

## **I. Preamble: Everything can be changed**

We all feel that things cannot stay as they are. Because we cannot be satisfied with the fact that jobs and prosperity are in danger. That parents and grandparents are worried about whether their children and grandchildren's educational and career prospects are as good as their own. That internal and external security are being challenged like never before. That irregular migration is still not sufficiently controlled. That important value decisions such as democracy, basic rights and the social market economy are no longer a matter of course. That increasing polarization is endangering the openness and tolerance of our society. That more and more people are withdrawing into their private lives instead of participating as self-confident citizens with their own opinions in the debates about the future of our country. That anti-Semitism and misanthropy are spreading again in the land of the Holocaust in an intolerable way. We do not want to and must not accept this. The good news is: All of this can be changed.

Because everything can be changed.

We Free Democrats want a Germany that builds on its strengths again. Because we know what energy lies in our country. There are 84 million good reasons for this today. Because the people in our country have repeatedly shown amazing strength. This strength comes from drive, optimism and worthwhile goals. We must release them. Because we are a We want to live in freedom and prosperity. Because we want to live in peace and security. Because we want performance and effort to be worthwhile. Because we want a state that functions where it is really needed, but does not interfere in every detail of daily life.

The best way to release this human power is to give more people more freedom. The history of our country has shown this time and again: the economic system of the social market economy enabled the western part of our country to experience an unprecedented economic resurgence after the Second World War. The 1970s were a decade of economic stagnation, energy crises and rising debts. The market economy reforms after the political change in 1982, brought about by the FDP, helped our country to grow and prosper again. The courageous people of East Germany fought for democracy and a market economy in 1989 and overthrew the oppressive apparatus of the GDR.

And in 2003, with Agenda 2010, a federal government was able to initiate a development that turned Germany from the sick man of Europe back into the growth engine of our continent. This shows that we can change things for the better. Because everything can be changed. change.

Such a change for the better is urgently needed today. We no longer have time for a policy of the lowest common denominator. Otherwise we will only continue to watch as prosperity and life opportunities in the world are redistributed at our expense. Since the Great Since the 2013 coalition, governments and majorities have approached the great challenges of the times only in baby steps - without the courage to structurally strengthen our competitiveness and our innovative power. Instead, there has been a willingness to

ever larger welfare state, ever more subsidies, ever more debt and ever higher government spending.

When we Free Democrats made it clear that things could not continue like this, the traffic light coalition collapsed. Now, on February 23, 2025, voters have the chance to make a real decision on direction to end the phase of baby steps and the lowest common denominator. We Free Democrats are applying for a mandate for change for the better. In order to describe in more detail how we envision this change, we are presenting this program. Because we are convinced: everything can be changed.

## II. World-class education for self-confident citizens

Germany's future lies in its people – their ideas, their potential and their freedom.

**Education and research are our country's most valuable resources.** In recent years, there has been a negative trend in the education system. We want to reverse this. Because everything can be changed. Education must once again be the key to personal advancement and a self-determined life - regardless of social background, age, gender, religion, parents' educational background and place of residence. New global challenges and rapid social change require a real paradigm shift in our education system. We must think holistically about education - from nursery to kindergarten, through schools, vocational schools and universities to lifelong learning opportunities. Excellence is a clear goal for us Free Democrats. Talent, passion and dedication require innovation and scientific progress. Germany as a research location needs more quality, networking, equal opportunities and excellence. With more academic freedom and optimal

Under certain conditions, anything is possible.

### a. Great opportunities for the youngest: Strengthening early childhood education

We Free Democrats see early childhood education as the cornerstone of a society that can develop its full potential. We want to take a more targeted and effective approach here. Lifelong learning begins in the sandbox, not just in school.

#### Improving the quality of early childhood education

We Free Democrats want to promote **early childhood education** through **nationwide daycare quality standards**. These include, in particular, a needs-based care ratio that takes into account educational work, administrative tasks and downtime, the reduction of unnecessary bureaucracy and the use of multi-professional teams to relieve the burden on educational staff. In this way, we ensure reliable care times and a high quality of care. We also want to strengthen **child day care** as another pillar of child day care. We are transferring responsibility for daycare centers from the Ministry of Family Affairs to the Federal Ministry of Education in order to ensure holistic responsibility for the educational path from daycare to graduation in one hand. A **start-up opportunity program for daycare centers** will provide additional support where there is a high proportion of socially disadvantaged children or an acute shortage of daycare places. We also want to give more space to MINT promotion in early childhood education.

#### Language opens up opportunities: Promote early, benefit for life

In order to promote language skills as effectively as possible, we want to introduce **mandatory and age-appropriate language tests for all pre-school children nationwide**. School enrollment should only take place when children have sufficient German language skills to be able to follow lessons properly. To this end, language proficiency assessments must be carried out in preliminary school entrance examinations. If **support is required**, compulsory language support should follow **for at least two years** before compulsory schooling begins.

## Qualified training for strong daycare teams

The success of early childhood education depends largely on the teaching staff. To **combat the shortage of skilled workers**, we want to fundamentally modernize teaching training, further education and continuing education. By **making teacher training and continuing education generally free of tuition fees** and **paying appropriate remuneration**, as well as increasing the **training capacities** of the states, we are giving more people access to training. We are modularizing training in order to raise the **quality of training to a high, uniform level nationwide**.

## b. Modern and independent schools – better educational opportunities for all

The poor PISA results are not the only thing that shows that in times of rapid social change, a real paradigm shift in the education system is needed. We have taken the first big steps with the Start Opportunities program. We must build on that.

### A State-of-the-Art Educational Federalism

We can no longer allow the power struggle between the federal government and the states. As a result, we are missing out on creating the education system that our children deserve. We Free Democrats are therefore calling for a **fundamental reform of educational federalism** that will make uniform standards and a stronger role for the federal government in education possible, and within the framework of which the distribution of finances between the federal government and the states is changed so that the federal government can take on the necessary financing obligations. Until this is implemented, the federal government will support projects as an exception within the framework of the allocation of powers in the Basic Law; the state share must follow the strict principle of additionality (i.e. new funds). In addition, cooperation between the federal government and just some of the states should be made possible. We want to abolish the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (KMK) as a decision-making body and replace it with a Federal Education Council made up of scientists, practitioners, parents and business representatives. Student performance is better when schools have more freedom and are not paralyzed by bureaucracy. We are committed to laws on school freedom. We want to create **uniform nationwide quality standards for the education of children from kindergarten to school graduation**, while maintaining the existing responsibility for funding education. Through **uniform final examinations (Germany Abitur)**, we ensure the **nationwide comparability of school qualifications**. We are in favor of compulsory grades from the third grade at the latest. We are committed to modern extracurricular learning locations - for example so-called student laboratories, maker spaces and TUMO centers. We want to integrate AI-supported and adaptive learning methods into everyday school life by creating a campus for educational innovations analogous to the GovTech campus. This connects federal states and municipalities with innovative players in the tech scene and applied research.

### Renovation offensive and more autonomy for schools

Not only does our education system need an update, many of our schools are also in need of restructuring. We Free Democrats therefore call for the **renovation of school buildings** in Germany. Through a **Digital Pact 2.0 between the federal and state governments**, we want to **drive forward the technical modernization of schools** and anchor **digital teaching in the training and further education of teachers**.

The current agreement between the federal government and the states is a missed opportunity because the states are hardly contributing any additional funds. We want to give schools more pedagogical, personnel and financial powers. To this end, everyone should receive a **freely usable opportunity budget**. This will enable schools to make their own decisions about the organization of educational elements, their school profile, the use of multi-professional teams, but also about personnel decisions and the length of the grammar school career (G8/G9).

### **Modern curricula and excellent teachers**

Schools need **excellent teachers**. We want to create more freedom in the teaching profession with **more attractive working conditions**, practical **training and further education**, performance **-related pay** and **attractive career opportunities**. We want to develop apprenticeship training nationwide into a **dual teacher training course** that closely interlinks theory and practice and places a stronger focus on digital and AI skills. A **nationwide mobility guarantee** should make it easier for teachers to change federal states.

At the same time, we want to modernize the **curricula**: We Free Democrats demand more **space for economic and financial education, MINT topics, democracy and politics, as well as media competence**. We are particularly committed to the nationwide introduction of the **school subjects economics and IT**. In addition, the school must also **deal with the various forms of misanthropy** such as anti-Semitism are intensified.

This includes the **obligatory visit** to a Holocaust memorial and a synagogue as a place of current Jewish life in Germany, the examination of the **history of Israel** and the discussion **of all forms of anti-Semitism**. We want to further promote the **German-Israeli Youth Office** in order to strengthen youth exchange. In addition, the examination of the **division of Germany and the unjust GDR regime** by visiting a corresponding memorial should be obligatory.

### **c. Strengthen vocational education and lifelong learning**

We Free Democrats want to attract more young people to vocational training. To this end, we want to **further develop the Vocational Training Excellence Initiative**. We want to make better use of the potential of vocational training centers and develop them into regional innovation and start-up centers. We want to strengthen career orientation offers, such as trainee ambassadors, women in MINT professions, and youth employment agencies. In addition, we want to create a **vocational orientation year** analogous to the Voluntary Social Year (FSJ) and expand SBB scholarships and trainee scholarships. To strengthen **international vocational training mobility**, we are establishing a **German Vocational Exchange Service (DBAD)**. We Free Democrats want to enable more **self-determined educational mobility** in the rapidly changing world of work. We are expanding the **Advancement BAföG** in a targeted manner and enabling the **funding of a second training course** at the same level. In

The recognition of professional training and practical experience **in the public service** should be improved. We want to **speed up the recognition of qualifications acquired abroad** and **digitize it throughout**.

For us Free Democrats, learning does not end with school, university or vocational qualifications. We see **learning as a lifelong process** and want to promote it. To do this, we want to make **access to smaller, flexible educational certificates** easier. To finance course fees, educational time off and childcare, we want a new **"Life Opportunities BAföG"**

A **personal free space account** should enable tax- and duty-free savings for further training opportunities and educational breaks.

#### **d. Excellent conditions for study, research and innovation**

Germany must be one of the top locations for research, study and innovation. In order to improve our international competition, we need more academic freedom and higher education independent of parental background. Dual-use research and close cooperation with the economy are indispensable for a strong scientific and economic location.

##### **Enabling study and intercultural exchange independent of parents**

The choice of study must not depend on the circumstances of the parents' home. We therefore want to **develop BAföG into a modular system that is independent of parents**. We want to strengthen and expand the **education loan program** in the short term. In addition, we want to make education savings attractive. If parents and grandparents want to provide for the education of their children and grandchildren, this should be possible tax-free - similar to a retirement savings account.

We combine equal opportunities in the education system with global networking and lifelong learning. Intercultural exchange is the best prerequisite for cosmopolitanism and dialogue. We are therefore very much in favor of the Erasmus program.

**Schoolchildren should also benefit from "Erasmus+" in the future** and be able to complete **six months of schooling in another European country**, regardless of their parents' income. We also want to expand the "Erasmus+" and "Training Worldwide" programs for trainees.

##### **New Ideas, New Opportunities: Science as the Key to the Future**

Excellent public and private research is a clear goal for us Free Democrats. We can only increase prosperity if we develop the best ideas and innovations. In order to keep up with international competition, we need **academic freedom** and **optimal framework conditions**. That is why we want to **strengthen the entire research process** - from basic research to applied research and transfer to the private sector.

We want to pool our strengths through public-private partnerships and further strengthen tax incentives for research. Germany must once again become an **attractive location for top researchers**. The German Agency for Transfer and Innovation must be established quickly. Because we are also in a new system competition in science. The future strategy for research and innovation must be consistently pushed forward and further developed. We want a technology-open **research freedom law** and thus create the conditions for the construction **of fusion power plants** in Germany through excellent fusion research.

reform the restrictive **legal framework for genetic engineering** and **strengthen stem cell research**. In the health sector, we want to focus more **on neurodegenerative diseases** such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's as well as on **women-specific**

**health areas** . Due to demographic developments, we also want to particularly promote **gerontological research** . We want to secure Germany's **leading position in basic physical research and quantum physics** .

#### **turning point in science**

Russia's war in Ukraine has made it clear to us that we also need a **turning point in research and teaching** in order to be able to stand up to aggressors technologically.

We reject civil clauses as a disproportionate interference with the freedom of research of individual researchers.

We therefore call for the civil clauses to be deleted from state university laws and for them to be abolished within the framework of academic freedom. We want to **develop a European DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency), an agile defense research institute** based on the American model that focuses on technology transfer between the military and science and on promoting research projects with military or dual-use applications. We want to make Germany one of the **strongest locations for artificial intelligence** in the world. The most important location factor is the availability of training data. We want to make the **European AI Act much more innovation-friendly in its implementation**. We want to enable **simplified access to research data** in a legally secure manner through a **research data law** .

## **e. Diverse art and culture**

Culture inspires liberal debate culture and is an expression of lived individuality. Culture should be open to all people.

We are committed to anchoring **culture as a state goal in the Basic Law** .

We want to continue to support the **cultural and creative industries** as one of the most important economic sectors in Germany by providing excellent framework conditions. We want to live the diversity of culture in cultural policy. That is why we are committed to abolishing the distinction between high and low culture. **Pop culture** is more than entertainment. The creative potential of pop culture is mainstream and innovation in one. That is why we are committed to a contemporary concept of culture that includes design, comics and games. In order to strengthen artists and creative people, we want to

maintain the existing level of **copyright** protection .

We Free Democrats see **foreign cultural and social policy (AKGP)** as a task and an opportunity to bring German and European values to other countries through strong partnerships. To this end, we want to **continue to support the Goethe Institutes** and expand their digital offerings.

We want to empower people to strengthen democracy, freedom and prosperity by providing education and culture.

The AKGP is also an important part of building resilient relationships. We also want to initiate the establishment of an **EU-wide cultural fund for monument protection** based on the model of the "National Trust" in Great Britain. In the long term, the **"European National Trust"** should finance itself largely through membership fees, income from admissions and commercial operations.

### III. Creating prosperity and opportunities for advancement for the future

Our country has great strengths: innovative power and intellectual property, highly qualified employees, a capital-rich middle class and an industrial base that has often proven its adaptability. But this strength lies in constraints: too much bureaucracy and regulation, a tax system that is hostile to performance, a shortage of workers and excessively high energy prices are reducing our competitiveness. All of this is costing us prosperity, preventing social advancement and strengthening the political fringes. We want to and can change that. In order to initiate a real economic turnaround, far-reaching and structural reforms are necessary. We need growth and better supply conditions so that the country does not slide into pessimism and struggles over distribution.

Germany can become a leading economic nation again if we show courage to make changes. Our goal: to ensure prosperity and opportunities for advancement for all. So that optimism returns and Germany will still be a wealthy and strong country in ten years' time.  
becomes.

We Free Democrats see the special economic challenges in the eastern German states, partly due to a more fragmented economic structure. Since 1990, it has not yet been possible to generate an economic power comparable to that of the western German states across the board. The wealth situation also differs considerably. Therefore, tax cuts, the reduction of bureaucracy, the implementation of real laboratories and practical economic and research funding for the many small and medium-sized

This is of particular importance for companies in eastern Germany. We reject an earlier end to brown coal mining before the legally stipulated phase-out by 2038.

#### a. End bureaucratic burnout

Germany is suffering from bureaucratic burnout. Citizens, businesses and even authorities are so exhausted by the many reporting obligations, regulations and forms that they can hardly take care of their actual tasks. The bureaucracy is also a vote of no confidence by the state in citizens and businesses. This spoils the desire for many to do things and weakens the performance of our economy. Small and medium-sized companies in particular, as well as

Family businesses suffer from bureaucracy. Startups and scale-ups also lose out due to bureaucratic hurdles time and flexibility for their growth. Therefore, reducing bureaucracy is a  
Economic stimulus package at no cost.

#### Reducing Bureaucracy in Germany

We Free Democrats are calling for an **immediate** three-year **moratorium on bureaucracy**: During this time, no new regulations may be adopted that lead to new bureaucratic burdens for companies, unless they have been reduced to the same extent beforehand. We want a **bureaucracy-free year for companies** in which they do not have to meet any reporting obligations. There must be an **annual bureaucracy reduction law** every year to create a **path for reducing superfluous regulations**. By putting a **bureaucracy brake in the Basic Law**, we are anchoring the reduction of bureaucracy in our constitution. We want to ensure that the **compliance costs** for companies **are reduced by at least six billion euros per legislative period**.



We want a real **clearing out of federal law**. Only through **cleanup and consolidation** can we create a basis that reduces bureaucracy, expands scope for action and strengthens our competitiveness. **Outdated, contradictory and unnecessarily complex laws must be abolished**. We want **to limit laws more frequently with a sunset clause**. This means that a regulation automatically expires if it is not actively extended. In addition, we want to **work more with fictitious approvals and deadline regulations in Germany**. It is unacceptable that companies despair over administrative procedures for months and years. If an authority does not respond within a certain period of time,

period, the rule in future must be automatic approval.

We want to do away with bureaucratic monsters, such as the obligation to issue receipts , **without replacement**. Companies should no longer have to deal with paperwork. That is why we want the **written form to become the exception**. We want to reduce the retention period for accounting documents to five years.

Reducing bureaucracy is also urgently needed in **data protection** . We Free Democrats want to **standardize data protection supervision** and thus ensure a uniform interpretation and application of data protection law. In Germany, the data protection supervisory authorities of the states and the federal government ensure that data protection law is interpreted and enforced. There are 17 different bodies, some of which come to different conclusions. This creates a great deal of bureaucracy, legal uncertainty and competitive disadvantages for companies. We want to change the Basic Law so that **the federal and state governments can work together effectively** and the **Data Protection Conference can make binding decisions**.

We Free Democrats want to **drastically simplify procurement law**. The complexity of procurement procedures has become a major burden for authorities and companies. Small and Medium-sized companies and family businesses suffer from the many bureaucratic hurdles.

That is why procurement law needs to be cleared out. We are calling for the value limit for direct contracts to be raised to 100,000 euros. We want to drastically reduce reporting, documentation and proof requirements. We reject the consideration of criteria that are not relevant to procurement when awarding contracts.

#### **Less bureaucracy from Brussels – Initiate a long overdue turnaround**

The EU Commission is now the main source of bureaucracy. Therefore, there must be a **strict ban on gold plating** , which means that European directives may only be implemented 1:1 into German law. It is even more important that bureaucratic EU legal acts in Brussels are abolished. We want to abolish reporting obligations from the EU Commission's "Green Deal". We are strongly committed to this at the European level. Because regulations such as the EU taxonomy, the EU directive on sustainability reporting (Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive), the **EU supply chain directive** (Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive) or the **action plan for the circular economy** do not ensure more climate protection and sustainability, but primarily cause frustration in companies. Small and medium-sized companies in particular can often hardly cope with the bureaucratic burden. We want to change that and give citizens and companies the trust they deserve again. We advocate the **complete abolition** of the above-mentioned regulations **of the Green Deal** . The expansion of the existing taxonomy to include a

**We strictly reject the social taxonomy.** At EU level, a system for binding recording of bureaucracy costs is needed in order to set ambitious and measurable goals for reducing bureaucracy.

## **b. A tax system that rewards performance and investment**

A fair, efficient and simple tax system is central to strengthening performance-based justice and Germany's position as a location in international competition. Citizens who go to work every day earn more net than gross. Living, working and investing must be worthwhile in Germany. We need an attractive and strong capital market that makes more investment and innovation possible in Germany.

### **For fair taxation**

Anyone who lives from their own work is taxed heavily in Germany. The incentive to take on additional work is too low. But we can only maintain our prosperity in the long term if we also work more. We therefore need to make work more attractive again. To do this, we want to gradually introduce a **linear-progressive opportunity rate in income tax** that completely eliminates the middle-class bulge. As part of the citizen's income reform, we want to gradually increase the **basic allowance** by at least 1,000 euros. In this way, we will strengthen the wage gap requirement, i.e. that people with paid work must be significantly better off than those with transfer income, and ensure that work is worthwhile. In order to create **additional work incentives**, we want to exempt **overtime** bonuses for full-time workers from income tax. In future, the **top tax rate** may only be paid by people who really earn top salaries and not by those in the middle of society. Specifically, we demand that the top tax rate in future be based on the current contribution assessment limit for pension insurance. This means that the top tax rate no longer applies to annual incomes of just over 68,000 euros, but **only from 96,600 euros**. In addition, we want to **completely abolish the solidarity surcharge**. This has now become a punitive tax for the middle class. So that the state does not profit from inflation and the taxpayer

does not fall victim to bracket creep, we want to automatically adjust the allowances and key figures of income tax to the general price development (**tariff on wheels**).

The **allowances for inheritance and gift tax** must also be **automatically increased by the rate of inflation**. We reject any form of wealth tax or wealth levy. Families are the backbone of our society and must be strengthened. In order to provide greater relief for families and single parents, we want to improve the **tax deductibility of childcare costs** and statutory maintenance payments.

### **Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and family businesses relieve**

We Free Democrats want to reduce taxation, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises and Make family businesses easier and thus relieve them of the burden. This will enable more companies to previously had the option of **actual taxation for sales tax** and simplified profit determination. **Small businesses**

**have the option of deducting a percentage flat rate for operating expenses**. We are increasing the **immediate depreciation limit for low-value assets** and **expanding the collective depreciation for assets** whose value is above the immediate depreciation limit.

The existence of companies must not be endangered by inheritance and gift taxes.

We demand that the allowances be automatically increased by the rate of inflation. This is the only way to ensure that the average tax burden on gifts and inheritances remains constant as prices rise.

Gastronomic offerings must remain affordable. A **reduced sales tax rate for food in restaurants** applies in 23 EU member states and should also apply in Germany. A uniform sales tax rate of 7 percent on food, whether eaten on site or to take away, would benefit not only customers but also employees in the restaurant industry.

We Free Democrats want to simplify the catalogue of sales at the reduced tax rate and debureaucratize.

The tourism industry is a key driver of economic growth, creates jobs, promotes international exchange and makes a significant contribution to regional development. A liberal tourism policy is not characterized by prohibitions, but rather aims to preserve established tourism structures, enable new developments and prevent bureaucracy from becoming a disadvantage for a location.

### **Competitive Corporate Taxes for a Competitive Economy**

Companies in Germany need more freedom, less government interference and a lower tax burden. We need internationally competitive corporate taxes. This is the only way we can achieve a real economic turnaround. To this end, we want to **reduce the bureaucracy in German tax law, replace the trade tax** with an alternative that is compatible with the international system and

tax income from capital assets and from renting and leasing more easily.

We demand that the corporate tax burden **be reduced to below 25 percent**. To achieve this, we will completely abolish the solidarity surcharge and reduce the corporate tax.

**We want to consistently avoid double taxation.** In the future, we want to tax net profits instead of fictitious profits by **consistently abolishing the addition of tax**. We want to end the unequal treatment of interest on equity and interest on debt by **introducing the tax deductibility of fictitious interest on equity**. Companies in Germany need an **unlimited loss carryforward** and a further expansion of **loss carryback**.

We want to take liquidation losses into account for tax purposes. In addition, we want to introduce special depreciation for movable assets and real estate based on the former Promotion Area Act in This can lead to a real investment boom.

### **For a modern and effective tax and financial administration**

We Free Democrats are committed to ensuring that **the once-only principle** is consistently implemented in tax administration. Citizens and companies should only have to provide certain information to the administration once. **The financial administration must become more digital and efficient.** We want to pursue our concept of an **"Easy Tax"**, a pre-filled tax return for many taxpayers, towards a **fully automated income tax assessment**. This saves time,

money and stress. One way to achieve this is through a pension withholding tax. A generous flat-rate working day allowance replaces and simplifies the previous regulations on home offices, home offices and travel expenses.

We Free Democrats want to consistently combat tax fraud, other financial crimes and illegal work, among other things by **setting up effective structures to combat financial crime and strengthening customs**, especially local customs offices. We are also committed to effective and practicable rules at European and national level that ensure that **imported goods on large online platforms are appropriately cleared and**

**be taxed.**

### **Stocks for Life – Venture Capital for the Economy**

We Free Democrats want to transform Germany from a country of savers into a country of shareholders. This requires a culture of long-term investing. We want a **national financial education strategy** to improve **financial education** across society, for example by making it a compulsory subject in general education schools **nationwide**.

We are committed to attractive investment conditions for small investors. We therefore also want to preserve the coexistence of fee-based and commission-based advice. We Free Democrats want to remove tax obstacles to private wealth creation and thereby support private pension provision in particular. We therefore call for the introduction of **tax-free capital growth**, whereby savers can carry over unused savings allowances to subsequent years, the allowance is increased significantly once and is also made dynamic. By **reintroducing a speculation period for private capital gains from the sale of securities**, we support long-term capital investments for pension provision. In addition, we want to **completely abolish the loss offset restriction within the withholding tax**. In the case of properties used by third parties, the ancillary acquisition costs should be immediately tax deductible. We reject a financial transaction tax.

### **Capital pools such as insurers and pension funds should be able to invest more in stocks and venture capital.**

This will increase private capital in the German venture capital market, which is still too small. We must improve the tax framework for private investors in Germany, as proposed in the WIN initiative. In order to prevent private capital providers and institutional investors from moving abroad, we need competitive framework conditions for investments in start-ups and growth companies.

We also call for the establishment of an **open and transparent data ecosystem in the insurance sector** ("Open Insurance"). This will strengthen the competitiveness and innovative strength of the insurance industry.

### **Making financial markets fit for the future**

We Free Democrats stand for modern financial market regulation that increasingly focuses on competitiveness, and for supervision that effectively and efficiently protects private creditors, prevents systemic crises and ensures a "level playing field" for market participants. We want to expand the range of tasks of the Federal Financial Supervisory Authority (BaFin) to include financial center promotion in order to better support FinTech and crypto innovations. We want to examine whether the existing regulation is proportionate. Here, too, we want to avoid the regulations in Germany going beyond the European minimum requirements.

We Free Democrats emphatically reject any support from the European Resolution Fund for national deposit guarantee schemes. As Free Democrats, we are **critical of the introduction of a European Deposit Guarantee Scheme (EDIS)**. EDIS would not bring any additional benefit for financial stability, but would endanger the particularly proven guarantee schemes of the savings banks and cooperative banks in Germany. We want to gradually end the preferential treatment of government bonds in the European regulation of banks and insurance companies and replace it with market-oriented approaches that transparently reflect the economic risk. We also want to **deepen the banking and capital markets union**.

We welcome the development of cryptocurrencies and digital ledger technology and are committed to the **approval of crypto ETFs**. We are open to the **European Central Bank and the Deutsche Bundesbank** using cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin as currency reserves. This can strengthen the resilience of the European monetary system. We Free Democrats are in favor of **preserving cash**. We are in favor of there being broad acceptance of card payments alongside cash. A digital euro that complements cash must respect the privacy of users and be usable both online and offline. There must be no compulsion to use the digital euro and no additional risks must arise for the financial system.

