

“Lost center – hostile conditions: Polarization, right-wing extremist orientations and group-focused enmity in Germany” (the latest FES-“Mitte-Studie”)

## Study on prejudiced sentiments and antidemocratic attitudes reveals ambiguous findings

Berlin, April 25, 2019

The Friedrich Ebert Foundation has presented a new study on the prevalence of prejudice, extreme right convictions, and other antidemocratic attitudes in German society. The “Mitte-Studie” is a bi-annual opinion survey of the German population. The 2018/19 study is based on a statistically representative survey of 1,890 Germans conducted by a team of researchers from the Institute for Interdisciplinary Research on Conflict and Violence (IKG) from Bielefeld University. Surveyed respondents were asked to agree or disagree with survey statements, such as “There is valuable and invaluable life.” or “Politics and media are colluding with each other.” and many more.

The study provides insight into the stability and instability of democracy by analyzing the distribution of far-right opinions and specific prejudice within the population.

The results are ambiguous. The majority of the German population supports democratic attitudes, appreciates diversity and demands to strengthen the European Union; but at the same time, a third of the population exhibits non-liberal attitudes towards democracy and impugns equal rights for all. The prevalence of hostile prejudices towards certain groups remains almost unchanged since 2014, especially including prejudice towards immigrants, Muslims, and feelings of anti-Semitism. However, negative attitudes against asylum seekers have risen: one in two of the surveyed respondents held negative opinions about asylum seekers. This is an increase compared to 2016, even though the number of asylum seekers arriving in Germany has decreased. When asked about homosexual and transgender people, negative opinions are declining, as well as the tolerance of sexism and intolerance of the homeless. Conspiracy myths enjoy widespread popularity in the population: 46 % of respondents believe that secret organizations are influencing political decisions, one in two trust their own feelings more than expert advice, and nearly a quarter assume that media and politics collude with each other.

As in previous years, potential voters of the radical right party AfD (*Alternative für Deutschland / Alternative for Germany*) are more prone to harbor hostile prejudices, accept violence as appropriate means of political dispute, and to have right-wing populist and right-wing extremist attitudes. The 2018/19 study confirms a high degree of superficial support for democracy, accompanied by anti-democratic and anti-pluralist convictions at the same time: this places the democratic foundation and orientation of the center of German society at risk.



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**Verlorene Mitte – Feindselige Zustände.**

**Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in Deutschland 2018/19**

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332 pages, paperback, 14,90€, available only in German  
ISBN 978-3-8012-0544-7

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