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Press Information

"Open to Diversity" flying the flag for Europe

- **Kassel calls for a liberal Europe**
- **VW's Kassel plant is new cooperation partner for the local Open to Diversity initiative**
- **Diversity promoters wanted for Kassel: Bids for project funding still possible until 30 June**

Kassel, 15 May 2019. For some time now, populist voices have been increasingly thrusting their way into the centre of our society. People are being repeatedly attacked and marginalised in many cities in Germany and Europe because of their commitment to democracy, diversity and equality. However, the Kassel city and region is doing something to counteract this: with the support of the Open to Diversity initiative founded in 2018, more than 5,000 Kassel citizens are now campaigning for tolerance and a willingness to engage in dialogue, and

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are demonstrating with city-wide door signs that they are "closed to exclusion".

This commitment to respectful coexistence at the local level provides a crucial basis for a strong and united Europe with freedom and diversity. Which is why voting in the forthcoming EU elections at the end of May is so important in order to preserve this Europe. This was something that the participants in the panel discussion at the Neue Denkerei event space in Kassel, which was organised by the Open to Diversity initiative yesterday evening, all agreed on. Under the motto "Flying the flag for a diverse Europe", the panel and the audience discussed the importance of diversity for society and economy in Europe.

"Europe is a community of values. The upcoming elections are about the future of our continent, where we can live in peace. Let us work together for an open Europe", said Kassel's mayor, Ilona Friedrich, opening the evening, and called on the citizens of Kassel to use their free and democratic right to vote in the upcoming European elections. At the same time, Friedrich praised the commitment of the people of Kassel to show civil courage and to work for an open urban society.

"As an agenda setter for diversity, we focus on a holistic approach of promoting diversity and inclusion as a success factor in the working environment," explained Denise Hottmann, executive board member of Charta der Vielfalt e.V., and called on all those attending the evening to take part in activities to mark the 7th German Diversity Day on 28 May 2019. The employer initiative has been committed to diversity in organisations since 2006. Hottmann also provided a glimpse behind the scenes of day-to-day work in diversity management. As head of the Department for Diversity and Inclusion Germany at the Boehringer

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Ingelheim pharmaceutical company, she has developed a new Diversity & Inclusion 2.0 action plan and is building diversity networks such as the Rainbow Network, which creates more visibility and acceptance for LGBTIQ issues through joint activities.

Mario Mehren, CEO of Wintershall Dea GmbH, explained during the subsequent discussion round why a Europe without diversity would be inconceivable: "Our business model is based on intercultural partnerships. At Wintershall Dea, people from more than 50 nations work together, which is why the topic of diversity is particularly important to us. We benefit from a diverse workforce and encourage and demand constant changes in perspective and mutual understanding. For us, this provides the basis for innovation and sustainable action," said Mehren.

Petra Walberg, co-initiator of Pulse of Europe in Kassel, Professor Hermann Heußner, member of Europa-Union, the German section of the Union of European Federalists, Søren Link, Managing Director of AKGG GmbH, and Dr Oliver Fromm, Chancellor of the University of Kassel, also took part in the discussion. The evening was hosted by HNA journalist Amira El Ahl.

Companies in Kassel sign Diversity Charter

With Wintershall Dea, Hübner GmbH & Co. KG and Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel (MHK), three Kassel enterprises used the evening to set another example for a diverse society. Together the three enterprises, which are already actively supporting the Open to Diversity initiative, have now also signed the Diversity Charter. With this voluntary engagement, they have committed themselves to creating a working environment free of prejudice. "A museum is inconceivable without diversity. Our institution houses

artefacts from all over the world. It is the diversity of our employees that enables us to gain these treasures and find new ones. By signing the Charter, we also want to set an example for our visitors: we welcome each and everyone, just as they are," said Dr Gisela Bungarten about the MHK's signing of the Charter.

"As a founding member of Open to Diversity, the signing of the Charter today was the logical consequence and evolution of our commitment. Companies need to acknowledge and be committed to diversity. Our employees should know that we are there for them and that we stand up for them," said Roland Kühnel, Managing Director of Hübner GmbH & Co. KG. More than 3,000 companies in Germany have already signed the Diversity Charter.

Volkswagen in Kassel supports Open to Diversity

At the event, Volkswagen Kassel was welcomed by the initiative as a new Open to Diversity cooperation partner. The Baunatal-based production plant for automotive transmissions, electric drives and automotive body parts has been closely rooted in the region for more than 60 years. By promising to be part of the initiative in the future, the company is taking its commitment to openness and tolerance to the next level. Together with other cooperation partners, further projects can therefore be funded that promote diversity and international understanding throughout the region.

Project budget for diversity promoters

The Open to Diversity initiative allocates a project budget to initiatives and projects that are particularly committed to open-mindedness, tolerance and respectfulness. Those interested can apply or be nominated by 30 June 2019. Important here is that they must promote

at least one of the six diversity dimensions – physical & mental ability, age, gender, ethnic origin & nationality, religion & worldview as well as sexual orientation & identity – in Kassel or the surrounding region. The "I want to become a diversity promoter" funding scheme totals 25,000 euros. The six successful bids will be announced this summer.

All further details on the "I want to become a diversity promoter" funding scheme and the initiative can be found at www.offenfuervielfalt.de. Applications can be sent by email to kontakt@offenfuervielfalt.de.

The "Open to Diversity – Closed to Exclusion" initiative was launched in autumn 2018 by five Kassel-based companies in order to set – shortly before the federal state elections in Hesse – an example for open-mindedness, respect and a willingness to engage in dialogue. The initiative is now supported by 16 strong partners from the region.

Note on sending door signs:

Members of the public as well as businesspeople and traders from Kassel and the surrounding area who would like to take part in the "Open to Diversity – Closed to Exclusion" initiative can request the red and blue "Open to Diversity – Closed to Exclusion" door signs free of charge. If you call (Tel.: 0561 203-1476) or order by email (offenfuervielfalt@gmail.com), the HNA will send you copies free of charge.

All information on "Open to Diversity" can be found at www.offenfuervielfalt.de.