

PRESS KIT

Institute launch & symposium of the Centre for Radicalisation Research and Prevention (Zentrum für Radikalisierungsforschung und Prävention ZRP)

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- IU International University of Applied Sciences | Campus Essen

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1. PRESS RELEASE ON THE FOUNDATION OF THE INSTITUTE

IU INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES ESTABLISHES A NEW INSTITUTE FOR PRACTICE-ORIENTED RESEARCH ON RADICALISATION AND PREVENTION

With the new ZRP Institute, IU is sending a strong signal for democratic values and against extremism

Essen, 30 April 2025. On 29 April, IU International University of Applied Sciences (IU) founded the Centre for Radicalisation Research and Prevention (Zentrum für Radikalisierungsforschung und Prävention, ZRP) as an independent institute on its campus in Essen. With a joint symposium that brought together leading researchers and experts from across Germany, the ZRP and the Evangelischer Erziehungsverband e.V. (EREV) kicked off the institute's work.

This sends out a strong signal: Scientific research is to play an even greater role in the fight against anti-democratic and extremist movements in the future. The ZRP sees itself as a practice-oriented, interdisciplinary institute in the field of social work with a unique profile in the research landscape. The ZRP's research aims to shed light on blind spots in the field of radicalisation and to develop reliable, evidence-based recommendations for action for politics, administration and individual professional fields. The aim is to actively incorporate the findings into prevention work in order to meet current challenges with new concepts.

Prof. Dr Burak Çopur, Head of the Institute: *"We deliberately chose the Ruhr region as the location for the Institute: The region stands for social diversity, urbanity and structural challenges like no other. With its excellent team of researchers, the institute is the first of its kind in North Rhine-Westphalia with a decidedly practical focus - and complements the existing research landscape in the field of radicalisation and prevention with an urgently needed, practice-oriented social work perspective."*

The importance of this step was also emphasised by **State Secretary Gonca Türkeli-Dehnert** (Ministry of Culture and Science of North Rhine-Westphalia), who was present at the symposium: *"The rise of far-right and anti-democratic movements is an appeal to our social responsibility. We must strengthen democratic resilience and, above all, empower children and young people at an early age to critically question radical slogans and attitudes. The Centre for Radicalisation Research and Prevention helps us to make the findings from this interdisciplinary field of research usable in everyday life. I am therefore delighted that the ZRP is now an institute in North Rhine-Westphalia. and sends out a clear signal in support of democracy."*

Prevention and research as a bulwark against extremism

The increasing radicalisation in parts of society poses a serious threat to social cohesion and the basic democratic order. The events of last year and this year highlight the urgency of scientifically sound analyses and preventative strategies: The revelation of right-wing extremist deportation plans in

Potsdam, Islamist demonstrations with calls for a caliphate in Hamburg and Essen, the Islamist-motivated attack on Pegida activist Michael Stürzenberger and the deadly attacks in Mannheim, Magdeburg and Aschaffenburg. These incidents have further inflamed the already heated debate on migration, security and social integration.

Accompanying symposium on the founding of the institute

As part of the founding of the institute, the ZRP organised a symposium at the Essen campus in cooperation with the Evangelischer Erziehungsverband e.V. (EREV). The ZRP team brought together renowned academics and practitioners on the topic of *"Recognising the signs! Developments in right-wing populism after the 2025 federal elections - challenges in child and youth welfare"*. A varied programme awaited the guests and expert audience. The focus was on practice-oriented workshops on social media in radicalisation dynamics, recognising and dealing with right-wing extremist attitudes in families and victim protection, supplemented by space for discussion and networking.

The event was an example of close cooperation between research and specialist practice - and showed that concrete solutions and joint action are possible and necessary.

"With the symposium on the founding of the ZRP Institute, we were able to highlight how important it is to recognise warning signs early on and to find ways and answers to counter right-wing populism and radicalisation together with specialist practice and research", emphasises EREV.

Institute's founding strengthens strategic planning and operational effectiveness

Back in 2022, a nationwide network of scientists was formed within IU International University of Applied Sciences to counter these alarming developments with an interdisciplinary and practice-oriented research approach. This network has now emerged as the ZRP Institute - funded by IU and based at the Essen campus. In view of the growing social challenges, interdisciplinary research work is now being given an institutional framework and substantially strengthened. The establishment of the institute today goes hand in hand with a structural upgrading of the research work. With better personnel and financial resources, the ZRP will gain strategic planning and operational clout. Projects that have already been promised focus on topics such as anti-Semitism, religiously motivated extremism, ultra-nationalism and (de)radicalisation in the youth context.

The ZRP combines research, responsibility and social resilience

The successes to date underline the dynamism of the research institute. The ZRP takes an interdisciplinary approach to its research, incorporating specialist perspectives from social work, political science, criminology and education, as well as methodological diversity. Using their specialist expertise and practical knowledge, ZRP researchers analyse the causes and dynamics of radicalisation processes - for example in the family environment, in schools, in the digital space or in civil society contexts. The work is intercultural and multilingual, both nationally and internationally, for example in cooperation with the University of Vienna. The focus is also on evaluating existing exit and advisory

programmes. The aim is to broaden the research of radicalisation and provide concrete concepts for prevention, intervention strategies and political recommendations for action.

Knowledge transfer is a central task: research findings flow directly back into practice in training courses, workshops, studies and seminar concepts. With the ZRP, IU is specifically positioning itself as a university that takes a stand - and assumes social responsibility in the areas of education and research.

Further information on the ZRP and the research team (currently only in German) can be found at:
<https://www.iu.de/forschung/projekte/forschungsinstitut-zrp/>

ABOUT IU INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

With over 130,000 students, IU International University of Applied Sciences (IU) is the largest university in Germany. The private, state-recognised educational institution with its headquarters in Erfurt began operations in 2000 and is now represented in 38 German cities. Students from over 160 nations design their studies according to their needs: whether practice-integrated dual studies, flexible distance learning or individual “myStudium”, which combines online self-study and campus life. IU wants to give people worldwide access to personalised education for a fulfilled and self-determined life. In more than 250 bachelor's, master's and MBA programmes, IU teaches students key skills relevant to the future. A digitally supported learning environment and the use of AI solutions help students to achieve optimal learning results and experiences. IU is one of the first universities in the world to have developed and deployed its own AI-supported learning buddy, Syntea. IU cooperates with over 15,000 companies and supports them in the academic training of professionals. Partners include Motel One, Vodafone, AWO and Deutsche Bahn. Further information at: iu.org

2. PHOTO MATERIAL



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Prof. Dr Burak Çopur, Head of the Centre for Radicalisation Research and Prevention (ZRP)



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Dr Björn Hagen, Managing Director, Evangelischer Erziehungsverband e.V. (EREV)



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State Secretary Gonca Türkeli-Dehnert, Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia

Further images for download can be found at the end of this news article:

<https://www.iu.de/news/en/iu-establishes-new-institute-for-practice-oriented-research-on-radicalisation-and-prevention/>

3. ABOUT THE ZRP – MISSION, RESEARCH, VISION

ZRP: Science for democratic societies

The Centre for Radicalisation Research and Prevention (ZRP) is an interdisciplinary, practice-oriented research institute under the umbrella of IU International University of Applied Sciences. It also works in line with the guideline "Research for practice" and sees itself as a bridge between science and application.

Research approach & methodology: The ZRP pursues an interdisciplinary, multilingual and intercultural research approach with close links to social work, political science, criminology and education. The research draws on a variety of methods (qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods) and is carried out nationwide as well as in international cooperation - for example with the University of Vienna.

Transfer into practice: These scientific findings form the basis for concrete transfer offers from the ZRP, such as

- Teaching and learning materials, seminar concepts, training courses
- Scientific support for projects e.g. CHAMPS, MEDAR, konex
- Preparation of policy papers and expert opinions for cities, authorities and ministries
- Advisory services for professionals from youth welfare, education, politics and civil society
- Integration of research results into teaching at IU (e.g. study programme in social work)

Thematic focus of work: Research focuses on the causes and dynamics of radicalisation, the strengthening of anti-democratic movements and conspiracy myths, particularly in the school, family and digital context. The ZRP also evaluates exit and counselling programmes and develops preventive measures against radicalisation in the analogue and digital space.

Research results: The members of the ZRP regularly publish scientific studies that shed light on socially relevant topics such as racism, anti-Semitism, religiously motivated extremism or the role of schools and social work in prevention.

Mission:

Understanding radicalisation processes, developing preventive approaches, strengthening social resilience.

Vision:

"Network globally, act locally" - The ZRP promotes a sustainable culture of peace and positive change towards justice, respect and social cohesion.

Self-conception: The ZRP sees itself as a complementary force to other institutions, conducting basic research and supplementing existing structures with innovative, application-oriented approaches. The focus is on cooperation, transfer and impact.

Lighthouse project

RadiX – Journal for Radicalisation Research and Prevention

A central project of the ZRP is the establishment of *RadiX - Journal for Radicalisation Research and Prevention*, which will be published for the first time in April 2025. RadiX emerged from a scientific network at IU International University of Applied Sciences to bundle publications on radicalisation phenomena in an interdisciplinary and practice-oriented manner. The journal is published twice a year in open access by Barbara Budrich Verlag and offers a forum for academic and practice-oriented contributions. All scientific contributions undergo a double-blind peer review process. The aim is to make innovative prevention approaches, well-founded analyses and new impulses visible - for science, practice and society alike.



ZRP facts & figures (as at Q1/2025):

- 88 scientific publications
 - 30+ media appearances (press, TV, radio)
 - 5 supervised doctorates
 - over 150 stakeholders in the network
-

4. THE ZRP TEAM – EXPERTISE AND COMMITMENT

The ZRP combines an interdisciplinary research team with scientific depth, social commitment and a direct link to practice. The leading minds of the institute introduce themselves here:

Prof. Dr Burak Çopur (*Head of ZRP*)

Background: Political scientist, professor at IU in Essen, lecturer at the University of Duisburg-Essen, doctorate on German-Turkish relations (Heinrich Böll Foundation)

Expertise: Turkey-related extremism, political Islam, migration, integration, anti-democratic tendencies in the migration society

Practice: Expert witness in state protection proceedings at higher regional courts, many years of work at the NRW Ministry of Education; Co-author of studies on Grey Wolves & Furkan movement

Position: Advocates for evidence-based policy advice and practical prevention strategies

Research focus: Prof. Çopur examines political radicalisation processes, particularly in the context of extremism and Islamism, authoritarian developments and minority politics. One focus is on Turkey - for example in relation to repression against exiles and structural discrimination against ethnic-religious groups. Other key topics include anti-democratic tendencies in Germany, for example in the wake of the coronavirus protests, and racist discourse in everyday life.



Prof. Dr Bärbel Bongartz

Background: criminologist, professor at IU in Hamburg, formerly worked in prisons and at HAW Hamburg

Expertise: Radicalisation of the middle class, penal system, crime motivated by prejudice

Projects: Evaluations and consulting for criminologically relevant areas

Position: Emphasises the importance of interdisciplinary approaches



Prof. Dr Emre Arslan

Background: Political scientist and sociologist specialising in right-wing extremism, democracy and racism research, teaches at IU in Cologne

Expertise: Racism, right-wing extremism, development of democracy

Projects: Focus on radicalisation in the context of migrant communities

Position: Critical observer of power relations and social inequality, strongly involved in intersectional educational work

Research focus: Focuses on ideologies of inequality, political didactics, symbolic order and racism in the educational context. His work questions dialogical pedagogy and analyses the conditions for successful integration, including in higher education. Other contributions deal with refugee movements, nationalism, everyday discrimination and dealing with racism in the educational field.



Prof. Dr Dr Veronika Zimmer

Background: Educational scientist, professor at IU

Expertise: Islamism, prevention of extremism in schools

Projects: Studies on the role of schools in promoting democracy, heterogeneity in education, values and attitudes of young people

Position: Stands for the combination of empirical educational research and prevention practice

Research focus: Development of values, religious orientations and anti-Semitism. Her studies examine the role of heterogeneous friendships on the attitudes of young people. Other works analyse educational experiences, Islamic religious education and diversity in the school context.



Prof. Dr Mehmet Kart

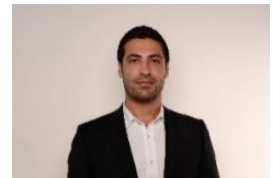
Background: Sociologist, professor at IU in Bremen, many years of experience in social work

Expertise: Islamism, prevention of extremism, migration and education, socialisation conditions in disadvantaged neighbourhoods

Projects: Research on deradicalisation (head of research project "Distance"), development of study concepts & management of seminars and workshops in the field of radicalisation and prevention, participation in intercultural projects, cooperation with Jewish and Muslim communities in the field of prevention, evaluation of projects in the field of political education and diversity

Position: Argues for a differentiated view of religious identity formation in the area of tension between integration and radicalisation, professionalisation of radicalisation prevention

Research focus: Radicalisation and prevention, upbringing, education and socialisation in immigration society



Prof. Dr Kemal Bozay

Background: Political and social scientist, many years of experience in various practical fields of pedagogical and political education work, project management and experience in EU projects, federal and state projects on migration, radicalisation, racism and ideologies of inequality. Author of numerous publications and articles on topics such as right-wing extremism, racism, ideologies of inequality, Turkish and migrant ultranationalism, Islamism/Salafism, prevention of radicalisation and de-radicalisation, diversity-sensitive social work, diversity-sensitive child protection. Co-editor of the series Critical Racism Research at Springer VS Verlag.

Expertise: Ideologies of inequality, criticism of racism, right-wing extremism in the migration society, radicalisation phenomena

Projects: Workshop management as part of the ZRP symposium (Victim Protection & Solidarity), scientific support for the NRW Anti-Muslim Racism Reporting and Documentation Centre (MEDAR, funded by the Ministry for Children, Youth, Family, Equality, Refugees and Integration of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia), the "Demokratie-Lost*innen" project (funded by Demokratie Leben!) and "Doing Memory" (funded by the Federal



Agency for Civic Education). He is currently advising the NRW Ministry of the Interior on the expansion of the "Wegweiser NRW" prevention programme.

Position: Committed to empowerment, diversity sensitivity and education that is critical of racism in social Professions. Addresses various phenomena of racism, right-wing extremism and ideologies of inequality in post-migrant society.

Prof. Dr Jens Ostwaldt

Background: Social scientist with a focus on prevention and deradicalisation research

Expertise: Prevention and deradicalisation as well as evaluation and monitoring of exit and prevention programmes

Projects: Evaluation of the Competence Centre against Extremism Baden-Württemberg konex at the LKA BW, development of impact models and methods for deradicalisation and prevention programmes, evaluation of the Central Contact Point for Public Officials and Mandate Holders (ZAMAT) at the LKA BW

Position: Professionalisation of prevention and deradicalisation in Germany through systematic effectiveness measurement and evidence-based programme design and implementation

Research focus: Methods, structures and actors of extremism prevention and deradicalisation, professionalisation of prevention work, counselling approaches, e.g. in cases of attacks on public officials and elected representatives



Yannick von Lautz (*Academic Coordinator ZRP*)

Background: Islamic studies and extremism researcher

Expertise: Evaluation research, Islamism, exit counselling, counselling, research on (de)radicalisation processes

Projects: Research assistant in the "Distance" research project, development of teaching modules & management of seminars and workshops in the field of radicalisation and prevention

Position: Combines scientific analysis with strategic advice for specialist agencies and authorities

Specialised in counselling approaches to deradicalisation, logics of action by professionals, the role of digital environments in radicalisation processes and interfaces between schools and extracurricular actors. Numerous publications are dedicated to the interweaving of security-oriented and socio-educational approaches, experiences of discrimination and structural challenges in the P/CVE field



5. CONTACT US

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