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CHEMNITZ 2025 – THE FAR RIGHT IN THE SHADOW OF THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE

ABSTRACT

In 2025, Chemnitz aims to showcase itself in the best possible light as European Capital of Culture. Standing in stark contrast to this aspiration is the still highly networked and active far-right scene in the city, which seeks to use the public attention generated by the European Capital of Culture year as a platform. This poses a threat not least to guests and marginalised groups. This policy paper explores historical roots as well as organisational structures and strategies of far-right actors in Chemnitz. It analyses the dynamics of their presence in the public sphere and highlights the associated risks. The aim is to raise awareness of the issue and to provide information for guests and residents who wish, or are compelled, to engage with the far right in Chemnitz. The basis for this analysis was already

published in 2021 under the title “EFBI Policy Paper 2021-2: Situationsanalyse extrem rechter Strukturen und Dynamiken in Chemnitz” and in a revised version as a chapter in an academic publication. For this edition marking the European Capital of Culture year, one of the authors has updated and abridged the original research. Following the analysis, an overview introduces a selection of local initiatives and associations that exemplify the active civil society on the ground. Their work countering far-right mobilisation and attacks can serve as a point of support. Democratic engagement can only succeed where democracy is practised at the local level and a broad alliance of actors jointly resists the appropriation of space by the far right.

INTRODUCTION

The city of Chemnitz is still one of the key organisational hubs of the far right in Germany today. It was here that the neo-Nazi terrorist group National Socialist Underground (NSU) went into hiding – before going on to murder nine migrants and one police officer after their time in Chemnitz. A wide range of far-right groups and parties have long been active in the city, and together they control four properties of their own. In no other German city of comparable size do far-right parties hold as many seats on the city council as they do in Chemnitz. Several factors help to explain this. Even in the GDR, far-right structures existed, but they were systematically downplayed and denied. There was little public reckoning with them at the time. This lack of engagement continued, at least in part, in Saxony after reunification in 1990. At the same time, Chemnitz – a major industrial centre – was hit particularly hard by deindustrialisation after 1990, leading to rising unemployment, dissatisfaction and a pervasive fear of decline.

As Jenni Brichzin, Henning Laux and Ulf Bohmann describe in their case study “Risikodemokratie”, public life in Chemnitz is shaped less by widespread political mobilisation than one might expect. Instead, they write, a “remarkably apolitical attitude has taken hold” (author’s translation). They write that there is “no awareness [...] of the fine line between democratic and undemocratic forms of politicisation”. This, they argue, is precisely what has allowed far-right structures to take root so successfully (Brichzin et al., 2022).

As Chemnitz presents itself to a global audience in its role as European Capital of Culture, the far right is poised to seize the opportunity to broadcast its propaganda to a wider public. Back in 2021, Robert Andres – then a city councillor for the far-right *PRO CHEMNITZ* movement – alluded to the 2018 rallies and predicted that Chemnitz would once again make headlines across Europe in 2025 (Stadt Chemnitz, 2021). The far right continues to benefit from Chemnitz’s reputation as a “right-wing city” and from the images that made headlines around the world in 2018 after mass mobilisations in the wake of the death of a young Chemnitz resident, Daniel H. Within a single day, neo-Nazis managed to mobilise thousands of supporters. From within these rallies, people perceived to be refugees, as well as counter-demonstrators and journalists, were

attacked. Chemnitz suddenly appeared on the front page of the *New York Times* as a city with violent far-right mass protests. The events of 2018 showed just how capable the far right in Chemnitz is of mobilisation and interregional networking (Grunert/Kiess, 2023).

What stood out at the time was the fact that two competing parties – *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) and *Pro Chemnitz* (today represented on the Chemnitz city council as the *PRO CHEMNITZ/Freie Sachsen* group) – appeared united on the streets. They stood side by side with numerous leaders of the neo-Nazi scene who had travelled from all over Germany. This convergence helped cement an internal narrative within the scene, namely that Chemnitz is a safe haven for the far right of all stripes: a place where people can live, work, study or begin an apprenticeship without interference. The result has been an influx of senior far-right activists from other parts of the country.

However, the possibility that the far right could benefit from the attention generated by the Capital of Culture year must not be used as an excuse to remain silent about its activities. Indeed, far-right organisational structures and properties thrive especially in places where they are not challenged.

