Countering right-wing extremism at Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus-Senftenberg

Proactive. Partisan. Participatory.

Prof. Dr. phil. Heike Radvan
Susanne Dyhr (MA)

BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg
Faculty 4 - Social Work, Health Care and Music
Institute of Social Work
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1. Introduction

At the Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus - Senftenberg (the BTU), many dedicated people are working at various levels to promote diversity and equal participation. The university has set itself the task of helping to ensure equal opportunities in education, work, research and development. All BTU community members should be free to develop individually, irrespective of their origin, gender, religion, ideology, age, physical/mental health, same-sex or transgender lifestyle. Misanthropic, antidemocratic, racist and discriminatory attitudes are not tolerated at the BTU. In recent years, various measures have been taken to counteract discrimination and unequal opportunities among students and employees. The antidemocratic and right-wing extremist\(^1\) mobilisation and influence growing in German society as a whole, as well as in the urban communities on the three BTU campuses, must be countered by the university. In this document we evaluate our resources, formulate the need to act and how we can intervene against right-wing extremism on our campuses. This short presentation is drawn from a more elaborate paper that analyses specific cases.

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\(^1\) The term ‘right-wing extremism’ presents an alternative to the topological concepts of the ‘horseshoe theory’ and the theory of extremism, which focus on the sinister political ‘fringes’ and the ‘good centre’ of society. Right-wing extremism is defined as the \textit{totality} of undemocratic, anti-pluralistic, historical revisionist and authoritarian attitudes, behaviours, political activities and actions of organised and non-organised individuals and groups that proclaim that people are unequal and seek to establish or reinforce relations of power and domination (Jaschke 2001, 30; Virchow 2016, 13–17). Far-right ideology legitimises the violence implied by the notion that human beings are not equal. Central components of modern right-wing extremist ideology are anti-Semitism, racism, \textit{gadje} racism (directed against Sinti, Roma and the Yenish), heterosexism and anti-feminism, ableism, nationalism, ethnocentrism, Social Darwinism, heteronormativity and hostility towards transgender people. These attitudes and the discrimination associated with them permeate society: They are not limited to a ‘right-wing fringe’.
2. Objective

This action plan responds to this menace by seeking to make the BTU a safe place to study and work for all students, employees and visitors. This includes maintaining and advancing the university as a place for critical debate and emancipation as well as equal rights and participation. It aims to protect the BTU from the potential or critical influence of antidemocratic and far-right forces. The plan includes raising awareness of the various forms of institutional discrimination (at the administrative, teaching and academic levels) – as well as how right-wing extremist discourses and activities affect everyday life at BTU.

3. Point of departure

3.1 Societal changes

Right-wing extremist attitudes are not just a phenomenon of the ‘social fringe’ but rather permeate all social groups and get high approval ratings (most recently Decker et al. 2022). For about a decade, social discourse has been observed shifting towards the right throughout German society. Authoritarian-nationalist positions, which assume that people are not equal, are more frequently expressed in public, with far-right actors popularising their ideologies through the clever use of media and provocative actions. The space of what can be said in public has expanded. Right-wing extremist mobilisation has become noticeable in much of society (cf. e.g., Quent 2019; Fuchs/Middelhoff 2019). This was particularly noticeable in right-wing terrorist attacks, both internationally and in Germany – Halle (2019), Hanau (2020) and the assassination of the Kassel district president Walter Lübcke (CDU) (2019) [translator’s note: a shooting at a synagogue, the mass shooting of people with ‘migrant backgrounds’ in a shisha bar and kiosk, and a member of the liberal conservative Christian Democratic Union known for his pro-migrant views]. Such incidents most affect those portrayed as the ‘enemy’ in right-wing extremist ideologies: People of Colour, Black Germans, democracy activists, Jewish, Muslim, queer, homeless people and people with disabilities. Their tribulations existed before the rise in right-wing extremism, however. Those targeted experience discrimination – particularly the racism that permeates ordinary activities – every day.
3.2. Developments in the Cottbus and Senftenberg urban communities

Both university locations feature high living standards and many possibilities. Good infrastructure connects the campuses to Berlin, Dresden and Leipzig, making the BTU an interesting place to study, work and live. At the same time, both Cottbus and Senftenberg – like the entire region of Lausitz – are considered ‘structurally weak’. Yet the two cities are differently challenged by right-wing extremism and efforts to develop a democratic civil society. We begin by referring to the situation in Cottbus and suggesting preventive measures.

