

# **Trade union response to the far-right political movement – Germany**

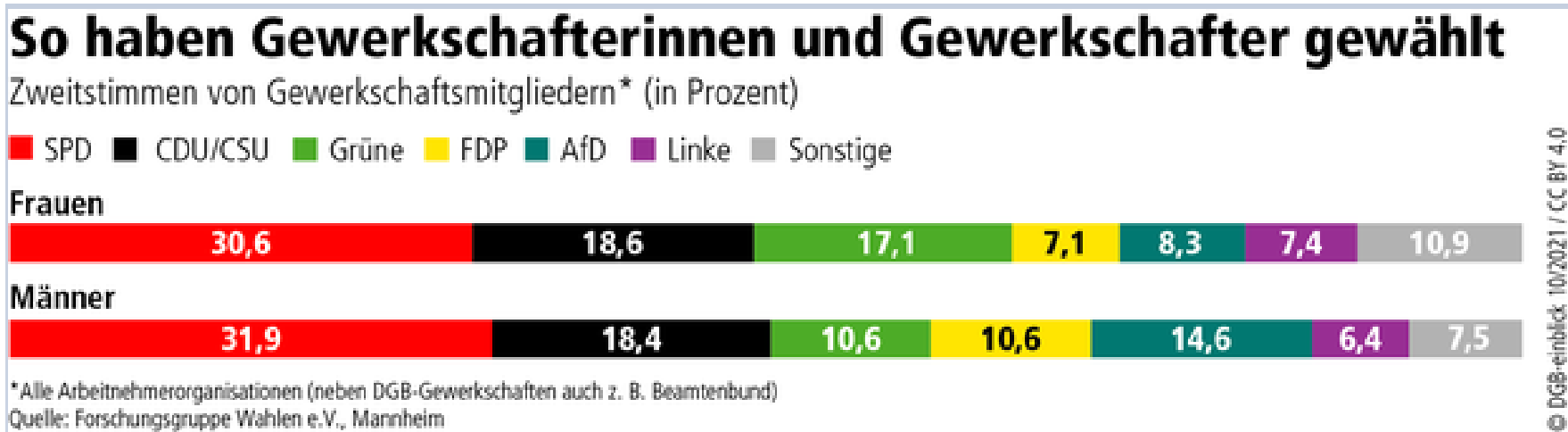
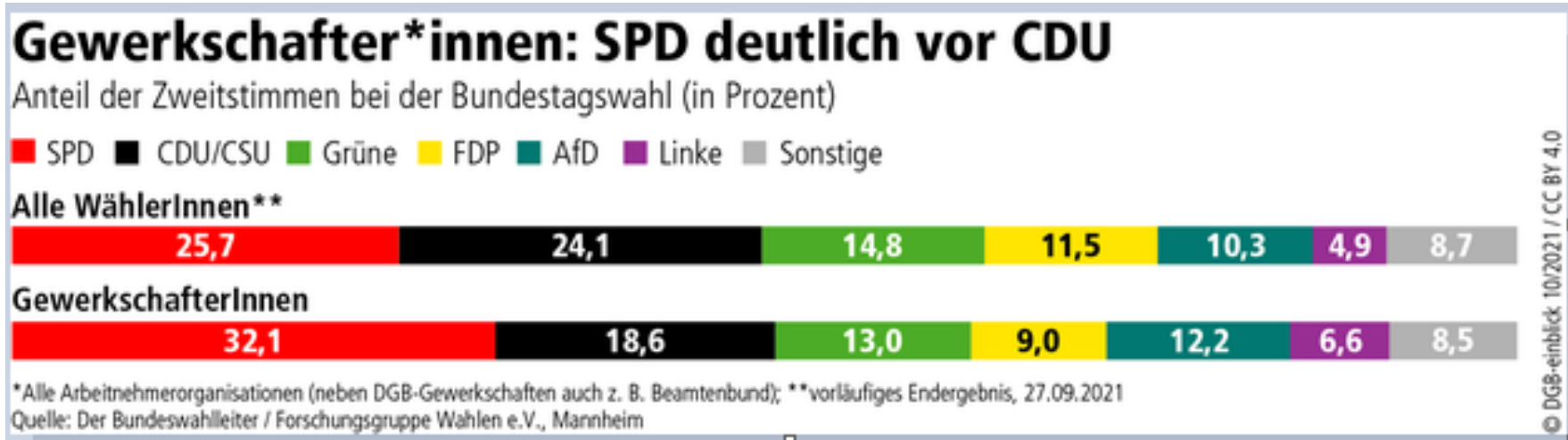
EFFAT Executive Committee, 21 November 2022

