

**Everything  
can be**

The FDP's election  
programme for the  
2025 Bundestag  
election

**change**

# The programme of the Free Democrats for the 2025 Bundestag election

*(subject to final editing)*

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## I. Preamble: Everything can be changed

We all feel it: it can't stay the way it is. Because we cannot be satisfied with the fact that jobs and prosperity are at risk. That parents and grandparents worry about whether the educational and advancement opportunities of their children and grandchildren are still as good as their own. That internal and external security are challenged as they have not been for a long time. That irregular migration is still not sufficiently controlled. That important value decisions such as democracy, fundamental rights and the social market economy are no longer a self-evident consensus. That increasing polarization endangers the openness and tolerance of our society. That more and more people are withdrawing into private life instead of participating in the debates about the future of our country as self-confident citizens with their own opinions. That anti-Semitism and misanthropy are once again spreading in an unbearable way in the land of the Holocaust. We do not want to and must not resign ourselves to this. The good news is that all 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 is in our country. There are 84 million good reasons for this today. Because time and again, the people in our country have shown amazing strength. This strength comes from drive, optimism and rewarding goals. We have to release them. Because we want a life in freedom and prosperity. Because we want to live in peace and security. Because we want performance and effort to be rewarded. Because we want a state that functions where it is really needed, but does not govern in all the details of daily life.

The best way to unleash this power of people is to have more freedom for more people. 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 achieve an unprecedented economic recovery after the Second World War. The 1970s were a decade of economic stagnation, energy crises and rising debt. The market-economy reforms after the political turnaround of 1982, which the FDP brought about, have helped our country to return to growth and prosperity. In 1989, the courageous people in East Germany fought for democracy and a market economy and overthrew the repressive apparatus of the GDR. And in 2003, with Agenda 2010, a federal government was able to initiate a development that has 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.

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 chances in the world are redistributed at our expense. Since the grand coalition of 2013, governments and majorities have only approached the major challenges of the time in baby steps - without the courage to structurally strengthen our competitiveness and our innovative strength. Instead, there was a

willingness to accept an ever larger welfare state, more and more subsidies, more and more debt and ever higher government spending.

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

## II. World's best education for self-confident citizens

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

**Education and research are the most valuable resources of our country.** In recent years, there has been a negative trend in the education system. We want to reverse it. 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, educational background of parents and place of residence. New global challenges and rapid social change require a real paradigm shift in our education system. We have to think about education holistically – from crèche to kindergarten, schools, vocational schools and universities to offers for lifelong learning. Excellence is a clear goal for us Free Democrats. Talent, passion and dedication lead to innovation and scientific progress. Germany as a research location needs more quality, networking, equal opportunities and excellence. With more academic freedom and optimal framework 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. This is where we want to start in a more targeted and effective way. Lifelong learning begins in the sandbox, not at school.

#### Improving the quality of early childhood education

We Free Democrats want to promote **early childhood education through nationwide quality standards for daycare centres**. These include, in particular, a needs-based childcare ratio that takes into account pedagogical 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. In addition, we 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 **Startchancen program for daycare centers** is intended to 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 the promotion of STEM in early childhood education.

#### Language opens up opportunities: early support, lifelong benefits

In order to optimally promote language skills, we want **mandatory and age-appropriate language tests for all children of pre-school age nationwide**. School enrolment should only take place when German language skills are sufficient to be able to follow the lessons properly. To this end, language level assessments must be carried out in upstream school entrance examinations. At

**Compulsory language support for at least two years** before the start of compulsory schooling is to follow.

## **Qualified training for strong daycare teams**

The success of early childhood education depends to a large extent on the educational staff. To **combat the shortage of skilled workers**, we want to fundamentally modernise pedagogical training, further education and training. By **making educator training and further education generally free of school fees** and **remunerating them appropriately**, as well as **by increasing the training capacities** of the federal states, we are enabling more people to have access to training. We are modularising 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**

It is not only the poor PISA results that show 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 Startchancen programme. We have to build on that.

### **A state-of-the-art educational federalism**

We can no longer afford the battle of competences between the federal and state governments. As a result, we miss out on creating the education system that our children deserve. We Free Democrats therefore call for a **fundamental reform of education federalism** that makes uniform standards and a stronger role for the federal government in education possible and within the framework of which the distribution of funds between the federal government and the states is changed in such a way that the federal government can assume the necessary financing obligations. Until the corresponding implementation, the federal government supports projects as an exception within the framework of the allocation of competences 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 only some of the states is to 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 school freedom laws. While maintaining the existing financial responsibility for education, we want to **create uniform nationwide quality standards for children's education from kindergarten to graduation**. Through

**uniform final examinations (Deutschland-Abitur)**, we ensure the **nationwide comparability of school leaving certificates**. We are in favour of compulsory grades from the third grade at the latest. We are committed to modern extracurricular learning venues – for example, so-called student labs, maker spaces and TUMO centres. 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, but many of our schools are also in need of renovation. We Free Democrats therefore demand the **renovation of school buildings** in Germany. Through a **Digital Pact 2.0 of the federal and state governments**, we want to **push ahead with the technical modernization of schools** and anchor **digital teaching in the initial and further education of**



**teachers.** The present agreement between the federal and state governments is a missed opportunity, because the states are hardly contributing any additional funds. We want to give schools more pedagogical, personnel and financial competences. To this end, everyone is to receive a **freely deployable opportunity budget**. This allows schools to decide independently on the organisation of educational elements, their school profile, the use of multi-professional teams, but also on personnel decisions and the length of the grammar school career (G8/G9).

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

Schools need **excellent teachers**. With **more attractive working conditions, practical training and further education, performance-based pay and attractive opportunities for advancement**, we want to create more freedom in the teaching profession. We want to develop apprenticeship training nationwide into a **dual teacher training program** that closely interlinks theory and practice and places a stronger focus on digital and AI skills. A **nationwide mobility guarantee** is intended to 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, STEM topics, democracy and politics as well as media literacy**. We are particularly committed to the nationwide introduction of **the school subjects of economics and computer science**. In schools, the **examination of the various forms of misanthropy** such as anti-Semitism must also be 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 Israel **'s history** and the thematization of **all forms of anti-Semitism**. We want to continue to promote the **German-Israeli Youth Office** in order to strengthen youth exchange. In addition, the examination of the **division of Germany and the GDR regime of injustice** is to be obligatory by visiting a corresponding memorial site.

### **c. Strengthening vocational education and training and lifelong learning**

We Free Democrats want to attract more young people to vocational training. To this end, we want to **further develop the Excellence Initiative for Vocational Education and Training**. We want to make better use of the potential of vocational training centres and develop them into regional innovation and start-up centres. We want to strengthen career orientation services, such as trainee ambassadors, women in STEM 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 education and 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 Upgrading BAföG** in a targeted manner and enabling the **funding of a second further training** at the same level. In **the public sector**, the recognition of vocational training and practical experience is to be improved. We want to **accelerate the recognition of qualifications obtained abroad and digitize them end-to-end**.

For us Free Democrats, learning does not end with school, university or vocational qualifications. We see **learning as the lifelong process** and want to promote it. To this end, we would like to **facilitate access to smaller, flexible educational certificates**. To finance course fees, education-related time-outs and childcare, we want a new **"Life Opportunity BAföG"** introduce. A **personal free space account** is intended to enable tax- and duty-free savings for further education and educational leave.

#### **d. Excellent framework 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 the parental home. Dual-use research and close cooperation with industry are indispensable for a strong science and business location.

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

The choice of study must not depend on the requirements of the parental home. Therefore, we want to **further develop BAföG into a parent-independent modular system. We want to strengthen and expand the education loan programme** 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 the 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 favour of the Erasmus programme. **In the future, pupils will also benefit from "Erasmus+" and will be able to complete six months of schooling in other European countries**, regardless of their parents' income. We also want to expand the "Erasmus+" and "Training Worldwide" programmes 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. Only by developing the best ideas and innovations can we increase prosperity. 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 join forces 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 of research and innovation must be consistently driven forward and further developed. We want a technology-open **Freedom of Research Act** and thus create the conditions for the construction of **fusion power plants** in Germany through excellent fusion research, reform the obstructive **legal framework for genetic engineering** and **strengthen stem cell research**. In the health sector, we want to place an increased focus **on neurodegenerative diseases** such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's as well as on **women-specific health areas**. Because of the demographic

development, we also want to

**gerontological research.** We want to secure Germany' s **leading position in basic physics 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 hold our own technologically against aggressors. We reject civil clauses as a disproportionate interference with the freedom of research of individual researchers. That is why we demand the deletion of the civil clauses from the state higher education laws and demand the dismantling of these 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, which focuses on technology transfer between the military and academia, as well as the promotion of 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 implementation of the European AI Act much more innovation-friendly.** We want to enable **simplified access to research data** in a legally secure **manner through a Research Data Act.**

### **e. Diverse Arts 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 Germany's most important economic sectors through 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 E- and U-culture. **Pop culture** is more than entertainment. The creative potential of pop culture is mainstream and innovation in one. Therefore, we are committed to a contemporary concept of culture that includes design, comics and games, among other things. In order to strengthen artists and creative people, we want to maintain the existing level of copyright protection .

We Free Democrats see cultural **and social relations policy (AKGP)** as a task and an opportunity to carry German and European values to other countries through strong partnerships. To this end, we want to **continue to support the Goethe-Instituts** and expand their digital offerings. We want to empower people themselves to strengthen democracy, freedom and prosperity by imparting 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 the protection of historical monuments** based on the model of the "National Trust" in Great Britain. In the long term, the **"European National Trust"** is to finance itself to a large extent 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 strength and intellectual property, highly qualified employees, a financially strong middle class and an industrial base that has often proven its adaptability. But this strength lies in shackles: too much bureaucracy and regulation, a tax system that is hostile to performance, labor shortages and excessively high energy prices reduce our competitiveness. All this costs us prosperity, prevents social advancement and strengthens 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 slip into pessimism and distribution struggles. Germany can become a leading economic nation again if we show the courage to change. Our goal: to secure prosperity and opportunities for advancement for all. So that optimism returns and Germany will still be a prosperous and strong country in ten years' time.

