



## STAND FOR VALUES

A business alliance for an open, diverse and prosperous Europe

# Press release

## German businesses are taking a clear stand for diversity, openness and tolerance

**+++ Over 30 companies stand united for our values and against extremism and populism +++ First joint campaign for the European elections +++ Focus on the importance of the EU for prosperity and jobs +++**

**Berlin, 7 May 2024.** "We stand for values" is the name under which more than 30 leading and distinguished German companies have joined forces to form an alliance for diversity, openness and tolerance. It includes numerous DAX companies, family-owned businesses, German SMEs and start-ups. The initiative is also backed by the Federation of German Industries (BDI) and the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB).

In their first joint campaign, the companies are calling on their combined 1.7 million employees to take part in the upcoming European elections and engaging in numerous activities to highlight the importance of European unity for prosperity, growth and jobs. The alliance aims to highlight the values that have made our peaceful co-existence possible and to underline that diversity and intercultural cooperation are essential for economic success.

The alliance is set to go public on 7 May 2024. Interested parties can discover more at [www.westandforvalues.com](http://www.westandforvalues.com). In line with its declared ambition to mirror the diversity of the German economy, the collective warmly invites further companies and organisations to join its ranks.

### Companies coordinate their internal and external communications

The alliance is also intentionally directed at the approximately 1.7 million employees of the member companies. Through proactive engagement with the staff, the economic advantages of these values for each of the more than 30 participating companies become the centrepiece. Under the 'We stand for values' framework, each participating firm organises internal discussion forums, workshops, town hall meetings, video messages, and informational events.



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Member companies have already launched many such initiatives and are collaborating with each other to develop formats and content, share best practices, and leverage the partnership as a platform for dialogue.

Furthermore, the firms are also actively disseminating their messages to the wider public. This includes a targeted social media campaign, which aims to reach new demographics by establishing a presence in spaces where numerous voters source their information.

### **Exclusion, extremism and populism pose threats to Germany as a business location and to our prosperity**

In addition to the benefits of European integration, the alliance is especially dedicated to the principles of diversity, openness, and tolerance. These principles are fundamental for peaceful coexistence within our society and workplaces.

Innovative ideas and breakthroughs can only flourish when individuals from all walks of life can exchange thoughts freely and safely. The member companies of “We stand for values” are united in the belief that exclusion, animosity, and isolation run counter to our shared values and endanger both entrepreneurial liberty and individual prosperity. German enterprises require a diverse skilled workforce from beyond our borders to thrive and maintain competitiveness for the foreseeable future. Currently, Germany faces a shortfall of 1.73 million unfilled positions. In the coming years, an additional 200,000 to 400,000 skilled workers will be needed annually.

Populism and extremism are inextricably linked with isolation and exclusion. Research indicates that such ideologies lead to diminished innovative capacity, reduced economic output, and consequently, less wealth, particularly affecting the most vulnerable in society. The consortium believes that instead of 'diminishing' our economies and societies, we should seek to 'enhance' them – through enhanced competitiveness, enhanced prosperity, and enhanced innovation. All of these create more liveable and attractive communities, free from the blight of hatred, segregation, exclusion, and racism.

### **The German economy depends on a functioning and unobstructed EU**

Germany must navigate major challenges in the forthcoming years: the digital revolution and swift technological advancements, climate change, demographic shifts, as well as global competition and conflicts. Success here is crucial for our economy. Only a capable Europe can overcome such obstacles effectively – a stagnant and divided Europe will fail to do so



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### Participation is key

"We stand for values" is already a diverse collaboration of a range of companies, in partnership with the BDI. Collectively, its members encompass a total of around 1.7 million employees. In pursuit of a broader impact, additional companies are warmly welcomed to join the alliance.

### "We Stand for Values" continues beyond the European election

Our values have no expiry date. The alliance's commitment does not end with the European elections, therefore, but will carry on to future elections.

**Dr. Roland Busch, President and CEO of Siemens AG:** "Our alliance stands for respect, tolerance, openness and diversity. Extremists and racists challenge these values, offering apparently simple solutions to the complex problems of our time. This is dividing our society and threatening our future. The alliance is now sending a strong signal: we firmly stand for our values, as they have made Germany successful – and our companies too. To this end, we are starting an open and constructive dialogue with our colleagues. And we call on people to take a stance against extremism and racism in the European elections on June 9."

