporters to Syria and Iraq, **jihadist propaganda** constitutes an essential part of jihadist activities in Germany. Since jihadist content is regularly deleted from the internet and owing to pressure from investigation and prosecution by the law enforcement authorities, this propaganda is not easy to spot as it relies on coded language and subtle hints and is packaged in expressions of a youthful lifestyle. On the whole, jihadists take a much more cautious approach than they did just a few years ago. Explicit violent content has become less visible in their propaganda and is focused on specific messenger services such as Telegram.

In 2022, the number of individuals **with a jihadist motivation attempting to travel** to Syria or Iraq was in the low two-digit range. No successful attempts to travel to Syria or Iraq were recorded. Of the more than 1,150 individuals who have left Germany since 2011 to travel to Syria or Iraq based on Islamist

motivations, approximately 40% have since returned to Germany. There is confirmed intelligence on a high two-digit number of individuals who are currently being held in custody or prison in Syria or Iraq; one third of them are being held in the camps of al-Hawl and Roj, which are located in northern Syria. The situation in these two camps, which are under Kurdish control, is problematic not only from a humanitarian perspective but also in other ways. In these camps where thousands of people have been living, often for years and under precarious conditions, there are still jihadists and especially female jihadists from Germany, many of whom have their children with them. Jihadist structures continue to exist in these camps. This frequently results in intimidation, violence and (re-)radicalisation. The jihadist scene uses these camps for propaganda and mobilisation purposes.

The **Salafist scene** continues to provide the ideological basis for jihadism. With a following of 11,000 people (2021: 11,900), Salafism remains the strongest Islamist extremist movement in Germany.



While the Salafist following remained at a high level with a slight decrease in recent years, 2022 saw the first increase in the scene's publicly visible activities, following a phase of withdrawal. Tried and tested activities such as information

stands in pedestrian zones, lectures and seminars were resumed, following the lifting of COVID-19-related restrictions. On social media, many Salafist figures adapt to the usage behaviour of the younger generation. The content provided is getting shorter, faster and more visual. The character of Salafist statements changes constantly. While clearly extremist content frequently remains unspoken in public at least, the scene seems to be increasingly responsive to emotionally charged social issues that are presented in a way which fits in with their own ideological framework. On social media, this watered-down brand of Salafism is hard to distinguish from other Islamist extremist trends.

Beyond the Salafist scene, particularly the websites of groups such as Realität Islam (Reality Islam), Generation Islam or Muslim Interaktiv (Muslim Interactive), which have ideological ties to Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HuT), feature images and activities that aim to provoke such emotional responses, for example by alleging that the government is stirring anti-Islamic sentiment and by defaming Germany's integration policy as a kind of "assimilation terrorism".

In this grey area of Islamist extremism, figures active on social media cast themselves as members of an oppressed minority by declaring all Muslims to be victims of allegedly systematic discrimination by the state and society. In doing so, they address experiences that many Muslims have in their daily lives, which enables them to make inroads into communities beyond the extremist milieu. They also aim to shift the "limits of what can be said", for example by referring to the "colonial" oppression of the Islamic world in order to justify Islamist extremist activities. At the same time, they re-articulate the Islamist extremist demonisation of the liberal Western democratic societies by inciting hatred against these democracies, their freedoms and everything they stand for.

The issue of **LGBTQ** rights is a typical example of how Islamist extremists use socially relevant topics to engage in debates, also driving home their message to people outside their own clientele. In these grey areas between the Islamist extremist filter bubble and debates which involve society as a whole, the importance of networks and of affiliation with a specific group is overshadowed by content that brings people together, especially on social media.

This goes hand in hand with a trend towards topic-driven presentation of content by major social media platforms. This relatively new format provided by TikTok and other platforms such as Instagram or YouTube enables users to consume thematically similar content independently of their own social networks. The algorithm thus not only facilitates the development of filter bubbles but also the interconnection of different movements through common content. This is another factor which makes the boundaries between different Islamist extremist tendencies more permeable.

Antisemitic ideas are an important common denominator in the ideology of the Islamist extremist spectrum. To most Islamist extremist organisations, the State of Israel is the central enemy. The fight against Israel is the key element both for the Palestinian Hamas and for the Lebanese Hezbollah. Jihadist organisations, too, regard Judaism and Israel as their main enemies. In 2022, IS supporters committed several attacks against Israel. In contrast to the attacks committed in former years, IS used these events to spread propaganda highlighting its own role in the fight for the “liberation” of Jerusalem.

