

contra-magazin.com

A right-wing news site that covers German and Austrian as well as international politics, and has repeatedly published false and misleading information.



Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency.

Score: 20/100

Ownership and Financing

The site states that it is owned by Marco Maier, who also owns the satirical site Berliner-Express.com. The site's Impressum (Imprint) page provides an address in the Philippines. Until late 2019, the site had been co-owned by Maier and Andreas Keltscha.

Contra-Magazin.com runs advertisements and sells subscriptions.

Content

On the site's Editorial Policy (Blattlinie) page, Contra Magazin describes itself as: "We at Contra Magazin want to convey the news in a very critical way [...] We stand for a free Europe that is democratic, social, and pluralistic." Its tagline reads: "information excitingly different."

Content on Contra-Magazin.com is divided into categories including Politics, Economy, Society, Knowledge & Technology, Art & Culture, and Media. Political coverage often focuses on the Austrian and German right-wing parties FPÖ (Freedom Party of Austria) and AfD (Alternative for Germany), frequently quoting their leaders and reporting on the party's prospects and election results.

Under the subheading Contra-Special, the site publishes articles on global conflicts and other thematic topics, such as the Ukraine crisis. The Contra-Punkt page is dedicated to what the site calls "articles about 'controversial', polarising topics against the mainstream."

Typical articles have run under headlines including "Meuthen: The AfD is the only election winner" ("Meuthen: Die AfD ist der einzige Wahlsieger"); "High cancer rate in Serbia - NATO uranium bombs as genocide weapon?" ("Hohe Krebsrate in Serbien: NATO-Uranbomben als Genozidwaffe?"); and "Federal government does not recognize Guaidó's ambassador" ("Bundesregierung erkennt Guaidós Botschafter nicht an.")

- ✗ Does not repeatedly publish false content (22points)
- ✗ Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)
- ✗ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)
- ✗ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)
- ✗ Avoids deceptive headlines (10)
- ✓ Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)
- ✓ Clearly labels advertising (7.5)
- ✓ Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)
- ✗ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

Criteria are listed in order of importance.

[More information.](#)

The CM English section features selected Contra Magazin articles in English.

Credibility

Articles on Contra-Magazin.com rarely include original reporting, mostly relying on content from other media sources, to which the site's writers add commentary. Contra-Magazin.com also often republishes articles from SputnikNews and RT Deutsch — Russian propaganda sites that NewsGuard found repeatedly publish false content.

Contra-Magazin.com has frequently published false and misleading information.

For example, in a February 2020 article, titled “Bioweapons suspicion: Coronavirus contains ‘HIV insertions’” (“Biowaffen-Verdacht: Coronavirus enthält ‘HIV-Insertionen’”), the site claimed that a study by “Indian researchers” found “irregularities in the genome of the virus, which indicate that it has been genetically modified for the purposes of a weapon.” It added that the study found “sections of the virus RNA that have no relationship to other coronaviruses such as SARS and instead appear to be closer to HIV.” The referenced study was posted on the website bioRxiv, which publishes scientific studies before they have undergone peer review.

According to a February 2020 article on the fact-checking website HealthFeedback.org, the study's finding that there is a similarity between the COVID-19 virus and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) “was detected using extremely short protein sequences, a practice that often gives rise to false positive results,” noting that those same sequences are found in many other organisms. The authors of the study withdrew it from bioRxiv just two days after it was published.

There is no evidence that the virus is a purposefully created bioweapon. A March 2020 study published in the journal Nature Medicine concluded that the virus “is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus.” An earlier study, published in February 2020 in the journal Nature, found that the COVID-19 virus is “96% percent identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus.”

An April 2019 article, titled “Notre Dame: What is behind the fire?” (“Notre Dame: Was steckt hinter dem Brand?”), suggested that the Notre Dame fire was an

act of arson by “Muslim extremists.” According to the article, “How centuries-old stone hard wood could so quickly go up in flames is also questioned. Fire accelerators are suspected here.”

In fact, there is no evidence that the fire was intentionally set, let alone that it was perpetrated by Muslims. Officials have not pinpointed the cause of the blaze, but suspect an electric malfunction or a worker’s burning cigarette.

In a September 2018 article, titled “Have the CIA and Saudi Arabia conspired to keep 9/11 details secret?” (“Haben sich die CIA und Saudi-Arabien verschworen, um 9/11-Details geheim zu halten?”), Contra Magazin claimed that “There is overwhelming evidence that the CIA and Saudis were involved in the September 11, 2001 attacks. So much is hushed up and lied about.” The article also stated: “There remains a conspiracy of silence among senior former US and Saudi officials about the attacks.”

The U.S. 9/11 Commission and multiple other investigations concluded that Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaida terror network were responsible for the 2001 terror attacks in the U.S., which killed nearly 3,000 people.

