

**COMMON TENDENCIES WITHIN THE EXTREME RIGHT SPECTRUM IN EUROPE:**

***Civil society against right-wing extremism***

This is an attempt made by a group of NGOs from Spain, Germany, Slovakia and Russia, all active members within the European network "UNITED for Intercultural Action", to analyze the tendencies and common trends in right-wing extremism across Europe. We consider it of paramount importance to concentrate not only on how different the revelations of right-wing extremism across Europe are, but in which respect they are similar. We believe that there are enough grounds to state that there are conspicuous common trends and that it is vital to highlight them and address their revelations in the course of all European actions or by means of networks.

We acknowledge that even what we call common trends, are rather diversified manifestations of xenophobia, racism, fascism, anti-Semitism, totalitarianism and other forms of intolerance, which can vary in scope and scale from country to country and even from region to region. Nevertheless, we find it crucial never to be tired of generalizing at the pan-European level what we are eye witnessing in the countries we reside.

First and foremost, we would like to point out two major tendencies: on the one hand, we observe that right-wing (RW) ideology becomes a mainstream legitimate rhetoric on different levels and by different ways; on the other hand, we can immediately see how this is linked with the increase of attacks and violence motivated by hate across Europe.

A number of minor trends might reinforce the first argument.

Firstly, the adoption of RW speech and ideology in governmental structures and ruling parties is becoming more and more visible. It manifests itself in the appropriation of speech of RW groups by conservatives, liberals and even left-wing parties in office for the sake of populism. The case in point is the so-called "Russian project" of the party "United Russia", which focuses on the crimes against ethnically Russian citizens and promotes the Russian national idea discourse, which happened to be the niche of the RW groups only.

Another example is the debate about a "new patriotism" in Germany which was initiated by the governing Christian Democratic Union CDU

in 2004. Its appeal that patriotism must play a stronger role in Germany was heavily criticized in being close to nationalistic positions. At the same time, Conservative spokesmen attached the discussion about immigration rules to the demand for a *leitkultur*, a "defining German culture", in clearly turning against any kind of multiculturalism. Such rhetoric inevitably expresses associations with the ideology originally spread by the right-wing extremist National Democratic Party of Germany NPD. Thus, under the label of patriotism and *leitkultur*, the CDU politics represents a turn to the right which eventually plays into the hands of right-wing extremists.

In the case of Slovakia, participants of the latest congress of Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) declared that they should also come up with ideas of nation and national pride, because otherwise it remain an open area to extreme nationalist parties like the Slovak national party (SNS), infamous for its xenophobic and even racist statements. This means a clear turn of political strategy from Christian and democratic values to nation-based populism and use of nationalistic sentiment by mainstream parties.

One more demonstration of such RW ideology adoption is the institutionalization of racism. This tendency reveals itself mostly in Eastern Europe and is the most warning one, because it shows how much some countries have already gone beyond democratic values. Anti-Georgian campaign in Russia brought to the surface the directives of officials of different levels that ordered, for example, heads of schools to trace down and report pupils' nationalities and the background of their parents in search of the illegal migrants of Georgian origin.

Secondly, we can state that the process is mutual: RW ideologists assume the popular social rhetoric. Debating about the possible solutions to the problems of unemployment, illegal migration, globalization, Roma issues or terrorism in Spain, RW groups and parties attract the audience. For example, the same National Democratic Party of Germany NPD organized several anti-globalization demonstrations across Germany during the G-8-summit in Heiligendamm in June 2007.

Thirdly, we face the change and extension of RW hate targets to those that majority of the population feel reluctant to support. Such groups as homosexuals, homeless, prostitutes and antifascists and other youths belonging to non-right-wing extremist subcultures are being attacked across Europe, but these assaults do not provoke a backlash and are seldom stated as hate crimes.

Fourthly, it becomes evident that RW groups and movements establish themselves quickly and effectively, using quite business-like efficient methodologies. Some movements as Movement against Illegal

Immigration in Russia prefer the network scheme, supporting individuals or grass-root groups in the regions that are easy to be gathered if need be. Another instance is the "Rudolf Hess memorial march" which used to take place on 17 August, the anniversary of his death, in the Bavarian city of Wunsiedel. Neo-Nazis from Germany and Europe gathered every year to commemorate the death of Hitler's deputy until the demonstration was banned in 2005 due to a stricter German legislation. In 2004, about 5000 right-wing extremists from all over Europe belonging to party-political structures and sub-cultural movements marched in Wunsiedel, making it the biggest Nazi demonstration in Germany since 1945.