Chemnitz’s application to become European Capital of Culture 2025 can be read as a statement of intent: a willingness to engage actively with the city’s problems (Stadt Chemnitz, 2020). Although opportunities to participate, formats for dialogue, and events are promising ways to break down barriers between people and foster greater acceptance, organised far-right structures remain part of the city and pose a threat. This paper therefore addresses far-right and anti-democratic structures in Chemnitz. It is intended as a resource – for guests and local residents who wish to learn about and engage with the far-right scene in Chemnitz.

OVERVIEW OF FAR-RIGHT ACTORS

In the Chemnitz of the 1990s, the far-right scene was shaped in particular by the neo-Nazi skinhead subculture surrounding the international Blood & Honour network, as well as by hooligan groups. Together, they formed the basis of the extensive support network that allowed the NSU to go underground. In 1998, while fleeing from the police, the NSU's core trio chose Chemnitz as a hiding place. Individuals from this network are still politically and economically active in the city to this day. More broadly, there have been remarkably few generational breaks within the far-right scene in Chemnitz: knowledge and infrastructure have been passed on, and the scene has shown an ability to learn from both failure and success. The facts that the neo-Nazi music label PC Records has now existed for 25 years, and that Martin Kohlmann – leader of *Freie Sachsen* – has held a seat on the city council since 1999, are just two illustrative examples.

Founded in 2021 as a Saxony-based regional party, *Freie Sachsen* now unites large parts of the neo-Nazi scene and the protest networks that were behind the Monday demonstrations against Covid containment measures.

Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) is the more prominent and significantly more broadly connected far-right party. It holds just over a quarter of the seats on the Chemnitz city council, making it the strongest political group in the chamber alongside the CDU.

A small local group of the *Junge Nationalisten* (JN – Young Nationalists), the youth organisation of the neo-Nazi party *Die Heimat* (formerly the NPD), is also active in Chemnitz. However, its activities are largely internally focused.

Beyond the party structures, a wide range of other groups are currently active in the city, with varying degrees of organisation. Among the most active are the activist *Identitäre Bewegung* (IB – Identitarian Movement), which is closely linked to both *Freie Sachsen* and the AfD, and more recently the young *Chemnitz Revolte* comradeship, which is mostly present in the public sphere.

Parts of the Chemnitzer FC football fan scene also continue to be dominated by the far right, with neo-Nazis still present in the stands. Another aspect that should not be overlooked, especially in light of the Capital of Culture year and the importance of public safety, is the presence of far-right securi-

ty personnel working for a number of Chemnitz-based private security firms.

PARTIES

The parties *Freie Sachsen* and AfD currently play significant roles in Saxony's far-right scene. This is due not least to their distinct strategic orientations, which will be outlined below.

While the AfD seeks to gain real political power through parliamentary means, *Freie Sachsen* functions first and foremost as a rallying point for extra-parliamentary far-right forces. The party serves as an umbrella organisation for these actors, who, through their networking efforts and participation in local elections, aim to further entrench their movement (Kiess/Nattke, 2024, 95ff.). *Freie Sachsen* is also utilising its status as a party to make a possible ban more difficult, as there are high hurdles in the way of party bans in Germany.

The party emerged from the so-called citizens' movement *Pro Chemnitz*, along with other groups and parties whose main arena of activity had previously been racist street protests against the reception of refugees. Since 2013, these actors have succeeded in forming protest alliances centred on particular issues, in collaboration with sections of the local population. This has made far-right views more socially acceptable. Initial protests targeted the establishment of accommodation for asylum seekers, followed by demonstrations against government measures during the Covid-19 pandemic. Today, they rally in response to multiple crises, such as the energy crisis or the Russian war in Ukraine. In both 2015 and 2018, these protests also turned violent. Images of the racist mass protests that took place in Chemnitz in late summer 2018 spread around the world. Neo-Nazis were seen hunting down people they perceived to be migrants on the sidelines, while marching alongside them were sections of the local population who presented themselves as respectable citizens.

Freie Sachsen relies heavily on visibility and a strong public presence. To this day, the party's core strength lies in organising waves of protest that attract wide media coverage and contribute to the growth of its movement. The party also regularly organises marches focusing on specific issues or events, such as those held on 5 March to mark the

1945 bombing of Chemnitz. *Freie Sachsen* also called for a demonstration to coincide with the opening of the European Capital of Culture year in January 2025, which it began promoting well in advance. That only around 350 people took part suggests that interest in protesting against the Capital of Culture initiative within the far-right scene is relatively low. Nonetheless, this once again highlighted the party's extensive networking: alongside *Freie Sachsen*'s core base – mostly older men with a conspiracist worldview and ideological leanings associated with the *Reichsbürger* (“Citizens of the Reich”) movement – there was a clearly visible bloc of young neo-Nazis affiliated with the *Chemnitz Revolte* comradeship.

