Package of measures to combat right-wing extremism and hate on the Internet

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On 30 October 2019, the German Bundesregierung (Federal Government) adopted a package of measures to combat right-wing extremism and hate crime, designed in part to extend law enforcement authorities' powers to deal with online platforms. This follows an attack in Halle in early October, when a heavily armed right-wing extremist, who had been radicalised on the Internet, tried to enter a synagogue and shot two people dead. The attack was one of several recent acts of violence and threats targeting politicians and journalists in particular.

The new measures are designed to make it easier to identify hate crime on the Internet. In future, platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube will not only be able to delete posts that incite hatred or contain death threats, but also report them to the authorities, along with the user's IP address. A new central contact point will be created at the Bundeskriminalamt (Federal Criminal Police Office) for this specific purpose.

The possibility of extending the scope of the Netzwerkdurchsetzungsgesetz (Network Enforcement Act), which entered into force in 2017, will also be examined. This law obliges social network providers with 2 million or more users to block illegal content within 24 hours and to publish regular reports on such content. Law enforcement authorities will also be given greater powers to obtain information from online platform operators.

In another measure, new rules on hate crime will be added to the German Strafgesetzbuch (Criminal Code), while the definition of existing offences will be amended to take into account the specific characteristics of the Internet.

However, the new measures also include changes to provisions on the fight against right-wing violence away from the Internet. For example, local politicians will be better protected against defamation and the law on arms and explosives will be strengthened. The civil register will also be adapted through legislative amendments in order to guarantee the protection of people threatened with violence.

The Federal Government is also planning to step up its efforts to prevent right-wing extremism, anti-Semitism and racism, as well as improve advice services

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and information for victims of hate crime.

The German Bundestag (parliament) is yet to approve the package of measures.

Pressemitteilung des Bundesministeriums der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz vom 30. Oktober 2019

https://www.bmjv.de/SharedDocs/Artikel/DE/2019/103019_Ma%C3%9Fnahmenpaket_Kabinett.html

Press release of the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection, 30 October 2019

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