**Christian Sewing, CEO of Deutsche Bank AG:** "Populism and extremism are a great danger to our basic freedoms and to our country. Racism and intolerance have no place in an open society and a global economy. Investors who value Germany precisely for its deep-rooted democratic values, are watching developments with concern and are hesitant to invest. It is crucial we categorically repeat that none of the solutions we need to the challenges of our time come from populists."

**Oliver Zipse, CEO of BMW AG:** "The business model of the BMW Group and the German economy is both European and global. International supply and business relationships are crucial for an export-driven nation like Germany. Our success heavily relies on trade relations within the European Union. Therefore, free trade and competition must be our guiding principles. Two out of three BMW Group employees come from the EU, and we sell almost a third of our vehicles in these countries. Ten of our plants are located in the EU, and EU companies supply more than twelve billion parts to our plants around the world each year."



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**Richard Lutz, CEO of Deutsche Bahn AG:** "DB represents Europe. We vote for Europe. Now, more than ever, voting is crucial as we witness the fragility of the foundations underpinning our prosperity, freedom, and peace. Populism and division are rife. But we must not accept efforts to undermine democracy and to undermine Europe. Recent events underscore the necessity for companies like the DB Group to actively engage with society. We stand for tolerance and democracy, for freedom and Europe."

**Christian Bruch, CEO of Siemens Energy AG:** "I am concerned that our democracy, and with it all the economic achievements made in recent decades, are at stake. Isolationism, extremism, and xenophobia are poison for German exports and jobs here in Germany – we must therefore not give space to the fearmongers and fall for their supposedly simple solutions"

**Miguel López, CEO of thyssenkrupp AG:** "With its innovative products and high-performance technologies, thyssenkrupp has a home all around the world – including, of course, in Europe. A strong and open Europe that embraces its role in the globalized world supports our business and secures jobs. Of our nearly 100,000 employees worldwide, more than 70,000 work in Europe. It is therefore clear to us that anyone who is against European unity, international cooperation and globalization is also clearly against thyssenkrupp."

**Dr. Markus Kamieth, CEO of BASF SE:** "Without diversity, innovation and success in global competition are unimaginable. Openness is one of our core corporate values. Diversity is what makes us strong at BASF and as a society. Therefore, it is clear: There is no room for xenophobia and intolerance at BASF."

**Dr. Jens Wohltorf, Co-Founder and CEO of Blacklane GmbH:** "As one of the few fast growing but profitable companies in the German startup ecosystem, Blacklane attributes its success to the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of its 300 employees from 54 different countries, as well as the sense of togetherness and humanity we cultivate in our workplace. In my view, today's entrepreneurial success stories are not possible without a cosmopolitan, tolerant, and diverse society in which everyone feels safe and comfortable. These fundamental values of our peaceful coexistence are non-negotiable and critical to the success of newly founded companies, explaining our achievements in over 50 countries worldwide."



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**Dr. Stefan Hartung, CEO of Robert Bosch GmbH:** "Global networks and cultural openness are key success factors for a strong economy and a strong Europe. We will only be able to overcome the enormous challenges of our time if all members of society stand together and uphold key values such as diversity, respect, equality of opportunities, and inclusion. As key players, business enterprises have a great deal of social responsibility. As an international and globally operating company, Bosch is committed to ensuring that Germany and Europe remain open to the world. The upcoming European elections are crucial for the continuation of the successful European Union project: they offer us the opportunity to strengthen our liberal democratic order as well as cohesion in Europe with a high voter turnout. Every vote counts."

**Martin Daum, CEO of Daimler Truck AG:** "The greatest challenges of our time are global challenges: Whether it's climate change, the wealth gap or technological change, we can only solve them together and on a global scale. The foundation for this are values such as diversity, tolerance, and openness. That's why Daimler Truck is fully committed to participating in the initiative 'We stand for values,' where over 30 companies come together to stand up for these values as well as for democracy and social cohesion."

**Wolf-Dieter Adlhoch, CEO of Dussmann Group:** "68,000 people from over 100 nations work in our family business. For many of them, their work with us, for example in cleaning buildings or geriatric care, is their entry into the primary labour market and therefore the key to successful integration. Hate and exclusion have no place here."