Freie Sachsen also maintains a property just outside the city centre, on Brauhausstraße. Occasional meetings and other indoor events are held there, and the party's leader, Martin Kohlmann, operates his law office out of the same building (Grunert, 2019). Another building in the Ebersdorf district is also closely linked to *Freie Sachsen* (Grunert, 2021). Another property in the Markersdorf district is home to the neo-Nazi music label and retail outlet PC Records. It is owned by right-wing rock music distributor Yves Rahmel, who stood for *Freie Sachsen* in the 2024 city council elections (Grunert, 2011).

Although *Freie Sachsen* enjoyed some successes in a few municipalities and districts during the 2024 local elections, its real base still lies in street-level protest. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the party was particularly successful in building a finely branched network across Saxony and parts of Thuringia. Today this network can be mobilised at very short notice and provides the party's core senior activists with easy access to information. *Freie Sachsen* presents itself as a *Sammlungsbewegung* – a unifying, collective movement. As such, it actively encourages members of other parties to hold dual membership. In this way, it has provided the regional far-right scene with an organisational umbrella (Kiess/Nattke, 2024, p. 73). This strategy also serves to delegitimise the AfD, which often finds itself in direct electoral competition with *Freie Sachsen* (Lang/Grunert, 2022).

In recent years, *Freie Sachsen* has made sustained efforts to curry favour with right-wing and reactionary political milieus, such as the Monday demonstration scene and the *Reichsbürger* movement, with some success. The party hardly needs to take an active role to achieve this: these scenes are self-organised, maintain their own structures, and

run their own events. This is evident, for example, in the gatherings held every Monday in towns across Saxony: *Freie Sachsen* only rarely appears as the formal organiser of these protests. The party merely keeps track of and publicises the weekly gatherings, which is probably one of the main reasons for its 130,000 followers on Telegram. In the 2024 local elections in particular, the party fielded candidates representing the full spectrum of the far-right scene. Within *Freie Sachsen*, it is not considered contradictory for activists who downplay the Russian war in Ukraine to stand for office alongside well-known neo-Nazis such as Yves Rahmel, the Chemnitz-based right-wing music distributor, who paradoxically organise aid convoys to Ukraine. Despite this broader ideological heterogeneity, the party's leadership is still dominated by long-standing neo-Nazis. Alongside party leader Martin Kohlmann, key positions are held by figures such as Robert Andres (formerly of *Nationale Sozialisten Chemnitz*), Michael Brück (formerly of *Nationaler Widerstand Dortmund*), and Stefan Hartung (*Die Heimat*). *Freie Sachsen* functions as a central node in a far-right network (Grunert/Kiess, 2023).

While *Freie Sachsen* is still known for its niche position as a radical minority with strong political views and its election results strongly reflect the popularity of individual candidates, the AfD can benefit from its nationwide popularity to achieve good results across Saxony. The AfD, whose significance is due in no small part to its broader political ecosystem, can also be described as a “movement and framework party” (author's translation) (Rippl/Seipel, 2022, p. 72).

The AfD's high expectations for its voters in the Chemnitz region were evident from the direct candidates it fielded for the 2025 Bundestag election: Alexander Gauland, former AfD national chairman, ran in the central Chemnitz constituency, while Maximilian Krah, a Member of the European Parliament, ran in the Chemnitzer Umland – Erzgebirgskreis II constituency. Both are known for making statements that relativise National Socialism. In 2018, Gauland declared that “Hitler and the Nazis [were] just a speck of bird droppings in 1,000 years of successful German history” (author's translation; Wiederwald, 2018). In 2024, Maximilian Krah told the Italian newspaper *la Repubblica*: “I will never say that everyone who wore an SS uniform was automatically a criminal” (author's translation; Mastrobuoni, 2024). Both candidates received the most votes in their constituencies and won direct mandates.

Much like *Freie Sachsen*, the AfD also repeatedly seeks to capitalise on protest movements. A formative moment for the AfD in Chemnitz were the large rallies in late summer 2018. Following the violent death of Chemnitz resident Daniel H., the party managed to mobilise several thousand people, forming a symbolic alliance with the neo-Nazis who had been mobilised by *Pro Chemnitz* on that day. Members of the Chemnitz AfD district association regularly show their presence at the *Chemnitz steht auf* (“Chemnitz Rises Up”) Monday demonstrations. On 7 October 2024, former AfD Bundestag member and current city councillor Ulrich Oehme gave a speech at one such demonstration, opposing sanctions and marching with a banner from the AfD-led initiative *Gegen Sanktionen* (“Against Sanctions”). In recent years, the AfD has at times stepped into roles traditionally filled by neo-Nazi actors by organising its own rallies: in 2023, the party registered a rally for the first time to mark the anniversary of the bombing of the city in 1945. Previously, rallies to mark this occasion had always been organised by comradeships or the NPD.

With regard to the European Capital of Culture year, however, the AfD has consistently held back. While there has been occasional criticism from the AfD regarding the Capital of Culture planning process, it is only *Freie Sachsen* that has taken a position of fundamental opposition. When *Freie Sachsen* submitted a motion in March 2024 calling for Chemnitz to withdraw from the “Capital of Culture 2025 project” (Stadt Chemnitz, 2024), the AfD abstained. “We just have to get through it now,” AfD city councillor Steffen Wegert was later quoted as saying by the *Freie Presse* newspaper (author’s translation; Märkisch, 2024).

Aside from *Freie Sachsen* and the AfD, there is effectively no other far-right party currently active in Chemnitz. Until the mid-2010s, there was an active local branch of the NPD (now *Die Heimat*), but its activities have ceased entirely. As senior activists from *Die Heimat* in other parts of Saxony have almost completely been absorbed into *Freie Sachsen*, and given that they now rarely engage with their former party despite the promotion of dual memberships, it is reasonable to assume that *Freie Sachsen* has entirely absorbed the far-right party’s local potential in Chemnitz. Largely independent of the parent party, however, there continue to be reports of a group affiliated with its youth organisation, the JN. The group’s activities appear to be entirely internally focused; there is no public presence under the organisation’s banner. In November

2024, the JN held a meeting for interested parties at a property belonging to *Freie Sachsen*. However, it was primarily led by senior figures from the JN branch in Central Saxony (Mittelsachsen). These figures appear to be using events of this kind in an attempt to capitalise on the current movement of mostly autonomously organised young neo-Nazis. As a result, a few underage neo-Nazis joined the JN, though they now seem to have integrated into the structures in Central Saxony. The neo-Nazi cadre party *Der III. Weg* (“The Third Path”) has also ultimately failed to gain a foothold in Chemnitz. After the *Nationale Sozialisten Chemnitz* comradeship was banned in 2014, individual members established local bases of *Der III. Weg* in the region – but today, their activities are only visible in the surrounding districts of Zwickau, Erzgebirgskreis, and Mittelsachsen.

IDENTITARIAN MOVEMENT

The so-called Identitarian Movement (IB) was initially founded in France in 2002; its German offshoot was founded in 2013. Although it is politically associated with the “New Right” and publicly professes a rejection of violence, the IB maintains numerous ties and overlapping membership with neo-Nazi circles. Members of the IB in Germany have also repeatedly committed acts of violence in the past.

The Chemnitz chapter of the IB is currently one of the most active in the country. In late 2022, it purchased a shopfront in the Schöna district and converted it into a public meeting place known as the *Zentrum Chemnitz* (Grunert, 2023a). A group photo taken at the opening in 2023 shows a number of AfD representatives from across Germany, apparently placing great hope in the project. The *Zentrum Chemnitz* is currently the IB’s only public contact point anywhere in the country. Monthly talks by far-right activists, reading groups, and internal meetings are held there. The importance of the *Zentrum Chemnitz* is further underscored by the fact that the local group’s leader, Vincenzo Richter, now serves as the national chair of the IB.

Properties like this serve a dual function: outwardly, they signal the far right’s presence in the city – a kind of monument to its establishment. Inwardly, they function as retreats; what is discussed behind closed doors generally escapes the view of authorities and civil society. Outside of this property, the IB is only rarely visible in Chemnitz. In addition to initially taking part in the Monday demon-

trations, the group has mainly attracted attention through brief public stunts involving banners, which are later shared as videos on social media, where they reach a far wider audience than they do on the ground. In April 2023, the IB carried out one such stunt specifically targeting what it views as the “left-wing extremist” Capital of Culture initiative: members stretched barrier tape in front of the entrance to the European Capital of Culture office, blocked the entrance with labelled barrels, set off pyrotechnics and fled. This stunt was a response to the exclusion of senior *Freie Sachsen* representatives from a panel discussion held shortly beforehand. It is to be expected that the IB will stage similar, and possibly larger, symbolic stunts during the European Capital of Culture year. Attempts to attend or disrupt events are also likely, particularly those focused on topics such as gender justice or the dangers posed by the far right.

CONSPIRACIST SCENE

Beyond the far-right groups, a conspiracy-driven scene has taken shape in Chemnitz in recent years, most visibly through the weekly Monday evening demonstrations in the city centre that have been ongoing since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Only part of this scene adheres to a fully far-right worldview, but there is little hesitation when it comes to engaging with actors like *Freie Sachsen*. Anti-Semitic narratives are also widespread within this milieu.

The demonstrations, organised by the group *Chemnitz steht auf* (“Chemnitz Rises Up”), now provoke little reaction among the local population due to the advanced degree of normalisation. Far-right and conspiracy theorist gatherings have come to be seen as a normal part of city life, which risks fostering the perception that widespread discontent is a constant undercurrent in the city.

LOOSELY ORGANISED GROUPS

Chemnitz continues to host a wide array of loosely organised far-right groups and affiliated networks, whose presence is primarily felt through participation in demonstrations, disruptions, and acts of violence. The banning of individual comradeships in the mid-2010s has led to a widespread perception within the far right that fixed, non-party organisations are highly vulnerable to repression. For many neo-Nazis, involvement in combat sports and the Chemnitzer FC fan scene forms an integral part

of their far-right identity. However, in both spheres, far-right actors are barely visible from the outside. This is largely because overt political exposure risks stadium bans, exclusion from combat sports tournaments, or, in extreme cases, the loss of training facilities. While the football scene serves as a fertile recruiting ground, neo-Nazis use combat sports training as preparation for street violence (Claus, 2020).

CHEMNITZ REVOLTE

In stark contrast to the trend towards looser far-right structures described above, new groups like *Chemnitz Revolte* seem almost anachronistic. Founded in 2024 as a *Kameradschaft* (comradeship) with a formal organisational structure, the group has mainly participated in demonstrations against Christopher Street Day events across Saxony. It stands out above all for its presence in public spaces. However, the group represents just a small segment of a new generation of very young neo-Nazis active across Germany, with a particular concentration in Saxony. This scene is characterised not only by its highly visible presence in public spaces but also by its apparent disregard for the legal consequences of its actions – a factor in how dangerous the group is at present. While individuals from the same milieu, some of them minors, committed serious acts of violence in other locations in 2024, incidents in Chemnitz were, until January 2025, limited to verbal abuse and intimidation. On 24 January 2025, however, a group of around 20 individuals – who according to police reports were linked to the *Chemnitz Revolte* network – attacked guests at the Balboa Bar on Chemnitz’s Brühl boulevard. The neo-Nazis aborted their attack when police happened to be on the scene; one bar patron sustained minor injuries. Seven suspected attackers were arrested shortly afterwards; they were between 15 and 20 years old. That same night, a 17-year-old male was assaulted nearby. Police are investigating a possible connection (Anke, 2025).

RIGHT-WING VIOLENCE IN CHEMNITZ

Right-wing violence remains an ongoing problem in Chemnitz. SUPPORT, the victim counselling service operated by the non-profit RAA Sachsen e.V., which documents such attacks, records a double-digit number of violent far-right incidents in the city every year. In 2018, the year of the mass protests, 79 assaults were registered – the highest number to date. However, the figures recorded only represent part of the overall picture. On the one hand, incidents are only counted once they exceed a defined threshold (RAA Sachsen, n. d.); on the other, the statistics only include cases that have been reported or are publicly known. It must therefore be assumed that the true scale of far-right violence is much greater.

At the end of January 2025, SUPPORT warned of “alarming developments” in Chemnitz, citing an unusually high number of reports and counselling requests (RAA Sachsen, 2025). According to the organisation, the cases appear to be linked to the *Chemnitz Revolte* group.

In the run-up to the European Capital of Culture year, there were already several violent attacks targeting people in the cultural sector. In 2022, Frédéric Bußmann, then General Director of the Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, was beaten up by a group of young people after asking them to stop making the Hitler salute (Müller, 2023). In November 2022, international attendees of the Build Peace Conference in Chemnitz were verbally threatened, causing significant distress among the guests. In 2023, a cultural manager visiting the city for a conference on the upcoming European Capital of Culture year was attacked and injured by a group while walking back to his hotel at night. According to reports, the attackers shouted at him and his companions: “Are you leftist scum?” and “You shouldn’t be speaking English!” (author’s translations; Grunert, 2023b).

Such attacks pose a threat to events related to the Capital of Culture year, because they occur outside the context of demonstrations and are difficult to predict. Another critical factor is the emergence of zones of fear in public spaces. On the one hand, these are created by a persistent far-right presence. But they are also a product of the wider social climate in the city: according to Quent and

Schulz, a key factor in the emergence of abstract zones of fear is “whether those potentially affected have reason to expect that uninvolved bystanders, local police, or the wider urban public will, in the event of an attack, assign them a share of the blame for the violence” (author’s translation; Quent/Schulz, 2015).

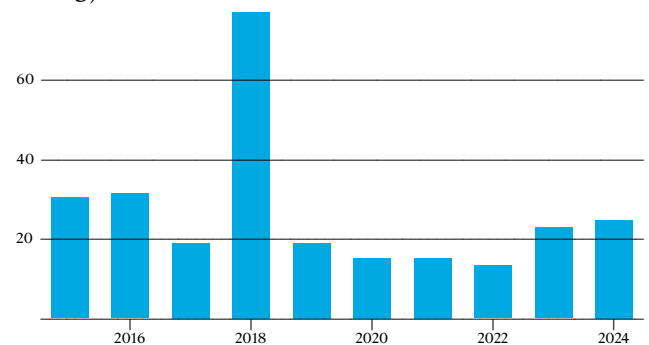


FIGURE 1

ATTACKS MOTIVATED BY THE FAR RIGHT IN CHEMNITZ SINCE 2015, SOURCE: RAA SACHSEN E.V., OPFERBERATUNG SUPPORT

CONCLUSION

In its year as European Capital of Culture, the city of Chemnitz has an opportunity to initiate important social processes. Brichzin, Laux and Bohmann even see the potential for Chemnitz to become “a model of general significance for democracy” through the European Capital of Culture process (author’s translation; Brichzin et al., 2022, p. 228). For this to happen, it would be necessary to develop “effective and lasting democratic forms of engaging with the risk” posed by the centre of society. For it is arguably anything but certain that this centre would “help democracy to win against its despisers” (ibid.). The European Capital of Culture has set itself the declared goal of “[encouraging] this ‘silent centre’ to get involved again” (European Capital of Culture Chemnitz 2025, n. d.).

As this analysis shows, however, far-right actors will also attempt to get involved, and to use the European Capital of Culture as their stage. *Freie Sachsen* has repeatedly announced this intention. Whether it will succeed remains doubtful, but the party knows that mere announcements are enough to attract attention and sow uncertainty. Nonetheless, its strength and strategic orientation are easily misjudged. In the run-up to the Capital of Culture year’s opening, media coverage of potential threats focused largely on the *Freie Sachsen* demonstration of 18 January. Despite its route passing through the city centre, the demonstration itself ultimately failed to significantly disrupt the opening event. It is also questionable whether *Freie Sachsen* will succeed in disrupting other Capital of Culture events, despite its grandiose announcements. Experience suggests that large-scale far-right protests in Chemnitz, despite the constant availability of a protest-friendly milieu, have always required an external trigger, something outside the organisers’ control.

The far right maintains a strong public presence in Chemnitz and continues to gain influence, repeatedly pushing democratic actors onto the defensive. Its presence, and the risks it poses – both to events and everyday life – must be taken into account. People who live in Chemnitz are used to the presence of the far right and have, whether consciously or not, adapted their behaviour accordingly. This may not be the case for guests from elsewhere. If the European Capital of Culture year is to be an enjoyable experience for all, it is essential to protect

and inform guests – albeit without causing undue alarm. Meaningful societal negotiation processes are unlikely to proceed without friction. However, danger and bad press can be avoided by facing problems openly and protecting those at risk of far-right violence.