We Free Democrats see the special economic challenges in the eastern German states, among other things due to a smaller-scale 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 financial situation also differs considerably. That is why tax cuts, the reduction of bureaucracy, the implementation of real-world laboratories and practical economic and research promotion are of particular importance for the many small and medium-sized enterprises in eastern Germany. We reject an earlier end to lignite mining before the legally stipulated phase-out by 2038.

#### a. End bureaucracy burnout

Germany is in 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 towards citizens and companies. This spoils many people's desire to do things and weakens the performance of our economy. Small and medium-sized enterprises as well as family businesses in particular suffer from bureaucracy. Startups and scale-ups also lose time and flexibility for their growth due to bureaucratic hurdles. That is why bureaucracy reduction is an economic stimulus package at no cost.

#### Reducing bureaucracy in Germany

We Free Democrats call 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 previously been reduced to the same extent. We want a **bureaucracy-free year for companies** in which they do not have to comply with reporting obligations. There must be an **annual bureaucracy relief law every year** to create a **reduction path for superfluous regulations**. With 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.** Because only by **streamlining and consolidating** can we create a basis that reduces bureaucracy, expands room for manoeuvre and strengthens our competitiveness. **Outdated, contradictory and unnecessarily complex laws must be abolished.** We want to **limit the time of laws with a sunset clause more often.** This means that a regulation automatically expires if it is not actively extended. In addition, we want to **work more with fictional approvals and cut-off date regulations** in Germany. It is unacceptable for companies to despair of official proceedings for months and years. If an authority does not respond to an application within a certain period of time, the rule must be automatic approval in the future. We want to abolish bureaucratic monsters, such as the receipt requirement, **without replacement.** Companies must 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.

Bureaucracy reduction is also urgently needed in data protection. We Free Democrats want to **standardise 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. These are 17 different passages, some of which come to different conclusions. This creates a great deal of bureaucracy, legal uncertainty and competitive disadvantages for companies. We want to amend the Basic Law in such a way that **the federal and state governments work together effectively** and

### **Data Protection Conference.**

We Free Democrats want to **drastically simplify public procurement law.** The complexity of procurement procedures has become a major burden for authorities and companies. Small and medium-sized enterprises as well as family businesses in particular suffer from the many bureaucratic hurdles. That is why public procurement law needs to be cleared out. We demand that the value limit for direct orders be raised to 100,000 euros. We want to drastically reduce reporting, documentation and verification obligations. We reject the consideration of non-procurement criteria in the awarding of contracts.

### **Less bureaucracy from Brussels – initiating an overdue trend reversal**

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 transposed 1:1 into German law. More importantly, bureaucratic EU legislation will be abolished in Brussels. We want to abolish reporting obligations from the EU Commission's "Green Deal". We are strongly committed to this at the European level. This is because regulations such as the EU Taxonomy, the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive, the **EU Supply Chain Directive** (Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive) or the **Circular Economy Action Plan** do not ensure more climate protection and sustainability, but primarily frustration in companies. Medium-sized companies in particular can often hardly cope with the bureaucratic effort. 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.** We strictly reject the expansion of the existing taxonomy to include a **social taxonomy.** At EU level, a

system of mandatory recording of bureaucracy costs is needed to set ambitious and measurable targets for reducing bureaucracy.

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

A fair, efficient and simple tax system is central to strengthening fairness and Germany as a business location in international competition. Citizens who go to work every day have earned more net of their gross income. 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**

Those who live from the work of their own hands are heavily taxed in Germany. The incentive to take on additional work is too low. However, we can only maintain our prosperity in the long term if we also work more. We must therefore make work more attractive again. To this end, we want to gradually introduce a **linear-progressive opportunity tariff in income tax** that completely eliminates the middle-class belly. We want to gradually increase the basic allowance by at least 1,000 euros in the course of the citizen's allowance reform. In this way, we strengthen the wage gap requirement, i.e. that people with gainful employment must be much better off than those with transfer income, and ensure that work pays off. In order **to create additional incentives** to work, we want to exempt bonuses for **overtime** from full-time work from income tax. In the future, the **top tax rate** may only be paid by people who really earn a top income and not by the middle of society. Specifically, we demand that the top tax rate be based on the current contribution assessment ceiling of the pension insurance in the future. This means that the top tax rate no longer applies from an annual income of a good 68,000 euros, but **only from 96,600 euros**. In addition, we want to **abolish the solidarity surcharge completely**. Because it has now developed into a punitive tax for small and medium-sized businesses. To ensure that the state does not become a beneficiary of inflation and the taxpayer does not become a victim of cold progression, we want to automatically adjust the allowances and benchmarks of income tax to the general price development (**tariff on wheels**). The **allowances of inheritance tax and gift tax** must also be **automatically increased by the inflation rate**. We reject any form of wealth tax or wealth levy. Families are the backbone of our society and need to 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.

### **Relieving the burden on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and family businesses**

We Free Democrats want to make taxation easier, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises as well as family businesses, and thus relieve them. More companies than before are to be given the option of **actual taxation for VAT** and simplified profit determination. **Small businesses will have the option of deducting a percentage lump sum for business 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 tax. We demand that the allowances be automatically increased by the inflation rate. This is the only way to ensure that the average tax burden on gifts and inheritances remains constant with rising prices.

Gastronomic offerings must remain affordable. A **reduced VAT rate for food in the catering** industry applies in 23 EU member states and should also apply in Germany. A uniform VAT rate of 7 percent on food, whether on site or to take away, would not only benefit customers, but also employees in the catering industry. We Free Democrats want to simplify and reduce bureaucracy in the catalogue of sales at the reduced tax rate.

The tourism industry is a central 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 bans, but wants to preserve established tourist structures, enable new things and not let bureaucracy become a locational disadvantage.

### **Competitive corporate taxes for a competitive economy**

Companies in Germany need more freedom, less state 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 of German tax law, replace trade tax** with an alternative that is suitable for international systems and tax income from capital assets, from renting and leasing more easily. We demand the **reduction** of the corporate tax burden **to below 25 percent**. To this end, we are completely abolishing the solidarity surcharge and reducing 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 additional charges**. We want to end the unequal treatment of return on equity and debt capital by

**tax deductibility of fictitious equity interest**. Companies in Germany need an **unlimited loss carryforward** and a further expansion of the **loss carryback**.

We want to take liquidation losses into account for tax purposes. In addition, we want to take a look at special depreciation for movable assets and real estate based on the former Subsidy Area Act. 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 the tax administration. Citizens and companies should only have to provide certain information to the administration once. **The tax administration must become more digital and efficient**. We want to continue 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 nerves. This can be achieved, among other things, through a pension withholding tax. A generous working day allowance replaces and simplifies the previous regulations on the home office, the home office allowance and the distance cost allowance.

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

### **Stocks for life – venture capital for the economy**

We Free Democrats want to turn 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 the breadth of society, for example through a **nationwide compulsory subject** at general education schools.

We are committed to attractive investment conditions for retail 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 accumulation and thus support private pension provision in particular. That is why we are calling for the introduction of **tax-free upward mobility** in which savers can carry over unused saver allowances to subsequent years, the allowance is significantly increased once and is also made more dynamic. By **reintroducing a speculation period for private capital gains from securities**, we are supporting long-term capital investment for retirement provision. In addition, we want to **completely abolish the restriction on offsetting losses within the final withholding tax**. In the case of third-party real estate, the ancillary acquisition costs are to be immediately tax-deductible. We reject a financial transaction tax.

**Capital collectors such as insurers and pension funds should be able to invest more in shares and venture capital.** In this way, we are increasing private capital in the German venture capital market, which is still too small. We need to improve the tax framework for private investors in Germany, as proposed by the WIN initiative. In order to prevent private investors and institutional investors from moving abroad, competitive framework conditions for investments in start-ups and growth companies are needed. In addition, we call for the establishment of an **open and transparent data ecosystem in the insurance sector** ("Open Insurance"). This strengthens 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 the promotion of financial centres in order to better support FinTech and crypto innovations. We want to check whether the existing regulation is proportionate. Here, too, we want to avoid that the regulations in Germany go beyond the European minimum requirements.



We Free Democrats emphatically reject any support for the European resolution fund for the national deposit insurance schemes. As Free Democrats, we see the

**introduction of a European Deposit Insurance Scheme (EDIS).** EDIS would not bring any additional benefit to financial stability, but would jeopardise the particularly proven protection systems 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 them with market-oriented approaches that transparently reflect 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 stand for the **preservation of cash.** We are in favor of widespread acceptance of card payments in addition to 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 there must be no additional risks for the financial system.

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

Germany urgently needs a realistic and sensible energy policy that no longer overwhelms 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 campaign for its abolition at European level. In view of the rising CO2 price, we want to gradually reduce the EU minimum rates for energy tax on heating and fuels to zero. In this way, the CO2 price is to completely replace the electricity and energy tax in the future. Likewise, the motor vehicle tax is to be abolished in this context in the medium term. In this way, we are strengthening the role of the CO2 price and creating more incentives for switching to renewable energies or climate-friendly fuels and heating fuels.