Foreign extremism

The following of foreign extremist organisations totalled 29,750 individuals in 2022 (2021: 28,650), representing an increase of 3.8% compared to the previous year. The most significant organisation in Germany in terms of numbers remains the Kurdistan Workers' Party with 14,500 supporters.

Foreign extremist following in Germany¹		
	2021	2022
Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)	14,500	14,500
Turkish right-wing extremism	11,000	12,100
Turkish left-wing extremism	2,550	2,550
Other	600	600
Total	28,650	29,750

1 Some of the figures are estimated and rounded off.

Crimes with a foreign extremist background increased for the second year in succession. In 2022, there was a particularly sharp rise in the number of offences to 1,974, an increase of 154.4% (2021: 776). Violent crimes almost doubled (226 offences; 2021: 116).

The lion's share of all crimes driving the significant increase was accounted for by the 1,229 offences recorded in Germany in 2022 in the category of politically motivated crime – foreign ideology in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Disregarding this newly relevant reference point for crimes in the area of foreign extremism, total crimes in the other subsets were more or less on the same level as in the previous year. Even discounting this particular impact, there was still an increase – albeit a less significant one – in the number of violent crimes. These developments cannot be explained solely by the crimes in connection with the Russian war of aggression. Rather, they

are more likely to stem from the rise in the number of public events following the pandemic and resulting offences relating to confrontation and assembly.

The political agitation and the level of militancy with regard to foreign extremism largely depend on the political developments and the strategic guidelines of the organisations in their respective home countries. Public events, which play an important role in foreign extremism, visibly increased in number in 2022 following the pandemic-related restrictions in the years before, but numbers have not yet returned to the level before the pandemic. The activities of societies and associations also increased, returning to pre-pandemic levels in some cases.

The groups and individuals being monitored in connection with foreign extremism varied in their response to **Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine**. Within a heterogeneous, pro-Russian community there were contentious discussions, including justification and defence of the narrative promoted by the Russian government. On social media in particular, individuals attracted attention with extremist statements and views directed against the concept of international understanding. In spring 2022 particularly, this scene organised pro-Russian demonstrations and vehicle convoys with participant numbers in the hundreds or low thousands. Over the course of the year, the number of these public gatherings dwindled. There was no evidence of a dominant cross-regional group. In the Kurdish and Turkish extremist organisations the war was only initially an issue. For the most part, pro-Ukrainian sentiments were heard. However, the subject was soon superseded by issues that were more important to the organisations.

Of particular importance for internal security in Germany are the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the Marxist-Leninist Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C) and the Turkish right-wing extremist Ülkücü movement: the PKK because of its violent activities in the Kurdish settlement areas, the left-wing extremist DHKP-C due to its overt commitment to armed struggle in Turkey, and the Ülkücü movement due to its persistent and in some cases

aggressive denial of the principle of equality. Turkish right-wing extremists also demonstrate overt antisemitism.

In Europe, the **Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)** has endeavoured for years to cultivate a largely non-violent image. Nonetheless, public events frequently spark violent confrontations with the police or with nationalists or right-wing extremists of Turkish origin.

In 2022, the PKK managed to attract participants in numbers close to pre-pandemic levels by organising central mass events popular with its supporters. For example, 17,000 people attended a major rally in Frankfurt am Main in March 2022 on the occasion of the Kurdish New Year festival of Newroz. During the reporting period, the PKK also organised numerous demonstrations across Germany, in particular to protest against Turkish military operations in the Kurdish settlement areas.

The pressure of investigation and prosecution by law enforcement agencies on PKK officials in Germany remains high. In 2022, as in previous years, several PKK leaders were arrested for or charged with supporting or belonging to a foreign terrorist organisation.

The PKK raised an estimated amount of between 16 and 17 million euros in Germany alone through its annual fund-raising campaign (“kampanya”) in 2022, more or less equalling the high level of the previous year. The “kampanya”, which is run in an extremely conspiratorial manner, is the main source of income for the PKK in Germany.

In 2022, the **DHKP-C** tried to maintain its usual campaigning activity in Germany. It primarily focused on the issue of prisoner solidarity. However, the involvement of supporters in propaganda activities such as protest gatherings, demonstrations and internal meetings clearly declined.

