DGB and the rise of the far right in Germany

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The rise of the far right in Germany

- **1949:** DRP
- **1966-69:** NPD
- **1987-99:** DVU, REP
- **2003-11:** NPD, DVU
- **2013 -:** AfD

**Graph Details:**
- **DRP**
- **NPD**
- **DVU**
- **REP**
- **AfD**
- **5%**
DGB responses:

- DGB-unions regard themselves in the tradition of antifascism (very important for activists)
- Participation in antifascist mobilisations if they are non-violent and not dominated by radical left
- Membership in NPD and DVU declared incompatible with union membership
- Today: discussions whether this should be extended to AfD-membership
The 1990s: the challenge of racism

- Debate: Is Germany „flooded“ by asylum seekers? (at the time mostly Tamils from Sri Lanka)
- Racist attacks against the homes of asylum seekers at the beginning of the nineties
- Parties including SPD react by dismantling in 1993 the constitutional right to demand asylum
- DGB draws clear boundaries and condemn aggressions against migrants and refugees
- Electoral success for REP and DVU: surveys show partial support for far right among union membership
2010 onwards: Greece and the „Euro“-crisis

- Union leadership speak out against EU-austerity measures
- But: Mobilisations against Troika and in solidarity with Greece remain limited to committed activists
2015: DGB activists are part of „welcome culture“

- 2015 congresses of ver.di and IG Metall show massive support for solidarity with refugees
- DGB condemns aggressions against migrants and refugees
- But quite some anecdotal evidence of gulf between leadership and parts of rank & file
  - „Refugees get everything …“
  - Full-time officials some times avoid addressing the question of racism at works assemblies
The AfD success as a challenge for DGB

- National elections 2017: unions campaign against AfD
- Tons of material to explain and denounce the far right program
- **BUT:** the effect remains limited
- **Surveys show:** union membership as such is no barrier against casting a vote for the far right
- In particular male blue and white collar workers vote for far right
## Vote for AfD and union membership

### AfD share of the vote: National election 2017 (data based on exit poll)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Share of the Vote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TU-members</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TU-members, men</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TU-members, women</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue collar</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TU-members, blue collar</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White collar</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TU-members, white collar</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The far right at the workplace

– First attempts by the far right to gain ground in the metalworking industries have only limited success in the 2018 round of works council elections

– But IG Metall and other unions are on alert

– How to effectively tackle the far right remains a continuous challenge

– While unions manage to set agendas when it comes to low wage and poor working conditions in care work they appear to be less heard when it comes to counter the growing nationalism
A GLIMPSE OF AUSTRIA
Thank you for listening!

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