In recent years, the activities of the parties, groups, movements professing right-wing ideology, have also become more marketing-oriented. The approaches to the target audience encompass brand promotion via e-shops (i.e. "Thor Steinar", as an identity brand for RW extremists, etc.), election campaigns, door-to-door polls and creative stickers and flyers or street graffiti. In this way, the RW bigotry ideas reach the consumers nicely packed.

Another contribution to the organizational growth reveals the tendency towards self-education of the community by means of editing and publishing a lot of literature, opening bookshops and manufacturing paraphernalia, organizing physical activities and Waffen-SS ("Armed SS") Official lectures of ideologists in the provinces, like the "workshops" with the former Theodor Soucek in Málaga, Spain, or the visit of the Spanish Delegation of Alianza Nacional to the former Luftwaffe officer Roman Gastager, dwelling in Dresden, Germany. New generations of Nazis are being indoctrinated and trained across Europe.

International networks of right-wing extremists play a very important role in their daily operations and use different and not compatible legal regulations in various European countries. Cases of printing CDs with hate music in one country, the booklets in another one and selling them through online shops registered in a third country illustrate this trend.

Fifthly, the RW culture does not isolate itself from the mass culture, but intrudes very actively into it, infecting some subcultures as well. The fact that ideologists have become public people in some countries, like Dmitriy Demushkin – the head of the Slavic Union, Russia, who is routinely invited to take part in the TV debates on state TV channels, is but alarming. The cooperation of bands in the black metal, hard core punk, folk and other scenes is ubiquitous in Europe and is stated e.g. in the reports of Polish "Never Again" association. The contamination of other subcultures like bikers, street-racers let alone football fans has a pervasive character. We are faced with new, updated, more clever and better prepared groups of right-wing extremists, hiding their message of hate into new cloths and symbols.

Sixthly, cyber hate has become the universal tool of inciting animosity. Websites and blogs serve as ideological covers for racist attacks and threats at activists and human rights defenders. Another tendency interlinked with the global network is the occurrence of websites specifically collecting and disseminating hate trailers and videos for PCs and mobile phones such as a *Format18* web-site administrated in Russia.

The second tendency that we have mentioned in the very beginning is the increase of hate-motivated violence across Europe. Due to the above-mentioned successful strategies according to the data provided by NGOs the number of attacks is rising constantly. In Russia, according to SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, in 2006 there was a 17% growth of racist violence in comparison to 2005 with 536 victims and a death toll of 54. In Spain, the Movement against Intolerance has an estimation of 4000 aggressions in 200 cities across the country according to the special RAXEN Report of 2007 with data of 2006. In England, data collections of the Fundamental Rights Agency (former EUMC) announce 57902 racist incidents and 37000 hate crimes in 2005. In Slovakia, police recorded 121 cases of racially motivated crimes in 2005, and 188 cases in 2006. It is noteworthy that the pan-European data are hardly incompatible and shows but success of England, in this case, to establish a well-functioning data collection system, rather than the worst situation with hate-motivated crimes in Europe as it might seem. In this respect, the setting up of a unified data collection system across Europe both from law enforcement agencies and NGOs is of acute necessity.

In conclusion, we would like to state that the tendency towards mainstreaming takes place not only due to the huge solidarity within the RW extremist community, but because of the fact that political and civil society actors have almost failed to suggest an attractive alternative agenda. The most concerning issue is the danger of allowing our values – human rights, equality and dignity – to become marginalized in the long run. Civil Society has a role to play in the struggle against right-wing extremism. Promoting democracy as a value, showing that it works, teaching against the totalitarianism temptation, spreading the principles of Human Rights and fundamental freedoms. We as a network of NGOs from Spain, Germany, Slovakia and Russia call for solidarity and hard work towards setting an attractive agenda promoting the values of democracy. We have a strong commitment and a great determination to put these ideas into action.

**Movimiento Contra la Intolerancia** – *Movement against Intolerance*  
(Spain)

**Kulturbüro Sachsen** – *Cultural Office Saxony* (Germany)

**L'udia proti rasizmu** – *People against Racism* (Slovakia)

**Международное Молодежное Правозащитное Движение** –  
*International Youth Human Rights Movement* (Russia)

**UNITED for Intercultural Action** – *European network against nationalism,  
racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees*