

## Press Release

# EU Research Project on the Costs of Disinformation and Extremism Presents Results

*Berlin/Potsdam, September 15, 2025.* What is the relationship between disinformation, crime and political extremism? How can authorities and civil society counter these threats? And how can the economic costs of radicalization actually be calculated?

These are the central questions addressed by the EU research project FERMI (“Fake nEws Risk MItigator”), launched in October 2022. On September 16, the Brandenburg Institute for Society and Security (BIGS), a research partner in the project, will present the results together with 17 partners from 11 EU countries at an international conference at Humboldt University in Berlin.

FERMI, funded by the EU’s Horizon Europe program, investigates the link between disinformation, crime and political extremism. The project aims to provide practical tools for both authorities and civil society to respond more effectively to these kinds of threats.

## Tools to Counter Disinformation

At the core of FERMI are technical tools such as digital monitoring systems that reveal through which social media channels and by which users disinformation is being spread. These tools also enable decision-makers to better assess the potential consequences for crime and extremism. Should a campaign be likely to cause particularly severe societal or economic harm, the system proposes tailored countermeasures that can be evaluated and implemented by practitioners.

BIGS, an independent security research institute based in Potsdam, played a key role in the design and implementation of the project. BIGS Director Tim Stuchtey emphasizes the institute’s methodological contribution: *“With FERMI, our focus was on the economic perspective of disinformation, demonstrating that disinformation and the radicalization it fuels are not only political, but also measurable economic challenges. They directly undermine economic growth. Quantifying their impact allows policymakers to design countermeasures that are evidence-based and transparent. This is where BIGS makes a difference – we make security measurable.”*

*“Disinformation is no longer a marginal phenomenon, but a serious threat to social cohesion and democratic institutions,”* adds Sven-Eric Fikenschner, project manager at the University of Applied Sciences for Public Administration in Bavarian, which headed the project. *“It can drive politically motivated crime from the digital sphere into the real world. With FERMI, we have built a platform that, for the first time, systematically connects data on disinformation with crime statistics. This provides the security authorities with a reliable foundation to identify criminal dynamics at an early stage and to develop targeted, effective counterstrategies.”*

The conference brings together an esteemed group of experts from academia, politics, security authorities and civil society. Discussions focus on the European-wide disinformation threat, the state of play in technology-driven solutions for crime

prevention, and data strategies as effective countermeasures. The event also examines whether politically motivated crime can serve as an indicator of radicalization – an approach that could prove promising in Germany but remains difficult to apply across borders due to the lack of comparable datasets.

Projects such as FERMI highlight BIGS' unique position as a bridge between research, policy and practice – and as a driving force in developing not only analyses but also concrete solutions to today's most pressing internal and external security challenges.

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## **About Brandenburg Institute for Society and Security (BIGS)**

The Brandenburg Institute for Society and Security (BIGS) is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit research institute based in Potsdam. Its mission is to address questions and challenges of civil security through research, analysis, publications and events, while bridging the gap between theory and practice with a strong application-oriented approach. The institute is led by Prof. Dr. Tim Stuchtey, an economist who also holds a professorship at the German University of Digital Science in Potsdam. BIGS fosters interdisciplinarity to ensure that scientific insights are considered when the state, society and businesses face the complex challenges of civil security.

[www.bigs-potsdam.org](http://www.bigs-potsdam.org)

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You can contact us at any time using our [general contact details](#). We will put you in touch with the right person at our institute.