We also want to **comprehensively reform grid charges.** Grid fees are one of the major drivers of electricity costs. In order to reduce grid costs, we want to make the grids more flexible through digitization and demand through dynamic grid charges. As a result, grid bottlenecks are reflected in the price, so that demand shifts to where capacities are available, thus reducing the need for grid expansion. We want to significantly reduce the costs of grid expansion, in which the new lines are usually built above ground. **We want to remove regulatory hurdles for rapid grid expansion** and ensure that only the grids that are actually needed are built. This also saves costs and lowers prices overall. At the same time, we call 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 compulsory grid connection,**

so that new plants are only connected to the grid if this is beneficial to the system and profitable. **Regulations**

and specifications that inhibit efficiency and modernization **must be completely dismantled**. 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, lean and unbureaucratic as possible. In addition, it is particularly necessary to diversify the gas supply so that there is no one-sided dependence on gas imports. To this end, **domestic natural gas production should be expanded**

for which the gas field in Borkum and **fracking processes** are currently available. Instead of importing gas at a high price, this ensures domestic value creation. We Free Democrats want to transfer renewable energies completely to 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. Remuneration on the market would also ensure that photovoltaic and wind power plants are only built if sufficient grids and storage systems are available 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 to ensure that new-generation nuclear power plants, such as dual-fluid reactors, thorium molten salt reactors or small modular reactors, can be built in Germany in a legally compliant manner. For nuclear fusion, we want to create an innovation-friendly legal framework outside nuclear law. We want to make it legally possible for the existing nuclear power plants to be put back into operation and leave the decision to the operators.

#### **d. Modern labour law for a modern working world**

A modern world of work offers opportunities for employees, the self-employed and employers. We Free Democrats therefore want to bring labour law up to date and create flexible, practical regulations. We want to focus on motivation and personal responsibility again – in order to strengthen the volume of work and private initiative.

We Free Democrats want to reform the **German Working Hours Act** by **new and flexible working time models instead of a maximum daily working time** enable. Likewise, the requirements for working hours must be made more flexible and opening clauses must be used for rest time regulations. Politicians 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. Wages and salaries are negotiated between employees and employers in the social market economy. We respect the autonomy of collective bargaining and reject political intervention in the work of the independent minimum wage commission.

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

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

Whether liberal professions, crafts, cultural and creative industries or the service industry: We Free Democrats demand fairness for the self-employed. We therefore want to reduce unequal treatment and, for example, base the **contributions for the self-employed to statutory health insurance on actual income**. We also call for a reform of the status determination procedure. **Clear legal positive criteria** must ensure legal certainty. In order to minimise risks for clients, we do not want contributions to be levied retroactively in the event of dependent employment, if neither intentionally nor grossly negligently self-employment was assumed. We Free Democrats want **maximum freedom of choice for the self-employed when it comes to retirement provision**. The form of pension provision should also be freely selectable. **Access to the entire subsidised private pension scheme must be open to all working people in the future**.

We also demand a **modernisation 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, day-care centres, energy, fire and civil protection as well as waste disposal, a mandatory arbitration agreement is needed at the beginning of collective bargaining as well as minimum notice periods and the safeguarding of emergency operation. Otherwise, there is a risk of disproportionately large social damage, which is associated with a distortion of the bargaining power of the social partners.

#### **e. For social security systems that make you want to perform**

The welfare state in Germany is expensive, but not necessarily social. We need significantly more incentives for work. And: More respect for those who make solidarity possible in the first place with their performance.

#### **Work must pay more**

Millions of people in Germany go about their work every day and play their part in the success of our country. But the reality is that for some it seems more rewarding to live on social benefits than to pursue a regular job. We want to change that. Because work must always be more rewarding 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 an alimentary citizen's allowance towards more activation, where work makes the difference. Our primary goal is: work instead of citizen's money. This is not only important as a perspective for people in need, but it is also a question of fairness to the working taxpayer. To this end, we want to oblige employable unemployed people to take an **active obligation to deliver** and **to take the initiative themselves, including the burden of proof**. They must make an effort to overcome their own need for help through work and qualification. The Jobcenter provides as much support as possible and checks whether sufficient activities are and can be undertaken. In the absence of initiative, social benefits are to **be reduced bit by bit**. To this end, we want to make the sanctions more effective. To prevent unemployment from becoming entrenched, we want to introduce an **intensive**

**phase at the beginning of the receipt of benefits**, so that in the first 12 months the density of contact with the Jobcenter is particularly high. We want to adapt the **reasonableness rules so that longer commutes and removals are also reasonable for people without children and without relatives in need of care**. In addition, we want to introduce job opportunities for total objectors. Recently, the citizen's allowance has risen disproportionately to inflation. The standard rate will continue to be above demand in 2025. That is why we want to **create the prerequisites for lowering the standard rate by abolishing the so-called vested rights regulation**. This strengthens the incentives to work.

We want to improve the **additional income rules in basic income support and housing benefit in such a way that work and performance pay off noticeably more and more**. We want to reform the rules on additional income in such a way that it is not the combination of citizen's allowance and mini-job that is particularly worthwhile, but rather to work your way out of a social benefit bit by bit. It cannot be 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 coordinating the tax and social systems in line with performance 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 the housing allowance — **in one benefit and in one state agency**. In this way, we create clear incentives for the status quo, where it is often not worthwhile to work more because the various social benefits are poorly coordinated. The assumption of reasonable rental costs and heating costs is extremely time-consuming due to the calculation and leads to enormous administrative effort in the individual case. Therefore, this new bundled service is to include a **regional lump sum for accommodation costs**. With a welfare state from a single source in the sense of a **negative income tax**, we reduce cost-intensive bureaucracy and 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 centres must be able to better check whether the transfer recipients own cars, how many accounts they have access to and whether they have assets abroad. In addition, we want to **take more consistent and tougher action against undeclared work while at the same time receiving social benefits**.

We Free Democrats want to make unemployment insurance (**unemployment benefit 1**) more flexible, so that lower contributions and more net of gross are possible. In times of an increasing shortage of labour and skilled workers, the risk of long-term unemployment is decreasing. We trust people to take **more personal responsibility**. That is why we want to create the possibility of opting for lower contributions and consequently a lower entitlement to unemployment benefits. The resulting reduction in the employer's contribution is paid out net. Such an option must not lead to the insured person slipping into state transfer receipt.

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

We Free Democrats stand for a **truly flexible retirement age**. According to the Swedish model, people should decide for themselves in the future when retirement begins, provided that they do not have to apply for social benefits. The later someone retires, the higher the pension - those who retire earlier get a lower pension. Partial pensions are possible without 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 that makes **pension contributions affordable**

and make people more aware of the opportunities offered by a **funded pension scheme** profit. A **real individual share pension** even ensures a rising pension level again. Finally, we Free Democrats are calling for the introduction of a **retirement savings account for private pensions**. This custody account is to be tax-subsidized and enable long-term asset accumulation for retirement provision, even for all those who are self-employed. Capital investments in funds and securities and restructuring within the retirement savings account are tax-free as long as the income is reinvested. Higher equity shares must also be made possible in company pension schemes. We want to make it possible for all companies to make the pure defined contribution scheme possible, especially micro-enterprises, which have so far shied away from liability risks. We will clarify the open question of the guarantee requirement and liability in company pension schemes. We also want to avoid double taxation of pensions.

### **Sustainable social security systems**

Demographic change is putting social security systems under pressure. However, ever-increasing premiums cannot be a solution. High social security contributions burden employers and employees alike. They prevent companies from creating new jobs and make it unattractive to take up work. They also restrict the opportunities for the younger generation 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 rule out the possibility that social security contributions will continue to rise above the level of 40 percent. To this end, future federal governments must be obliged to take concrete measures. In order to make the social security systems fit for the future, significantly more funded elements are needed in the statutory pension insurance and social long-term care insurance. In this way, we ensure sustainable social security systems with a fair distribution of the burden between the generations.

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

Self-determination is the most immediate 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 self-determinedly as possible. The fundamental rights of our constitution protect these freedoms of the individual. We want to strengthen fundamental rights. We defend the individual against discrimination and open up new spaces of self-determination for citizens. We strengthen women's rights and ensure a better work-life balance. A free society and a functioning democracy belong together. We defend the institutions of liberal democracy against attacks by 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 elementary life risks. It includes solidarity for the major health risks that individuals cannot bear – for the sick, those in need of care and those who care for them. Promotion and appreciation for sport also help to keep society together and people stay healthy.

Our country is in urgent need of immigration into the labour market. At the same time, the municipalities in particular are so overburdened by the continuing high influx into the German asylum system that integration can only take place with difficulty. Swift procedures and clear decisions are needed in the area of migration. We want a new migration policy that controls and regulates more. Those who work for us and live according to our values should have an easier time. Anyone who wants to immigrate to our social security systems without the right to stay or endangers our security will have a harder time.

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

The state must protect the legal interests of citizens. Authorities that are well equipped in terms of technology and personnel must quickly and efficiently ensure security and prosecute crimes. But there is no security at any price. In the design of internal security, we are committed to the **rule of law** and **civil rights**. We also protect the **civil liberties** of the individual vis-à-vis the state. Because those who give up freedom for the sake of security will end up losing both.

#### **An update for our constitutional state**

The **structures of internal security** must be reformed. Too many authorities at federal, state and local level overlap in the fulfilment 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 call for **Europol to be developed into a real European Criminal Investigation Office**. Because terrorism, organized crime and cybercrime do not stop at national borders.

The powers of the security authorities are formulated in a confusing and incomprehensible way. The German **intelligence services** in particular need clearer legal bases in order to be able to act at an early stage in the face of the internal and external threats. At the same time, a **improved control of the intelligence services**. We want to reorganize 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. With any new authority for the security authorities, the **effects on civil rights and technical feasibility must first** be examined. For this purpose, a **permanently updated overall monitoring account is required**. A permanently appointed independent **Freedom Commission** is also to assess the relationship between

freedom and security in the light of existing powers when new powers are to be decided.

