

For democracy, human dignity, and diversity!

Pledge of community foundations in Germany

Think, shape, live democracy

Community foundations of Germany consider themselves as actors of civil society who shape and further develop local communities and life together.

The basis of our actions are the basic democratic values without which civil engagement and participation in decision-making and in shaping life in the community are not possible.

With this pledge, we jointly set an example for democracy and coexistence in dignity; for tolerance and diversity, against hate, intolerance, discrimination, and racism. Democracy is a value that has to be achieved constantly afresh and be defended.

Worldwide we currently experience the wavering of democratic fundamental values, the rise of autocrats, populists and right-wing extremist parties and the brutalization of the social discourse – also in Germany. Derogatory remarks on Twitter, fake news, populist simplifications – the public exchange of opinions has become disrespectful. Snide remarks, insulting propaganda, racist smear campaigns – former taboos seem to have become socially acceptable. There is also the increasing presence of right-wing groups and escalating violence: right-wing extremists' marches, innocent people being hounded down in the streets, attacks on strangers.

We do not accept these tendencies silently but campaign for the basic values of our society, for a free, democratic coexistence on the basis of inalienable fundamental rights and shared fundamental values.

That is why we stand up for the values of our constitution, the European Convention on Human Rights, and the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the foundations of our coexistence, our culture, our democracy.

- 1 We, the community foundations of Germany, are committed to democracy and the inalienable fundamental rights that form the basis of our democratic coexistence.
- 2 We are committed to human dignity, respect and diversity.
- 3 Free thoughts, free expression, freedom to shape one's life and the society: We understand freedom as an indispensable basis of our democracy and as a fundamental right of all people.
- 4 Freedom of opinion, freedom of belief, freedom to implement ideas allow for a variety of convictions and ways of life. This is a basis of the democratic discourse and a mutual enrichment of the social life. Freedom has to be understood within the framework of fundamental democratic rights. The respect for freedom of opinion, of belief is a prerequisite for exchange in a free democratic society.
- 5 Democracy requires an active civil society. As independent, local actors of this civil society, we are ready to assume responsibility for the community.
- 6 We strengthen local civic engagement as a fundamental part of the democratic coexistence. We want to enable all local people to participate.
- 7 We see our contribution to democracy in bringing together the people who are willing to participate in shaping our society and our democracy. We want to initiate debates about shared values and the way we live together, to promote exchange and to learn from each other.
- 8 We do not only want to demand democratic action from others. Our own work in the community foundations should also be judged by this and be organised democratically.

- 9 Diversity in our committees is important to us, and we are committed to an open culture of discussion and democratic decision-making processes.
- 10 We also want the work in projects funded or supported by us to be democratic. We want to meet our target groups on an equal footing, involve them in decision-making processes, shape processes together with them and initiate change.

Democracy is a work mandate

Democracy is not a matter of course, does not run like clockwork. Democracy needs to be reassessed and defended constantly.

We, the community foundations of Germany, want to stand up and work for a diverse, tolerant, democratic society. In this respect, we understand this pledge to democracy, coexistence in dignity, and diversity, also as a work mandate to put this commitment into practice in our everyday lives and shape democracy.