A March 2019 article, titled “Video forensics: The ‘forbidden’ Christchurch video - 24 incongruities that captivate ‘hoaxers’” (“Video-Forensik: Das ‘verbotene’ Christchurch-Video – 24 Unstimmigkeiten, die ‘Hoaxer’ fesseln”), claimed that Brenton Tarrant, who carried out mass shootings at two New Zealand mosques in March 2019, was associated with an unnamed intelligence agency. “Why does this resume remind one of intelligence work?”, the article asked of Tarrant. It also claimed that the shootings were part of a police exercise and may have been orchestrated by authorities. “As professional as [the gunman apprehension] happened - the car was rammed - it looks like part of the ongoing exercise scenario,” the article claimed.

In fact, there is no evidence connecting the New Zealand massacre or Tarrant — who espoused anti-Muslim and white supremacist views — to any intelligence or police agencies. The New Zealand Herald reported that the two officers who apprehended the gunman had been in “a training session on how to

deal with armed offenders” when the shooting broke out. But there is no evidence that the shootings were somehow part of that exercise, as the article implied.

A March 2019 article, titled “Propaganda-children - abuse for political purposes” (Propaganda-Kinder - Missbrauch für politische Zwecke”), stated that the nonprofit organization White Helmets in Syria, also known as the Syria Civil Defense, are “tightly connected with al-Qaeda” and “regularly abuse children for propaganda,” in a bid to convince Western nations to oppose the Assad regime.

Fact-checking site Snopes investigated the claim and said there was no evidence linking the White Helmets to al-Qaeda or suggesting that the group abuses children in Syria so that Assad will be blamed.

Because Contra-Magazin.com regularly publishes inaccurate and misleading content, NewsGuard has determined that the site repeatedly publishes false information and headlines and that it does not gather and present information responsibly.

The site’s Editorial Policy (Blattlinie) page states that “many different opinions and perspectives should be expressed.” However, although the site includes an Opinion section, opinionated content favoring Austrian and German right-wing parties and causes frequently appears in news articles.

For example, a September 2019 article, titled “Austria is no longer an island of the blessed” (“Österreich ist keine Insel der Seligen mehr”), criticized the Austrian government under ÖVP (Austrian People's Party) leadership, stating that “the tactically smart voter will put it in the hands of the FPÖ to decide the composition of the makeup of the next coalition....”

Another September 2019 article, headlined “On the crucial question: 'Who creates terrorists?’” (“Zur entscheidenden Frage: 'Wer schafft Terroristen?’”), stated that “Isn't it the military industrial complex that creates terrorists? Blood money is lubricating the US economy.” It added: “After all, the great lie of the perpetual militaristic state is that the Americans and the peoples of the world are safer.”

An August 2019 article, titled “Christianity is being wiped out in the Middle East” (“Das Christentum wird im Nahen Osten ausgelöscht”), stated that “Once the

Middle East was a thriving Christian country. Today, the remains of Christian life face total extinction,” adding: “Political correctness makes us close our eyes to misery.”

Because Contra-Magazin.com does not disclose its ideological perspective and regularly publishes opinionated statements in articles published outside the Opinion section, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Contra-Magazin.com does not have a stated corrections policy, and NewsGuard did not find corrections on the site.

Asked about the site’s editorial standards, including the articles cited above, the site’s former co-owner Andreas Keltscha told NewsGuard in an email that the site does not intentionally publish incorrect information. Besides, Keltscha said, “That happened so rarely that one does not need to worry about it.”

Regarding the September 2018 article “Have the CIA and Saudi Arabia conspired to keep 9/11 details secret?”, Keltscha wrote: “That tells me that you at NewsGuard really believe that a country like the USA in the year 2001 would not be able to intercept planes that get off their routes... And of course dozens of other things that nobody can make sense of, such as WTC 7, which collapsed without a reason - no fire, no damage from the outside...”

He did not respond to questions about the other stories cited above, or about the site’s handling of opinion.

Transparency

The site’s Imprint (Impressum) page names the site’s owner and editor-in-chief. The site provides contact information in the form of a general email address.

Many articles do not include the name of the writer, and the site does not provide contact or biographical information for its content creators — which is why NewsGuard has determined that Contra-Magazin.com does not meet the standard for disclosing information about content creators.

Keltscha told NewsGuard that the site does not provide such information because some of its writers have been subjected to harassment and insulting comments in the

past. Keltscha added that readers can reach specific staff members by contacting the newsroom.

Advertisements are distinguishable from editorial content.

History

The site was launched in September 2013.

Corrections: An earlier version of this Nutrition Label gave the wrong dates for articles about the Austrian People's Party and terrorism. Both were published in September 2019, not August. NewsGuard apologizes for the errors.

Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was last updated on April 16, 2020, to include an example of the site's coronavirus coverage. It had previously been updated to indicate that the site no longer solicits donations and that it now sells subscriptions, and to reflect that the ownership of the site changed.

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Send feedback to NewsGuard:[Click Here](#)

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