

# How the German federal election has fueled COVID-19 misinformation online

A Report for Governments and the WHO

Oct. 7, 2021

A silhouette of a hand holding a ballot box, set against a bright, hazy background. The hand is on the left, wearing a watch, and is holding a dark, rectangular ballot box. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape with a bright light source, possibly the sun, creating a lens flare effect.

 **NewsGuard**

This report features Facebook pages and groups that have been spreading misinformation about the German election AND health topics - including COVID-19, vaccines, and COVID-related governmental regulations - to large audiences.

As became apparent in the wake of the U.S. presidential elections in November 2020, German elections proved once again that national elections are a fertile growing ground for misinformation of all kinds, including health misinformation.

a) The German federal election spurred new COVID-related myths online.



Facebook account  
with 87,246  
followers

Post:  
44 comments  
554 likes  
95 shares

False claim: During the Bundestag-election campaign, the federal government deliberately hid from the public the side effects of COVID-19 vaccines as well as their lack of efficacy, while dissenting opinions were silenced.

reitschuster.de

NewsGuard



Proceed with caution: This website fails to adhere to several basic journalistic standards.

A news blog run by journalist Boris Reitschuster that covers German politics from an undisclosed right-wing perspective.

Score: 59.5/100

[See the full Nutrition Label →](#)

CREDIBILITY

- ✓ Does not repeatedly publish false content
- ✗ Gathers and presents information responsibly
- ✓ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors
- ✗ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly
- ✗ Avoids deceptive headlines

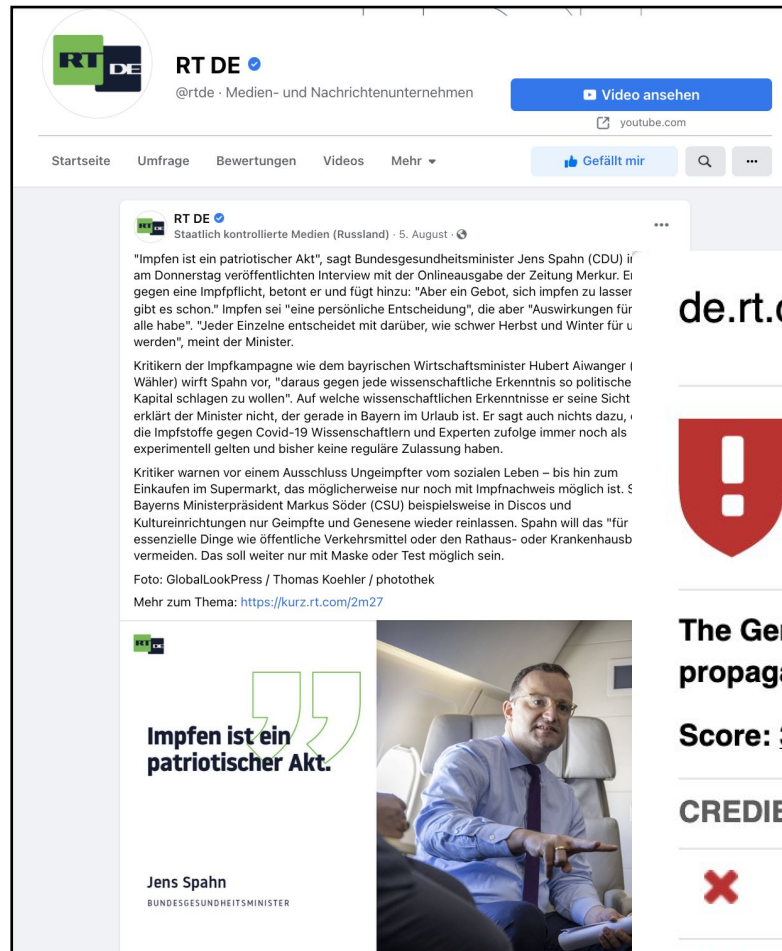
TRANSPARENCY

- ✓ Website discloses ownership and financing
- ✓ Clearly labels advertising
- ✓ Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest
- ✓ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information

**False claim:** Starting this fall, the German federal government is planning to make shopping in supermarkets only possible for people with proof of vaccination.