**Ola Källenius, CEO of Mercedes-Benz Group A:** "With the European elections in early June, we will start into the super election year 2024. As always, the more people vote, the stronger democracy remains."

**Markus Haas, CEO of O<sub>2</sub> Telefónica:** "A strong democracy is the basis for a strong Europe united in diversity. O<sub>2</sub> Telefónica stands for connections, we stand up against division of society. We connect more people in the mobile sector than any other provider. Our customers, employees and partners come from many different backgrounds. We are proud of this. For us, diversity is part of our self-conception. That is why we participate in 'We stand for values'. A strong democracy is a prerequisite for a strong economy. Germany needs an effective EU in order to master the challenges ahead."



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**Markus Krebber, CEO of RWE AG:** "It's our chance to take a stand and stand up for our values. Democracy, freedom, cosmopolitanism, diversity, tolerance, and respect. Fundamental values that are crucial for coexistence – for us and for future generations. And I will, of course, be casting my vote and I hope that everyone will do the same. And thus ensure one thing above all: political stability. This political stability will also be decisive in ensuring that we can consistently pursue the challenging path towards an affordable, secure and climate-neutral energy supply. We at RWE are playing our part. With all of our energy."

**Michael Lewis, CEO of Uniper:** "At Uniper, we work together with European and global partners and create values across national borders. This applies in particular to the international exchange of energy and raw materials, without which no secure supply can be guaranteed. Exclusion, hatred and isolation jeopardise entrepreneurial freedom and prosperity in Europe. Diversity, openness and tolerance, on the other hand, are the basis for innovative ideas and economic success. I ask you and all Uniper employees who have the right to vote in the EU elections: Take part in the election on 9 June and vote for the EU you want to live in tomorrow!"

**Oliver Blume, CEO Volkswagen AG & Porsche AG:** "More than 670,000 people work in the Volkswagen Group. Our colleagues come from all regions of the world. Diversity is our strength. This applies equally to Volkswagen and Porsche. We are one big family and operate on the basis of strong values. We are committed to a culture of mutual respect and mutual appreciation. The Volkswagen Group and Porsche take a stand: both companies stand for our democratic and liberal fundamental values. For cohesion in our diverse society. We are actively committed to this."

**Siegfried Russwurm, President of the Federation of German Industries (BDI):** "An open, liberal society and the strength of a united Europe are key pillars of Germany's economic success and the prosperity of its citizens. Through dialogue in the workplace, we aim to raise awareness of the values on which our country's performance is based."

**Yasmin Fahimi, President of the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB):** "People from different backgrounds with very different talents or dreams have made this country strong. Europe has reconciled peoples and secured our prosperity. As trade unions, we work for good work, fair competition and secure jobs for all. So that we can continue to work on this, every vote that strengthens the democratic pro-European forces is important in the European elections. It is the responsibility of all of us for ourselves and for future generations."



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The initiative will continue its activities in the coming weeks to reach as many people as possible within member companies and across society at large.

Further information and perspectives from staff and executives can be found on the initiative's shared website: [www.wirstehenfuerwerte.de](http://www.wirstehenfuerwerte.de) and [www.westandforvalues.com](http://www.westandforvalues.com).

### **The following companies and organisations are part of the "We stand for values" alliance:**

- Allianz SE
- BASF SE
- Bayer AG
- Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie e.V.
- Beiersdorf AG
- Blacklane GmbH
- BMW AG
- Robert Bosch GmbH
- Daimler Truck AG
- Deutsche Bahn AG
- Deutsche Bank AG
- Deutsche Börse AG
- Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB)
- DHL Group
- Dussmann Group
- E.ON SE
- EnBW Energie Baden-Württemberg AG
- Ford Werke GmbH
- Forvia HELLA
- Henkel AG & Co. KGaA
- Mercedes-Benz Group AG
- Merck KGaA
- Metro AG
- Philip Morris GmbH
- RWE AG
- Schaeffler AG
- Siemens AG
- Siemens Energy AG
- O<sub>2</sub> Telefónica
- thyssenkrupp AG
- Uniper SE
- Volkswagen AG
- Vonovia SE



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