In May 2022, three high-ranking officials of the DHKP-C including one female functionary were arrested in Germany in connection with three criminal

investigations by the Public Prosecutor General at the Federal Court of Justice, on suspicion of membership of a foreign terrorist organisation. The arrests further weakened the leadership and association structures of the DHKP-C in Germany, which were already suffering from a lack of personnel, and left its supporters deeply unsettled.

One of the DHKP-C's most important propaganda tools is still the "Grup Yorum". The popularity of this music group gives the organisation access to a target group of potential supporters beyond its own followers. Other than smaller-scale appearances at demonstrations, "Grup Yorum" has not been able to organise any larger concerts in Germany since 2020.

Of the approximately 12,100 **Ülkücü** movement supporters living in Germany, around 10,500 are organised into three major umbrella organisations, representing the various manifestations of the **Ülkücü** ideology in different formats. The organisations strive to cultivate a moderate public image and tend to promote their right-wing extremist ideology internally, primarily in their affiliated associations. Consequently, their adherents are also very restrained in their participation in demonstrations and rallies and in displaying **Ülkücü** symbols in public.

Non-organised supporters of the **Ülkücü** movement, however, often openly promote their mainly racist or antisemitic ideology, for instance on social media, but also in public clashes with their political opponents, such as PKK supporters. Clashes on the margins of demonstrations in particular reveal the high potential for violence in the non-organised scene.

Antisemitism plays a relevant role in foreign extremism in Germany, predominantly in Turkish right-wing extremism and among Palestinian extremists, among whom antisemitic agitation mainly occurs against the backdrop of the territorial conflict with Israel. In other foreign extremist structures, however, antisemitism is not a key ideological factor – often simply due to the lack of regional, religious or political overlap. Nonetheless, on occasions Turkish left-wing extremists also express anti-Israel sentiments; these, however, do

not primarily focus on religion and ethnicity but on the territorial conflict with the Palestinians.

In April 2022, Germany was also the scene of pro-Palestinian demonstrations following riots on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and missile attacks on Israel by militant Palestinians. Rallies like this easily attract hundreds or several thousands of participants. Antisemitic declarations and statements directed against the concept of international understanding, as well as violent protests, were witnessed at several events in Berlin.

Intelligence activities, espionage, cyber attacks and other activities carried out on behalf of a foreign power

Espionage activities against Germany by foreign powers are becoming increasingly multi-faceted and sophisticated; they encompass human sources as well as cyber attacks. These activities pose a serious threat to Germany and to German interests. Foreign powers use their intelligence services as well as illegitimate or illegal methods and means to acquire information, exert influence, monitor their critics or pursue other interests.

Germany's role in the EU, NATO and other international organisations makes it a target for a wide range of political espionage. In 2022, the geopolitical and geoeconomic upheaval as a consequence of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine and the political and economic turmoil following the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as China's pursuit of power and influence, increasingly brought the actions of foreign intelligence services to the fore.

Espionage, cyber attacks, disinformation, undue foreign interference, proliferation and state-sponsored terrorism have considerable negative impacts on Germany. In particular, the unlawful activities of foreign intelligence services are detrimental to Germany's national sovereignty. They can weaken our foreign policy negotiating positions and our social cohesion and can disrupt the free democratic process by influencing decision-making and public opinion. When foreign intelligence services in Germany gather information on opposition groups from non-EU countries and infiltrate these groups, this can create a climate of fear and also threaten people's lives and health. Espionage and cyber attacks also inflict considerable damage on companies and on the economy as a whole. Furthermore, attacks on our economic prosperity have a destabilising effect on our democracy and our social cohesion.

The **main actors** in espionage targeted at Germany, cyber attacks directed by intelligence services, proliferation and influence operations are – with differing areas of focus – the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, the

Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Turkey. However, through a “360° approach” as part of Germany’s reconnaissance, counter-intelligence and cyber defence efforts, all illegal activities by intelligence services are dealt with, as espionage by foreign intelligence services in or against Germany cannot be tolerated in any case.

The **Russian war of aggression against Ukraine** which began on 24 February 2022 was the focus of Germany’s counter-intelligence efforts in the reporting year. In times of war, the actions of the Russian intelligence services are particularly significant to the Russian leadership as an integral part of Russia’s state security architecture. Russian intelligence services have a heightened interest in acquiring intelligence in light of the sanctions against Russia and the support of Ukraine by Western countries including Germany. Increasingly clandestine and aggressive espionage operations from Russia and activities in cyber space originating from Russia are expected in future.