**Facebook account with 627.861 Followers**

**Post:**  
 1,590 comments  
 3,358 likes  
 305 shares



de.rt.com

NewsGuard



**Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.**

**The German website of RT, a Russian government disinformation and propaganda effort previously known as Russia Today.**

**Score:** 32.5/100

[See the full Nutrition Label →](#)

**CREDIBILITY**

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This claim was also shared by the Facebook Group “Ich misstraue der Regierung!” (“I don’t trust the government”), with an article from another well-known misinformation website, rated Red (generally unreliable) by NewsGuard: JournalistenWatch.com


Facebook group with  
15,048 members

**Ich misstraue der Regierung!**  
Öffentliche Gruppe · 15.075 Mitglieder

journalistenwatch.com **NewsGuard**

Info Diskussion Mitglieder Ver...

Stephan Nuding hat einen Link geteilt  
7. August · 🌐



JOURNALISTENWATCH.COM  
**Corona-Deutschland goes Nordkorea: verhungern, jeder kontrolliert jeden, D**

Im COVID-19-Informationszentrum findest du Infos und Ressourcen zu Impfungen.  
[Infos zu Impfungen](#)

5 Mal geteilt

**Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.**

A website that has relied on misleading or unsubstantiated claims to back an undisclosed far-right, anti-Islam viewpoint in its coverage of journalism and of national and international news.

Score: 20/100 [See the full Nutrition Label →](#)

CREDIBILITY	TRANSPARENCY
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✗ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly	✗ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information
✗ Avoids deceptive headlines	

b) The election also helped perpetuate long-lasting myths about the pandemic, with a new twist.

In April 2021, one of the most widely shared conspiracy theories about the pandemic, **the Great Reset theory**, took a different spin in Germany - and gained new traction - ahead of the federal elections of September 2021.



wochenblick.at

NewsGuard



Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.

The website of the right-wing Austrian weekly newspaper **Wochenblick**, which has published false content that advances nationalist and pro-FPÖ views, including about COVID-19.

Score: 0/100

[See the full Nutrition Label →](#)

#### CREDIBILITY

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False claim: "Global financial elites" and world leaders planned the COVID-19 pandemic to take global political and economic control in a New World Order, or take control over the Bundestagswahl 2021 elections, with a new chancellor that will come from the Green party.



In April 2021, this false claim started being shared by several large Facebook groups.


### Boarisch Bluad

Öffentliche Gruppe · 41.593 Mitglieder

Gruppe beitreten

Info Diskussion Ankündigungen Themen Personen Mehr

Maja Biene hat einen Link geteilt.  
18. April ·



WOCHENBLICK.AT  
**Deutsche Politikerin packt aus: Corona nur ein Vorwand für den Great Reset**

9 3 Kommentare 8 Mal geteilt

**Info**  
Wer san ma und wos woll ma?  
Mia sama stoize Boarer wou a jeda wos zum song hod.... [Mehr ansehen](#)

**Öffentlich**  
Jeder kann die Mitglieder der Gruppe und ihre Beiträge sehen.

**Sichtbar**  
Jeder kann diese Gruppe finden.

**Allgemein**

“Boarisch Bluad”  
(Bavarian Blood)  
41,577 Followers

“Ob du dumm bist hab ich dich gefragt”  
(I asked you, if you are stupid?)  
19,519 Followers

### Ob du dumm bist hab ich dich gefragt

@ObDuDummBistHabIchDichGefragt · Community


Jetzt Nachricht senden

Startseite Info Fotos Videos Mehr

Gefällt mir

Ob du dumm bist hab ich dich gefragt  
18. April ·

<https://www.wochenblick.at/deutsche-politikerin-packt-.../>



WOCHENBLICK.AT  
**Deutsche Politikerin packt aus: Corona nur ein Vorwand für den Great Reset**  
Der Great Reset wird durchgezogen, das ist beschlossene Sache. Die Corona-Krise ist nur ...

Im COVID-19-Informationszentrum findest du Infos und Ressourcen zu Impfungen.  
[Infos zu Impfungen](#)

32 16 Kommentare 42 Mal geteilt

And in August 2021, a month before the election, the claim was still being shared on large Facebook groups.