### **c. Affordable energy for citizens and businesses**

Germany urgently needs a realistic and sensible energy policy that no longer overburdens people and companies. Energy prices must fall, otherwise life will become unaffordable and we will continue to lose economic competitiveness.

We Free Democrats want to **reduce the electricity tax to the EU minimum as a first step**

and will work at European level to **abolish** them. In view of the increasing trend in the price of CO<sub>2</sub>, we want to gradually reduce the EU minimum rates for energy tax on heating and fuels to zero. In this way, the CO<sub>2</sub> price should completely replace the electricity and energy tax in the long term. In this context, the vehicle tax should also be abolished in the medium term. In this way, we will strengthen the role of the CO<sub>2</sub>

price and create more incentives for switching to renewable energies or climate-friendly fuels and heating fuels.

We also want to **comprehensively reform grid charges**. Grid charges are one of the major drivers of electricity costs. In order to reduce grid costs, we want to make grids more flexible through digitalization and demand through dynamic grid charges. This will reflect grid bottlenecks in the price, so that demand shifts to where there is capacity, and thus the need for grid expansion is reduced. We want to significantly reduce the costs of grid expansion by generally building the new lines above ground. We want to **remove regulatory hurdles to rapid grid expansion** and ensure that only the networks that are actually needed are built. This also saves costs and lowers prices overall. At the same time, we are calling for better synchronization of grid expansion with the expansion of renewable energies, power plants, storage facilities and the hydrogen economy in order to increase the efficiency of the overall system. We want to **abolish the obligation to connect to the grid** so that new systems are only connected to the grid if this is beneficial to the system and profitable.

**Regulations** and requirements that hinder efficiency and modernization **must be completely eliminated**. We want to create the necessary incentives for the construction of new gas-fired power plants through a capacity market that we make as simple, streamlined and unbureaucratic as possible.

In addition, there is a particular need for diversification of gas supplies to avoid one-sided dependence on gas imports. To this end, **domestic natural gas production should be expanded**

The gas field in Borkum and **fracking processes** are currently suitable for this. Instead of importing gas at high prices, this creates domestic added value. We Free Democrats want to fully integrate renewable energies into the market.

Since these already account for more than 60 percent of electricity production, the EEG subsidies for new plants can no longer be justified. A remuneration on the market would also ensure that photovoltaic and wind power plants are only built when there are sufficient networks and storage facilities to ensure the use of the electricity produced. We reject legally prescribed expansion paths for individual technologies as well as state-guaranteed purchase prices.

We Free Democrats want to **enable the use of climate-friendly future technologies such as nuclear fusion and safe nuclear power plants without subsidies**. We want to free German nuclear law from ideological ballast. Our goal is that new generation nuclear power plants, such as dual-fluid reactors, thorium liquid salt reactors or small modular reactors, can be built in Germany in a legally secure manner. We want to create an innovation-friendly legal framework for nuclear fusion outside of nuclear law. We want to facilitate the recommissioning of

existing nuclear power plants legally and leave the decision to the operators.

#### **d. A modern labor law for a modern working world**

A modern working world offers opportunities for employees, the self-employed and employers. We Free Democrats therefore want to bring labor law up to date and create flexible, practical regulations. We want to put the focus back on willingness to perform and personal responsibility - in order to increase the volume of work and private initiative.

We Free Democrats want to **reform the German Working Hours Act** by introducing **new and flexible working time models** with a weekly instead of a daily maximum working time.

Likewise, the working time regulations must be made more flexible and opening clauses for rest periods must be used.

Politics must not continue to interfere with freedom of contract, which is why we reject legal regulations for a **four-day week** with full wage compensation.

In the social market economy, wages and salaries are negotiated between employees and

We respect collective bargaining autonomy and reject political interference in the work of the independent minimum wage commission.

**We want to streamline labor law** and simplify **documentation requirements for the minimum wage**. We want to make the electronic certificate of incapacity for work more practical by having it forwarded from the health insurance company to the employer. We want to abolish the special regulations for telephone sick notes introduced during the Corona pandemic. **Digital employment contracts** must be possible in all sectors. The procedures for

**We want to make the posting of workers within the EU much easier and more digital** (e.g. A1 certificate).

Whether freelance professions, crafts, cultural and creative industries or the service sector: We Free Democrats demand fairness for the self-employed. We therefore want to reduce unequal treatment and, for example, **base contributions for the self-employed on their actual income**. We also demand a reform of the

Status determination procedure. **Clear legal positive criteria** must ensure legal certainty. In order to minimize risks for clients, we want **contributions not to be collected retroactively in the case of dependent employment, if it was not assumed intentionally or through gross negligence that the person was self-employed**. We Free Democrats want **maximum freedom of choice for the self-employed when it comes to pension provision**. The form of pension provision should also be freely selectable. **Access to all subsidized private pension provision must be open to all employed persons in the future**.

We also demand a **modernization of the right to strike**. Of course, the right to strike is an important fundamental right. However, in critical areas such as transport, health and social care, daycare centers, energy, fire and civil protection, and waste disposal, a mandatory arbitration agreement is needed at the start of collective bargaining, as well as minimum notice periods and the guarantee of emergency operations. Otherwise, there is a risk of disproportionately great social damage, which is associated with a distortion of the bargaining power of the collective bargaining parties.

## **e. For social security systems that encourage performance**

The welfare state in Germany is expensive, but not necessarily social. We need significantly more incentives to work. And more respect for those whose work makes solidarity possible in the first place.

### **Work must be more rewarding**

Millions of people in Germany go to work every day and contribute to the success of our country. But the reality is that for some it seems more worthwhile to live on social benefits than to have a regular job. We want to change that. Because work must always be more worthwhile than social benefits! To this end, we Free Democrats want to **fundamentally reform the citizen's allowance**. We want a reform of basic security, away from a citizen's allowance that supports people and towards more activation, where work makes the difference. Our main goal is: work instead of citizen's allowance. This is not only important as a perspective for people in an emergency, but it is also a question of fairness towards the working taxpayer. To this end, we want to oblige employable unemployed people to take an **active duty and initiative, including the burden of proof**. They must strive to overcome their own need for help through work and qualification. The job center provides as much support as possible and checks whether sufficient activities are and can be undertaken.

If there is no initiative, **social benefits will be reduced step by step**. To do this, we want to make sanctions more effective. To prevent unemployment from becoming entrenched, we want to

Introduce **an intensive phase at the beginning of benefit receipt**, so that the density of contact with the job center is particularly high in the first 12 months. We want to **adapt the reasonableness rules so that longer commutes and moves are also reasonable for people without children and without relatives in need of care**. In addition, we want to introduce work opportunities for total objectors. Recently, the citizen's allowance has increased disproportionately to inflation. The standard rate will continue to exceed demand in 2025. That is why we want to create the conditions for lowering the standard rate by **abolishing the so-called grandfathering rule**. This strengthens the incentives to work.

We want to improve the **rules on additional income in basic social security and housing benefit so that work and performance become noticeably more worthwhile**. We want to improve the rules on additional income so reform that the combination of citizen's income and mini-job is not particularly worthwhile, but rather that people work their way out of a social benefit bit by bit. It cannot be the case that working people first pay taxes and then have to apply for social benefits from a tax-financed authority. We want to change this by **aligning the tax and social system in a performance-based way in the sense of a negative income tax**.

We Free Democrats want to reduce the bureaucratic confusion of the various social benefits by combining the **tax-financed social benefits** - such as the citizen's allowance and housing benefit - **into one benefit and at one government agency**. In this way, we create clear incentives for the status quo, where working more is often not worth it because the various social benefits are poorly coordinated. Taking on appropriate rent and heating costs is extremely complex due to the calculation and leads to enormous administrative effort when looking at individual cases. This new bundled benefit should therefore include a **regional flat rate for accommodation costs**. With a welfare state from a single source in the sense of a **negative income tax**, we reduce costly bureaucratic bureaucracy, the confusing complexity of the welfare state and avoid false incentives that demotivate and paralyze those entitled to benefits.

We Free Democrats want to **take effective and consistent action against the abuse of the welfare state**. Job centers must be better able to check whether transfer recipients own cars, how many accounts they have access to and whether they have assets abroad. We also want to **take more consistent and tougher action against illegal work while receiving social benefits**.

We Free Democrats want to make unemployment insurance (**unemployment benefit 1**) more flexible so that lower contributions and more net from gross are possible. In times of increasing labor and skilled labor shortages, the risk of long-term unemployment is decreasing. We trust people to take **more responsibility for themselves**. We therefore want to create the possibility of opting for lower contributions and, as a result, a lower entitlement to unemployment benefit. The resulting reduction in employer contributions is paid out net.

Such an option must not result in the insured person slipping into receipt of state transfers.



### **For flexible, affordable and rising pensions**

We Free Democrats stand for a **truly flexible retirement age**. People should

Following the Swedish model, people will be able to decide for themselves when they will retire, provided that they do not have to apply for social benefits. The later someone retires, the higher their pension -

Those who leave earlier receive a lower pension. Partial pensions are possible without any complications. Those who can no longer work for health reasons still need strong support.

In addition, we want the **statutory share pension**. We want a small part of the pension contributions to be invested in an independently managed fund, as in Sweden, so that we are better protected against the risk of an ageing population and **pension contributions can be financed**.

remain and people benefit more from the opportunities of a **funded pension plan**

benefit. A **real individual stock pension** even ensures that the pension level rises again.

Finally, we Free Democrats are calling for the introduction of a **retirement savings account for private pensions**. This account should be tax-advantaged and enable long-term asset accumulation for retirement provision, even for those who are self-employed. Investments in funds and securities and reallocations within the retirement savings account are tax-free as long as the earnings are reinvested. Higher shareholdings in company pensions must also be made possible. We want to make pure contribution commitments available to all companies, especially small companies that have previously shied away from liability risks. We will clarify the open question of the guarantee requirement and liability in company pensions. We also want to avoid double taxation of pensions.

### **Sustainable social security systems**

Demographic change is putting pressure on social security systems. However, ever-increasing contributions cannot be the solution. High social security contributions burden employers and employees alike. They prevent companies from creating new jobs and make taking up work unattractive. They also limit the younger generation's opportunities to make additional provisions. As a result, ever-increasing social security contributions are becoming a major burden for citizens and businesses. We Free Democrats want to prevent social security contributions from continuing to rise above the 40 percent level. To achieve this, future federal governments must be committed to concrete measures. In order to make social security systems future-proof, significantly more funded elements are needed in the statutory pension insurance and social long-term care insurance. In this way, we will ensure

sustainable social security systems with a fair distribution of burdens between generations.

## **IV. Self-determination in all situations**

Self-determination is the most direct form of freedom. We want a society of free citizens. The people in our country must be able to decide on their private affairs as freely and independently as possible. The basic rights of our constitution protect these areas of freedom for the individual. We want to strengthen basic rights. We defend the individual against discrimination and open up new areas of self-determination for citizens. We strengthen the rights of women and ensure a better balance between family and work. A free society and a functioning democracy belong together. We defend the institutions of liberal democracy against attacks from

extremists and against infiltration by authoritarian regimes. We fight political and religious extremism.

Our liberal promise of freedom does not only apply to the strong. It includes protection against the basic risks of life. It includes solidarity for the major health risks that the individual cannot bear - for the sick, those in need of care and those who care for them.

Promoting and appreciating sport also helps keep society together and people healthy.

Our country urgently needs immigration for its labor market. At the same time, the municipalities in particular are so overwhelmed by the continuing high influx into the German asylum system that integration is difficult. We need swift procedures and clear decisions in the area of migration. We want a new migration policy that controls and organizes more. Those who work for us and live according to our values should have it easier. Those who want to immigrate to our social security systems without the right to stay or who endanger our security will have it more difficult.

#### **a. Preserving fundamental rights and the rule of law**

The state must protect the legal interests of its citizens. Authorities that are well equipped with technology and personnel must ensure security and prosecute crimes quickly and efficiently. But there is no security at any price. When designing internal security, we are committed to the **rule of law** and **civil rights**. We also protect the individual's **civil liberties** against the state. Because those who give up freedom for the sake of security will ultimately lose both.

lose.

#### **An Update for our Constitutional State**

The **structures of internal security** must be reformed. Too many federal, state and local authorities overlap in the performance of their tasks. The federal and state governments must **reorganize the distribution of tasks in the area of internal security**. At the European level, we are calling for **Europol to be expanded into a genuine European Criminal Investigation Office**. Terrorism, organized crime and cybercrime do not stop at national borders.

The powers of the security authorities are formulated in a confusing and incomprehensible manner. The German **intelligence services** in particular need clearer legal bases in order to be able to act early on in the face of internal and external threats. At the same time, there is a need for **improved control of the intelligence services**.

We want to **reorganise** the previously fragmented control landscape and **close control gaps**. The cooperation of different Security authorities in joint centres such as the Joint Counter-Terrorism Centre (GTAZ) must be placed on a legal basis.

Every new power for the security authorities must first be examined for its **impact on civil rights and technical feasibility**. For this purpose, a permanently updated overall surveillance account is needed. A permanently appointed independent **Freedom Commission** should

Furthermore, the balance between freedom and security must be assessed in the light of existing powers when new powers are to be adopted.

### **fighting clan crime**

We Free Democrats want a constitutional state that **does not tolerate criminal clans and other forms of organized crime**. Crime must not pay. **Money laundering** must be stopped, **assets** from crime must be consistently **confiscated**. Crime makes does not stop at borders. We want to promote international cooperation between police and justice

When tackling clan crime and other forms of organized crime, we want to strengthen **controls** by different authorities in conjunction .

### **Strong courts, digital tools**

A modern constitutional state requires well-equipped courts and public prosecutors. This also includes making use of the **opportunities offered by artificial intelligence (AI) in the justice system**. We want to explore these consistently without AI replacing judicial decisions. To do this, judicial decisions must be available as training data. We also support **comprehensive testing of new technologies**. We are also committed to further **digitizing courts and procedural law**, for example through online court proceedings. In this way, **civil law disputes can be resolved more quickly, more closely to the citizens and more cost-effectively.**

be performed.

We stand for a **strong criminal justice system** that ensures quick convictions of criminals and focuses on the essentials. Constant expansion of criminal law is incompatible with its character as the last resort of the constitutional state. We want to systematically review the criminal code and adapt or delete outdated criminal offenses. These include Section 142 of the Criminal Code (leaving the scene of an accident without permission) and Section 265a of the Criminal Code (obtaining services by deception); fare evasion should be considered an administrative offense. **In future, court proceedings in criminal cases should be recorded** and the recording then automatically transcribed. This creates transparency and justice. We demand a **publicly accessible database for court decisions in anonymized form**. A general publication therefore also strengthens Germany as a location for legal tech applications.

We want to clarify the **legal framework for legal tech companies** and demand clear legal regulations that provide legal tech companies, and especially lawyers and notaries, with security and enable innovative solutions. At the same time, **we protect the professional secrecy** of lawyers and notaries.

Disclosure obligations and access to information subject to professional secrecy may only be made possible on the basis of the strictest requirements. In order to counteract the shortage of skilled workers on the legal labour market and to ensure the functioning of the constitutional state, we want to improve the quality and attractiveness of legal training with modern

strengthen reforms.

## Security and civil rights in harmony

We Free Democrats **defend privacy in public spaces**. Because we all have the right to move around in public spaces without constant monitoring. Video surveillance can make sense in individual crime hotspots such as train stations, but it can never replace the **presence of police officers** and **functioning prevention concepts**. There must therefore be no comprehensive surveillance in public spaces. We reject the use of automated facial recognition in public spaces. The protection of privacy must also apply in the digital world. This includes a **right to encryption** so that **private communication remains private**. We reject network blocks, chat controls, upload filters, data retention and other forms of data collection without cause. With our **quick freeze model**, **certain data** can instead be secured by court order in the event of suspicion. German gun laws must be designed **with a sense of proportion** .

Sports shooters and hunters must not be burdened unnecessarily. Instead, the **focus should be on dangerous individuals and extremists** through **improved communication between the authorities** and the **combating illegal arms trafficking** .

We call for the **development of a future-proof data infrastructure and the reform of the fragmented data protection supervision** in order to strengthen the innovative power and competitiveness of the German economy. **We are therefore committed to a uniform interpretation of data protection law by the supervisory authorities**. We Free Democrats are in favor of **maintaining net neutrality** .

By treating all data packets equally, we ensure that the Internet remains free of discrimination and that all companies, especially start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises, have fair market access.

## Strengthening cybersecurity – fending off hybrid attacks

We Free Democrats want our country to **finally take the hybrid attacks of authoritarian states such as Russia and China seriously**. They want to systematically undermine our democracy with attacks such as espionage, sabotage, disinformation and cyber attacks. The public must be proactively informed about the background and perpetrators of these attacks.

In the private sector and in government institutions, **cyber attacks** are still detected too late or not at all. That is why we want to **strengthen cyber security** by reorganizing government responsibilities and specifying the principle of **security by design** and making providers liable for damage caused by security gaps. The state itself must not endanger cyber security by using state Trojans. There is a need for orderly **vulnerability management**,

so that IT vulnerabilities can be closed quickly. We want to build up skills and know-how in software and hardware in Europe and Germany. To this end, we are driving the **development of data centers** .

## A new approach in civil and disaster protection

Whether extreme weather events, pandemics or the growing danger posed by Russian aggression: **civil protection and disaster protection** must be seen as **part of overall defense** . To this end, the **Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance must be able to take over coordination as a central office** . Volunteer work in civil protection and disaster protection must be strengthened and technical equipment improved.

## Modern Consumer Protection

We want to empower citizens through **modern consumer protection** and reject paternalism. However, self-determination requires a free and informed decision. We want to make this possible by advocating the display of average monthly prices, particularly for **better comparability in long-term contracts** . We also want to simplify the enforcement of consumer rights, for example through so-called **smart contracts**, which provide for automatic compensation for consumers in the event of delays.

## b. Open society and liberal democracy

An **open society** with free citizens and a liberal **democracy** with strong and functioning institutions belong together. We are committed to a **democratic culture of debate** in which opinions are not shouted down or even censored, even in the digital world, but respected and heard.

### For a tolerant and open society

For us Free Democrats, equal treatment of all citizens is an integral part of a democracy. We oppose **all forms of discrimination**. We fight discrimination against LGBTI people, implement the National Action Plan “Living Queer” and provide the Magnus Hirschfeld Federal Foundation with better financial resources. The police should record and prosecute **hate crimes against LGBTI people in a uniform manner across the country** . We want to amend **Article 3 of the Basic Law** to include **complement sexual identity**.

People with disabilities still face many hurdles that prevent them from participating equally in our society.

We Free Democrats are committed to greater accessibility in public life. We are committed to **greater visibility of**

**People with disabilities** . We also call for an **inclusive education system** from daycare to vocational training, in which **special education content** is integrated into basic educational training. However, due to the different forms of disabilities, we believe that special schools are indispensable in order to meet all individual support needs. **In future, proof of a permanent disability will only have to be provided once** . Through **practical support and job placement**, we improve opportunities on the primary labor market.

## Religious Policy in Liberal Civil Society

We Free Democrats stand for the freedom of religion enshrined in the Basic Law. We want to achieve a peaceful relationship between all religious and non-religious people in Germany, characterized by **mutual acceptance** . We want to develop the existing state church law into a **constitutional law on religion** - as an equal legal basis for all religious communities that recognize the principle of equality and the diversity of beliefs, the basic rights and the self-determination of their members. In addition, the federal and state governments must comply with the constitutional mandate **to replace state benefits**. We want to subject the Islamic associations to a critical review. We must clarify which associations are partners of the

German state and which cannot. Associations that whitewash or trivialize Islamism or do not condemn anti-Semitism cannot be partners in religious policy in this country. **The Islam Conference (DIK) also needs to be reformed**, in which our value partners among the associations are given significantly more space. The **training of imams and Islamic religious teachers** at German universities must be expanded in order to no longer be dependent on the sending of imams by associations controlled by autocrats. **Islamic religious instruction** must be offered free from the influence of Islamist organizations or organizations controlled from abroad.

### **Combating extremism from the heart of society**

We Free Democrats **strictly reject any form of political and religious extremism**. The security authorities must do better to **protect particularly vulnerable groups** and their **institutions**. The **scientific expertise** in the security authorities in combating various forms of extremism must be expanded. There is no place in the public service for people with proven **anti-constitutional attitudes**.

### **Consistently combat Islamism and strengthen prevention and deradicalization**

We Free Democrats want to **actively combat the threat of Islamism**. The radicalization of Muslims in German society leads to social division, violence and terrorism. In particular, radicalization **by Islamist influencers** on the Internet has increased significantly in recent years. In addition to the means of criminal law, all **measures under immigration law** must also be taken. In addition, we expect a self-critical debate in Muslim communities in order to ensure better protection of young people from extremist ideas. All existing **prevention and deradicalization programs** must be reviewed for their effectiveness. The area of so-called **legalistic Islamism** must also be examined more closely than has been the case so far.

### **Germany as a safe country for Jews**

We Free Democrats want Jews to feel safe in Germany.

In order to preserve the diverse Jewish life in Germany, **anti-Semitism** must be fought even more consistently in view of the growing violence against Jews – regardless of whether it is **right-wing or left-wing extremist anti-Semitism**, Islamic **anti-Semitism**, hatred **of Jews by immigrants** or **anti-Semitism from the middle of society**.

To do this, authorities must recognize all forms of anti-Semitism at an early stage. It is unacceptable that Jews are increasingly less likely to report anti-Semitic attacks because cases are too often dropped. We advocate that the **working definition of anti-Semitism according to the IHRA** (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) be established comprehensively in state authorities and that this should be used as the basis for training of civil servants and for the allocation of state funds. No state funds may be spent on organizations and projects that question **Israel's right to exist**.

The **use of public spaces** must also be prohibited if events endanger the peaceful course of public discussion. The **bans** on the extremist **network Samidoun** or the **Islamic Center Hamburg** were long overdue. We therefore want to examine further bans on activities and organizations, such as those against the right-wing extremist

Turkish **Grey Wolves**, the anti-Israel organization **Masar Badil** or the anti-Semitic **BDS movement**. We want to consistently close gaps in criminal liability.

#### protection of freedom of expression

A vibrant democracy needs open and active debates. **Freedom of the press and freedom of expression** are increasingly under pressure from within and without and must be protected. Freedom of expression is one of the pillars of the democratic community. Digital platforms also have their own responsibility when it comes to protecting freedom of expression.

The due diligence obligations for platforms introduced under the Digital Services Act **must not result in freedom of expression being impaired** or in private individuals rather than state courts deciding on the limits of freedom of expression.

#### Modern and lean public broadcaster

The public is increasingly getting the impression that public broadcasting (ÖRR) needs more diversity of opinion and that factual reporting needs to take up more space.

We are committed to ensuring that this is ideally taken into account as part of a "reform from within". We are committed to the dual media system - consisting of the public broadcaster and private media. However, it is not the public broadcaster's job to compete with every private media offering. That is why we want a **more modern and streamlined public broadcaster** that **concentrates on its core tasks**: news, education and information. By **reducing the number of channels** and **eliminating duplicate structures**, we want to **significantly reduce the broadcasting fee**. We want to **exempt young people in training from the broadcasting fee**.

### c. For a new realpolitik in migration

We want **orderly migration according to clear rules** that are also **enforced**. We want **immigration into the labor market, not into the social security systems**. And we want to live up to our **humanitarian responsibility**, but also align it with our real possibilities. Furthermore, only through **sustainable integration** can **social acceptance of immigration** be maintained.

#### Immigration into the labor market instead of into the social security systems

Our country needs more immigration into the labour market. We have improved the rules with the **immigration law**. As a next step, we are calling for a **single immigration code** that brings together all the legal bases for immigration and asylum. In addition, **the administrative structures** must now be reorganised.

**and procedures** in the area of labor migration. We want people who want to **immigrate to the German labor market** to only have to deal with one government agency. In order to create such a **one-stop shop for immigration to**

**the labor market**, the entire **visa process** must be put to the **test**. We want to make immigration to the labor market even easier for highly qualified professionals. We want to open the European Blue Card to more non-academic professionals and abolish the impractical minimum wage limits. We want to expand the instrument of the **Western Balkans regulation**. We also want to

provide graduates of the world's top 200 universities with a one-year **orientation visa** to find work, following the Dutch model.

**Asylum seekers with the right to remain** must be given **access to the labour market** as quickly as possible so that they can stand on their own two feet as quickly as possible. A job is also the best integration course. We Free Democrats want to create **a new social status for all recognised refugees** – including Ukrainian refugees – instead of receiving citizen's allowance. It combines stronger support for taking up work and – as far as legally permissible –

lower social benefits. The level of social benefits must not represent a perverse incentive.

That is why we want to critically review the level of social benefits, for example in the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act, and standardize them across Europe in the future. We are also focusing on more benefits in kind rather than cash and are calling for the payment card, which was decided on long ago, to be used everywhere without unnecessary exceptions. Anyone who is **legally and enforceably required to leave the country** and has a reasonable opportunity to leave Germany should, **as a rule, no** longer receive state support. Those who actively obstruct the identity verification process should also have their social benefits cut. Well-integrated asylum seekers must be given the opportunity to **switch lanes** and enter the labor market if they are qualified enough that they and their families can live from their own work without transfer payments.

### Migration according to clear rules

Anyone who does not meet the requirements for a stay in Germany should not be allowed to enter Germany permanently. Anyone who is here **without the right to stay** must **return to their homeland immediately**. However, **repatriations** too often fail due to enforcement by the federal states. That is why we want to **transfer responsibility for deportations to the federal level**.

centralize. **Asylum procedures and asylum court proceedings** must **be further accelerated**.

**Asylum procedures** should also take place **in third countries** if those seeking protection are safe there and **legal procedures** are guaranteed. We also demand an orderly procedure for determining more **safe countries of origin**. **We want to suspend family reunification for those entitled to subsidiary protection** and pause **admission programs**. As Free Democrats, we support the model testing of rejections at Germany's external borders in order to exhaust all legal options for limiting irregular migration.

Together with our European partners, we want to ensure greater **order and control** in migration policy. The role of FRONTEX in **protecting external borders** and in **combating irregular migration** and **people smuggling** must be strengthened. The EU must also use **migration agreements** to ensure that countries of origin increase their willingness to take back refugees and curb irregular migration. At the same time, we want Germany to continue to successfully develop bilateral migration partnerships.