In addition to the outflow of young, well-educated people, the open atmosphere of Cottbus has been challenged and attacked by nativist-authoritarian and far-right actors since the early 1990s (cf. Wagner 2014: 309–326). An active right-wing extremist scene is present in various milieus, including the martial arts and hooligans (cf. Claus 2021), security and rocker, as well as organised crime (cf. Müller/Zimmermann 2020; Fröhlich 2019; Garzke 2019). In the Lausitz region, right-wing extremists own real estate, business premises and companies – including food supplements, sports and fashion – and also provide outdoor activities (cf. Claus 2021; Müller/Zimmermann 2020). For several years, far-right groups in Cottbus have demonstrated their capacity to mobilise, with as many as 4,000 people supporting street protests organised by the ‘Zukunft Heimat’ (Homeland Future) association against Germany’s migration policy and democratic constitution in 2017/2018, as well as those by ‘Bürger für Bürgerrechte’ (Citizens for Civil Rights), founded in 2020 to rail against the government’s coronavirus containment measures (cf. Botsch/Schulze 2018; Fröschner/ Warnecke 2019; Minkenberg/ Sündermann 2021; Krüger n.d.; Schulze 2022: 3). Far-right actors in Lausitz and Cottbus itself have good connections to officials of the ‘Alternative

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2 To analyse the situation in Senftenberg, we recommend establishing a monitoring centre.
for Germany' party (AfD) (cf. Minkenberg/Sündermann 2021), which Brandenburg’s State Agency for Constitutional Protection considers ‘right-wing extremist’ and is monitoring. There are more AfD supporters in Cottbus than in other cities: in the 2022 mayoral election, the AfD candidate got 31.4 percent of the vote.³

The region and specifically Cottbus, have a climate of immanent and explicit violence, hostility towards democracy and misanthropy (cf. Botsch/Schulze 2018; Fröschner/Warnecke 2019) that impacts local politics (Raab/Radvan 2020). The counselling centre ‘Opferperspektive Brandenburg – Beratungstelle für Betroffene rechter Gewalt’ (Brandenburg Victims’ Point of View – Counselling Centre for Victims of Right-Wing Violence) records a higher number of far-right assaults in Cottbus and its surroundings than in other German states (cf. Opferperspektive 2022). In addition, the Cottbus judicial district only slightly prosecutes far-right violence – or not at all, causing additional hardship for victims (cf. Opferperspektive 2021).

Although rarely mentioned, for many years Cottbus has also had an active democratic civil society that counters everyday racist and far-right attempts to dominate (cf. e.g., Sander 2021, Lippelt/Schäfer 2019). With respect to democratic resistance, our university – like the Carl Thiem Clinic [translator’s note: a 1200-bed teaching hospital and the largest employer in Cottbus] and the city government – has special standing, which requires us to behave responsibly. In 2022, the Cottbus administration launched an ‘action plan to fight right-wing extremism’. Not only is right-wing extremism likely to push more people to leave the city and the region, leading to their disintegration, but it also reduces the BTU’s attractiveness as a cosmopolitan place to study and work. Large groups of students and staff are affected by far-right mobilisation, everyday discrimination and urban violence in Cottbus. That also influences the campus atmosphere.

³ https://www.cottbus.de/opt/wahl/ob22sw/#w_86092
3.3. Academic developments

3.3.1 Attacks on academic freedom

There are also increasing numbers of right-wing attempts to influence – along with outright attacks on – science (cf. Einwächter 2022), as shown by the numerous requests for information on gender and gender research made by both state and federal AfD parliamentary groups⁴ (cf.: Bereswill/Ehlert, 2022; afd 2021) and AfD members positioning themselves against scientific proposals to contain the pandemic⁵ (cf. dpa 2021, Pösl 2022; Amlinger/Nachtwey 2022: 247–298) and climate change (cf. Reusswig et al. 2021; Schumatsky 2018, Schmidt-Mattern 2019). Besides public defamation and attacks, however, there is also a shift in discourse regarding ‘academic freedom’, ‘ideology’ and ‘cancel culture’. Defending individual freedom rights (‘no bans on speech or thought’) is pitted against promoting participation in knowledge production by previously marginalised perspectives.

Attacks on science and academic freedom aim to delegitimise research fields, research results and positions that confront anti-pluralist and antidemocratic attitudes and to cast doubt on their funding as well. Migration and climate research, epidemiology and gender studies, along with the social sciences and humanities, are particularly affected. Researchers suffer personal attacks, and even death threats⁶ (Schmidt-Mattern 2019). Usually such attacks are strategically organised, often ‘downright choreographed’ (bukof 2021). This causes those targeted to limit themselves and their engagement (cf. dpa 2021): minority positions remain unheard. Right-wing positions and attacks undermine the scholarly quest for knowledge. In this regard,

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⁶ See the statement by the Centre for Transdisciplinary Gender Studies (ZIG) at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in support of Prof. Maisha Maureen Auma, who criticised the lack of diversity and underrepresentation of People of Colour at German universities. https://www.gender.hu-berlin.de/en/diverses-en/2021_en/statement_auma_en
a change in campus climate goes hand in hand with limiting the foundations of democratic coexistence, scientific critical-dialogical exchange and free thought.7 Denying such developments – along with discrimination, skewed power relations and global inequality – reinforces these phenomena (Radvan/Schäuble 2019). As sites for learning, reflection and critique, analysis and research, universities have an important social function (SV/HNS 2020). They equip people to articulate and reflect on their own realities (Gutiérrez et al. 2016: 164). In line with offering equal opportunities (Article 3 of Germany’s Basic Law) and upholding academic freedom (Article 5, Paragraph 3 of the Basic Law)8,9 a university must unequivocally condemn racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, rejectionism and other forms of discrimination so that the maximum number of people can participate in university life and knowledge production.

3.3.1 On-campus attempts at normalisation and supra-regional mobilisation

For several years, right-wing extremist attempts to mobilise and seize space by using stickers, flyers, posters, conducting high-profile actions with banners and sporting far-right symbolism on clothing have been observed at German universities (cf. Leidinger/Radvan 2019).10 These tactics aim to normalise right-wing extremist symbolism and ideology on campus, causing some students, staff and guests to feel threatened and experience the university as an insecure place.11 Reports from other universities show that right-wing functionaries12 (so-called cadres) try to exploit public events to promote their ideology and goals (cf. Leidinger/Radvan 2019).

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7 Personal attacks on climate researchers influence the public presentation of their results (Schumatzky 2018).
8 Academic freedom protects research and teaching.
9 Teaching cannot be carried out in isolation from the principles of the constitution (Article 5 Paragraph 3 Sentence 2).
10 As far as we know, no monitoring or studies have been conducted on these actions. But there has been ‘rough research’ (Sabine Andresen 2018: 768), information from colleagues and an exploratory study on a far-right women’s group (Leidinger 2019: 49f.).
11 For example, democratically oriented and engaged students in Faculty 4 report that they often only participate to a limited extent in small group work in seminars. They partly justify this by saying that they do not always experience the university as a safe space. They restrict their reflections to biographical experiences, personal attitudes and professional/ethical motives due to concerns about their personal protection (note from a conversation at the Social Work Student Council event at the BTU Cottbus - Senftenberg ‘Störungen haben Vorrang [Disorders have priority] Social Work Plenary on the Situation in Cottbus’, 31 Jan. 2018).
12 In German, we generally use the asterisk in the middle of a word to make gender self-identifications and bodies visible and to emphasise that the prevailing gender binary is constructed. For right-wing extremists, we use ‘I’ to emphasise their naked structural and personal violence, especially with regard to heteronormativity, heterosexism and hostility towards transgender people – for example, among the ‘Identitarians’.
4. Challenges for the BTU

The university is affected by developments in the region, especially in the urban community of Cottbus. It can be assumed that the normalisation of authoritarian and far-right statements in public discourse will be reproduced at the university – for example, in seminars.

This action plan is based on detailed analysis of incidents at the BTU in recent years that are viewed as falling between ‘right-wing extremist’ and ‘anti-discriminatory’. We use this analysis to formulate precise proposals for intervention. Challenges exist in the following areas:

4.1 Discrimination and violence related to right-wing extremism

4.1.1 In Cottbus

With 35 per cent, the BTU has a share of international students much higher than the rest of Brandenburg (cf. Destatis 2021) – which the university successfully promotes, not least through its ‘internationalisation strategy’.\(^{13}\) Cottbus is known internationally as an innovative place to study and for supporting its students. Yet Students of Colour and Black Students also experience frequent far-right provocations in everyday life that in many cases go unchallenged.\(^{14}\) In recent years, several Students of Colour have suffered racist and far-right violence in Cottbus and on campus (cf. Bahout 2021: 23; cf. Nauschütz 2019; Schulze 2018; cf. Raab/Radvan 2023). People viewed as politically ‘left-wing’ have also been attacked (cf. Opferperspektive 2018).

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\(^{14}\) Chadi Bahout (2021) terms these ‘recurrent’. BTU students report everyday racism: while being treated in hospital or shopping, by security staff during entry checks at (university) parties and riding public transport (by drivers and other passengers). They also report being physical attacked in public.
4.1.2 Contact with authorities

Discrimination also occurs in public agencies and offices (for the nationwide situation, see Beigang et al. 2017). Testimony exists about discriminatory experiences in Cottbus – and not only from students (cf. Bahout 2021, Schulze 2018, Raab/Radvan 2023). Police controls at the main train station are named as a specific problem that could be called ‘racial profiling’ and may cause those stopped to miss important appointments at the university or other events.

4.1.3 The risk of violence within the institution

It is often assumed that students who join right-wing extremist groups and parties and publicly present their ideology do not bring their political commitment and associated attitudes and actions into the university. But even if the group of organised far-right students referred to here seems to be very small (Leidinger/Radvan 2021), the situations that result present universities with big challenges; the BTU has had individual cases (cf. e.g., BTU position papers 2020 and 2021). Professional ethics becomes an issue in state-mandated disciplines that involve working with people, such as law, policing, social work, teaching, nursing and medicine. Whether the presence of students organised on the far right poses dangers to other students and university members is rarely discussed; there has been no expert debate on this (cf. Leidinger/Radvan 2021). But when student violence endangers the institution, taking legal measures is recommended (Borstel/Luzar 2014).

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15 Racial profiling refers to checking persons based on their physical appearance or ethnic characteristics, usually while they are engaged in everyday activities and not performing any actions that might legitimise suspicion. The control is accompanied by questioning, searching and sometimes temporary detention in the police station. Vanessa Thompson (2020) points out the stressful effect on those stopped, not least because they are accompanied by public exposure and concrete consequences, such as missing an exam or an important meeting.

16 Statement made in conversation with counsellors of the victims’ perspective association.

17 We make a well-founded distinction between right-wing extremist organised and right-wing extremist oriented (Radvan/Schäuble 2019). This is based on experience with young people organised on the far right in the ‘accepting youth work’ programmes of the 1990s [translator’s note: in which young right-wing extremists made use of state and community resources to strengthen their networks] (cf. e.g., Radvan 2023).
4.2 Right-wing extremist mobilisation attempts at the BTU

4.2.1 Using clothing and symbols

Nativist authoritarian – right-wing extremist – groups view the BTU as having mobilisation potential. Attempts to mobilise have been observed in the form of stickers, flyers and far-right fashion. One right-wing extremist label illegally depicted a BTU campus in its advertising.

4.2.2 At public events

Nativist authoritarian and right-wing extremist cadres try to normalise their ideology in public lectures and discussion with ‘word-grabbing’, described as a far-right tactic of making targeted verbal attacks on democratic civil society.¹⁸ Neo-Nazi cadres also try to assert their leadership by appearing at public events at the BTU.

4.2.3 Renting space at the BTU

Attempts by external actors from far-right organisations to rent BTU premises must be blocked.

4.2.4 Digital mobilisation

Regional far-right actors have made isolated attempts to spread their ideology by contacting members of the BTU community online.

¹⁸ When cadres of the far right intervene, moderators and those in charge have a hard time ensuring that discussion events at the university remain dialogues – on the subject planned.
4.3 Classroom challenges

Usually, the social sciences and humanities critically examine and discuss forms of discrimination and right-wing extremism in lectures and seminars (cf. Leidinger/Radvan 2021). But manifestations of this ideology that ‘appear’ in courses challenge not just teachers and students across disciplines, but also the administration and the institution. At this juncture, a concept is needed for teaching – one that deals with 1) unintended, everyday discriminatory statements, 2) students’ right-wing political statements and 3) organised far-right students (cadres). The document ‘Extrem rechte Interventionen – Herausforderungen und Handlungsoptionen in Lehrveranstaltungen (Far right-wing interventions – challenges and options for action in seminars)’ is part of our action plan.\(^{19}\)

5. The BTU’s legal obligation to provide duty of care

The protection and duty of care towards all university members is regulated by the principle of equal treatment in Article 3 of Germany’s Basic Law\(^{20}\) and Germany has ratified additional international and European legal provisions. In 2022, the BTU adopted an anti-discrimination statute and implemented relevant measures. This action plan presents recommendations for countering far-right influence at the university.