## Glaub nicht alles!

Öffentliche Gruppe · 62.525 Mitglieder

Gruppe beitreten

Info Diskussion Ankündigungen Themen Personen Mehr

Glover Stephen hat einen Link geteilt.  
5. August ·



WOCHENBLICK.AT  
Deutsche Politikerin packt aus: Corona nur ein Vorwand für den Great Reset

### Info

Diese Gruppe ist dazu da um mit Wachen Menschen in Kontakt zu treten, um Neuigkeiten zu verbreiten und um uns gegenseitig zu Helfen.

Die Leute ... Mehr ansehen

- Öffentlich  
Jeder kann die Mitglieder der Gruppe und ihre Beiträge sehen.
- Sichtbar  
Jeder kann diese Gruppe finden.
- Deutschland
- Allgemein

**“Glaub nicht alles!”**  
**(Don't believe everything!)**  
**62,515 members**

c) As election misinformation spurs new narratives or gives them a second life, COVID-19 misinformation continues to thrive on German-language groups and pages on Facebook.


False claim: A phenomenon called “antibody dependent enhancement” causes an infection with the COVID-19 virus to be worse in previously vaccinated persons than in unvaccinated persons.

Facebook account with 50.586 Followers

Post:  
91 comments  
615 likes  
412 shares

**Achgut.com - Die Achse des Guten**  
31. August um 10:40 · 🌐

(Jochen Ziegler) Das Phänomen heißt „antibody dependent enhancement“ (#ADE), dabei führt die #Impfung dazu, dass eine Neuinfektion mit dem Erreger schlimmer verläuft als ohne. Ich habe das für übertrieben gehalten, aber neue Hinweise sind beunruhigend./  
[#Achgut](#) [#Coronalmpfung](#) [#antibodydependentenhancement](#)



ACHGUT.COM  
Und nochmal: Verschlimmert die Impfung w  
Das Phänomen heißt “antibody dependent enhance

Im COVID-19-Informationszentrum findest d  
Impfungen.  
[Infos zu Impfungen](#)

👍👎 615

achgut.com

 NewsGuard



**Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.**

A conservative opinion blog covering German politics that has published false and misleading claims, particularly about immigration and climate change.

Score: [35/100](#)

[See the full Nutrition Label →](#)

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This false claim was shared by the Facebook Group "Glaub nicht alles" ("Don't believe everything").

Facebook group with 62,515 members

# Glaub nicht alles!

Öffentliche Gruppe · 62.537 Mitglieder

Gruppe beitreten

Info Diskussion Ankündigungen Themen Personen Mehr



Martin Klinger hat einen Link geteilt.

1. September ·

[https://www.achgut.com/.../und\\_nochmal\\_verschlimmert\\_die...](https://www.achgut.com/.../und_nochmal_verschlimmert_die...)



ACHGUT.COM

Und nochmal: Verschlimmert die Impfung womöglich COVID?



Im COVID-19-Informationszentrum findest du Infos und Ressourcen zu Impfungen.

[Infos zu Impfungen](#)

1 Mal geteilt

## Info

Diese Gruppe ist dazu da um mit Wachen Menschen in Kontakt zu treten, um Neuigkeiten zu verbreiten und um uns gegenseitig zu Helfen.

Die Leute ... Mehr ansehen

Öffentlich

Jeder kann die Mitglieder der Gruppe und ihre Beiträge sehen.

Sichtbar

Jeder kann diese Gruppe finden.

Deutschland

Allgemein

# Völker dieser Welt erheben sich !!

Öffentliche Gruppe · 17.532 Mitglieder

Gruppe beitreten

Info Diskussion Mitglieder Veranstaltungen Medien Dateien

It was also shared by the Facebook Group “Völker dieser Welt erheben sich !!” (“Nations of this world rise up”)..

Facebook group with 17,532 members



Marion Wee hat einen Link geteilt.

31. August · 🌐



ACHGUT.COM

Und nochmal: Verschlimmert die Impfung womöglich COVID?



Im COVID-19-Informationszentrum findest du Infos und Ressourcen zu Impfungen.

[Infos zu Impfungen](#)

3

1 Mal geteilt

## Info

Partnergruppe <3 Willkommen schaut mal vorbei , drück auf den folgenden link ... [Mehr ansehen](#)

Öffentlich

Jeder kann die Mitglieder der Gruppe und ihre Beiträge sehen.

Sichtbar

Jeder kann diese Gruppe finden.