### Enabling and Shaping Integration

Our society's capacity to **absorb and integrate refugees** is limited. Persistently high numbers of refugees **are overloading** the infrastructure in the **municipalities**. In order to improve the framework conditions for integration, we want to make greater use of the instrument of the **residence requirement**.



The existing **integration courses** must be reviewed for their **effectiveness** .

In particular, we need to **separate language and integration courses**, as the current approach has proven to be ineffective and costly. **Language courses** should be modular and performance-based. Their primary goal should be language acquisition for integration into the job market. Both courses must be able to be completed **alongside work** .

We Free Democrats want the granting of German **citizenship** to be the end result of **successful integration** . We have enforced that people can only be naturalized if they earn their own **living** .

In doing so, we send the signal that hard work and personal performance pay off. **Anti-Semitic, racist, xenophobic actions or motives** are a strict **reason for exclusion** . Anyone with a criminal record or who does not share the **values of our constitution** may not be naturalized.

#### **d. Liberal politics for self-determined women**

With regard to equal rights for women, we see that there are still disadvantages that we cannot accept. Women experience domestic violence more often than men and experience restrictions in their sexual and reproductive autonomy, but also in their health care. They still earn less money than men and suffer more often from poverty in old age. There are still no equal opportunities when it comes to career advancement. This must change.

#### **Better protect physical self-determination**

In order to combat **domestic violence against women** , we would like states and municipalities to finance places in women's shelters according to need and for available places in women's shelters to be displayed in real time via a nationwide online platform.

We want to improve **women's health** through gender-specific care and optimal diagnostics . We are committed to more intensive research into diseases such as endometriosis, PCOS, lipedema, breast cancer and gender differences between men and women in cardiovascular diseases.

**We want to help women who are unintentionally pregnant as best we can** and improve the inadequate care situation. Abortion should be included in the training of gynecologists in all federal states. All women should be able to have their abortion costs covered. Existing options **for medical abortion methods** should be **made more accessible** to pregnant women and medical staff and midwives should be able to provide support. A reform of the regulations on abortion (§§218, 218a StGB) should be discussed in the next Bundestag by means of so-called cross-party group motions with freedom of conscience for every member of parliament.

become.

We are committed to **protecting and strengthening women's rights worldwide** , for example by **fighting forced marriage and female genital mutilation** and by **improving the prosecution of**

**sexual violence in wars.** Women should be more systematically included in peace negotiations and conflict resolution.

### **Economic Self-determination of Women**

We are strengthening **women's economic freedom** through better **tax regulations**, in particular through the abolition of tax classes 3 and 5, for which we continue to campaign.  
We want to provide greater relief to families and **single parents** by improving the tax deductibility of childcare costs and statutory maintenance payments.

In order to increase the proportion of **female founders**, we particularly encourage girls at school to study **STEM subjects** and entrepreneurship education, and we make it easier for women **to access venture capital funds from state development banks**. To combat **poverty** in old age among women, we want couples to make use of the option of splitting pension points in the event of interruptions in their employment due to care work.

### **e. Modern law and fair opportunities for families and seniors**

There are many different family models, but they are all based on values and care. As Free Democrats, we want to accommodate and strengthen families in their most diverse constellations. The political framework must enable a self-determined life and independent decisions.

### **Time for Families**

Many couples today strive to share care work equally. This must not be prevented by political decisions. Parents must also be able to make their own decisions. The full parental allowance (14 months) should be paid out in full if both partners claim at least four months of parental allowance each. Parents can divide the remaining months freely between themselves.

Parental allowance and other family benefits must be made less bureaucratic, digitalized and automated, e.g. through an AI-based application process and a **child opportunities portal**. The current regulations are often inadequate for **self-employed women and men**, as they often do not receive sufficient income replacement benefits. The regulations must better reflect the working reality of self-employed people. **Maternity protection** needs to be reformed. We are committed to flexible and voluntary **maternity protection for self-employed women**. Pregnancy should not become an obstacle or hindrance to starting a business.

Currently, the right to maternity protection in the case of stillbirths only exists from the 24th week of pregnancy. We are committed to ensuring that women who have a miscarriage before the 24th week of pregnancy are also able to week of pregnancy should be able to take advantage of **staggered maternity protection**. No woman should have to go to work the day after a miscarriage.

## **Improved compatibility of family, care and work**

Childcare that meets needs promotes equal opportunities and enables women to participate equally in the labor market. To **improve the compatibility of family, care and work**, the expansion of company kindergartens should be supported and bureaucratic hurdles should be reduced. The tax deduction of childcare costs should be improved. To improve the **compatibility of work and caring** for relatives, we are committed to expanding short-term and day care for people in need of care.

We are abolishing the outdated Working Hours Act to enable **flexible working hours**. Flexible working hours, part-time work, job sharing, top sharing and home office should enable women and men to better combine work and family.

## **A Modern Family Law**

We demand a **modern reproductive medicine law**. This should **legalize egg donation** as well as the clarification that embryo donation is **permissible**. We also want to enable **non-commercial surrogacy** with a clear legal framework and **better financial support for fertility treatments, regardless of marital status or sexual orientation**. Modern **family law** should do justice to today's diverse family constellations, for example by enabling **parenthood agreements before conception**, especially in rainbow families, modernizing the law of descent, allowing unmarried couples to adopt and **anchoring the community of responsibility in law**. Likewise, we want to **speed up amicable divorces** and **allow divorce hearings via court video conference**. We Free Democrats want to make the so-called **alternating model the legal model** for the care of underage children after the parents separate, with the child's welfare always remaining the primary criterion in the decision. **Both parents should be entitled and obliged** to provide a substantial share of both maintenance and care. We want to strengthen the rights of grandparents in dealing with these children.

## **senior citizens**

The values of a freedom-based policy apply across generations. For us, policy for **senior citizens** is a cross-sectional task that does not, however, see the special needs as stigmatizing age-related issues. We are committed to a modern image of old age that promotes the potential of older people in the workplace beyond retirement, in participation in social life and in voluntary work. We individualize the retirement age. By **improving access rights**, we recognize the role many grandparents play in supporting their grandchildren. We support the **granting of loans for age-appropriate renovations and conversions**, and by introducing the **community of responsibility**, we enable alternatives to traditional family structures in old age. We call for the introduction of the "Life Opportunities-BaföG" and a **personal free space account** for further training opportunities and a **digital offensive for senior citizens**. Mobility must also be possible in old age, and discriminatory compulsory driving ability tests for senior citizens must be abolished.

We reject senior citizens.

## f. Enjoyment of success and responsibility through sport and strong volunteer work

A functioning democracy needs a vibrant civil society – people who are socially or politically active, be it in sports, culture or political parties.

### Promote Volunteering

So that volunteers can concentrate on their commitment, we want to **significantly reduce the burden on clubs in terms of liability risks and bureaucracy**. **Digital offers** and **platforms for volunteers** are to be further **expanded** . In particular, we propose a **reduction in documentation and retention requirements** . We are also striving for increasing **digitalization** of the tax and registration processes surrounding volunteer work. A **central club guide** provides a clear guide through all requirements, registration and reporting obligations. This creates security for volunteers. We are adapting the legal framework, flat rates for trainers and volunteers, as well as relevant income limits.

### Sport as a social project

**Sport is more than just exercise** - it keeps you healthy, brings people together and helps **prevent the need for care**. In order to leverage this potential, we want to not only strengthen volunteer work in general, but also specifically **involve the commitment of the baby boomer generation**. With their experience and time, they can expand sports offerings for children, young people and seniors and revitalize club work. We are also strengthening **cooperation between clubs, schools, companies and social institutions** in order to reach as many people as possible. Sport brings people together, regardless of origin or ability. We maintain the **Federal Youth Games with individual performance incentives** and supplement them with the opportunity to acquire **the German Sports Badge** . In this way, we motivate high-performing children and those who are disadvantaged in terms of physical activity equally and promote performance and participation among young people. Major sporting events such as **the Olympic and Paralympic Games**

We want to bring eSports back to Germany – provided that they meet ecological, economic and humanitarian standards as well as the traditional values of sport. Such events show how sport connects people and makes values such as inclusion and fairness visible. In this way, we strengthen the **role of sport in integration and violence prevention** and **promote top-level sport** with clear goals and efficient structures. We are also committed to ensuring that **eSports is recognized as a non-profit is recognized** .

### For more incentives in volunteer service

We Free Democrats see a general service obligation, a so-called social year and related concepts as a serious infringement on freedom. We therefore firmly reject such compulsory service. Instead, we rely on attractive voluntary services that prepare people for a career.

## g. Ensuring the best health and care for the future

A free and self-determined life also includes the **best possible health and nursing care** with stable contributions. We Free Democrats want the

**Designing healthcare in a patient-centered manner.** We are committed to self-administration and strengthening the liberal professions. We want to **reduce unnecessary bureaucracy** in the healthcare system and **continue to drive digitalization forward** .

#### **Whether rural or urban – ensuring healthcare everywhere**

As Free Democrats, we are committed to ensuring that everyone in Germany has access to high-quality care close to where they live - **in rural areas and in the city**. In **outpatient care**, we are committed to a primary care system: general practitioners and pediatricians should be the first point of contact for patients. We believe that strengthening comprehensive outpatient care also means that the full remuneration of all health professions must be based on performance. In **hospital care**, we want to provide specialized and therefore better services, slow down cost developments and at the same time relieve the burden on doctors and nurses. Hospitals, doctors and the emergency services must also be better networked, integrated and coordinated with an emergency reform. We want to consistently reduce artificial sector barriers between outpatient and inpatient care and **further develop the interlinking and networking of all care areas**. We are committed to the **liberal professions** in the health care system. They must be able to make decisions on medical issues autonomously and free from instructions from third parties. The **freedom** of treatment without the need for budgeting benefits patients.

#### **More choice and efficiency in health**

We are committed to the **dual system of statutory (GKV) and private (PKV)**

**Health insurance**. We therefore reject a single fund (so-called citizens' insurance). In both insurance systems, we want to **strengthen the insured's freedom to change and choose**. In order to get the unchecked development of service expenditure in the statutory health insurance system under control, expenditure should not grow faster than income in the future. In addition, we will **subject all service expansions of the last ten years to an evidence, efficiency and cost-effectiveness check**. Services that have not proven successful should be removed from the statutory health insurance service catalog.

#### **Promoting innovations – strengthening Germany as a location for medicine**

We Free Democrats are committed to ensuring that patients in Germany **early access to useful and innovative medicines** . To achieve this, we want to **strengthen Germany as a production and research location**. We are committed to relocating the production of important medicines back to Germany and Europe. This requires that the healthcare industry **is future-oriented, digitalised and competitive**

To ensure that drugs reach the market more quickly, we want to **speed up approval procedures**, review the **rules for benefit assessment and price negotiations** and **reduce bureaucratic hurdles** - without compromising on patient safety. **We want to pay special compensation** for therapeutic successes. A good supply of drugs requires strong pharmacies. They need conditions under which

where they can work economically.

## Preventing Diseases Through Prevention

We Free Democrats want to start an **active prevention strategy** . Digitalization offers great opportunities here, for example through **health apps, telemedicine and wearables**. Those who take preventive measures incur less expenditure for their health insurance. That is why we want to enable health insurance companies **to introduce a reduced additional contribution for these insured persons**. In the area of **mental health** , too , we want to improve the quality of life of those affected by **destigmatization** and **low-threshold, digital offers** . We are committed to better psychotherapeutic care and want to reduce the waiting time for a therapy place to less than four weeks. Until the waiting times are reduced, we want to make the reimbursement process less bureaucratic and more

standardize.

We Free Democrats want to focus on **prevention** of addictive substances. Instead of

Instead of criminalizing consumption behavior, we want to help people to **use addictive substances responsibly** through **education** . With cannabis, we have already taken a decisive first step that helps to curb the black market and at the same time ensure quality and protection of young people. We therefore remain committed to the legalization of cannabis.

## Critically review corona measures

Our health system was caught unprepared by the corona pandemic. This has put our country to the test. Deficits, a lack of preparation and excessive infringements of fundamental rights have enormously damaged trust in our institutions. All of this must be thoroughly addressed. We Free Democrats are calling for a parliamentary committee of inquiry to ensure **real clarification and transparency** through an orderly process and to provide **recommendations** for action for future crises.

## Self-determination in death and organ donation

For us Free Democrats, **physical self-determination** is a central aspect of a liberal society. We want to **increase the number of organ donations** and at the same time protect the self-determined decision of the individual. We are also committed to liberalising regulations on living **organ donation** . A free life also includes **self-determination at the end of life**. We firmly believe in the **right to a self-determined death**. This also includes the **possibility of legally making use of assisted suicide**. At the same time, the state must **lend a helping hand to anyone who has suicidal thoughts**. We therefore want to **noticeably improve suicide prevention** .

expand.

## strengthening care

The need for care can affect anyone - whether due to an accident, illness or old age. Good care requires security of care. We Free Democrats free care providers from double checks with no added value, unnecessary proof and documentation requirements and excessive requirements.

We are easing the burden on caring relatives by **making it easier to combine care and work**. At the same time, we want to look at the situation and special needs **of caring children and young people** and expand **low-threshold counseling services** . We want to **recruit more nursing professionals at home and abroad**. To this end, we want to **introduce recognition procedures for foreign**

**Drastically simplify the work of nursing staff. Through digital applications, automation and robotics**

We want to make a significant contribution to **easing the burden on nursing staff** . An ageing society means more people in need of care and fewer contributors. The **financing of care must therefore be diversified** . We want to retain the pay-as-you-go system of social long-term care insurance as a partial benefit. To stabilize contribution rates, we want to **add a funded component**. We are also committed to more **incentives for private long-term care provision** and to **equal treatment of company long-term care provision and company pensions**.

a.