The Russian war of aggression against Ukraine also has impacts on the operations and possibilities for action of **Russian intelligence services** in Germany. The Western sanctions – especially the expulsion of more than 400 employees of Russian diplomatic missions primarily from EU countries, including 40 expelled from Germany in April 2022 – have led to efforts by the Russian intelligence services to reorient their intelligence-gathering activities. Russian intelligence services are attempting to bring new employees to the legal residencies in Germany or to resume or continue their earlier activities with their existing staff. In the medium and long term, they are likely to seek other ways to attain intelligence, using methods which are familiar to them from decades of activity.

The targeted espionage activities of the Russian intelligence services are directed at the political, business, research, technology and military spheres, with varying degrees of intensity. They are particularly interested in the (security) policy goals of Germany and its allies concerning the war and their positions on Ukraine and Russia in the context of the war. German and European **energy policy** continues to be another focus of Russian espionage. Energy

supply issues are particularly significant for Russia as an exporter of fossil fuels. Russia has a long history of using its gas supplies to exert political pressure. In 2022, a potential gas shortage and rising inflation were instrumentalised to aggravate public anxieties.

The Russian war of aggression has led to greater public awareness of **hybrid threats**. The repertoire of illegitimate foreign interference includes but is not limited to cyber attacks, sabotage actions and the deliberate generation and spreading of **disinformation**. Foreign states particularly seek to shape public opinion and political discourse in their favour in order to influence political decision-making processes. They also strive to undermine public trust in the stability and ability to act of democratic institutions and mechanisms. To do so, foreign states use not only their intelligence services but also additional state capacities or state-influenced organisations. In this context, the origins, authorship or intentions of such activities are often concealed and reference is made to current political and social events and developments.

State-sponsored and state-aligned actors increasingly use social media channels in particular to spread their own content and narratives to as broad an audience as possible. Along with state-sponsored actors, influencers and activists also play an increased role in amplifying propaganda and disinformation for Russia.

In terms of **cyber activities**, the threat level was already high before the war of aggression and has now escalated further, with those who perpetrate such attacks showing willingness to inflict collateral damage and spillover effects. Russia's geopolitical interests are the driving force in such activities. The attack operations which have been observed are regularly directed at acquiring information, but may also have sabotage or exertion of influence as their goal. Russian actors in the cyber realm also use cyber attacks to spread disinformation and propaganda or to support disinformation campaigns. This is ultimately intended to advance Russian interests and weaken Western support for Ukraine. Russian cyber attacks mainly target government entities, parliaments and political figures, armed forces, media organisations,

supranational organisations, political foundations, international businesses, and scientific and research institutions.

China's intelligence services have wide-ranging powers, which they use largely to maintain the power of the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP). They play a key role in the country and party leaders' pursuit of the "Chinese Dream", the goal of making China a global leader and a global power at least equal to the United States by 2049. They are also involved in transforming their economy into a global leader among industrialised nations and in implementing economic policy master plans to become a market and technological leader in strategic sectors. Chinese intelligence services are also involved in influence operations through which the CCP seeks to advance the interests of the country and party leadership abroad. In its strategic orientation, China acts according to long-term plans and does not think merely in single years or legislative terms. China's offensive cyber strategy is similarly long term, with a focus on furthering the country's industrial and geopolitical goals through extensive knowledge transfer.

In Germany, Chinese intelligence services focus on the fields of politics and administration, the business sector, academic research, the technology sector and the military. They also act against Chinese opposition groups. To achieve its ambitious industrial objectives, China uses industrial and academic espionage, acquires partial or full ownership of German cutting-edge technology firms and engages in targeted recruitment of experts. Chinese intelligence services focus on obtaining information on the structure, armaments and training of the Bundeswehr, and on acquiring modern weapons technology from the German security and defence industries. Worldwide, Chinese authorities also combat the opposition groups which they call the "Five Poisons".

The Chinese legal residencies in Germany mainly gather publicly available information. This includes monitoring the media and other open publications. Employees of the legal residencies also gather information by cultivating seemingly innocuous contacts. Current and former political and business decision-makers are particularly targeted as potential contacts to **obtain relevant**

information. The intelligence services' activities also include monitoring and managing Chinese nationals living in Germany.