Allgemein





unzensuriert.at

21. September um 11:18 · 🌐

Sätze wie dieser, wonach der Biontech/Pfizer-Impfstoff mehr Menschen töte als rette, werden gerne in die Schublade „Verschwörungstheorie“ gesteckt. Schwierig wird das, wenn diese Sätze in offiziellen Gremien fallen.



UNZENSURIERT.AT

Forscher im Expertengremium: „Pfizer-Impfstoff tötet mehr rettet“

👍👎👤 603

42 Kor

👍 Gefällt mir

💬 Kommentieren

False claim: The COVID-19 Pfizer vaccines kills twice as many people as it actually saves.

unzensuriert.at



**Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic journalistic standards.**

A right-wing news site covering Austria and Germany, which has published false content that advances the Freedom Party of Austria's views.

Score: 7.5/100

[See the full Nutrition Label →](#)

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Facebook account with 58,444 Followers

Post: 42 comments 603 likes 508 shares

This false claim was shared by the Facebook Group "Völker dieser Welt erheben sich" ("Nations of this world rise up").

Facebook group with 17,532 members

## Völker dieser Welt erheben sich !!

Öffentliche Gruppe · 17.532 Mitglieder

Gruppe beitreten

Info Diskussion Mitglieder Veranstaltungen Medien Dateien



Michael Mike Domovnik hat einen Link geteilt.

21. September um 11:30 ·



UNZENSURIERT.AT

Forscher im Expertengremium: „Pfizer-Impfstoff tötet mehr Menschen, als er rettet“

2

1 Mal geteilt

Gefällt mir

Teilen

### Info

Partnergruppe <3 Willkommen schaut mal vorbei , drück auf den folgenden link ... [Mehr ansehen](#)

Öffentlich

Jeder kann die Mitglieder der Gruppe und ihre Beiträge sehen.

Sichtbar

Jeder kann diese Gruppe finden.

Allgemein

It was also shared by the Facebook Group "Neuwahlen für Österreich. Demokratie jetzt" (New elections for Austria. Democracy now).

Facebook group with 15,319 members

# 🇺🇦 Neuwahlen für Österreich 🇺🇦

## Demokratie JETZT

🌐 Öffentliche Gruppe · 15.319 Mitglieder

[Gruppe beitreten](#)

Info **Diskussion** Ankündigungen Themen Personen Mehr ▾

Michael Mike Domovník hat einen Link geteilt.  
21. September um 11:30 · 🌐



UNZENSURIERT.AT

**Forscher im Expertengremium: „Pfizer-Impfstoff tötet mehr Menschen, als er rettet“**

6 2 Mal geteilt

[Gefällt mir](#) [Kommentieren](#) [Teilen](#)

**Info**

Diese Gruppe ist dafür gemacht, in Österreich eine positive Veränderung herbei zu führen.

Dieses Land muss sich lernen zu wehren, nicht immer ... [Mehr ansehen](#)

**🌐 Öffentlich**  
Jeder kann die Mitglieder der Gruppe und ihre Beiträge sehen.

**👁 Sichtbar**  
Jeder kann diese Gruppe finden.

**👤 Allgemein**

This report was produced using two proprietary datasets from NewsGuard.

- The Misinformation Fingerprints dataset, a catalogue of data about top misinformation narratives, contains related keywords and search terms for all of the top misinformation and disinformation narratives spreading online--produced using human intelligence but designed for use with AI/ML/NLP tools to identify content matching specific false claims. NewsGuard analysts used the Misinformation Fingerprints dataset to identify relevant searches related to misinformation narratives about COVID-19 and other topics.
- The second dataset used was the News Website Reliability Ratings, which consists of credibility ratings for over 6,000 news and information website that account for 95% of online engagement with news in the U.S., U.K., France, Germany and Italy. Each site's rating is based on nine basic, apolitical journalistic criteria. Based on the criteria, each site receives an overall designation of green (generally trustworthy) or red (generally not trustworthy) and a trust score of 0-100. NewsGuard's analyst used the News Website Reliability Ratings dataset to identify misinformation sources that appeared in the results for searches conducted as part of the analysis.
- Examples selected for the report represent an illustrative, but by no means exhaustive, list of search results that contain misinformation sources. Both the Misinformation Fingerprints and the News Website Reliability Index are available to be licensed for research and other purposes.

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Photo by [Element5 Digital](#) from [Pexels](#)