### **Fighting clan crime**

We Free Democrats want a constitutional state that **does not tolerate criminal clans and other forms of organised crime**. Crime must not pay. **Money laundering** must be stopped, **assets** from crimes must be **confiscated** consistently. Crime does not stop at borders. We want to expand international cooperation between the police and the judiciary. In the fight against clan crime and other forms of organized crime, we want to strengthen **controls** by different authorities in the network.

### **Strong dishes, digital tools**

A modern constitutional state includes well-equipped courts and public prosecutors' offices. This also includes taking advantage **of the opportunities offered by artificial intelligence (AI) in the judiciary**. We want to explore these consistently without AI replacing judicial decisions. For this purpose, court decisions must be available as training data. We also stand for **comprehensive testing of new technologies**. We are also committed to further **digitising courts and procedural law**, for example through online court proceedings. In this way, **civil litigation can be brought faster, closer to the citizen and more cost-effectively**

be in progress.

We stand for a **strong criminal justice system that** ensures quick convictions of offenders and concentrates on the essentials. Constant expansions of criminal law are incompatible with its character as the ultima ratio of the rule of law. We want to systematically review the Criminal Code and adapt or delete outdated criminal offences. These include, for example, § 142 of the Criminal Code (unauthorized removal from the scene of an accident) and § 265a of the Criminal Code (fraudulent obtaining of benefits); the fraudulent use of transport, "fare evasion", is to be considered an administrative offence. The

**In the future, court hearings in criminal trials will be recorded** and the recording will then be automatically written down. This creates transparency and justice. We demand a **publicly accessible database for court decisions in anonymised 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 call for clear legal regulations that give legal tech companies, and in particular lawyers and notaries, 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 rule of law, we want to strengthen the quality and attractiveness of legal education with contemporary reforms.

## Security and civil rights in harmony

We Free Democrats **defend privacy in public spaces**. Because we all have the right to move in public space without constant control. Video surveillance can make sense at individual crime hotspots such as train stations, but it never replaces 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 blocking, 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 judicial order in the event of suspicion**. German **gun law must be designed with a sense of proportion**. Sport shooters and hunters must not be unnecessarily burdened. Instead, the **focus on endangerers and extremists should be strengthened** by **improved communication between the authorities** and the **fight against the illegal arms trade**.

We call for the **development of a future-proof data infrastructure and the reform of the fragmented data protection supervisory authority** in order to strengthen the innovative strength 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 favour of **preserving net neutrality**. By treating all data packages equally, we ensure that the Internet remains non-discriminatory and that all companies, especially startups and small and medium-sized enterprises, receive fair market access.

## Strengthen cybersecurity – defend against 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 cyberattacks. The public must be proactively informed about the background and perpetrators of these attacks. In the private sector and government institutions, **cyber attacks** are still detected too late or not at all. That's why we want to **strengthen cybersecurity** by reorganizing government responsibilities and establishing the principle of **security by design** and making providers liable for damage caused by security breaches. The state itself must not endanger cybersecurity by using state trojans. Orderly **vulnerability management is needed**,

so that IT vulnerabilities are quickly closed. We want to build up expertise and know-how in software and hardware in Europe and Germany. To this end, we are pushing ahead with the **construction of data centers**.

## A new approach to civil protection and disaster management

Whether extreme weather events, pandemics or the growing danger from Russia's aggression: **Civil protection and disaster protection** must be understood as **part of the overall defence**.

To this end, the **Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance must be able to** take over the coordination as a central office. Volunteering in civil protection and disaster control must be strengthened and the technical equipment improved.



## Modern consumer protection

We want to strengthen the citizens through **modern consumer protection** and reject paternalism. Self-determination, however, requires a free and informed decision. We want to make this possible by advocating the disclosure of monthly average prices, especially for **better comparability in the case of 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, but respected and heard, even in the digital world.

### For a tolerant and open society

For us Free Democrats, the equal treatment of all citizens is an integral part of a democracy. In doing so, we oppose **any form of discrimination**. We fight discrimination against LGBTI people, implement the National Action Plan "Live Queer" and provide the Federal Foundation Magnus Hirschfeld with better financial resources. The police are to record and prosecute **anti-LGBTI hate crimes in a uniform manner throughout Germany**. **Article 3 of the Basic Law**, we want to **sexual identity**.

People with disabilities also still experience many hurdles that prevent them from participating equally in our society. We Free Democrats are committed to more accessibility in public life. We are committed to **increasing the visibility of people with disabilities**. In addition, we call for an **inclusive education system** from daycare to vocational training by integrating **special education content** into basic pedagogical training. However, because of the different manifestations of disabilities, we consider special schools to be indispensable in order to meet all individual needs for support. In **the 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 labour 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 and **mutually acceptable** relationship between all religious and non-religious people in Germany. We want to further develop the current 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 faith, the fundamental 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 examination. We have to make it clear

which associations can be partners of the German state and which cannot. Associations that gloss over Islamism, trivialize it or do not condemn anti-Semitism cannot be partners in religious policy in this country. There is also a need for a **reform of the Islam Conference (DIK)**, 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 education** must be offered free of the influence of Islamist organisations or organisations controlled from abroad.

### **Fighting extremism from the middle of society**

We Free Democrats **strictly reject any form of political and religious extremism**. The security authorities must take better care of the **protection of particularly vulnerable groups** and their **facilities**. 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 combating Islamism and strengthening prevention and deradicalisation**

We Free Democrats want to **actively fight the danger of Islamism**. The radicalization of Muslims in German society leads to social division, violence and terrorism. In particular, **radicalization by Islamist influencers** via the Internet has increased sharply 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 to ensure better protection of young people from extremist ideas. All existing **prevention and deradicalisation programmes** must be reviewed for their effectiveness. The area of so-called **legalistic Islamism** must also be better examined than before.

### **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 combated even more consistently in the face of 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**

Is. To this end, authorities must detect all forms of anti-Semitism at an early stage. It is unacceptable that Jews are reporting anti-Semitic attacks less and less often because proceedings are too often dismissed. We advocate that the **working definition of anti-Semitism according to the IHRA** (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance) be comprehensively established in state authorities and that this should be made the basis for further training of civil servants and in 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** of the extremist **network Samidoun** or the **Islamic Center Hamburg** were overdue. We therefore want to examine further bans on activities and organisations, such as against the right-wing extremist Turkish **Grey Wolves**, the anti-Israel organisation **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 under increasing pressure from within and outside and must be protected. Freedom of expression is one of the supporting pillars of the democratic polity. 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 lead to freedom of expression being impaired** or to private courts instead of state courts deciding on the limits of freedom of expression.

### **Modern and lean ÖRR**

There is an increasing impression among the population that public broadcasting (ÖRR) needs more diversity of opinion and that factual reporting must take up more space. We are committed to ensuring that this is ideally taken into account within the framework of a "reform from within". We are committed to the dual media system – consisting of the ÖRR and private media. However, competition with every offer of private media is not the task of the ÖRR. That is why we want a **more modern and leaner ÖRR that concentrates on its core tasks:**

News, education and information. By **reducing the number of channels** and **dismantling 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 labour 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. Only through **sustainable integration** can **social acceptance of immigration** be maintained.

### **Immigration into the labour market instead of social security systems**

Our country needs more immigration into the labor market. We have improved the rules with the **immigration law**. As a next step, we demand an **immigration code from a single source**, in which all legal bases for immigration and asylum are bundled. In addition, a **reorganisation of the official structures and procedures** in the area of labour migration must now follow. We want people who want to **immigrate into the German labor market** to have to deal only with a state agency. In order to create such a **one-stop-shop for immigration into the labour market**, the entire **visa process must be** put to the **test**. We want to make it even easier for highly qualified specialists to enter the labour market. We want to open up the European Blue Card to more non-academic skilled workers and abolish the impracticable minimum earnings limits. We want to expand the instrument of the **Western Balkans regulation**. In addition, we want to provide graduates of the world's top 200 universities with a one-year

**orientation visa** to find a job based on the Dutch model. -

**People seeking protection with the right to stay 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 money. It combines greater support for taking up work and, where legally permissible, lower social benefits. The amount of social benefits must not be a false incentive. That is why we want to critically review the amount of social benefits, for example in the Asylum Seekers' Benefits Act, and standardise it at European level in the future. We are also relying on more benefits in kind instead of cash and demand that the payment card, which has long been decided, be used everywhere and without unnecessary exceptions. Anyone who is **legally and enforceably obliged to leave the country** and has a reasonable opportunity to leave Germany is usually no longer allowed to **receive state support**. Those who actively obstruct the identity verification procedures are also to be deprived of social benefits. For well-integrated asylum seekers, there must be the possibility of **changing lanes** to immigration into the labour market if they are so qualified 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 able to enter Germany permanently in the first place. Anyone who is here **without the right to stay must return to their home country immediately**. However, **repatriations** too often fail due to enforcement by the federal states. That is why we want to centralise the **responsibility for deportations at the federal level**. **Asylum procedures and asylum court proceedings must be further accelerated**. **Asylum procedures** should also **take place in third countries** if protection seekers are safe there and **procedures based on the rule of law** are guaranteed. We also call for an orderly procedure for determining more **safe countries of origin**. **We want to suspend family reunification with beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and pause admission programmes**. As Free Democrats, we support the pilot testing of pushbacks at Germany's external borders in order to exhaust all legal possibilities to limit irregular migration.

Together with our European partners, we want to ensure more **order and control** in migration policy. The role of FRONTEX in **the management of the external borders** and in **the fight against irregular migration and migrant smuggling** must be strengthened. The EU must also ensure that countries of origin increase their willingness to take back migrants and curb irregular migration through migration agreements. At the same time, we want Germany to continue to successfully develop bilateral migration partnerships.