China's "**overseas police stations**" also enforce close connections with ethnically Chinese people living in Germany. These police stations are not official diplomatic institutions but rather informal overseas outposts of local Chinese police units from regions of China that typically have a large number of emigrants. These units are led not by Chinese police officers but rather by overseas Chinese people who are loyal to the party line – many of whom hold German citizenship. These are illegitimate parallel structures which China could use to spy on and influence the Chinese diaspora in Germany. Their tasks include providing support with various police and official matters as well as gathering information about members of the diaspora and their opinions and propagating the CCP's ideological principles to the diaspora.

In 2022, too, suspected official or state-sponsored Chinese actors carried out targeted **cyber attacks** on companies, government agencies, private individuals and political institutions. BfV observed ongoing attack campaigns during 2022, especially in Europe – including Germany – but also in other Western countries, which likely originated from Chinese state cyber actors.

Iran's intelligence activities are driven by the (geo-)political situation in the Middle East as well as the demonstration and protest movement within the theocratic nation itself. However, the main focus of Iranian intelligence activities is combating opposition groups and individuals both domestically and abroad. Those in power in Iran believe that these opposition forces threaten the continued existence of the regime. This was particularly evident in the ruling powers' harsh crackdown against demonstrators in Iran in connection with the protests against the government which have been going on since September 2022. The Iranian power apparatus also sharpened its tone towards Germany in 2022 amidst the protests and the international expressions of solidarity with them. For example, the Iranian leadership blamed "the West" for the protests, specifically mentioning Germany.

Iran's declared enemies include not only the United States but also the State of Israel and its representatives and prominent supporters. These may include leading representatives of Jewish diaspora organisations. Iranian espionage therefore continues to include spying on (pro-)Israeli and (pro-)Jewish targets in Germany.

Intelligence services of the Islamic Republic of Iran also use **state-sponsored terrorism** as a means to achieve their goals. For some time, **travellers to Iran** – both Iranian and German citizens – have been increasingly subject to random arrests and in some cases also criminal charges. Furthermore, since 2022 people have been increasingly approached by Iranian intelligence services with the goal of compelling them to cooperate with the intelligence services. This particularly applies to people whom the Iranian authorities believe to have connections with opposition groups or individuals. People with German and Iranian dual citizenship are at particular risk of being targeted.

The **Turkish intelligence services** and security authorities play a key role in the Turkish government apparatus. They help the Turkish government, the president and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) implement government policy, maintain domestic security and, not least, gather information to prepare policy decisions. In Germany, Turkish intelligence services spy on organisations and individuals which oppose or are thought to oppose the Turkish government. Their intelligence-gathering focuses above all, however, on organisations which Turkey classifies as extremist or terrorist.

Countries that seek weapons of mass destruction are dependent on the global market for developing and manufacturing such weapons and the related delivery systems, even if they have made considerable technological progress in some areas. For this reason, they also seek to procure in Germany the needed goods and knowledge as well as other military goods and technology with military applications. However, strict German and European export controls prevent such goods from being purchased on regular markets. Countries pursuing proliferation therefore try to get around these controls. In 2022, the German domestic intelligence services found that the evidence of Iranian attempts

to acquire proliferation-sensitive material for **Iran's** nuclear programme remained at the same high level as in the previous year.

BfV also has indications of **Russian proliferation-related activities** which seek to evade sanctions and disguise the actual end user of materials. In July 2014, the EU imposed on Russia a weapons embargo, trade restrictions and restrictions on financial transactions due to its annexation of Crimea in violation of international law. Since late February 2022, in response to the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, the EU has imposed a series of packages of sanctions against Russia which go considerably further than these previous sanctions. Against this backdrop, in the reporting period BfV was able to verify a growing amount of information indicating attempts to acquire proliferation-sensitive material which involved Russian intelligence services and specific connections to Germany. Increasing concealment of Russian acquisition efforts in order to evade the sanctions was also observed.

China has for years been operating an extensive system of knowledge and technology transfer to advance its civilian and military development. In these efforts it is particularly focused on emerging technologies such as quantum technology, artificial intelligence, hypersonic technology, surveillance technology or biotechnology, which have a growing military significance. In 2022, Germany was once again one of the top targets within the EU of Chinese investment, which is a way for China to legally gain access to technologies, expertise or intellectual property. Direct investment not only enables China to compensate for lack of innovation and achieve a technological edge, but also creates opportunities for political interference, espionage and sabotage. Direct investment, particularly in areas such as sensitive technologies and critical infrastructure, can also present risks to public security in Germany.

