



# Code of Conduct - Germanwatch e.V.

## Our statutory objectives and their realisation

Germanwatch is a non-profit Association that is committed to the 2030 Agenda adopted by the United Nations with its Sustainable Development Goals based on democracy and human rights.

The Association aims to strengthen awareness that only through mutual learning and shared responsibility between North and South, in the sense of a multilateral human rights-based order, can the vital problems be solved or at least effectively contained.

**The primary purpose of the association** according to its statutes is environmental and climate protection, including the preservation of secured ecological livelihood. In addition, it promotes the human rights-based implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. In this context, it pursues

- promoting the goals of the Paris Agreement and protecting the human rights of those affected by the impacts of climate change,
- the promotion of understanding between the peoples of the global North and South, whose people are equally entitled to sustainable development, the promotion of an international mind-set, tolerance in all fields of culture and the peaceful shaping of a common future worldwide including living together in solidarity in the spirit of equality and supporting people who - in particular for political reasons and on the basis of their gender identity or orientation, origin, religion, disability, illness or age - are affected or threatened by persecution or discrimination,
- the promotion of development cooperation, for example by promoting international regulations and structures that serve to fight poverty and promote a just coexistence, such as a human rights-based implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, for example in the sense of the right to food, including the avoidance of inappropriate food speculation.
- the promotion of education for sustainable development,
- the promotion of science and research, for example with regard to scientific investigations, the development and preparation of indices as well as the inclusion of affected groups and institutions, among others to identify relevant issues and to promote the implementation of the results,
- a public-interest-oriented, non-profit representation of consumers' interests towards politics, administration, economic organisations and providers, such as through advice, information, education, and commitment to sustainable consumption, as well as through legal measures for consumer protection.

In order to achieve its objectives, the Association shall cooperate with the media, educational institutes, and those institutions and bodies which support the tasks, purpose and objectives of the Association.

### **The purpose of the statutes shall be realised in particular by:**

- public statements and publications,
- multi-actor partnerships in Germany as well as with partners in the Global South and partner regions in Europe,
- supporting own scientific research, knowledge transfer and cooperation with scientific partners,
- organising and conducting public information campaigns and events,
- educational events in schools and in an extracurricular context, for example in the form of seminars, conferences and lectures,
- exhibitions,

- developing practice-oriented proposals for action and solutions to the global challenges in the areas of preservation of secured ecological livelihood, sustainability and human rights; presentation, (further) development and contribution to the implementation of the results in this regard by means of specialist workshops, discussion events, campaigns, dialogue processes with relevant actors, in particular decision-makers, as well as by issuing specialist publications and contributions to third-party publications and specialist journals,
- Implementation and support of relevant model lawsuits, complaints and comparable actions,
- disseminating information about the market development, assessment of sustainability and free advice to consumers and others,
- cooperation with domestic and foreign organisations (as long as they operate on a charitable basis) through financial and non-material support of programmes and interventions.

## **Other principles of conduct**

Where necessary for the implementation of these statutory goals, Germanwatch shall actively contribute to the debate on political framework conditions and strengthen the corresponding social debate. Therefore Germanwatch shall have a mediating function between politics and the public. The situation of the most disadvantaged people, especially in the Global South, is the starting point of our work. In our approaches to solutions, we shall also try to keep in mind the interests of the different sectors of society and milieus as well as gender equality. We shall constructively integrate these approaches to solutions into the achievement of our public good-oriented goals so that they support or at least do not jeopardise the implementation of fundamental and human rights and the protection of livelihoods. The realisation of our goals shall address, on the one hand, a wide range of actors and institutions in politics, the judiciary, the economy, the financial market and the public. Both this range and, on the other hand, the exchange within civil society require Germanwatch to be particularly sensitive and transparent in the realisation of their tasks.

Employees and others working on behalf of Germanwatch shall, in the exercise of their profession, respect and promote the principles of democracy and international law, as well as the values of the German Basic Law, the provisions of national legislation, in particular the principles of freedom of expression, the right to information, the independence of the media and the protection of personal rights.

We shall base our actions on human rights standards and principles as set out in the German Basic Law and international human rights conventions. We shall also constantly raise our own and each other's awareness of the possible unintended impacts of our actions on the ecological environment, the protection of livelihoods (such as climate protection and adaptation as well as biodiversity) and human rights.

Integrity, respect for the democratic order and its rules as well as respect for people with different opinions shall be the prerequisites when competing for the best ideas and concepts.

Against this background, Germanwatch has adopted the present Code of Conduct. We, the employees, the Executive Board and the Board of Directors of Germanwatch as well as other persons acting on behalf of Germanwatch, shall commit ourselves to adhere to the following principles in the exercise of this activity.

## **Party-political independence**

Germanwatch wants to communicate the organisation's central goals (protection of livelihoods, human rights, more global and national justice) in a way so that all democratic parties can support them from their respective traditions. To achieve this connectability, we shall draw on the great humanist, religious, agnostic or atheist democratic traditions - such as liberalism, democratic socialism, or conservatism.

Germanwatch shall not promote private or economic individual interests. The "political" action shall exclusively be limited to the promotion of the tax-privileged statutory objectives including the fundamental rights of the constitution reflected in the statutes as well as the human rights-based implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Any other statements made by representatives of Germanwatch that may, in the widest sense, be considered political are limited to socially appropriate positions, such as general election calls or the condemnation of inhuman agitation.

## **Economical use of funds and prevention of corruption**

We have the responsibility and legal obligation to use the funds we have been granted in an economical and efficient way to achieve our goals. This includes observing the four-eyes principle and developing descriptions for essential processes. In financially relevant processes, we ensure the separation of personnel functions appropriate to the size of the organisation.