## V. For a lean state that works

Some people suppress it, but everyone feels it: In Germany, the state regulates more than it can manage. It wants to be a problem solver for everything and everyone and in doing so becomes a problem itself. The state has never had as much money, as many staff and as many powers at its disposal as it does today, and yet many things do not work better. This excessive demand costs trust every day and strengthens the political fringes. Instead of constantly defining new tasks, the state must concentrate on the essentials. In doing so, we are strengthening the core of a lean

State: Solid finances are the basis. We want to protect all generations from the burdens of a excessive national debt and the effects of demographic change. We are cutting subsidies for the few and creating better conditions for everyone. Where we really need a well-functioning state, it must be better equipped. Federalism must be simpler and the state must become leaner and more efficient. With clear responsibilities, we want to upgrade the interaction between the federal and state governments from an obstacle to an advantage. A lot needs to change in Germany. The state is perhaps the biggest problem. We have the power to change that.

### a. Solid public finances

We Free Democrats want to protect future generations from the burden of excessive national debt. We therefore stand for responsible and future-oriented budget and financial policy. Our goal is a successful economy that grows and creates prosperity.

#### **Adhering to the debt brake is intergenerational justice**

Freedom for future generations also means not leaving them mountains of debt. For us Free Democrats, **compliance with the debt brake enshrined in the Basic Law** is therefore a central requirement of intergenerational justice. Otherwise, children are liable for their parents. This also applies to the federal states. Sustainable and prioritized budgets create intergenerational justice because burdens are not passed on to future generations. This is the only way we can ensure the **financial freedom of action for future generations**. Germany must remain an anchor of stability in Europe and set a good example. We cannot allow our creditworthiness to be called into question. Rampant national debt like in France or Italy

would undermine European stability. We have fought for strict debt rules in the past. If we do not abide by the rules, the monetary union will fail.

### **No debt at European level**

We Free Democrats are strictly **against the European Union having the power to take on debt**. The EU reconstruction fund Next Generation EU must remain a one-off exception. Further EU debt funds would be a breach of law and trust. The European Union does not need new debt, but must focus on core tasks with European added value. We Free Democrats are therefore firmly opposed to a European debt union.

## **b. Less subsidies and more market**

We Free Democrats want to **reduce subsidies** so that financial aid and tax reductions are brought into an appropriate relationship with economic value creation. Because the many billions of euros of state money given to individual industries and companies are better invested in education in the long term. Existing and new subsidy programs must be consistently time-limited, degressive and externally evaluated. We Free Democrats want **to sell state holdings** because private investors are better entrepreneurs. In doing so, we must also respect the federal budgetary law

so that it does not stand in the way of a sale of federal holdings that makes sense from an overall economic perspective.

## **c. Modernize the state through federalism reform**

The federal structure and administration in Germany has proven itself, but it needs an update that **focuses on efficiency and citizen-friendliness**. An agile state that shows that it can reform itself proves its ability to act and strengthens citizens' trust in democratic institutions.

**A general inventory is the first necessary step.** All federal responsibilities and administrative processes must be subjected to **critical review**. Too many Authorities at federal, state and local levels overlap in the Fulfilling their tasks. The general inventory must be supported by a clear political will **to improve the efficiency and ability of the state to act** and must be concluded with a federalism reform. For us, reforms in the financial and educational sectors, internal security, civil and disaster protection, migration and digitalization are a priority.

As part of a federalism reform, tax revenues must also be distributed between the federal government and the states in such a way that the federal government can also provide the considerable co-financing of state tasks. We Free Democrats want to **limit federal spending more to the original tasks of the federal government**. Tasks of the states



The federal government should only subsidise these in exceptional cases. A strong federalism needs clear Competencies and responsibilities. We therefore consider a new financial federalism commission to be essential and will campaign for its establishment. If tasks are changed between the federal government and the states, this must also be underpinned by a change in the financing flows.

## d. An agile state for a modern country

### A federal government that sets a good example

A lean and resource-efficient state begins with the federal government. That is why we want to **significantly reduce the number of federal government representatives** and keep them permanently at a lower level using a **one-in, one-out principle**. We also want to **limit** the number of state secretaries in the ministries and make the career structure more flexible. **The Federal Agency for Disruptive Innovations (SPRIND) should be a model for the release of potential.** With the SPRIND Freedom Act, we have created freedom for innovation –

for example, by dispensing with intermediate instances and making an exception to the prohibition of preferential treatment in order to attract highly qualified specialists. For example, top experts from the business world can be recruited for specific projects or for a limited period of time for special tasks at more market-based conditions, which is not possible with the usual instruments of public service law.

We Free Democrats want to reduce the number of federal ministries and authorities, streamline their structures and define responsibilities more clearly. We want to significantly reduce the number of positions in the federal administration outside of the security authorities. The **Development Ministry should be merged with the Foreign Office**. The Federal Ministry for Building and Housing will be integrated into an existing ministry. The cross-cutting issue of digitization, which affects all departments and ties up resources everywhere, should be brought together in a **digitization ministry**. Leaner structures within the ministries - for example by **eliminating sub-departmental management** - should shorten decision-making processes within the ministries. In the spirit of **Dynamic Shared Ownership (DSO)**, the vast majority of decisions should be made where the actual work is done. This strengthens responsibility.

We also need to look at the so-called subordinate areas of the ministries. We want to significantly reduce the number of authorities and institutions. **The entire administrative landscape needs to be streamlined.** We should have the courage to take new paths - for example, abolishing or reorganizing authorities such as the Federal Environment Agency.

This saves taxpayers' money and can lead to greater efficiency through fewer overlaps.

### A performance-oriented administration for the citizens

In public administration, advancement is currently only possible within a rigid framework. We want to **create more space for professional excellence, especially in technical disciplines.** With more flexible public service law, we want to enable civil servants to gain professional experience outside of the administration - and in some cases even demand this. This ensures that acquired expertise is reflected in the career and remuneration model.

In addition, by **introducing Expert Tracks**, we want to enable highly competent experts outside of traditional career paths to be promoted without leaving their field of expertise. must.

The **idea of performance** must be more strongly reflected in administration - because administration must not be an end in itself. It serves the citizens. We Free Democrats want to create an administrative culture of enabling and not of rejecting. To achieve this, discretion and personal responsibility should be strengthened at all levels.

**Citizens' satisfaction should be included in the civil service assessment of agency management and employees.** This creates an incentive for better service and more citizen-friendliness. To this end, we want to create a uniform evaluation system and introduce **performance indicators** in the public service. **Binding target agreements** round off the new idea of performance in the public service.

## e. Comprehensive digitalization of administration

Government institutions must solve people's problems and not create new ones.

We stand for a **digital and citizen-friendly administration** that is open to technical innovations. Here, too, we want to **reduce overlapping authorities**. With modern technologies such as the DeutschlandID as the digital citizen account and AI-supported administrative assistants, we are streamlining and modernizing the structures.

This makes them faster and more citizen-friendly and **relieves the burden on taxpayers**. Less bureaucracy, more digitization

-

for a sustainable administration.

### A Ministry for Digitalization

Our country cannot function without an efficient digital infrastructure. We will overcome outdated structures: We will set up a **Federal Ministry for Digitalization**, which will be formed from existing departments of other ministries and will act as a central authority to manage the digitalization of the administration nationwide. To do this, the powers of administrative digitization must be separated from the Federal Ministry of the Interior. This is because this issue, which is so important for Germany's future, has so far been neglected there. However, administrative digitization must be the top priority, and the ministry must have the powers to stop undesirable developments in other areas. We only want to supplement the high dynamics of fiber optic and mobile network expansion by private and municipal telecommunications companies with tailored funding where private sector expansion is not possible.

We are strengthening competition between telecommunications companies.

### Administrative digitization for an administration of tomorrow

The state must not constantly ask people for information that it already has. In the future, citizens and companies should have the right to have **all administrative services provided digitally and processed online**. We Free Democrats are calling for the introduction of a **once-only guarantee** and a **legal right to digital administrative services**.

In addition, we want to include all relevant registers, such as population registers, company registers and

Health registers, fully digitize and network them. This will significantly speed up and simplify administrative processes.

A central element for successful **administrative digitization** is the "Government as a Platform" model (GaaP). This uniform platform then contains all digital administrative applications in Germany. To expand digital identity, citizens should be able to store and link their most important documents and evidence securely and always at hand on their smartphones in the newly created digital wallet. This also includes the digital ID document and the driver's license. This enables citizens to identify themselves in a forgery-proof manner and use digital services securely. In the future, **dealings with authorities** will be possible anywhere, whether from home or on the go. Germany must become faster and more agile. Only through efficient administrative structures can we meet the challenges of our time.

We Free Democrats do not want **any analogue-digital double structures**. We want to consistently abolish analogue processes and replace them with modern, more efficient digital solutions. However, we are not just relying on a one-to-one transfer of analogue processes to digital, but rather see the digitization of administration as a comprehensive modernization. We Free Democrats trust people to manage this digital transformation. We rely on simple local solutions: For example, easy-to-use terminals on site in the authorities and **support from human digital guides** so that no one is excluded. We also want to introduce an **AI citizen assistant** that supports citizens in digital administrative procedures.

## VI. Sustainability, Innovation and Infrastructure

Sustainability requires innovation. This applies to successful climate protection as well as to the way we want to live, move around and produce food in Germany in the future.

The state is fixated on compliance with existing rules. That is why it is not a good innovator. Because it has spread into so many areas of life, our country has lost its innovative strength. But that can be changed. We Free Democrats want to achieve the European climate targets safely and as cost-effectively as possible. To do this, we are relying on a uniform **European emissions trading system**. Technology bans are not necessary for this. On the contrary: We will put innovation above reservations and ensure that new technologies and business models are not suffocated by excessive regulation. The time for excuses is over: now it is about making things possible. People need affordable housing. We want to make faster and cheaper construction possible.

A modern and efficient infrastructure is the key to growth and prosperity.

Bridges, roads, railways and airports create real added value in people's everyday lives. Our goal is to at least halve the planning times for all infrastructure projects. This also applies to the digital space. Our country cannot function without an efficient digital infrastructure.

We will overcome outdated structures. We respect farmers as entrepreneurs. We will align agricultural policy more closely with farmers' entrepreneurial activities. By focusing on increasing productivity and innovations instead of ineffective subsidies, we will make farmers independent of state subsidies.

## a. Environmental and climate protection through innovation and market economy

### EU Emissions Trading as a Leading Instrument: Efficiency Instead of Overregulation

We Free Democrats want to achieve the European climate targets safely and as cost-effectively as possible. To this end, we want to establish a uniform **European emissions trading system as the leading instrument of climate policy**. With its annually decreasing upper limit for greenhouse gas emissions, emissions trading ensures that the European climate targets are met. The CO2 price created by trading emissions rights ensures that greenhouse gases are always saved where this is cheapest. Further regulations that have no additional benefit for climate protection due to the capped greenhouse gas volume in emissions trading must be abolished. In order to achieve the climate targets of the Paris Agreement and to ensure fair competitive conditions for European industry, we are committed to international emissions trading with a global CO2 price.

Since national special targets within the framework of the European emissions trading system cannot have any additional benefit for climate protection, we want to replace the **target of climate neutrality by 2045** in the German Climate Protection Act **with the European target of climate neutrality by 2050**.

This gives companies, especially energy-intensive industries, more time to switch to climate-friendly technologies. Plants that contribute to value creation can be used for five years longer. The ramp-up and market maturity of new technologies also gains more time. **This strengthens the economic performance of companies, secures jobs and avoids subsidy programs worth billions**. We Free Democrats want to **introduce a climate dividend** in order to pay revenue from emissions trading back to citizens directly and at a flat rate per capita.

We Free Democrats are committed to **technological openness in climate protection**. If politicians and officials dictate which technologies are used and which are banned, the innovative power of companies is curbed and climate protection becomes unnecessarily expensive. That is why we are committed to an **immediate lifting of the de facto ban on combustion engines** from 2035 and an innovation-friendly regulation of the removal, use and storage of greenhouse gases, because the use of these technologies is essential for achieving the climate goals. We want to enable the capture and storage of greenhouse gas emissions through carbon capture and storage (CCS) and carbon capture and utilization (CCU) as a non-discriminatory climate protection option: Anyone who removes greenhouse gases from the atmosphere through reforestation or technical methods should receive a free certificate. We also want to expand the EU climate target to include our own **negative emissions target**.

### Environmental policy as an innovation driver – successful in the global market

We want environmental technology "Made in Germany". To achieve this, we must create framework conditions that produce innovations that are in demand in other European countries and worldwide. To this end, we want to strengthen the innovative power of our companies by avoiding special national paths.

