Strategic Culture Foundation



The Censor from the Machine. When AI Decides What Can Still Be Said in Germany

Stefan Pieck - Journalist, columnist. November 13, 2026

The German government wants to use AI to restrict freedom of speech by blocking articles and speeches on the internet that the establishment parties find objectionable. The SPD and the CDU are planning a massive offensive against freedom of speech. Citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms are under threat—in particular, the right to access information. Essentially, the proposal is to use AI to establish a "digital concentration camp," whereby artificial intelligence would scan the internet and determine which texts, journalistic articles, and personal posts should be banned and blocked.

Some German media outlets have learned of these plans by the Merz government. While a final draft bill has not yet been reviewed or passed, such a draft is being prepared, and the idea of blocking unwelcome information is being discussed behind the scenes within the CDU

and SPD. The issue at hand is the so-called “State Treaty on Digital Media” (Digitale-Medien-Staatsvertrag).

Representatives of these parties plan to introduce constant AI monitoring on the Internet. A special AI-based program (which has already been named “KIVI”) will comb through the boundless sea of the Internet like a fisherman with a net, fishing out content that, in the opinion of the program’s creators, does not conform to Germany’s mainstream propaganda. The censored information will then be deleted.

> This means there are plans to simply ban and block all opinions and texts online that might, for example, contain positive statements about the AfD or criticism of the Merz government. The ban would undoubtedly also apply to texts that criticize the Zelenskyy regime, Ukraine as a whole, or those that discuss establishing contacts with Russia. I am certain that pro-China articles and posts will also be blocked.

According to German media reports, the draft bill initially applies only to digital mass media and is intended to permanently legalize the use of artificial intelligence by state and regional media regulatory authorities. To date, such activity has had no legal status or legal basis. This means that, until now, the use of AI for censorship purposes has taken place entirely outside the legal framework. That is one side of the story.

On the other hand, many online platforms, podcasts, and social media channels do not currently have the status of registered media outlets and also fall outside the legal framework of regulatory oversight. They are subject only to the fundamental universal “right to freedom of expression” and the freedom to express one’s thoughts.

To block content in which alleged “violations” have been identified, a court ruling is required. Or, let’s say, an angry outburst from the German interior minister. However, everyone remembers how the case involving the magazine “Compact”—which was shut down by order of Nancy Faeser—turned out. The court ruled to overturn the German Interior Ministry’s ban and allowed the magazine to resume publication and convey its ideas to readers.

If the “KIVI” bill were to be passed, magazines could continue to be published. Formally, no one would ban them. However, any content critical of the government or the chancellor would be automatically deleted without having to wait for a court ruling.

Critics of the bill are convinced that it would grant state governments powers that conflict with citizens’ fundamental rights. Under the guise of concern for the accuracy of what is written on the internet, the authorities could intervene in an unprecedented manner in the digital public sphere, which has thus far been an oasis of freedom.

You can also find images online generated by the same AI that depict Friedrich Merz as Pinocchio. Or, for example, AfD supporters might come out with harsh anti-immigrant slogans, and pro-Palestinian civil society organizations might (oh, my God!) criticize the Netanyahu government.

Is something like this even allowed in a normal, civilized, liberal-democratic society?

That is why the idea behind the bill, as intended by its authors, is of course the very best: to ensure quality and combat disinformation. But the question remains: What counts as disinformation?

> This is a very serious issue. For example, given the stance taken by German authorities toward critical journalists, it is already clear that freedom of expression in Germany is under threat and that repression is already a reality.

Here are a few examples: Alina Lipp, a journalist and blogger from Hamburg, was forced to flee to Russia with her parents because she advocated for friendship and good relations with Russia in her articles. The Hamburg intelligence services constantly monitored her and her mother, and she herself faced the threat of arrest for supporting Russia.

Another example: The journalist Vladimir Sergienko lost his German citizenship for purely formal reasons. Allegedly, he stated on a form that he held only Ukrainian citizenship. And in addition to German citizenship, he also wanted to acquire Russian citizenship.

A violation? Technically—perhaps. I'm not a lawyer. But I wonder: Who checked the citizenship of the so-called Syrian refugees, many of whom have been coming to Germany without papers since 2015? And when they commit serious crimes in Germany, they're provided with Arabic interpreters, but it turns out that many of them speak Pashto, Dari, or other Middle Eastern or Asian languages—but not Arabic.