LOCAL DEMOCRATIC RESISTANCE AND ENGAGEMENT

This section presents a selection of initiatives from Chemnitz and the surrounding area that are actively and passionately committed to fostering a democratic culture and opposing the rise of far-right forces. Their work testifies to a vibrant civil society that takes responsibility at the local level – because democracy draws its strength above all where it is practised in daily life. Only when a diverse range of actors work together can far-right influence on social spaces be effectively limited and pushed back.

A key pillar of this work is the network structures funded by the federal government and the Free State of Saxony, which provide crucial impetus and enable democratic initiatives to connect with one another. But one thing is also clear: democratic engagement needs long-term perspectives. Project-based funding alone is not enough – what counts is continuous, reliable support. From a democracy strategy standpoint, it is therefore essential to advocate for the structural consolidation of funding lines in order to secure civil society engagement in the long term.

This overview is not exhaustive. We are happy to continue expanding the list in the digital version of this policy paper at www.efbi.de – we warmly welcome suggestions and input at any time.

THE ACTORS AT A GLANCE

ASA-FF is the sponsor of the Offener Prozess initiative, which addresses the consequences of the right-wing terrorist group NSU. The pilot documentation centre can be visited in Chemnitz city centre between May and November 2025. More information: www.asa-ff.de

The association Agiua e.V. primarily provides advice and support to people with a migration background in Chemnitz. More information: www.agiua.de

The alliance Aufstehen gegen Rassismus has been active in Chemnitz since April 2016, working alongside people affected by racism, Muslim and Jewish communities, trade unions, political parties,

and associations to build a broad, solidarity-based counter-movement against the AfD, Pro Chemnitz and the broader shift to the right in society. More information: <https://www.facebook.com/agr.chemnitz>

The alliance Chemnitz Nazifrei actively opposes discriminatory and dehumanising attitudes. In addition to organising demonstrations and actions, the group carries out educational and campaign work against far-right activities and for a culture of tolerance in the city. More information: <https://www.chemnitz-nazifrei.de/>

The goals of different people e.V. are to promote acceptance of LGBTQIA+ forms of love and life, to counter prejudice and reduce discrimination. In addition to a welcoming and diverse association life, the group offers professional counselling for all and runs educational work for specific target groups. More information: <https://www.different-people.de>

The cultural alliance Hand in Hand e.V. is a campaign network of Chemnitz-based clubs, artistic initiatives, cultural practitioners, and organisers working at the intersection of culture, politics, business and society. The alliance was founded in response to a neo-Nazi march in Chemnitz. More information: <https://handinhand-chemnitz.de/start#hand-in-hand>

The regional offices of the Mobile Advisory Team (MBT) run by the Kulturbüro Sachsen e.V. have been providing advice since 2001 on how to address right-wing extremism, racism, Anti-Semitism and other ideologies of inequality, and support efforts to strengthen a democratic culture rooted in everyday life. Their professional advisory services are aimed at anyone who wants or needs to engage with these issues and who wishes to work towards strengthening democratic culture. More information: <https://kulturbuero-sachsen.de/arbeitsbereiche/mobile-beratung>

NDC Sachsen (Courage - Werkstatt für demokratische Bildungsarbeit e.V.) provides advisory and

educational services in schools focused on confronting and preventing ideologies of group-based hate and exclusion. NDC also trains young people as multipliers of political education to lead project days in schools. More information: www.netzwerk-courage.de/sachsen

SUPPORT, the victim counselling service operated by RAA Sachsen, not only assists those affected by right-wing violence, but also documents such incidents throughout the state as part of its work. RAA Sachsen also sponsors various social and educational projects. More information: www.raa-sachsen.de

The City of Chemnitz has developed a local strategy and network through its Local Action Plan, forming the basis for fostering a diverse and vibrant culture of coexistence in Chemnitz. More information: <https://www.chemnitz.de/en/unsere-stadt/ordnung-und-sicherheit/demokratiefoerderung/koordinierungsstelle-lap>

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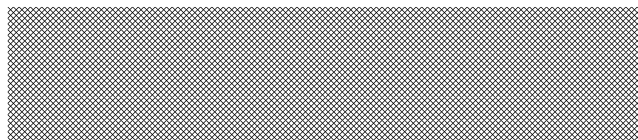
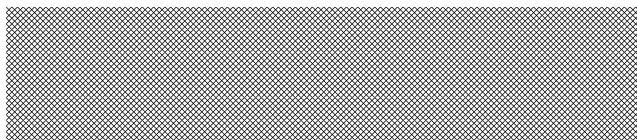
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