With the chemical industry, the automotive industry and mechanical engineering, we have globally successful industries in Germany. On the road to sustainability,

Germany has gone well beyond the European framework through restrictive regulations, for example on limit values, technical specifications and quota requirements, and is far removed from global regulation. The products developed in and for the German market therefore fail to meet the requirements of other markets. We will **merge the environmental standards in Germany and Europe and thus enable our industry to develop products that are in demand worldwide.**

### **Making nature and species conservation more effective and targeted**

With the approach of "**population protection instead of individual protection**", we focus on effective, holistic nature conservation measures. We focus on preserving entire populations and habitats and thus avoid individual sightings of individual individuals blocking construction projects for long periods of time without their species being endangered at all. Up to now, construction projects that use new areas have had to find individually approved compensation areas and use these exclusively for nature conservation. This often means that projects cannot be implemented for a long time. In addition, this results in many small-scale nature conservation measures that are often not coordinated with one another. Their benefit for nature conservation is therefore limited. We **want to make compensation payments the standard instead of real compensation** through compensation areas. This relieves the burden on both authorities and companies. The money paid can be used for really effective nature conservation projects in a coordinated manner by experts via a fund. This creates large-scale, interconnected protection measures that secure habitats, promote biodiversity and protect nature in the long term. At the same time, companies benefit from a simpler process and gain planning security.

A key instrument for greater climate, species and nature conservation is the **circular economy**. With new, innovative processes, waste from the past can become raw materials of the future. We want **modern recycling methods instead of product bans**. To achieve this, we will make the current legal framework more market-oriented and open to new technologies. At the same time, this will make our country more independent of raw material imports.

### **b. Better infrastructure and technology-neutral mobility**

We want people in our country to remain mobile in an individual and affordable way. We Free Democrats reject a general speed limit on motorways. We will not achieve fair coexistence between all road users -whether cars, motorbikes, bicycles, e-scooters or pedestrians - through bans, but through balanced rules and mutual respect.

#### **Modern infrastructure – accelerating planning processes**

A modern and efficient infrastructure is the key to growth and prosperity. Bridges, roads, waterways, railways and airports create real added value in people's everyday lives. We have simplified road traffic law and initiated an acceleration of planning and approval processes. We are consistently continuing on this path. The aim is to at least **halve the planning times** for all infrastructure projects in order to expand roads, railways, waterways and digital networks more quickly. We are committed to ensuring that **both mobile and fiber optic expansion become a priority in the Federal Telecommunications Network Expansion Acceleration Act**. In a next

In a first step, we want to make replacement infrastructure generally exempt from approval, even if it has to be expanded and adapted to growing demand. We Free Democrats want fewer traffic jams caused by the **construction site turbo**. To this end, the tendering procedures must be adjusted so that quick and timely construction is rewarded through incentives.

In view of the increasing need for investment, we need a sustainable solution within the framework of the debt brake for the maintenance and expansion of infrastructure in Germany. We want to strengthen the road financing cycle, generate own revenues for the Autobahn GmbH through the truck toll and open up to private capital in order to enable adequate and multi-year planning and financing.

### **Technological freedom instead of ideological transport policy**

All generations in our country share the need for individual mobility. Instead of a

**Banning the combustion engine**, we are enabling alternative fuels such as e-fuels. Because it is not the drive technology, but the fossil fuels that are the problem. This will enable us to continue to operate the existing fleet in a climate-neutral manner in the future. This will ensure affordable and sustainable mobility regardless of the type of drive. Air and sea traffic can also be made more environmentally friendly with alternative fuels. We want to fundamentally revise the emission requirements for cars. The focus should not only be on exhaust gases while driving.

Instead, we want to look at the entire life cycle of a vehicle. We also want to **abolish the EU fleet limits**. This creates more flexibility for industry. It can then rely on new technologies that both protect the climate and secure jobs. For a technology-neutral, sustainable mobility policy, we want to give electromobility, climate-neutral fuels (e.g. from electricity or biomass) and hydrogen equal status in terms of regulation, taxation and funding. Only through genuine openness to different technologies can we shape the mobility of the future. This must advance climate protection and at the same time strengthen economic stability.

We Free Democrats want to make autonomous driving a part of everyday life. This includes the **approval of automated driving systems of all development stages**. For many young people, a driving license means freedom. That is why we want to make driving licenses and professional driver qualifications (truck driving license, bus driving license) cheaper again, for example by doing away with a

Daily limit for theory lessons, the possibility of completing theory lessons digitally and the integration of driving simulators in the training. By opening up the examination market to other providers and offering further training to become a driving examiner even without an engineering degree, we want to increase the number of test appointments and significantly reduce waiting times.

We want to make accompanied **driving possible from the age of 16** – because early driving experience has been proven to increase road safety. **We reject discriminatory compulsory tests for seniors**. We Free Democrats are committed to the digitization of driving licenses and vehicle documents in order to reduce bureaucracy. The digital vehicle registration that we have launched is a good start, and we are building on it. We Free Democrats want to **strengthen the automotive cultural heritage** and also secure for the future.

### Strengthening public transport through market and innovation

A **functioning local public transport system** is a necessary complement to private transport. The interaction of buses, trains and other means of transport is the key to modern and flexible mobility. With the Deutschlandticket, we have cleared the tariff jungle and radically simplified access. Now the transport associations and states must break up their rigid structures and implement the necessary reforms. We will supplement rigid scheduled services with **flexible, needs-based offers**. The basis for this is available data and digital platforms. By digitally connecting different modes of transport, we create seamless mobility chains from the first to the last kilometer, and **"mobility hubs"** provide efficient transfer options.

### For more competition on the railways

The railway must be a reliable means of transport. This requires more competition on the railways. We **are separating network and operations at Deutsche Bahn** in order to increase operational efficiency, create clear responsibilities and optimise the maintenance and expansion of the infrastructure. With a mix of stable financing, reformed structures

and incentives through competition on the railways, we will achieve these goals. The financial resources

The federal government's funding will be concentrated on the infrastructure sector, with a focus on adequate and sustained investment and expenditure financing. In long-distance transport, we want to open up to more competition in order to provide customers with a broader and better range of services. We will review the ambitious renovation of the main traffic arteries in the rail network and continue it if it is proven to be successful.

### Making climate protection in air transport market-based and competition-neutral

For many people, air travel is an important part of their lives - whether for work or private reasons. Good framework conditions, competition and innovation have made air travel affordable and accessible to everyone. We want to maintain this. Worldwide passenger and freight transport by air is an expression of a strong and competitive Germany. To ensure that this remains the case, we are abolishing the **air traffic tax** and reducing **air security fees to a competitive level**. Airlines and airports need entrepreneurial freedom instead of government interference. The modernization of airport infrastructure must not fail due to government bureaucracy. The "EU quotas for sustainable aviation fuels" must not place a one-sided burden on European airlines.

### c. More construction and better housing

We Free Democrats want to make building faster and cheaper possible. People need affordable housing. In many regions of Germany, housing is scarce and expensive. We want to change that!

#### housing for all

We Free Democrats will **improve tax depreciation in housing construction** – this will make investments more attractive and create new housing more quickly. The **special depreciation of**

**We are continuing the implementation of the Growth Opportunities Act without unnecessary restrictions.**

We are putting an end to government cost drivers with an immediate **moratorium on building costs**. We are **speeding up approval procedures**, abolishing superfluous environmental reports and giving **priority to housing construction**. We are promoting **serial construction** with uniform requirements and nationwide approval standards. We will reduce excessive building requirements and reduce them to sensible minimum standards for building energy, fire and health protection and statics. The **building type E** that we have launched should be a blueprint for clearing out the

To achieve this, we need a **federal-state offensive for construction**. Because

Building regulations are essentially governed by the state building regulations. Here, simplifications must be created based on the model of building type E.

In addition to **densification and building extensions**, we are also **simplifying** the designation of new building areas. If the authorities do not respond on time, the building application is deemed to have been approved (**fictitious approval**). We Free Democrats will create the legal framework for consistently digital planning and strengthen the use of corresponding systems in authorities. We are making **digital building models** (BIM) the new planning standard through uniform standards and interfaces. In urban planning, we want to use digital technologies and data to improve the lives of citizens and develop cities into smart cities. AI-supported traffic management should intelligently control traffic flows and optimize infrastructure use. The flexible use of hard shoulders and digital real-time recording of parking spaces are important building blocks here.

#### **Fair rules for tenants and landlords**

We Free Democrats want balanced rules between tenants and landlords. Many private landlords are withdrawing from the market because renting has become unattractive due to complicated regulations. This is exacerbating the housing shortage. We are therefore **simplifying the ancillary costs law**. The rent cap has been proven to be a brake on investment. That is why we are allowing it to expire. In order to create incentives for urgently needed new construction, we are breaking the state regulation spiral in the rental market. We will not introduce a nationwide rent cap. In addition, we will relax the rigid caps on energy-saving renovations so that the modernization of existing buildings can progress. Tenants will also benefit from this, because such renovations reduce ancillary costs.

#### **Targeted support through housing benefit**

We want to provide targeted support to people whose income is not enough to live on despite hard work and effort. Housing benefit is the right tool for this – it provides flexible and tailored help. However, the complex interaction of housing benefit, citizen's allowance and other social benefits often means that work, especially full-time work, is not worthwhile. We will readjust this system: **by better coordinating the various benefits, we will create clear incentives for more employment and provide targeted support.**

#### **owner nation Germany**

Home ownership is central to wealth creation and retirement planning. We want the dream of owning a home to become a reality for more people. We want Germany to be a



Becoming a nation of owners: We are lowering the hurdles to achieve this. With a **property transfer tax exemption of EUR 500,000 for the first self-used property of natural persons**, we are making access to property easier. For families, this exemption is increased by EUR 100,000 for each child. Following the Swiss model, funds from company pension schemes should be able to be used to purchase property - an additional, flexible source of financing.

#### **Freedom in the boiler room: CO2-free, but affordable**

We Free Democrats are convinced that a warm home with modern, climate-friendly heating is possible - economically and with an open mind to technology. We rely on innovative solutions that promote climate protection and remain affordable at the same time. Instead of countless individual regulations, we rely on a market-based solution - **CO2 certificate trading**. The **Heating Act** with its excessive requirements **must be completely phased out**. In order to cushion the social costs of climate protection, we Free Democrats want to **introduce a climate dividend** and drastically reduce energy taxation. We reject the obligation to connect to district heating networks. Heating with wood remains possible with us, and we want to reduce requirements for fireplaces and stoves.

### **d. Entrepreneurial Agriculture**

Agriculture is of great importance to Germany, and goes far beyond the production of food. We Free Democrats are therefore committed to entrepreneurial agriculture in Germany. Animal protection and animal welfare are a matter of course for us.

We have pushed for the inclusion of animal protection in the Basic Law because we believe that this is inseparably linked to a liberal system of values. The important thing is the balance between necessary improvements for animals and practical regulations.

#### **Strengthening entrepreneurial agriculture, promoting innovative technology**

Farmers and winemakers are entrepreneurs. We will align agricultural policy more closely with farmers' entrepreneurial activities. By focusing on increasing productivity and innovations instead of ineffective subsidies, we will make farmers independent of state subsidies.

**We are abolishing** pointless and disproportionate documentation requirements and conditions. At EU level, we are continuing to push for the withdrawal of restrictive regulations. In the new funding period of the Common Agricultural Policy from 2027, productivity and technology are to be promoted more strongly. Scarce budgetary resources must be used as a priority for **sustainable intensification**. The use of technology enables environmental and nature conservation in harmony with yield security.

Anyone who uses digital technologies will be exempt from documentation obligations and requirements. We will reward the spirit of innovation and progress instead of regulating operational processes with detailed regulations. We want to use the **possibilities of new breeding methods** such as the CRISPRCas9 gene scissors. Such biotechnological processes expand the agricultural toolbox. With them, we can combine agricultural productivity and environmental protection. We will **simplify and accelerate the approval processes for plant protection products**. This will make it easier to ensure yield and quality in viticulture, specialty crop cultivation and horticulture and landscaping. In animal husbandry, digital innovations such as AI-controlled systems for recognizing animal welfare offer an enormous opportunity to

We want to generate income for secure agricultural businesses, maintain livestock farming in Germany and ensure the supply of the population.

Biogas plants contribute to a secure supply of electricity and heat. In the future, we will adapt the financing of biogas plants so that their flexibility contributes to reducing electricity costs and the continued use of existing biogas plants.

### **Enabling nutritional innovations and preserving consumer choice**

For us Free Democrats, a responsible food policy is based on consumer competence, education and freedom of choice. We want to improve the approval system for innovative food products. **Biotechnological developments** that have already helped many people in medicine can also help bring healthier products to market in nutrition. Innovations improve the quality, safety and traceability of our food. They ensure that consumers can obtain healthy and trustworthy products. However, a healthy diet can only be achieved if consumers themselves are willing to question their eating habits and actively change them. We are committed to ensuring that people receive the information they need to make confident decisions.

Together with the federal states, we want to **strengthen educational programs** and make them more effective. We reject any changes to recipes, as well as new incentive taxes on things like sugar. Products that are safe and healthy should continue to be advertised transparently and positively so that consumers can choose what best suits their lives.

### **Multifunctional forestry**

We create freedom and room for maneuver for **sustainable forest management**. The existing Federal Forest Act has proven its worth. We will not interfere with property rights or introduce unnecessary management regulations. The planned European regulation on deforestation-free supply chains is impractical. We support climate-resilient forest conversion with site-appropriate, non-native tree species, because managed forests protect our climate, create jobs in rural areas and reduce dependence on raw materials. All **use of wood from sustainable management is climate-neutral** and must be treated as such legally.

### **Safeguarding biodiversity through active nature conservation**

For us Free Democrats, hunting is **an indispensable part of sustainable land use and the protection of biodiversity**. Through responsible wildlife management and the possibility of regulating new and invasive species, we protect the ecological balance and our landscapes. We Free Democrats will introduce **active population management** of wolves and cormorants, among others, **through hunting**. We are committed to a European fisheries policy that takes sustainability, social aspects and economic stability into account equally.