### Enabling and shaping integration

The **absorption and integration capacity** of our society 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 **residence requirements**,

among other things. The existing **integration courses** must be reviewed for their **effectiveness**. In particular, we need to **separate language and integration courses**, because the current approach has proven to be ineffective and costly. **Language courses** are to be modular and differentiated in terms of performance. Their primary goal is to acquire the language for integration into the labour market. Both courses must be able to be carried out **part-time**.

We Free Democrats want the granting of German **citizenship** to be the end of successful **integration**. We have succeeded in ensuring that people can only be naturalised if they earn their own **living**. In this way, we send the signal that diligence and one's own work performance pay off. **Anti-Semitic, racist, xenophobic acts or motives** constitute a strict **reason for exclusion**. Even those who have a criminal record or **do not share the values of our Basic Law** may not be naturalized.

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

With regard to equal rights for women, we note 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 self-determination, but also in their health care. They still earn less money than men and suffer more often from poverty in old age. There are also not yet equal opportunities with regard to career advancement. That has to change.

#### **Better protection of bodily self-determination**

To combat **domestic violence against women**, we would like states and municipalities to finance women's shelter places in line with demand and for available women's shelter places to be displayed in real time through a nationwide online platform.

**We want to improve women's health** through gender-specific care and optimal diagnoses. 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 unintentionally pregnant women in the best possible way** and improve the inadequate supply situation. In all federal states, abortion is to be integrated into the training of gynaecologists in the training. All women should be able to cover the costs of the abortion. Existing possibilities **of medical abortion methods**

**should be made more accessible** to pregnant women and, for example, medical staff and midwives should be able to be accompanied. A reform of the regulations on abortion (§§218, 218a StGB) is to be discussed in the next Bundestag by way of so-called cross-party group motions with freedom of conscience for each member of parliament.

**Worldwide**, we are committed to **the protection and strengthening of women's rights**, e.g. through the **Fight against forced marriage and genital mutilation** and better **punishment of sexualised**

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

### **Women's economic empowerment**

We strengthen **the economic freedom of women through better tax regulations**, in particular through the abolition of tax brackets 3 and 5, which we continue to advocate. We want to provide greater relief for 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 inspire girls in particular at school in **STEM subjects** and entrepreneurship education and make it easier for women **to access venture capital funds from state development banks**. In order to combat **poverty among women in old age**, we would like couples to take advantage of the possibility of pension point splitting in a standardised manner in the event of career breaks due to care work.

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

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

### **Time for families**

Many couples today are striving for a partnership-based division of care work. This must not fail because of political decisions. Parents also have to be self-determined. The full parental allowance (14 months) is to be paid in full if both partners each take at least four months of parental allowance. Parents can freely divide the remaining months among themselves.

Parental allowance and other family benefits must be reduced in bureaucracy, digitized and automated, e.g. through an AI-based application and a **child opportunities portal**. For **self-employed women and men**, the current regulations are often insufficient, as they often do not receive sufficient income replacement benefits. The regulations must better reflect the working reality of the self-employed. **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 obstacle to a start-up.

So far, there is only an entitlement to maternity protection in the event of stillbirths from the age of 24. week of pregnancy. We are committed to ensuring that women who have suffered a miscarriage before the 24th week of pregnancy can also take advantage **of staggered maternity leave**. No woman should have to go to work the day after the miscarriage.

## Improved compatibility of family, care and career

Needs-based childcare promotes equal opportunities and enables women to participate in the labour market on an equal footing. To **improve the compatibility of family, care and work**, the expansion of company kindergartens is to be supported and bureaucratic hurdles reduced. The tax deduction of childcare costs is to be improved. To improve **the compatibility of work and the care** of 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 in order to enable **flexible working hours**. Flexible working hours, part-time, job sharing, or top-sharing and home office should enable women and men to better reconcile work and family.

## A modern family law

We demand a **modern law on reproductive medicine**. This is intended to **facilitate the legalization of 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**, especially in rainbow families **before conception**, modernising the law of parentage, allowing unmarried couples to adopt and **enshrining the community of responsibility in law**. At the same time, we want to **speed up divorces by mutual consent** 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 minor children after a separation of the parents, whereby the best interests of the child always remain the highest standard of the decision. **Both parents should be entitled and obliged** to provide both maintenance and care with a substantial share. We want to strengthen the rights of grandparents in dealing with these children.

## Senior citizens

The values of freedom-based politics apply across generations. For us, politics for **senior citizens** is a cross-sectional task, but one that does not understand the special needs as stigmatising 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. With an **improvement in access rights**, we recognize the role of many grandparents in supporting their grandchildren. We support the **granting of loans for age-appropriate renovations and conversions** and with the introduction of the community of **responsibility**

we provide the opportunity for alternatives to traditional family structures in old age. We demand the introduction of the "Lebenschancen-BaföG" and a **personal space account** for further education offers as well as a **digital offensive for senior citizens**. Mobility must also be possible in old age, and we reject discriminatory compulsory driving fitness tests for senior citizens.

## **f. Enjoyment of success and responsibility through sport and strong volunteering**

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

### **Promoting volunteering**

So that volunteers can concentrate on their commitment, we want to **significantly relieve clubs 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 obligations**. In addition, we are striving for an increasing **digitization** of the tax and register law processes surrounding volunteering. A **central club guide** guides you clearly through all requirements, registration and reporting obligations. This creates security for those who are committed. We are adapting legal frameworks, trainer and volunteer allowances, as well as relevant income limits.

### **Sport as a social project**

**Sport is more than just exercise**- it keeps you healthy, connects people and helps **to prevent the need for care**. In order to leverage this potential, we want to specifically integrate the **commitment of the baby boomer generation in addition to a general strengthening of volunteering**. With their experience and time, they can expand sports offers for children, young people and seniors and revive the association's work. We are also strengthening cooperation **between associations, schools, companies and social institutions** in order to reach as many people as possible. Sport brings people together, regardless of origin or ability. We are maintaining the **National Youth Games with individual performance incentives** and supplementing them with the opportunity to acquire **the German Sports Badge there**. In this way, we motivate high-achieving children and those with disadvantaged mobility alike and promote performance and participation among young people. Major sporting events such as **Olympic and Paralympic Games** we want to bring 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 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-class sport** with clear goals and efficient structures. We are also committed to ensuring that **eSports is recognized as a non-profit** organization.

### **For more incentives in voluntary service**

We Free Democrats see a general compulsory service, a so-called social year and related concepts as a serious encroachment on freedom. We therefore firmly reject such compulsory service. Instead, we rely on attractive and pre-vocational voluntary services.

## **g. Ensure 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 to **make health care patient-centred**. We are committed to



self-administration and strengthen the liberal professions. We want to **reduce unnecessary bureaucracy** in the health care system,

### **Continuing to drive digitalization.**

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

As Free Democrats, we are committed to ensuring that all people in Germany have access to high-quality care close to home – **in rural areas and in the city**. In **outpatient care**, we are committed to a primary care system: family doctors and paediatricians should be the first point of contact for patients. For us, strengthening nationwide outpatient care also means that the unreduced remuneration of all health professions must be performance-based. In **hospital care**, we want to provide specialized and thus better services, slow down cost development and at the same time relieve doctors and nurses. Hospitals, doctors and the rescue service must also be better networked, integrated and coordinated with an emergency reform. We want to consistently dismantle artificial sector barriers between the outpatient and inpatient care sectors and **further develop the interlinking and networking of all care areas**. We are committed to the **liberal professions** in the healthcare sector. They must be able to make decisions on medical issues autonomously and free of instructions from third parties. The **freedom** of treatment without the need for budgeting benefits patients.

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

We are committed to the **dual system of statutory (GKV) and private (PKV) health insurance**. Therefore, we reject a single health insurance fund (so-called citizens' insurance). In both insurance systems, we want to **strengthen the freedom of change and freedom of choice for the insured**. In order to get a grip on the unchecked development of benefit expenditure in the statutory health insurance system, expenditure should not grow faster than income in the future. In addition, we will **subject all service expansions of the last ten years to a evidence, efficiency and profitability check**. Services that have not proven themselves are to be deleted from the statutory health insurance service catalogue.

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

We Free Democrats are committed to ensuring that patients in Germany **early access to beneficial and innovative medicines**. To this end, we want to use the **Strengthening Germany as a location for production and research**. We are committed to relocating the production of important medicines to Germany and Europe. This presupposes that the healthcare industry **is future-oriented, digitalised and competitive**. To bring medicines to market faster, we want to **Accelerate approval procedures, review the rules of benefit assessment and price negotiations, and reduce bureaucratic hurdles**- without compromising on patient safety. **We want to remunerate therapeutic successes in particular**. Strong pharmacies are needed for a good supply of medicines. They need conditions under which they can work economically.

## Preventing diseases through prevention

We Free Democrats want to start an **active prevention strategy**. Digitization offers great opportunities here, for example through **health apps, telemedicine and wearables**. Those who take preventive care cause less expenditure for their health insurance company. That is why we want to enable the health insurance companies to introduce a **reduced additional contribution for these insured persons**. We also want to strengthen the quality of life of those affected in **mental health** and **mental health through destigmatization and low-threshold, digital services**. We are committed to better psychotherapeutic care and want to reduce the waiting time for a therapy place to less than four weeks. Until waiting times are shortened, we want to make the cost reimbursement procedure less bureaucratic and more standardised.

We Free Democrats want to focus on **prevention** of addictive substances as well. Instead of criminalizing consumer behavior, we want to help people use **addictive substances responsibly through education**. In the case of cannabis, we have already taken a decisive first step that helps to curb the black market and at the same time ensure quality and youth protection. We are therefore sticking to cannabis legalisation.

## Critically reviewing Corona measures

Our health system was caught unprepared by the Corona pandemic. This has put our country to the test. Deficits, a lack of preparations and excessive interference with fundamental rights have enormously damaged trust in our institutions. All this must be thoroughly dealt with. We Free Democrats call for a parliamentary committee of inquiry to ensure **real clarification and transparency** through an orderly procedure and to give recommendations for action for future crises.