We firmly reject any form of corruption, including bribery and venality, and shall not tolerate them under any circumstances.

## **Separating roles and avoiding conflicts of interest**

We shall ensure to avoid possible conflicts of interest that could arise due to the simultaneous representation of directly opposing interests.

In this sense, we shall take care that no conflict of interest arises between our activities for Germanwatch on the one hand and other political offices, mandates and functions on the other. If this risk exists, we shall immediately contact our respective manager.

## **No discrimination**

We shall commit ourselves to ensuring a working environment as non-discriminatory as possible, to not supporting whatever form of discrimination (unjustified disadvantage) and shall do our utmost to act in an inclusive and non-discriminatory manner. It is the responsibility of the Board of Directors and the Executive Board - with the support of the Diversity Manager(s) and the Works Council - to make organisational provisions which ensure that discriminatory behaviour does not take place, and in this sense also to promote a discrimination-sensitive cooperation. Personal complaints can be submitted to an accessible ombudsperson's office, which acts in cooperation with the Diversity Manager(s). Relevant processes are to be designed in the most non-discriminatory and barrier-free way as possible, including application procedures, websites, events and publications.

## **Common learning processes also against unconscious bias**

We want to establish joint learning processes to avoid unconscious and structural forms of discrimination, for example in the use of language and in the organisation of events. We want to support inclusive formats that highlight the opportunities and potential of an open, diverse society. In doing so, we try to dismantle prejudices and discrimination that are often transported unconsciously. We shall do this in a way that allows individual scope for trying out non-discriminatory language as well as the corresponding actions and the gathering of experiences in this regard. Non-violent communication practices can help in this process. In this joint learning process, we shall take care to avoid new exclusions and problems of understanding, also by changing the use of language. Our aim is to promote an open, appreciative discourse with each other.

## **Protection against harassment**

We shall ensure that we do not inflict on any person physical or psychological violence, ranging from harassment to abuse. This applies in particular to sexual harassment and violence.

## **Children's rights and child protection**

Children enjoy the special protection to which they are entitled, as stipulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Our actions shall be based on the Germanwatch Policy on Children's Rights and Child Protection<sup>1</sup>. In this policy, we commit ourselves to developing and implementing appropriate instruments, including clearly defined responsibilities and procedures in the areas of prevention, crisis management and monitoring, especially when we have contact with children.

## **Respect**

We treat each other and external contacts, especially those with different political views, with respect. We pursue our goals according to the motto "dialogue and cooperation where possible, objective confrontation where necessary".

## **Public interest representation, principle of truth and transparency**

Germanwatch is a knowledge-based organisation. We are committed to truthful communication to members, political institutions, the media and the public to the best of our knowledge and belief. We shall correct any errors in a timely manner.

We shall pay attention to transparency. For our representation of interests oriented towards the common good, this means:

- anyone who engages in advocacy on behalf of Germanwatch shall coordinate their activities in advance with their own manager with regard to the requirements to be met and the registration to be applied, if any.
- Germanwatch is registered with the Bundestag and the EU as a public interest lobby<sup>2</sup> and recognises the principles of the Code of Conduct of the German Lobby Register Act<sup>3</sup> and the Code of Conduct according to the European Transparency Register<sup>4</sup>.
- Anyone acting on behalf of Germanwatch at federal or EU level in the sense of directly influencing higher officials (in government sub-department heads or higher, members of the German Bundestag), and doing so proactively (i.e. not by invitation), shall behave accordingly and follow the relevant codes of conduct.
- The core requirements of the above codes include, in the case of direct influence, the disclosure of one's own identity, the concern and the information that the contact is made in the name of Germanwatch e.V. as an organisation registered in the respective register. It also applies that we shall not obtain information in an unfair manner or by exerting inadmissible pressure, for example on public officials.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.germanwatch.org/de/84792](https://www.germanwatch.org/de/84792)

<sup>2</sup> Registration numbers with the Bundestag: R001063. Identification number with the EU: 99203901869-52.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/991840/cebe30b6a57c06b978d3cd2ebe42c412/Verhaltenskodex-2024.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> see Annex I I in: Official Journal of the European Union L 207 of 11 June 2021, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=OJ:L:2021:207:FULL>

## **Data minimisation and commitment to discretion**

Access to information shall be based on the functional role of the respective person (principle of data minimisation). Confidentially obtained information that is not legally problematic or is not intended to clarify gross violations of the law or grossly and morally offensive behaviour shall only be passed on with the explicit consent of the respective informer. The protection of whistleblowers has a very high priority.

## **No damage to reputation**

As a matter of principle, we shall avoid activities that could damage the public image of Germanwatch when pursuing the statutory purposes.

## **Dealing with complaints**

In case of complaints, i.e. suspicion of possible violations of the Code of Conduct, we shall primarily address our respective manager. Those who are unable or do not want to do so shall approach (at least) one person from the following group of persons: Executive Board, Works Council, ombudsperson (in cases of harassment or discrimination), external data protection officer (for data protection issues).

If the parties involved are unable to resolve the grievance in the course of their chosen path of resolution, any party involved may contact the Executive Board and, if they wish, also the Leadership Team of the Board of Directors. It is then their task to mediate a settlement and make a final decision.

Complaints shall be conscientiously investigated and, if confirmed, lead to consequences that can range from simple conflict resolution talks and mediations as well as – then by the Executive Board and/or the Board of Directors - new regulations up to Warning letters or even harsher sanctions.

Adopted by the Germanwatch Board of Directors on 23 May 2025