In terms of **prevention**, BfV helps to ensure that private industry, the research community, policy makers, political organisations and government administration can protect themselves against information-gathering, illegal and illegitimate transfer of knowledge and technology, sabotage and extremist and terrorist threats. In the 2022 reporting year, prevention work was shaped

primarily by the Russian war of aggression and the risks arising from it. This work focused mainly on protecting companies and research institutions from espionage and sabotage activities as well as from collateral damage from attacks on other targets. The Russian war of aggression and its consequences for the economy and the research community have also been the focus of events and targeted ad hoc campaigns to raise awareness among particularly vulnerable companies, research institutions and public agencies.

Security of classified information and counter-sabotage

Security of classified material serves to protect information which is defined by a state authority as classified material¹⁰. Protection against sabotage is intended to keep vital and defence-essential facilities safe against sabotage.

Security clearance checks in accordance with the Act on Prerequisites and Procedures for Security Clearance Checks Undertaken by the Federal Government (Security Clearance Check Act (Sicherheitsüberprüfungsgesetz, SÜG)) are a crucial element of personnel security and counter-sabotage. Such checks determine whether an individual is sufficiently reliable to work in a security-sensitive position.

The SÜG defines the cases in which a security clearance check is necessary. In the context of personnel security, checks must be conducted if an individual has actual or potential access to material classified VS-VERTRAULICH (confidential) or above. In order to prevent sabotage, checks are necessary if the individual works in a security-sensitive area of a vital or defence-essential facility.

Whether a security clearance check on an individual is necessary and whether the person represents a security risk is determined by the public authority employer or, if the person in question is employed by a private enterprise, by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK). BfV carries out the measures required for the respective security clearance check under section 12 of the SÜG, and in doing so provides an important service to the stakeholders referred to above.

Last year, BfV contributed to more than 77,000 security clearance checks related to the security of classified information and protection against sabotage. Its workload in this area has been growing steadily. BfV has responded to this situation by designing, testing and introducing largely digital working processes.

¹⁰ Classified material is defined as sensitive facts, objects or intelligence, regardless of the forms these take, which must be kept secret in the public interest, in particular to protect the welfare of the country as a whole or of one of the federal states.

A similar number of security clearance checks is conducted for employees of public authorities and private enterprises.

In 2022, 12,784 simple security checks, 39,012 extended security checks and 2,697 extended security checks including security investigations were carried out in connection with the security of classified information. Another 6,089 checks were completed in connection with counter-sabotage, along with 16,641 updates of security checks.

The Scientology organisation (SO)

The Scientology organisation (SO) seeks to establish a global society based on Scientology. As in the previous year, the organisation counts about 3,600 members in Germany.

The organisation's ideology is strictly based on the writings of its founder and long-time leader Lafayette Ron Hubbard (1911–1986), who invented a method he called “technology”, “dianetics” and “Scientology”. This method is intended to create the perfect human, called “clear” or “non-aberrated”. In Hubbard's teachings, people who are not “clear” are to be denied fundamental rights and human dignity. The SO sees itself as a ruling elite that should reign over the rest of humanity. This world view is incompatible with the principle of democracy enshrined in Germany's constitution, the Basic Law.

Scientology seeks to attain its envisaged social order via a long-term strategy of expansion, by increasing the organisation's revenues and by fighting its critics. The SO presents itself to the outside world as an apolitical religious community.

As the restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic were progressively lifted in 2022, the SO increasingly resumed its demonstrations, information stands and distribution of its promotional materials (e.g. through the SO cover organisation The Way to Happiness). The online course and seminar offerings established during the pandemic remained available. The SO uses these offerings strategically in order to bring easily accessible Scientology content to a broader audience, recruit new members, generate funds and further the expansion of the SO. Scientology is pursuing these goals as part of its “Golden Age of Admin” initiative, which U.S. Scientology leader David Miscavige announced to the organisation's members in 2022.

As in previous years, the SO continued to distribute materials specifically designed for children, with the intention of influencing the public's perceptions of the SO from an early age.

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