## Self-determination in the event of death and organ donation

For us Free Democrats, **bodily self-determination is** a central aspect of a liberal society. We want to increase the **number of organ donors** while at the same time preserving 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 stand firmly by the **right to a self-determined death**. This also includes the

**Possibility to make use of euthanasia in a legally secure manner**. At the same time, the state must **lend a helping hand to anyone who has suicidal thoughts**. We therefore want to **noticeably expand suicide prevention**.

## Strengthening care

The need for long-term care can affect anyone – whether due to accidents, illness or old age. Good care needs security of supply. We Free Democrats exempt care providers from duplicate inspections without added value, unnecessary verification and documentation obligations and excessive requirements. We relieve the burden on family caregivers by **making care and work more compatible**. At the same time, we want to take a look at the situation and special needs **of caring children and young people and expand low-threshold counselling services**. We want to **attract more nursing professionals at home and abroad**. To this end, we want to **drastically simplify recognition procedures for foreign nurses**. Through

#### **digital applications, automation and robotics**

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

one.

## **V. For a lean state that works**

Some suppress it, and yet everyone feels it: In Germany, the state regulates more than it can manage. He wants to be a problem solver for everything and everyone and thus becomes a problem himself. Because never before has the state had so much money, so much staff and so many powers at its disposal as it does today, and yet many things don't work any 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: sound finances are the basis. We want to protect all generations from the burdens of excessive national debt and the effects of demographic change. We are cutting back subsidies for the few, but we are creating better location conditions for everyone. Where we really need a well-functioning state, it must be better equipped. Federalism must become simpler and the state leaner and more efficient. With clear responsibilities, we want to upgrade the interaction between the federal and state governments from an obstacle to a locational advantage. A lot has to change in Germany. The state is perhaps the biggest construction site. We have it in our hands to change that.

### **a. Sound public finances**

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

### **Compliance with the debt brake is intergenerational justice**

Freedom for future generations also means not leaving them mountains of debt. Therefore, for us Free Democrats, **compliance with the debt brake enshrined in the Basic Law** central commandment of intergenerational justice. Otherwise, children are liable for their parents. This also applies to the federal states. Sustainable and prioritizing budgets create intergenerational justice because burdens are not passed on to future generations. This is the only way we can secure the **financial room for manoeuvre of future generations**. Germany must remain an anchor of stability in Europe and set a good example. We cannot afford to have our creditworthiness questioned. Escalating

national debt, as in France or Italy, would shake European stability. We have fought for strict debt rules in the past. If we don't play by the rules, monetary union will fail.

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

We Free Democrats are strictly **against the European Union's debt competence**. The EU's Next Generation EU recovery fund 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 its core tasks with European added value. We Free Democrats therefore position ourselves firmly against a European debt union.

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

We Free Democrats want to **reduce subsidies so that** financial aid and tax reductions are brought to an appropriate ratio to economic value creation. After all, the many billions of euros in state money to individual industries and companies are better invested in the long term, for example in education. In future, existing and new subsidy programmes must be consistently limited in time, degressive and externally evaluated. We Free Democrats want to **sell state shareholdings** because private investors are the better entrepreneurs. In doing so, we must also adapt the federal government's budget law so that it does not stand in the way of a sale of federal shareholdings that makes sense for the economy as a whole.

### **c. Modernizing the state with a federalism reform**

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

**A general inventory is the first necessary step for this.** All federal responsibilities and administrative processes must be subjected to a **critical review**. Too many authorities at the federal and state level as well as in the municipalities overlap in the fulfilment of their tasks. The general inventory must be based on a clear political will **to improve the efficiency and ability of the state to act**, and must be concluded with a reform of federalism. For us, reforms in the financial and education sectors, internal security, civil protection and disaster control, migration and digitalisation are priorities.

In the course of a federalism reform, tax revenue must also be distributed between the Federation and the Länder in such a way that the now considerable co-financing of Länder tasks by the Federation can also be provided by the Federation. We Free Democrats want to **limit federal spending more strongly**

**to the original tasks of the federal government.** The federal government should only subsidize tasks of the states in exceptional cases. A strong federalism needs clear competences and responsibilities. We therefore consider a new Financial Federalism Commission to be indispensable and will campaign for its establishment. If tasks between the federal government and the states are changed, 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-saving state begins with the federal government. That is why we want to **significantly reduce the number of Federal Government Commissioners** and keep them permanently at a lower level with the help of a **one-in, one-out principle**. We also want to limit the number of **state secretaries in the ministries** and make the career regulations more flexible. **The Federal Agency for Disruptive Innovations (SPRIND) should be a role model for the release of potential.** With the SPRIND Freedom Act, we have created scope for innovation – for example, by dispensing with intermediate instances and 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 special tasks on a project-by-project basis or for a limited period of time at more market-oriented 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 jobs in the federal administration outside the security authorities. That

**Development Ministry was to be merged with the Foreign Office.** The Federal Ministry of Building and Housing will be integrated into an existing ministry. The cross-cutting topic of digitization, which affects all ministries and ties up resources everywhere, should **be summarized in a digitization ministry**. Leaner structures within the ministries – for example through the **elimination of sub-department heads**– are intended to shorten decision-making processes within the ministries. In terms of **Dynamic Shared Ownership (DSO)**, the vast majority of decisions should be made where the actual work is done. This strengthens the competence to take responsibility.

We also have to look at the so-called subordinate area of the ministries. We want to noticeably reduce the number of authorities and institutions. The **entire administrative landscape needs to be streamlined**. In doing so, we should have the courage to break new ground - for example, the abolition or reorganization of authorities such as the Federal Environment Agency. This saves taxpayers' money and can ensure 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 room for professional excellence, especially in technical disciplines**. With a more flexible public service law, we want to enable civil servants to gain professional experience outside the administration – and in some cases also demand this. This ensures that the expertise acquired is

reflected in the career and remuneration model. In addition, with the **introduction of Expert Tracks**, we also want to enable highly competent experts outside the classic career paths to be promoted without having to leave their area of expertise.

The **idea of performance** must be reflected more strongly in the 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 rejecting. To this end, the exercise of discretion and personal responsibility are to be strengthened at all levels. The

**Citizen satisfaction should be taken into account in the assessment of authority managers and employees under civil service law.** 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 sector. **Binding target agreements** round off the new performance concept in the public sector.

### **e. Comprehensive digitization of the administration**

State institutions must solve people's problems, 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 DeutschlandID as the digital citizen's account and AI-supported administrative assistants, we are streamlining and modernizing structures. This makes them faster and more citizen-friendly and **relieves the burden on taxpayers**. Less bureaucracy, more digitization – for a future-proof administration.

### **A Ministry for Digitalization**

Without an efficient digital infrastructure, our country will not function. We will overcome outdated structures: To this end, we will set up a **Federal Ministry for Digitalisation**, which will be formed from existing departments of other ministries and which, as a central authority, will control the digitalisation of the administration uniformly throughout Germany. To this end, the powers of administrative digitization must be removed from the Federal Ministry of the Interior. Because this topic, 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 powers to stop undesirable developments in other areas. We only want to supplement the high dynamics of fibre-optic and mobile network expansion by private and municipal telecommunications companies with tailor-made funding where private-sector expansion does not pay off. We are strengthening competition between telecommunications companies.

### **Administrative digitization for the administration of tomorrow**

The state must not constantly ask people for information 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 call for the introduction of a **once-only guarantee** and a **legal entitlement to digital administrative services**.

In addition, we want to fully digitize and network all relevant registers, such as population registers,

company registers and health registers. In this way, we will significantly accelerate and simplify administrative processes.

A central element for successful **administrative digitization** is the "Government as a Platform" (GaaP) model. This uniform platform will then include all digital administration applications in Germany. For the expansion of digital identity, citizens will be able to store their most important documents and proofs securely and at all times on their smartphones and link them with each other in the newly created digital wallet. This also includes the digital ID document and the driver's license. This allows citizens to identify themselves in a forgery-proof manner and use digital services securely. In the future, **visits to the authorities** will be possible anywhere, whether from home or on the road. 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 **analogue-digital double structures**. We want to consistently abolish analogue processes and replace them with modern, more efficient digital solutions. However, we do not only rely on a one-to-one transfer of analogue processes into the digital world, but also understand the digitalisation of administration as a comprehensive modernisation. We Free Democrats trust the people to achieve this digital transformation. We rely on simple solutions on site: for example, easy-to-use terminals on site in the authorities and **support from human digital pilots** 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 needs innovations. 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. Therefore, he is not a good innovator. Because it has spread to so many areas of life, our country has lost innovative strength. But that can be changed. We Free Democrats want to achieve the European climate targets safely and as cost-effectively as possible. In doing so, we are relying on a uniform **European emissions trading system**. Technology bans are not needed for this. On the contrary, we will prioritize innovation over scepticism and ensure that new technologies and business models are not drowned out in excessive regulation. The time for excuses is over: Now it's all 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. Without an efficient digital infrastructure, our country will not function. We will overcome outdated structures. We respect farmers as entrepreneurs. We will align agricultural policy more closely with the entrepreneurial actions of farmers. By focusing on increasing productivity and innovation instead of ineffective subsidies, we are making farmers independent of government subsidies.

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

### **EU emissions trading as a key 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 a guiding 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 formed by the trading of emission rights ensures that greenhouse gases are always saved where it is most cost-effective. Further regulations that have no additional benefit for climate protection due to the capped amount of greenhouse gases in emissions trading must be abolished. In order to achieve the climate goals of the Paris Agreement and ensure fair competitive conditions for European industry, we are committed to international emissions trading with a global CO2 price.