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**Deine Arbeit. Unsere Stärke.**

# Trade Unions and the Far-right - Election Results of the AfD 2021

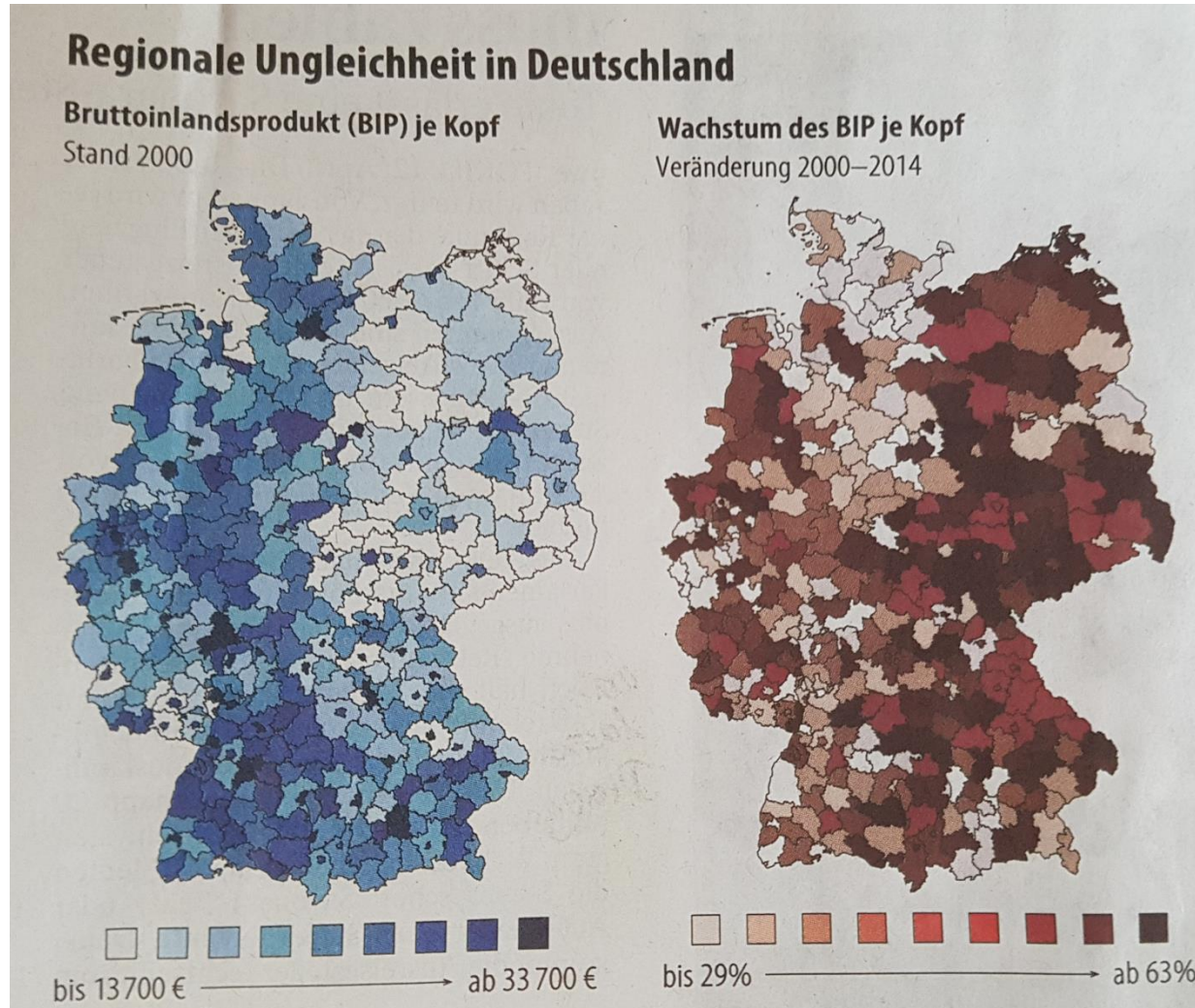


## Some Findings

In a scientific study on the subject of trade unions and right-wing extremism, Richard Stöss, Bodo Zeuner and others have pointed out,

- » that **active trade union members** - unlike passive members - **tend to be immunised** against right-wing extremist attitudes and that the most effective defensive orientation against right-wing extremism lies in democratic convictions/participatory orientations.
- » In addition to entrenched right-wing attitudes, which have unfortunately been evident all these years, **male, middle-class, middle-aged voters in particular tend to vote for the AfD**. The motives are to be found in a role insecurity, in personal dissatisfaction.
- » It is not the **objective situation that is decisive, but the subjective perception**. Where individual dissatisfaction meets rejection of a democracy dependent on compromise, as well as hostility towards a diverse and open society, the AfD has its greatest successes.

# Why? Social situation not the decisive question



## Regional inequalities

**Ingolstadt („Audistadt“)**  
GDP per capita (2020):  
Euro 122.410.-

AfD election result  
2017: 15,1%  
2021: 10%

**Nordfriesland/  
Dithmarschen Nord**  
GDP per capita (2017):  
Euro 31.593.-

AfD election result:  
2017: 6,5%  
2021: 6,1%

## Middle-class Bias

Gerd Grötzinger (in a quantitative analysis of social data) looking at Eastern Germany:

- » "The higher the household income per person and the higher the proportion of employees subject to social security contributions, the more AfD is voted for in these constituencies. So it is definitely not the poorer eastern regions that are susceptible to right-wing populism. (...) It is the areas in the new federal states with more employment intensity. (...) At the moment, at least, it seems to boil down more to a survey-derived description of "average earners who feel at the mercy of others".
