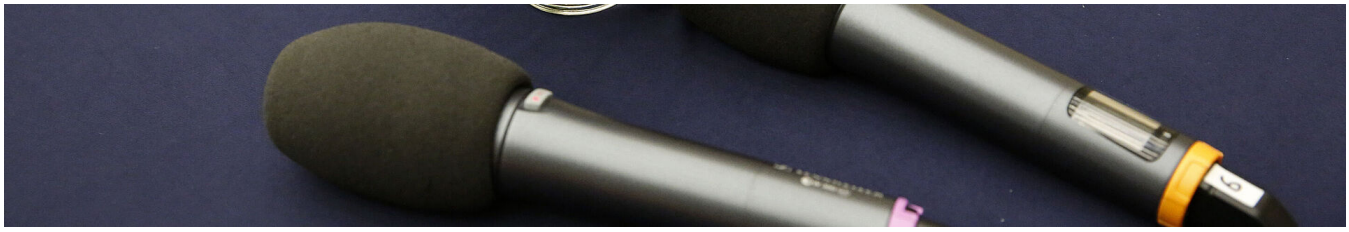
Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freien Wohlfahrtspflege



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Broad social ‘Alliance for Tolerance’ founded

The ‘Alliance for Tolerance, Solidarity, Democracy, and Constitutional State – Against Prejudice, Hatred, and Violence’ was presented in Berlin in February 2016.

The ‘Alliance for Tolerance, Solidarity, Democracy, and Constitutional State – Against Prejudice, Hatred, and Violence’ was presented in Berlin in February 2016. In a joint appeal, the 10 alliance partners call for the preservation of fundamental democratic values and societal cohesion in the light of present challenges and a firm stand against hatred and intolerance. The appeal, ‘Human Dignity shall be Inviolable’, can be read at <link http: www.allianz-fuer-weltoffenheit.de>www.allianz-fuer-weltoffenheit.de

The broad alliance includes the Confederation of German Employers' Associations, the German Bishops' Conference, the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany, the German Trade Union Confederation, the Central Council of Jews in Germany, the German Cultural Council, the Coordination Council of Muslims, the German League for Nature, Animal and Environment Protection, the German Olympic Sports Confederation, and the Federal Association of Non-statutory Welfare.

Ingo Kramer, President of the Confederation of German Employers' Associations, said: 'German industry strongly advocates a tolerant Europe in which all member states protect human dignity and our fundamental democratic rights. Those who flee to Europe because they fear for their lives in their own countries must be given refuge. That is only possible, however, if those people who are not threatened by persecution and violence are returned to their home countries. Asylum seekers with prospects of permanent residence must help to ensure they are properly integrated. They must, without exception, accept the fundamental values and rules of our societies.'

Speaking for the German Bishops' Conference, Archbishop Heiner Koch said: 'No-one who seeks to marginalise or denigrate refugees and migrants in word or deed can call themselves a Christian. Misanthropy and xenophobia not only clearly contradict the values of our democratic constitutional society but ultimately always betray a deep disregard of the

Christian message.’

Bishop Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, speaking for the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany, said: ‘Society must protect the weakest, especially in difficult times. That is why Christians throughout our country are working very hard to care for and integrate refugees. Within the Alliance for Tolerance, we are part of a broad coalition against racism, antisemitism, and hatred – regardless of politics. Germany is a tolerant country whose sense of responsibility does not end at its own borders.’

Reiner Hoffmann, President of the German Trade Union Confederation, said: ‘Education, training and work are the keys to self-determination and participation in society. This is equally true for refugees and resident populations. Integration has always come at a cost, but the present challenges will really test us. We must waste no time in investing in people, public infrastructure, education, and affordable accommodation. The future will show that it benefits all of us.’

Vice-President of the Central Council of Jews Mark Dainow said: ‘Supporting the goals of the Alliance for Tolerance is a matter of fundamental conviction for us, as the Jewish community has always championed values such as tolerance, respect, and the protection of minorities. Fighting antisemitism and racism is just as much a part of our society’s value system. And everyone who lives here permanently must

not only accept but also promote this value system.’

Olaf Zimmermann, Director of the German Cultural Council, said: ‘Cultural diversity is not about arbitrariness but rather respect for and interest in other cultures while preserving one’s own cultural traditions and values. It means recognising cultural similarities without glossing over what separates us. Embracing cultural diversity is one of the greatest challenges of our times.’

Speaking for the Coordination Council of Muslims, Zekeriya Altu? said: ‘There are no limits to human altruism and compassion. Especially when people are in desperate need of help. All of us – Muslims, Christians, Jews – must stand by this principle, with no ifs or buts! The polarisation of our society is a cause of great concern to us as German Muslims. Divisions are hiding our society’s strong cohesion and immense willingness to help, at the same time preventing us from seeing the opportunities that immigration offers for our future. We must now be ready to build this future together.’

Speaking on behalf of the German League for Nature, Animal and Environment Protection President Kai Niebert said: ‘We are concerned about how the debate surrounding people in need is increasingly being exploited to make hatred and violence acceptable. The values and duties enshrined in the constitution apply to everyone: those seeking our

protection just as much as concerned citizens. There is no room for hatred or arbitrary limits. Our alliance of more than 50 million sees itself as a broad coalition of decent people taking a stand to promote a sustainable, welcoming, and tolerant Germany within Europe.'

Karin Fehres, Director of Sports Development at the German Olympic Sports Confederation (DOSB), said: 'Sport is international, speaks all languages, and knows no borders. It fosters understanding because everyone plays by the same rules. The DOSB is committed to an open and welcoming Germany and to its own responsibility to promote integration. The hard work put in by the "Sportdeutschland" campaign and over 90,000 sports clubs aims to boost social cohesion, bring joy and a sense of community to refugees, many of whom are traumatised, and thus open doors to our society.'

Rolf Rosenbrock, President of the Federal Association of Non-statutory Welfare, said: 'Taking in and integrating refugees is a challenge that the non-statutory welfare sector has been rising to with commitment and empathy from day one, assisted by hundreds of thousands of volunteers, among them many migrants. It is a powerful demonstration of societal cohesion, and inclusion will succeed with this strength and smart thinking – to the benefit of all.'

Dateien

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