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

In this way, we are giving companies, especially energy-intensive industry, more time to switch to climate-friendly technologies. Plants that contribute to value creation can thus be used five years longer. The ramp-up and market maturity of new technologies also gain more time. **This strengthens the economic performance of companies, secures jobs and avoids billion-dollar subsidy programs**. We Free Democrats want to **introduce a climate dividend** in order to pay back revenues from emissions trading directly and at a flat rate per capita to citizens.

We Free Democrats are committed to **technology openness in climate protection**. Because if politicians and civil servants dictate which technologies are used and which are banned, the innovative power of companies is slowed down and climate protection is only unnecessarily expensive. That is why we are committed to an **immediate lifting of the de facto ban on internal 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 indispensable for achieving the climate targets. 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. In addition, we want to add its own

**Expand the negative emissions target.**

### **Environmental policy as a driver of innovation – Success in the global market**

We want environmental technology "Made in Germany". To do this, we must set framework conditions that produce innovations that are in demand in other European countries and worldwide. To this end, we want to strengthen the innovative strength 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 moved far beyond the European framework through restrictive regulations, for example in limit values, technical specifications and quota requirements, and has moved far away from global regulation. The products developed in and for the German market thus fall short of the requirements of other markets. We will **bring together 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 rely on effective, holistic nature conservation measures. We focus on the preservation of entire populations and habitats and thus avoid individual sightings of individual individuals blocking construction projects for a long time without their species being endangered at all. Until now, construction projects that use new areas have had to find individually approved compensation areas and use them exclusively for nature conservation. This often leads to projects not being able to be realized for a long time. In addition, this results in many small-scale nature conservation measures that are often not coordinated with each other. Their use for nature conservation is therefore limited. We **want to make compensation payments the standard instead of real compensation** through compensation areas. This relieves both authorities and companies. The money paid can be used for really effective nature conservation projects in a coordinated manner via a fund of experts. This results in large-scale, interconnected protective measures that secure habitats, promote biodiversity and protect nature in the long term. At the same time, companies benefit from a simpler procedure and gain planning security. A central instrument for more 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 this end, we will make the existing legal framework more market-based and technology-open. At the same time, we are making our country less dependent on raw material imports.

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

We want people in our country to remain individually and affordably mobile. We Free Democrats reject a general speed limit on motorways. We do not achieve fair cooperation between all road users - whether cars, motorcycles, 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 planning and approval acceleration. We are consistently pursuing 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 communications and fiber optic expansion become overriding public interest in the Federal Telecommunications Network Expansion Acceleration Act.** In a next step, we want to make

new replacement buildings of infrastructure generally exempt from approval, even if they have to be expanded and adapted to the growing demand. We Free Democrats want fewer traffic jams due to the **construction site turbo**. To this end, the tendering modalities must be adapted in such a way that incentives are used to reward fast and timely construction.

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, own income for Autobahn GmbH through the truck toll and an opening for private capital in order to enable adequate and year-long planning and financing.

### **Freedom of technology instead of ideological transport policy**

All generations in our country are united by the need for individual mobility. Instead of 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. In this way, we ensure affordable and sustainable mobility regardless of the type of drive. Aviation and shipping 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 the exhaust gases while driving. Instead, we want to look at the entire life cycle of a vehicle. In addition, we would like to **abolish the EU fleet limits**. This creates more flexibility for the industry. This allows it to rely on new technologies that both protect the climate and secure jobs. For a technology-neutral, sustainable mobility policy, we want electromobility, climate-neutral fuels (e.g. from electricity or biomass) and hydrogen to be put on an equal footing in terms of regulation, taxation and subsidies. 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 part of everyday life. This includes the **approval of automated driving systems at all stages of development**. For many young people, the driver's license means freedom. That is why we want to make the driver's license and the professional driver qualification (truck driver's license, bus driver's license) cheaper again, e.g. by waiving a daily upper limit for theory lessons, the possibility of completing theory lessons digitally and the integration of driving simulators in training. By opening up the exam market to other providers and continuing education 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 practice 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 we have launched is a good start, and we are building on it. We Free Democrats want to **strengthen the automotive cultural heritage** and secure it 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 fare jungle and radically simplified access. Now the transport associations and states must break up their encrusted structures and implement 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 networking different modes of transport, we are creating seamless mobility chains from the first to the last kilometre, and **"mobility hubs"** are efficient transfer options.

## **For more competition on the railways**

The railway must be a reliable means of transport. The prerequisite for this is more competition on the rails. We **are separating network and operations at Deutsche Bahn** in order to increase operational efficiency, create clear responsibilities and optimize maintenance and infrastructure expansion. We will achieve these goals with a mix of permanent financing, reformed structures and incentives through competition on the rails. The federal government's financial resources will be concentrated on the infrastructure sector, with a focus on adequate and stable 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 offer. We will review the ambitious rehabilitation of the main traffic arteries in the rail network and continue if it is proven successful.

## **Shaping climate protection in aviation in a market-based and competition-neutral manner**

For many people, air travel is an important part of their lives – be it professionally or privately. Good framework conditions, competition and innovation made air travel affordable and accessible to all. We want to preserve that. Worldwide passenger and freight transport by air is an expression of a strong and competitive Germany. To keep it that way, we are abolishing the **aviation tax** and reducing **aviation security fees to a competitive level**. Airlines and airports need entrepreneurial freedom instead of state bullying. The modernization of the airport infrastructure must not fail because of state bureaucracy. The "EU quotas for sustainable aviation fuels" must not impose a one-sided burden on European airlines.

## **c. More construction and better housing**

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

### **Apartments for everyone**

We Free Democrats will **improve tax depreciation in housing construction**– this will make investments more attractive and create new housing more quickly. **We will continue the special write-off of the Growth**

**Opportunities Act without unnecessary restrictions.** With an immediate **moratorium on construction costs**, we are stopping government cost drivers. We **are speeding up approval procedures**, abolishing superfluous environmental assessments and giving **priority to housing construction**. With uniform requirements and nationwide approval standards, we are advancing serial construction. We will reduce excessive building requirements and reduce them to sensible minimum standards for building energy, fire and health protection as well as statics. The **building type E** that we launched was intended to be a blueprint for clearing out building rights. For this we need a **federal-state offensive for construction**. This is because building regulations are essentially regulated by the state building codes. Here, facilitations must be created according to the model of building type E.

In addition to **densification and additions, we are also simplifying** the designation of new building areas. If the authority does not react in time, the building application is considered approved (**fiction of approval**). We Free Democrats will create the legal framework for end-to-end digital planning and strengthen the use of corresponding systems in public 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 is intended to 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 in this regard.

### **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 exacerbates the housing shortage. We are therefore **simplifying the law on ancillary costs**. The rent brake is demonstrably a brake on investment. That's why we're phasing them out. In order to create incentives for the urgently needed new construction, we are breaking the state regulatory spiral in the rental market. There will be no nationwide rent cap with us. In addition, we will relax the rigid capping limits for energy-efficient renovations so that the modernisation of the building stock can progress. The tenants also benefit from this. Because such renovations reduce ancillary costs.

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

We want to support people in a targeted manner where the income is not enough to live on despite work and diligence. Housing benefit is the right instrument for this – it helps flexibly and precisely. However, the complex interplay of housing benefit, citizen's allowance and other social benefits too often means that work, especially full-time, 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 asset accumulation and retirement provision. We want the dream of owning a home to become a reality for more people. We want Germany to become an owner nation: To achieve

this, we are lowering the hurdles. With a **real estate transfer tax allowance of EUR 500,000 for the first owner-occupied property of natural persons**, we facilitate access to property. For families, this allowance increases by 100,000 euros for each child. Following the Swiss model, funds from the company pension scheme should be able to be used for the purchase of property - an additional, flexible source of financing.

### **Freedom in the boiler room: CO<sub>2</sub>-free, but affordable**

We Free Democrats are convinced: A warm home with modern, climate-friendly heating is possible - economically and open to technology. We rely on innovative solutions that promote climate protection and at the same time remain affordable. Instead of countless individual regulations, we rely on a market-based solution – **CO<sub>2</sub> certificate trading**. The **Heating Act** with its excessive requirements **must be phased out completely**. 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 a compulsion 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 outstanding importance for Germany, which goes far beyond the production of food. We Free Democrats are therefore committed to entrepreneurial agriculture in Germany. Animal welfare and animal welfare are a matter of course for us. We have pushed for the inclusion of animal welfare in the Basic Law because, for us, it is inseparable from a liberal system of values. It is important to strike a balance between necessary improvements for the animals and practical regulations.

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

Farmers and winegrowers are entrepreneurs. We will align agricultural policy more closely with the entrepreneurial actions of farmers. By focusing on increasing productivity and innovation instead of ineffective subsidies, we are making farmers independent of government subsidies. We are abolishing pointless and disproportionate **documentation obligations and requirements**. At the EU level, we continue to push for the withdrawal of slowing regulation. In the new funding period of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy from 2027, productivity and technologies are to be promoted more strongly. Scarce budget funds must be used as a priority for **sustainable intensification**. The use of technology enables environmental and nature conservation in harmony with securing yields. Anyone who uses digital technologies is exempt from documentation obligations and requirements. We will reward innovation and progress instead of interfering with operational processes through small-scale regulations. We want to exploit 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**. In this way, we facilitate yield and quality assurance in viticulture, special crop cultivation and horticulture and landscaping. In animal husbandry, digital innovations such as AI-driven systems for detecting animal welfare offer an enormous opportunity to meet consumer

demands. Comply with. We want to secure income for farms, 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 adjust the financing of biogas plants in such a way that their flexibility contributes to reducing electricity costs and to the continued use of existing biogas plants.