- » Disappointments and slights are not so much the result of previous relegation processes and devaluation experiences. The driving motive is rather the expectation of economic and social deterioration. These fears are strongly pronounced in the middle classes.
- » Elevated far-right attitudes have a middle-class bias.

## Why? Just a few incomplete bullet points...

- » The world of work generates a high degree of insecurity - be it due to possible job losses, new demands in coping with technological changes, company restructuring also in the context of globalisation processes (outsourcing, reorganisation of value chains) etc. **These uncertainties are experienced as losses of control.** Devaluation of qualifications and experience, acceleration of rationalisation processes with unclear consequences, changed forms of company control. Even if work can still be "done" today, this no longer applies to the future. The feeling that one's "fate is no longer in one's own hands" is spread.
  - » Active trade union members perceive the processes even more as changeable. Whether the challenges of the world of work are accepted depends largely on the fact that the changes are experienced as transparent and manageable and that it seems possible to shape one's own employment biography in the company regime. Here, however, doubts and concerns are increasingly being formulated.
- » An **anti-establishment attitude** has developed at a distance from politics. Distrust in the outdated structures of democratic decision-making and its institutions has increased. It is reinforced by a "us down here" - the ordinary, hard-working man - against "them up there" - the elites, the politicians, the media ("lying press")
- » **Trivialisation:** References to colleagues who have voted or want to vote for the AfD are often supplemented with the reference that they are only doing so as a protest.