

Actively work

for

social cohesion and democracy

against violence and right-wing extremism!

We have

more options

than we think!

Many believe that our democracy and our peaceful coexistence are at risk. According to the Economist's Democracy Index, democracy is in decline worldwide. The reasons for increasing uncertainty, aggression among the population and growing success, especially of right-wing populists, are numerous: for example, many people feel that they are affected by major social challenges such as climate change, globalization, migration, digitalization, polarization in society, the consequences of Covid, the war overwhelmed in Ukraine and Gaza. The gap between rich and poor, a lack of equal opportunities and the loss of social security for an ever-growing part of our society also causes many to doubt the value of democracy. Social media platforms have become sites of abuse, often making them a hostile environment for users. Hate not only makes it difficult for those who experience abuse to express themselves freely, but also leads to significant negative consequences in everyday life and violence. In addition, hardly any positive images of the future are conveyed. **These problems and this attitude must first be acknowledged and addressed. There are many analyzes and proposed solutions - they must be implemented.**

Now it is up to us, as citizens, to stand up for democracy and social cohesion and to take action.

How we treat each other is crucial for our social cohesion and democracy. Through personal encounters and experiences, through more knowledge and more commitment, we can strengthen cohesion in our society and democracy, and decisively change attitudes and behavior - especially towards people who think differently and minorities. **We can do something in various areas of life and in everyday life. Every action, no matter how small, is an important contribution.** Last but not least, we should look more at what we have achieved together and what good circumstances we live in compared to other countries.

You are in demand! Your attitude and commitment are crucial to our future. Let us actively defend our democracy together and strengthen social cohesion! Now!

For that we would like to give you some suggestions.

Actively advocate for democracy and cohesion - in conversation, in society and in public

- **Talk to people who have different opinions, origins or religions. Listen and exchange ideas about different perspectives, attitudes and experiences.** Democracy protects against arbitrariness, hatred and violence. It is the basis for peace, social cohesion, freedom and prosperity. Don't be afraid of conflict - it is part of our democracy!
- **Intervene if you witness insults against minorities and discriminatory and inflammatory jokes.** Oppose it. Speak openly about the threat of right-wing extremism.
- **Do not allow discriminatory, inflammatory language** to be used when talking about minorities and people who think differently.
- **Allow people who have a different background or attitude than you to have their say** and create opportunities in which we can all meet and exchange ideas in our differences (communities, sports, clubs, churches, etc.). Or take part in them.
- Use letters to the editor to oppose actions that disparage minorities and combat our democracy -- and similar media coverage. **In these letters, you should also advocate for good coexistence between people with different cultures and attitudes - without hiding the problems that come with it.**
- Call on the representatives of your constituency to clearly support democracy and against right-wing extremism and xenophobia. **Politicians serve as role models.**
- **Complain and contact the media if they use discriminatory language and images that,** for example, create or promote violence and xenophobia.

- **File a criminal complaint** if you hear **right-wing extremist songs** being sung or you **see right-wing extremist computer games**. Share your observations (in writing) with your local politicians

And in general: Try to find out about the situation of minorities yourself. Welfare associations such as Caritas, Diakonie, Red Cross and Volkshilfe, integration officers and many NGOs provide information material on this subject.

Get involved, inform, inspire - on the internet and in social media

- **Work to ensure that social media platforms are free from hate speech and discrimination**, as they have increasingly become the main place where young people exchange ideas, develop cultures, process news and create values and norms for coexistence.
- Be polite. **Never post material that is obscene, racist, sexist, pornographic, sexually exploitative or otherwise discriminatory, threatening or harassing, personally offensive, defamatory or illegal.**
- Share viewpoints that express the **core values you want to follow**, be it respect, **compassion, kindness, ethics, knowledge, or humor**. Actively oppose hatred, violence and discrimination. **Educate, inform, inspire, support.**
- **Use the media and platforms where people come together** to develop ideas and appreciate and respect each other's points of view.
- Be open and not passive towards people who abuse public access. **Report, block, expose.**
- **Be a source of hope, confidence and optimism.** Never underestimate how sharing your knowledge, experiences and encouragement can help someone through difficulties.
- **Encourage different opinions**, as long as they respect and adhere to the boundaries of respect that are universal to us.