But Vladimir Sergienko did not rob or kill anyone. He merely advocated for Russia's position as a journalist and advisor to an AfD member of parliament on the Brandenburg public broadcaster RBB. I am convinced that his journalistic stance is the real reason for the revocation of his German citizenship.

Here's another example: Thomas Röper, a journalist from Bremen and the author of the "Antispiegel" project, cannot return to his home country because he faces arrest there due to his civic stance, which he freely expresses online.

In other words, all of these German journalists are currently beyond the reach of the German justice system, but their free speech is accessible to Germans via the Internet. And that annoys the German authorities terribly.

> However, if the "KIVI" bill is passed, Germans in Germany will no longer be able to read what they write. They will be blocked just as the Russian media—RT DE and Sputnik—were officially blocked before.

Germans will not be exposed to any alternative viewpoints that differ from the position of Chancellor Merz and his company.

Nor will law-abiding citizens be exposed to alternative viewpoints from like-minded people in Germany who are dissatisfied with the government's policies. Under the proposed bill,

Germans who express criticism could not only have their “incorrect” posts quickly blocked, but could also be fined.

And all of this—without a court order. The special “KIVI” program will handle everything on its own.

As the publication “Overton” notes in this context, this puts pressure on one of the fundamental principles of the rule of law—judicial review: Independent courts will no longer issue preliminary rulings on blocking measures.

Instead, the leadership of the authorities—which is appointed under the influence of political parties—will decide independently and without judicial approval which content must be removed from the internet. Such a shift toward administrative arbitrariness is effectively tantamount to censorship and constitutes a structural attack on the very foundations of the rule of law and the Constitution (Grundgesetz).

Why has hardly anyone in Germany sounded the alarm so far? The explanation is simple: deliberations on the draft bill have so far been kept secret from the general public.

Currently, the deliberations are taking place at the level of the “Broadcasting Commission of the States,” which has reportedly already approved the draft. The official phase will last until mid-November 2026. Only then will the draft bill be put to a vote in the parliaments of all 16 federal states. That is when the real battle over this draft bill will begin.

The fact is that media policy in Germany falls exclusively under the jurisdiction of the federal states. If the parliament of even one of the states does not approve this bill, it will be rejected. And there is hope that it will be rejected at least by the state parliament of Saxony-Anhalt, where the AfD has a strong presence.

The AfD understands very well that this bill is also directed against them, as it involves the imposition of digital control in the interest of the establishment parties, primarily the CDU and SPD. However, it’s not quite that simple.

> The AI program might already be secretly blocking individual posts by specific Germans, who may not even notice that one of their posts has been deleted—for example, a week after it was published in a chat or in comments on social media.

And even if suspicious deletions of their posts are noticed, they will not take the matter to court. Lawsuits in Germany are expensive. Therefore, the AI censorship software is not at risk. If even the German Ministry of the Interior resorts to such a blatantly illegal measure—banning the well-known magazine “Compact” by ministerial decree, even though it knows what a scandal this will cause—why shouldn’t such a stealthy method of censorship be introduced on the internet?

Incidentally, there is yet another method of covert censorship—the suppression of undesirable media resources. They can be deliberately pushed to the margins of the internet. Links to them and their content do not appear in search engines. Although they exist online, no one sees them unless they specifically search for direct queries or links.

Financially vulnerable online media outlets cannot compete on equal footing with the media giants. They are simply overwhelmed online by large broadcasting and media conglomerates with billions in revenue and their content.

Mainstream media enjoy a certain privileged status on platforms like YouTube, TikTok, or X. And the developers of AI systems are required to create models that allocate more media space to outlets certified by the government or large corporations.

Seeking protection from the “Press Council” is also futile. The “Press Council” is dominated by major publishers, who act as gatekeepers and decide for themselves which competitors they will allow to reach the audience and which they will not. Independent publications, on the other hand, face enormous bureaucratic hurdles erected by regional media regulatory authorities.

By granting the already dominant media conglomerates a privileged position, the authorities are creating a shortage of independent information. The internet is gradually becoming the only source of information. Alternative journalistic investigations don’t even have to be deleted. They simply aren’t read by anyone, since they aren’t visible to users.

And the fact that German media regulatory authorities are currently coming up with projects like “KIVI” points to only one thing—they intend to completely destroy freedom of expression and speech, as well as the pluralism of opinions in Germany.