6. Recommended measures

6.1 BTU principles

There are three guiding principles for developing safeguards against the success of far-right mobilisation and normalisation efforts at institutions like BTU: proactively thematizing the problem and taking sides with those affected by right-wing extremist violence through the participatory implementation of jointly developed preventive measures.

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\(^{19}\) The action plan is found at the Centre for Further Academic Education: https://www.b-tu.de/weiterbildung/

\(^{20}\) The German states of Hamburg, Baden-Wuerttemberg and Schleswig-Holstein already protect students against discrimination for students in their laws on higher education; universities are free to draft their own guidelines (cf. ADS 2020: 8).
measures. Below are primary and secondary preventive measures for responding to right-wing extremist mobilisation and normalisation attempts and potential violence at the university.

6.1.1 Proactive

The danger posed by right-wing extremism is often taboo within institutions and urban communities (cf. Aikins et al. 2015; for Cottbus cf. Raab/Radvan 2023). However, research on the effectiveness of municipal counterstrategies (cf. Möller 2005, among others) impressively demonstrates that proactive thematization helps protect democratic culture. This is also to be expected in the field of higher education. To our knowledge, no other university has developed a comparable concept. The incidents we analysed at the BTU – and others throughout Germany (Lehnert/Radvan 2016: 109-120) – show that counterstrategies are urgently needed. Surveys and requests for advice from the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency reveal ‘virulent’ discrimination at universities (AdB 2020: 11). A proactive stance requires proper analysis of the problem and clear identification of the conflict, as well as developing and implementing primary and secondary preventive measures.

6.1.2 Partisan

People vulnerable to violent right-wing extremism must be protected. Apprehension and experiences of discrimination cause stress and negatively affect one’s physical and mental health (cf. Schmitt/Branscombe et al. 2014; Carter/Forsyth 2010; Ziegler/Beelmann 2009; Rausch et al. 2021: 39) found that a lack of protection at institutions causes victims to lose trust in counselling and complaint centres. Particularly in smaller towns and rural regions, vulnerable individuals are assumed to be at greater risk because it is easier to trace their residential addresses and daily trajectories.
This applies to Cottbus (cf. Raab/Radvan 2023), where there are fewer opportunities in leisure time to avoid potential dangers and violent individuals. This negatively affects the BTU climate, especially learning and working there: concentrating is harder and so is trusting others…. Vulnerable students and researchers have a hard time ‘surviving’ the institution. Taking sides with those affected by violent right-wing extremism implies material and non-material support from the BTU.

6.1.3 Participatory

Creating a BTU with less discrimination and more equal opportunities and active awareness of far-right mobilisation and normalisation attempts within the institution can only be effective by involving a maximum of university members. Key to success is democratic participation by all status groups, which should be funded. It requires training, transparency, spaces for honest and sincere discussion and networking.

6.2. Primary preventive measures

Primary preventive measures include establishing a process to make the university a place that rejects discrimination and specific steps to block the influence of right-wing extremist groups and individuals.

6.2.1 Monitoring and documentation

Our analysis of victim cases and feedback suggest that BTU needs a monitoring and documentation office to collect information and respond to incidents at all three campuses. The system for reporting should be low-threshold, online or face-to-face, and include referrals to counselling centres. The office should document annual incidents and analyse the way they were handled. Internal monitoring should serve to heighten awareness of the problem within the institution and help develop effective
intervention strategies. This activity is aided and accompanied by FUR (Forschungs- und Transferstelle sozialpädagogische und zivilgesellschaftliche Gegenstrategien im Umgang mit der extremen Rechten [Research and Transfer Centre for Social Pedagogy and Civil Society Counterstrategies in Dealing with the Far Right]) in the Department of Social Work (under Prof. Radvan) and a working group of full-time BTU staff who provide specialised support. The Gewaltopferberatung [Victim of Violence Counselling] (BURG) project of the Opferperspektive Brandenburg is willing to be a project partner and provide technical advice; staff working on anti-discrimination and equality are closely cooperating. With support from the BTU executive committee, a monitoring office will be opened during the 2023 summer semester.