Find alliance partners - in your city or community

- Make sure that the topic of “democracy and understanding with minorities” is also given intensive consideration in the cultural sector of your city. For example, **different cultures should be taken into account in the offerings of theaters, museums and concerts** and minorities should be included as artists.
- **Try to form or take part in broad social alliances with people from business, trade unions, culture, science, church, initiatives, startups and politics.** Action groups or platforms are important for working together at various levels for social cohesion, peaceful coexistence and democracy.
- Don't be afraid to **take on important public positions**, e.g. by making yourself available as a lay judge. Get involved!
- **Take part in or hold events that promote mutual understanding and strengthen social cohesion and democracy.**
- Commit to ensuring that **clubs open themselves significantly to minorities of all kinds.** It goes without saying that the basic values of our society must be taken into account.

Go to the polls and motivate others to do so - political engagement

- **Participate in elections to parliaments, local councils and parliamentary representations and in organizations.** Cast your vote. Without a vibrant democracy and parliamentary participation of the population, our freedom, our constitutional state, personally free developments and prosperity are at risk.
- **Before elections in your area, get involved in ensuring that your acquaintances and friends also vote.** Before the election, make sure they don't forget this. Write to them – call them.
- **Don't let the many rigidities of political parties put you off.** Join a political party or a civically active group. Ask critical questions.

Every active support from you counts - in the neighborhood

- **Alone or together with others, ensure that right-wing extremist slogans are removed from lanterns, bridges, walls and other places.** Start the conversation and explain why you are doing this.
- Support **initiative groups** in your immediate neighborhood that are committed to **better understanding and democracy**.
- **Try to strengthen personal contacts with people who have different attitudes**, origins or beliefs. Arrange contacts or perhaps invite yourself to an evening together. Take advantage of the opportunity to meet in person.
- **Take part in or hold neighborhood festivals, children's afternoons with games from other countries**, cooking together with local information or music in the neighborhood. Maybe you'll cook at a homeless shelter someday.
- **Actively approach your neighbors to strengthen solidarity.** The task of neighborhood initiatives could be to listen to what problems your neighbors in the household have. Try to address the existing problems together. Support people in your neighborhood when dealing with authorities.
- **Support local action weeks that involve, for example, cultural institutions, independent groups and city administration.** These events can be held with prominent guests and cover a wide variety of areas of life.
- **Support the self-organization of minorities** who actively strive for peaceful, constructive participation in our society.

Help ensure that democracy is learned - in kindergarten and at school

- **Ask educators and teachers how they work for better mutual understanding and democracy in kindergarten and classrooms** and what they do against hatred and violence. Ask the same thing in

parent councils, class committees and school conferences.

- Suggest that school trips be carried out abroad, where the main focus is on **contact with the local population**.
- Encourage schools to look through **textbooks and school curricula on the topic of “democracy, social cohesion and cultural understanding”** in class. Give your suggestions and results, e.g. B. forwarded to school authorities and publishers.
- Encourage **poster campaigns in schools about democracy** and social cohesion; Exhibitions can also be created from this.
- Suggest that **authors who deal with the topic of democracy and social cohesion be invited to school readings**.

Show attitude - in the company and at work

- **During your lunch or coffee break, discuss with your colleagues why you are committed to democracy, better understanding and social cohesion and against right-wing extremism.**
- Pass on the suggestion that minorities be given greater consideration in local government recruitment. **Mutual contact also helps to break down prejudices in this area.** Send suggestions to the city or municipality.
- Use your work and company newspaper to ensure that articles for democracy, social cohesion and better mutual understanding and against xenophobia appear. **“All people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should treat one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”** – this statement in Article 1 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights can be illustrated by many examples.

Look at what we have in common - also in the church and religious communities

- Try to celebrate as many **festivals as possible with members of other religions**.

- **Have conversations with members of other religions. We often have more in common than what separates us.**
- Try to encourage activities in your church communities, such as talking about everything **worth knowing about other religions.**
- Use Sundays and church holidays for political prayers and work positively and publicly for **better mutual understanding at the celebrations ahead.**

Conclusion: You have so many opportunities to strengthen democracy and social cohesion!

We have many reasons to trust that we can overcome our major challenges, because there are signposts on our expedition to new continents, e.g. looking at the opportunities - without hiding the problems, remembering challenges that we have successfully achieved together, political action that... Situation and necessary actions explained clearly and understandably, development of positive images of the future and no horror scenarios, a broad public discourse on the value of democracy and much more. Let's take advantage of the opportunities we have. Every single action counts. All of us, civil society, are called to action. NOW!

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