### **Enabling food innovation and preserving consumer freedom of 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 contribute to bringing healthier products to the market in nutrition. Innovations improve the quality, safety and traceability of our food. They ensure that consumers can receive healthy and trustworthy products. However, a healthy diet can only succeed if consumers themselves are willing to question and actively change their eating habits. 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 programmes** and make them more effective. We reject interventions in recipes, as well as new incentive taxes, e.g. on sugar. Products that are safe and healthy should continue to be able to be advertised transparently and positively, so that consumers have the choice of what suits their lives best.

### **Multifunctional forestry**

We create open spaces and scope for action for **sustainable forest management**. The existing Federal Forest Act has proven its worth. There will be no property encroachments and unnecessary management regulations with us. The planned European law regulation on deforestation-free supply chains is impractical. We support climate-resilient forest conversion with site-appropriate, even 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 also 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 ability to regulate 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 into account sustainability, social aspects and economic stability in equal measure. We Free Democrats recognise the nature and species protection of farmers, hunters and anglers in action.

## 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 and too little. At the same time, China's actions pose additional challenges to Germany and the EU economically, technologically, socially and geopolitically. It is the effects of the increasing systemic rivalry between liberal democracies and authoritarian regimes that are now also affecting Germany, the EU and other allies as a whole. Hamas' insidious attack on Israel has escalated the unresolved Middle East conflict. Even after the re-election of Donald Trump as US president, the USA remains our closest ally and partner. Nevertheless, it is now more important than ever that Germany itself and within the EU and NATO demonstrates its ability to act. To do this, we need an EU that can actively defend its foundation of freedom, the rule of law, human rights, democracy and the social market economy.

The overall geopolitical situation illustrates the considerable pressure for reform on German foreign, security and development policy. When so much changes, we have to change too. We Free Democrats are convinced that realpolitik and the commitment to freedom and human rights do not have to be mutually exclusive worldwide.

### a. Expand defence capability

At the latest through Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, it has become clear that Germany must do more for its defense. To do this, we need a **security policy turning point that** is worthy of the name, because war has returned to Europe.

### Comprehensive support for Ukraine

For us Free Democrats, it is clear that the defence of Ukraine must not fail because of money and arms deliveries, as a Russian victory will be more expensive and our freedom will also be defended in Ukraine. There will only be real peace in Europe if Putin does not succeed with his aggressive course. Ukraine must be put in a position to defend itself against Russian attacks at any time. For us, this also includes defence 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 achieving adequate, permanent and fairly distributed financing of support for Ukraine within the NATO/EU/G7 states**, in particular through the **use of frozen Russian assets**, as far as this is legally possible. Our goal is to **restore the territorial integrity of Ukraine**. At the same time, we support their **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 US and NATO—** regardless of which president sits in the White House. Nevertheless, Germany and its European partners must **take more responsibility for their own defence and that of our allies** and be able **to credibly deter in terms of security policy**. We must counter the threat posed by Putin's Russia with diplomacy and military strength.

We Free Democrats stand unreservedly by **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 goals. This includes Germany meeting at least NATO's 2% target. If NATO agrees on higher goals, we will also meet them 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 **dovetail the cooperation of the EU partners in NATO more closely**.

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

We want to make the Bundeswehr **the strongest conventional armed force in Europe**. In close coordination with France, Germany is to become a strong cooperation partner for smaller European partners. 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 militarily successfully**. To do this, the Bundeswehr needs **better financing and equipment**.

We Free Democrats are committed to a **professional volunteer army** of active members and a strong reserve and to a **national database** for the registration of men and women fit for military service. In doing so, we are guided by NATO's capability goals. We reject the reintroduction of universal conscription. The attractiveness of service in the Bundeswehr is to be massively increased through excellent conditions such as salary and social benefits.

In order to meet the demand for defence capability, Germany must also make its actions **more uniform strategically and institutionally**. That is why there must **be no "business as usual" in German security policy**. We therefore want to establish a **National Security Council** that identifies risks at an early stage, enables meaningful decision-making and develops joint strategies.

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

We are in the age **of systemic rivalry between aggressive autocracies on the one hand and liberal democracies on the other**. States such as China and Russia are striving for a different world order in which they want to undermine international law and human rights, divide the world into zones of influence and enforce the law of the strongest. We reject this and instead advocate a **multilateral world order** in which the **strength of the law prevails, not the law of the strongest**. We stand for a rules-based international order that applies to everyone. This also includes the commitment to the **universality of human rights**. We



therefore demand that **human rights violations, oppression and discrimination be punished more consistently**

become. Authoritarian states such as Russia and China are trying to draw states of the Global South into their own sphere of influence, for example in the context 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 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 on Ukraine in the strongest possible terms, which is contrary to international law**. We demand that Russian war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression be prosecuted. We are also consistently advocating **economic sanctions**, including the **widest 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 opponent.

There is **no going back to the status quo before the war of aggression** against Ukraine. This applies in particular to dependence on Russian energy. We Free Democrats call for an **EU-wide phase-out plan from Russian energy purchases**. The Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines were a geopolitical instrument of Putin from the beginning.

We would like 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 destabilise its European neighbours.

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

Our relations with **China** are strained by China's more autocratic actions and aggressive international appearance. 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 need to **identify and reduce economic dependencies**. We therefore call for **"de-risking"** of imports from China in security-relevant areas and in key areas of the economy. Critical infrastructure must be effectively protected from Chinese influence.

It is clear to us that we have to create **good framework conditions for companies at the same time**. These include **new trade agreements** with other partners and a strategic approach by the EU towards the subsidised overproduction of the Chinese economy. We call for a Europe-wide fight against the glut of illegal cheap products from China and advocate for **tough enforcement of applicable law**, such as the Digital Services Act, but also with 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

development of **democracy and the rule of law in Taiwan** and **support Taiwan's integration into international organizations** to the extent that this can be done below the threshold of state recognition. We want to **expand bilateral economic cooperation** and are therefore committed to a free trade-like agreement with Taiwan at the European level. At the European level, we also want talks on an investment agreement with Taiwan to start in the near future. In addition, we want to tackle the global challenges of the future together with the countries in the Indo-Pacific.

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

**Realpolitik** and the **commitment to freedom and human rights** do not have to be mutually exclusive – we are firmly convinced of that. However, this requires a German foreign policy that **focuses more on cooperation and less on moral finger-wagging**. We therefore stand for a clever 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.

### **Realigning development cooperation**

We Free Democrats call for a **structural reorientation of development cooperation** and its institutions. In the struggle for the multilateral world order, spending on development cooperation must **be strategically prioritised in line with the economic and security interests of Germany and the EU**. In the case of tougher penalties against LGBTIQ people and human rights defenders and the dismantling of women's rights, we want to adapt development cooperation in such a way that it continues to reach the minorities and groups concerned. To this end, Germany must also work with partners who are distant from the government and, if necessary, consider the cancellation of budget support or end cooperation with state institutions.

## **c. Germany and Israel**

Hamas' dastardly terror attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, reignited the Middle East conflict, with significant implications for the entire region and its neighboring states. Germany must play an active role in ensuring that the EU, together with the United States and other partners as well as all relevant states in the region, seeks a long-term political peace solution for the Middle East.

### **Israel's security is Germany's raison d'être**

For us Free Democrats, it is clear that **Israel's existence and security** is **Germany's raison d'être** 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**. This is because they serve to strengthen strategic partnerships and ensure stability in geopolitically important regions. Israel must therefore be **put on an equal footing with NATO countries**

**in arms exports.** We advocate a negotiated **two-state model** as the most appropriate solution to guarantee Israel's security in the long term, 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 endangered by anti-Semitic violence. We Free Democrats want Jews to feel safe everywhere in Germany. Jewish life belongs in the public sphere 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 this end, authorities must **detect all forms of anti-Semitism at an early stage.** In addition, **no state funds may be spent on organizations and projects that question Israel's right to exist.** We also want more **bans on activities and organisations** for anti-Semitic organisations.

### **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 the Member States. We must now secure and continue this success story through courageous reforms.

#### **For a strong and sovereign Europe**

We Free Democrats want the EU' **s strategic sovereignty** to be further developed. For us, this means first and foremost **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 resources, the EU could better assert its own interests and values in the future and become less dependent and vulnerable in important areas. This **requires institutional reforms of the EU.** We Free Democrats are particularly committed to a

**reduction of the size of the Commission, a right of initiative of the European Parliament and qualified majority voting** 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 defence policy, be pursued more consistently by the member states.** The design of the **strategic compass** is to be adapted to the intensified threat situation from 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 decision-making in the EU's foreign and security policy.** We also want to strengthen the **European defence industry by making it easier to access 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 a targeted manner in order to develop joint European solutions, especially in security policy, and to promote regional cooperation. We are also committed to even

**deeper cooperation with the United Kingdom**, especially 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. Because the accession of the **Western Balkan region, Moldova and Ukraine to the EU** according to the Copenhagen criteria is in the interest of Germany and Europe. We demand that **the European Union's financial resources be better distributed along the tasks of the future**— 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 rule of law, respect for human rights, the protection of minorities and international law. Requirements that Erdogan's Turkey does not meet.

### **e. Dare 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 economically and geopolitically less dependent on individual countries, especially autocracies such as 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 concluding negotiated **EU free trade agreements** as well as ongoing negotiations, especially with **Indonesia, Australia, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia** as soon as possible. The **Mercosur agreement** opens up new markets for our companies, strengthens climate protection ambitions and takes partnership 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 are to be launched. **Safe products, fair competitive 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 institutionalisation of the Trade and Technology Council (TTC) and a joint approach in the area of economic security. We stand for value- 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. However, we also support **sectoral trade agreements** in order to enable rapid progress, which could, for example, be an alternative to the faltering negotiations on a comprehensive free trade agreement with

**India. We want to deepen the European single market** – especially for labour, energy, capital and digital services.