We Free Democrats recognize the active nature and species conservation of farmers, hunters and anglers.

## VII. Freedom, Security and Human Rights Worldwide

The world is in great turmoil: Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has profoundly shaken the European order. Putin's aggressive actions clearly show that Germany and its European partners have taken too little responsibility for their own security for too long. At the same time, China's actions pose additional economic, technological, social and geopolitical challenges for Germany and the EU. The effects of the increasing systemic rivalry between liberal democracies and authoritarian regimes are now also affecting Germany, the EU and other allies as a whole. Hamas's insidious attack on Israel has escalated the unresolved Middle East conflict. The USA remains our closest ally and partner even after Donald Trump's re-election as US President. Nevertheless, it is now more important than ever that Germany demonstrates its ability to act within the EU and NATO. To do this, we need an EU that can actively defend its foundation of freedom, the rule of law, human rights, democracy and a social market economy.

The overall geopolitical situation highlights the considerable pressure for reform on German foreign, security and development policy. If so much is changing, we must change too.

We Free Democrats are convinced that realpolitik and the commitment to freedom and human rights worldwide do not have to be opposites.

### a. Expand defense capabilities

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has made it clear that Germany must do more to defend itself. We need a **turning point in security policy** that deserves the name, because war has returned to Europe.

#### Comprehensive support for Ukraine

For us Free Democrats, it is clear that the defense of Ukraine must not fail because of money and arms deliveries, since a Russian victory will be more expensive and our freedom is also being defended in Ukraine. There will only be real peace in Europe if Putin's aggressive course is not successful. Ukraine must be put in a position to be able to defend itself against Russian attacks at any time. For us, this also includes defense against

Launch bases and supply lines on the Russian side with long-range weapons. Therefore, we demand the **immediate delivery of the Taurus cruise missile**.

We Free Democrats are also committed to ensuring **adequate, permanent and fairly distributed funding for support to Ukraine within the NATO/EU/G7 states**

in particular by **using frozen Russian assets**, as far as this is legally possible. Our goal is to **restore Ukraine's territorial integrity**. At the same time, we support its **accession to the EU and NATO in the future**.

#### More responsibility towards our partners

Germany needs **strong alliances** to meet foreign policy challenges. We stand **firmly by our alliances such as the transatlantic friendship with the USA and**

**NATO** - regardless of which president sits in the White House. Nevertheless, Germany and its European partners must **take more responsibility for their own defense and that of our allies** and be in a position to **credibly deter security policy** . We must counter the threat from Putin's Russia with diplomacy and military strength.

We Free Democrats are fully committed to **NATO** as the **most successful defence alliance** in the world and as **a guarantor of our security**. We are committed to ensuring that Germany fully meets NATO requirements and objectives. This includes Germany meeting at least NATO's 2% target. If NATO agrees to higher targets, we will also meet these and invest even more in our security. **We want to strengthen NATO's European pillar** and thereby **increase the ability of the EU partners in the alliance to act**. Accordingly, the European NATO partners must **take on more responsibility**. The prerequisite for this is **to strengthen the cooperation of the EU partners in NATO** .

interlock.

#### **Expanding defense capabilities – for a strong Bundeswehr**

We want to make the Bundeswehr **the strongest conventional armed force in Europe** . Germany should become a strong cooperation partner for smaller European partners in close coordination with France. Our long-term goal is to build a European army, also as an integral part of strengthening the European pillar within NATO. Our opponents must realize that we **are able and willing to defend ourselves successfully militarily**. To do this, the Bundeswehr needs **better funding and equipment**.

We Free Democrats are committed to a **professional volunteer army** made up of active members and a strong reserve, and to a **national database** to record men and women fit for military service. We are guided by NATO's capability goals. We reject the reinstatement of general conscription. The attractiveness of service in the Bundeswehr should be massively increased through **excellent conditions** such as salary and social benefits.

In order to meet the demands of defense capability, Germany must also organize its actions more **strategically and institutionally** . This is why there can be **no "business as usual" in German security policy** . We therefore want to set up a **National Security Council** that identifies risks at an early stage, enables sensible decision-making and develops common strategies.

## **b. For smart foreign policy in the age of systemic rivalry**

We are in an age of **systemic rivalry between aggressive autocracies on the one hand and liberal democracies on the other**. States like China and Russia are striving for a different

world order in which they undermine international law and human rights, divide the world into spheres of influence and seek to enforce the right of the strongest. We reject this and

Instead, we are committed to a **multilateral world order** in which the **strength of the law prevails and not the right of the strongest** . We stand for a rules-based international order that

This includes a commitment to the **universality of human rights**. We therefore demand that **human rights violations, oppression and discrimination are punished more consistently**. Authoritarian states such as Russia and China are trying to influence countries in the global

South into their own sphere of influence, for example as part of the expansion of the BRICS group of states. In order to forestall these transparent attempts, Germany needs a foreign and development policy that makes more attractive offers of cooperation to emerging middle-sized powers in Africa, Latin America and Asia than has been the case so far.

#### **More self-confidence in dealing with Putin's Russia**

Vladimir Putin has brought the war back to Europe. We Free Democrats **condemn the war of aggression against Ukraine, which violates international law**, in the strongest possible terms. We demand that Russian war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression be prosecuted. Furthermore, we consistently advocate **economic sanctions**, including the most **extensive possible trade embargo, diplomatic measures, visa revocations against the Russian leadership and other responsible parties**. We also support secondary measures against third countries that circumvent sanctions against Russia. Putin's Russia is our enemy.

There is **no going back to the status quo before the war of aggression** against Ukraine. This particularly affects the dependence on Russian energy. We Free Democrats are calling for an **EU-wide exit plan from Russian energy purchases**. The Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines were a geopolitical instrument of Putin from the start.

We want to support Russian civil society and all people who are committed to a free, democratic and peaceful Russia. We strongly condemn Russia's attempts to destabilize its European neighbors.

#### **Adjusting relations with China – for less dependence and more support for Taiwan**

Our relations with **China** are strained by China's more autocratic actions and aggressive international behavior.

Under Xi Jinping, it has become a **systemic rival**

This requires an **adjustment of German and European China policy**. We Free Democrats want to maintain our economic relations with China as far as it makes sense.

At the same time, we must **identify and reduce economic dependencies**. We therefore call for a **“de-risking”** of imports from China in security-relevant areas and in key sectors of the economy. Critical infrastructure must be effectively protected from Chinese influence.

It is clear to us that we must simultaneously create **good framework conditions for companies**.

This includes **new trade agreements** with other partners and a strategic approach by the EU to the subsidized overproduction of the Chinese economy. We are calling for a Europe-wide fight against the flood of illegal cheap products from China and are committed to **strict enforcement of existing laws**, such as the Digital Services Act, but also to better coordination of market surveillance and customs authorities in Europe and Germany.

We Free Democrats support targeted EU sanctions against Chinese officials responsible for human rights violations. We support the **democratic and**

**rule of law development in Taiwan** and **support Taiwan's integration into international organizations**, as long as this can be done below the threshold of state recognition.

We want to **expand bilateral economic cooperation** and are therefore working at the European level to reach a free trade-like agreement with Taiwan. At the European level, we also want talks on an investment agreement with Taiwan to begin soon. We also want to tackle the global challenges of the future together with the countries in the Indo-Pacific.

#### **Diplomacy instead of moral finger-pointing – for more realism in foreign policy**

We are firmly convinced that **realpolitik** and the **commitment to freedom and human rights** do not have to be opposites. However, this requires a German foreign policy that focuses **more on cooperation** and **less on moral finger-wagging** . We therefore stand for a smart balance between a value-based foreign policy and an interest-oriented approach.

By **respectfully expanding cooperation** with concrete offers, a cooperative partnership with Germany can become more attractive.

#### **Reorienting development cooperation**

We Free Democrats call for a **structural reorientation of development cooperation** and their institutions. In the struggle for a multilateral world order, spending on development cooperation must be **strategically prioritized along the economic and security interests of Germany and the EU** . When it comes to tougher penalties for LGBTIQ people and human rights defenders and the reduction of women's rights, we want to adapt development cooperation so that it continues to reach the minorities and groups concerned. To this end, Germany must also work with partners outside the government and, if necessary,

Consider cutting budget support or ending cooperation with government agencies.

### **c. Germany and Israel**

Hamas's insidious terrorist attack on Israel on October 7, 2023 has reignited the Middle East conflict, with significant implications for the entire region and its neighboring states.

Germany must actively contribute to the EU's search for a long-term political peace solution for the Middle East, together with the USA and other partners as well as all relevant states in the region.

#### **Israel's security is German state policy**

For us Free Democrats it is clear: **Israel's existence and security is a German matter of state** and an **indispensable pillar of German foreign and security policy**. As the country of the perpetrators, Germany bears an outstanding historical responsibility for the security of the Jewish state of Israel. We must provide Israel with everything it needs for its **right to self-defense, which is guaranteed under international law** . We are convinced that **arms exports are a legitimate means of foreign and security policy** . They serve to strengthen strategic partnerships and ensure stability in geopolitically important regions. Israel must therefore be **treated equally with NATO countries when it comes to arms exports** . We advocate a negotiated

**Two-state model** as the most appropriate solution to guarantee Israel's lasting security, end the suffering of people on all sides and enable the creation of a sovereign, democratic and viable state of Palestine.

### Consistently against anti-Semitism

In Germany, Jewish life is increasingly threatened by anti-Semitic violence. We Free Democrats want Jews to feel safe everywhere in Germany.

Jewish life belongs in public and must be able to be lived there without fear.

**Anti-Semitism must therefore be fought more consistently** - regardless of which direction it comes from. To do this, authorities must **identify all forms of anti-Semitism at an early stage**. In addition, no state funds should **be spent on organizations and projects that question Israel's right to exist**. We also want more **bans on the activities and organizations** of anti-Semitic organizations.

### d. Germany in the European Union

The European Union is a unique success story. It has brought peace, freedom, security, progress and prosperity to the people of its member states. We must now secure and continue this success story through bold reforms.

#### For an effective and sovereign Europe

We Free Democrats want **the EU's strategic sovereignty** to be further developed. For us, this primarily means **the ability to act independently**. The EU must be able to assert itself as a global player in a changing world order. Equipped with the necessary means, the EU could better defend its own interests and values in the future.

and become less dependent and vulnerable in important areas. To achieve this, **institutional reforms of the EU are necessary**. We Free Democrats are particularly committed to **reducing the size of the Commission**, giving **the European Parliament** the right of initiative, and **qualified majority decisions** in the common EU foreign and security policy.

We demand that the ambitious **goals of the EU's strategic compass, an action plan to strengthen the EU's security and defense policy, be pursued more consistently by the member states**. The design of the **strategic compass** should be adapted to the increased threat posed by Russia. This also includes **faster coordination of decisions** and the ability to **speak with one voice**. We Free Democrats are therefore committed to **qualified majority decisions in the EU's foreign and security policy**. We also want to **strengthen the European defense industry** by giving it **easier access to capital**.

Close German-French cooperation is crucial for the unity and ability of the entire EU to act. We also want to strengthen expanded formats such as the Weimar Triangle with Poland and cooperation with other European partners in order to develop common European solutions, particularly in security policy, and to promote regional cooperation. We are also committed to an even **deeper**

**Cooperation with the United Kingdom**, particularly on security and defence issues.

#### **EU enlargement based on clear criteria**

Institutional reforms are also necessary to prepare the EU for the next round of enlargement. The accession of the **Western Balkans, Moldova and Ukraine to the EU** in accordance with the Copenhagen criteria is in the German and European interest. We demand that the **financial resources of the European Union be better distributed along the lines of future tasks** – towards innovation, research and foreign and defence policy.

We Free Democrats want to **end the EU accession negotiations with Turkey in their current form**. The basis for membership remains the Copenhagen criteria, i.e. a functioning constitutional state, respect for human rights, protection of minorities and international law. Requirements that Erdogan's Turkey does not meet.

#### **e. Dare to have more free trade**

Germany is an export nation. Our prosperity depends heavily on good and competitive products that we sell all over the world. More regulated trade with more partners makes us more economically and geopolitically independent of individual countries, especially autocracies like China, protects us from protectionism and secures and creates German jobs.

We Free Democrats call on the EU **to conclude as many free trade agreements as possible**. We are therefore committed to the swift conclusion of negotiated **EU free trade agreements** and ongoing negotiations, especially with **Indonesia, Australia, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia**. The Mercosur agreement opens up new markets for our companies, strengthens climate protection ambitions and takes partnership cooperation with Latin America to a new level. We Free Democrats are committed to the immediate ratification of the Mercosur agreement. Further agreements to strengthen our economy should be put in place. **Safe products, fair competition conditions and a level playing field** remain prerequisites for free trade and open markets for the benefit of our economy. We are committed to **more economic agreements and investment partnerships** as well as partnerships in the field of raw materials or green technologies, especially with medium-sized powers. For us Free Democrats, the **expansion of transatlantic trade relations** is a priority, at least through sectoral agreements (e.g. an industrial tariff agreement), an institutionalization of the Trade and Technology Council (TTC) and a joint approach in the area of economic security. We stand for values- and rules-based trade and at the same time for more pragmatism in EU trade policy: If our partners are open to a comprehensive free trade agreement, we strive for this. But we also support **sectoral trade agreements** to enable rapid progress; this could, for example, be an alternative to the stalled negotiations on a comprehensive free trade agreement with **India**. We want to deepen the **European internal market** – especially for labor, energy, capital and digital services.