6.2.2 Public relations

The growing menace of right-wing extremism – not just to Cottbus, but to all of German society – compels the BTU to exploit its symbolism and standing to publicly defend academic freedom and reject right-wing extremist normalisation efforts on campus – on the university website, at events, in the press, and elsewhere. It must clearly name the problems and explain the various preventive measures developed in response. Our plea for a proactive stance is linked to the aim of cooperatively strengthening democratic standards and guaranteeing protection and solidarity for persons subject to discrimination and right-wing extremist threats. This should be included in the BTU’s democratic mission statement and other position statements. FUR and the BTU Senate’s commission on ‘University Culture and University Community’ can offer public relations tips.

6.2.3 Organisational culture

The BTU can use its organisational structure to raise awareness of the issue in all degree programmes and begin to make the university a place that rejects discrimination. The university mission statement – to be developed with maximum participation – should clearly reject all far-right mobilisation and normalisation attempts within its sphere of influence and enthusiastically endorse a democratic university culture and academic freedom. A mission statement on a democratic, anti-discriminatory and cosmopolitan organisational culture can also be effective in labour issues.
Clearly defined guidelines for dealing with right-wing extremism prepare everyone for such situations. We recommend developing targeted guidelines for:

1. Responding to right-wing extremist statements in the classroom

(See the detailed version of the action plan that serves as the basis for creating relevant offers for BTU’s further education department under the direction of Heike Bartholomäus.)

2. Dealing with right-wing extremist attacks on science and research

The Bundeskonferenz der Frauen- und Gleichstellungsbeauftragten an Hochschulen [Federal Conference of Women's and Equal Opportunities Officers at Universities] has drawn up relevant guidelines (bukof 2021), which can be adapted to BTU’s specific challenges.

3. Dealing with off-campus security services

This policy is to be developed in close consultation with the municipality, which has its own method for dealing with private security companies in city facilities.

6.2.4 Further education

- Substantive awareness of the topic

An important part of primary prevention is raising awareness of the current forms, ideological content and mechanisms of right-wing extremism, along with the consequences for those affected and counterstrategies. The BTU further education department has developed tips for teachers – and for departmental lecture series, Open BTU, the BTU Senior Citizens’ Academy, specialist days, theme weeks on right-wing extremism, the decolonisation of teaching and anti-discrimination. By opening events to other interested parties, the BTU can use its competencies and knowledge to impact the Cottbus community. It is already cooperating with the city administration.

- Recognising right-wing extremist symbols and content – and how to counter them

Relevant training can be organised in cooperation with ‘demos’, the mobile advisory team of the Brandenburg community counselling institute, focusing on the BTU facility management. Workers tasked with implementing house rules should identify, interpret and remove far-right propaganda (in the form of posters, stickers, flyers, spraying, etc.)
6.3 Secondary preventive measures

Secondary preventive measures respond to the real efforts by right-wing extremists to mobilise and normalise their ideology or to incidents of exclusion or threats made by apparent right-wing extremists.

6.3.1 Drawing up an emergency plan

An emergency plan for offering uncomplicated assistance to vulnerable persons should include an emergency number established in cooperation with the Cottbus police. The number should be distributed to all those at risk of racist and far-right violence. Regular contact with the police officers in charge is advised. There is a bilingual (German/English) brochure outlining whom to call. Its addresses and telephone numbers must be updated regularly.

We also recommend establishing a victim assistance fund – in line with the positive action outlined in Section 5 of the General Act on Equal Treatment (AGG). This should be institutionalised by setting up a fund for legal assistance and to compensate for material damage caused by the attack. That would ensure accessible legal support and the implementation of individual rights (Rausch et al. 2021: 37) and provide compensation for other damage. The fund should also be made accessible to researchers exposed to personal attacks (cf. Chapter 2.3.1).

6.3.2 Enforcing house rules

Adjustments will be made to provide a clear basis for implementing the BTU house rules to block attempts at far-right mobilisation and normalisation on campus. This addresses the challenges described in 4.2.2 and 4.2.3. To ensure appropriate and effective application, facility managers must receive further training, which should also be provided for the lecturers and administrative staff involved in organising and moderating public events at the BTU.

6.3.3 Institutional response

Inasmuch as members of the BTU community are involved in incidents of violent right-wing extremism, the university must condemn right-wing extremism in the spirit of our ‘defensible democracy’. In doing so, the BTU will join the ranks of other universities that take a critical stance and reject distorted interpretations of ‘neutrality’ when studying the history of National Socialism. Over the past few semesters, various German universities have adopted such statements – in some cases, motivated by actual events. We conclude by mentioning the banner hanging from the Faculty 4 building that describes our professional ethics: ‘Social work stands for democracy and human rights, and condemns right-wing extremism and racism.’
References


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