

Press information



New companies on board: Business initiative for diversity in Kassel continues to grow

- More than 1,500 citizens already involved
- Participating companies actively promote diversity
- Sporting participation: German league handball club MT Melsungen

Melsungen

Kassel. Cosmopolitan and diverse – that’s how Kassel presents itself: For many years now, the city, its citizens and businesses have been committed in many fields to fostering an open society in which tolerance and diversity are practiced wholeheartedly. People from 160 countries call Kassel, with its 204,000 inhabitants, their home. In 2014, the city council formally and unanimously committed itself to the goal of a “**Kassel for all – a cosmopolitan Kassel.**” The resolution reads: “Great and diverse civil engagement and pinpointed integration measures strengthen the diversity that is lived in all generations in Kassel! We will preserve this quality of life. We are ready to argue and fight for that.”

“We stand for a city in which everyone can lead their life without restricting the freedom of others. To ensure that a diverse and open Kassel becomes and remains a reality, we all need to work to that end – every day. To that end, we reach out to each other without qualms and fears, speak with and listen to one another, and seek solutions together,” runs the declaration.

That is also the precise objective of the initiative “**Open to Diversity**”, jointly launched by several Kassel companies. With considerable

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success: The initiators Wintershall, Hübner GmbH, K+S, the Schaltbau Bode Group and Kasseler Sparkasse have now been joined by further companies. Gesundheit Nordhessen Holding GmbH, the transport company Kasseler Verkehrsgesellschaft (KVG) and the museum institute Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel (MHK) have now thrown their support behind the initiative. Further additions are the young leaders and entrepreneurs of Wirtschaftsjunioren Kassel e.V., the Hessische/Niedersächsische Allgemeine (HNA) daily newspaper and, as the most recent partner, MT Melsungen.

“The events of the past months – attacks on people who have become targets because of their origin, religion or commitment to democracy and diversity – are something we cannot tolerate in any shape or form,” reads an initial press release on the initiative. “We as companies place our **trust in the free democratic order governed by the rule of law**. We are committed to values such as respect, tolerance and the willingness to engage in dialogue. That is precisely what we express with our campaign and the slogan Open to Diversity – Closed to Exclusion!” state the companies.

The core idea of the initiative is to distribute a door sign, like those everyone is familiar with from retail stores, to show their opening and closing times. The front of the reversible sign bears the main message “Open to Diversity”, while its rear conversely reads in red font: “Closed to Exclusion”. Almost 1,500 orders for the sign have been received by mail or phone so far. Distribution is already underway.

New: Poster campaigns in the city and in the trams

This measure will be now flanked by posters from the joint initiative put up at central locations in Kassel. They will also be displayed in KVG trams until the end of the year. And: Institutions such as schools and universities will be sent signs from the initiative. Anyone can post

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photos of the signs “in use” in social media under **#offenfuervielfalt**. The Kassel initiative now also has a homepage: All interested parties can network at www.offenfuervielfalt.de.

The **German league handball club MT Melsungen** will ensure additional visibility in future, now that it’s actively supporting the initiative to boost its own sporting values. “Sport has always stood for openness, tolerance and integration. That’s already evident in the fundamental Olympic idea, that people from all over the world meet to participate in fair and peaceful competition, and thus in turn inspire an international audience. The essence of that also applies to our German league team, made up of players from different nationalities,” as Axel Geerken, Manager of the German league handball team MT Melsungen, explains. “The spectators in the stands also reflect this diversity. Living cosmopolitanism is a matter of course for us, and we are wholeheartedly committed to it.”

The companies involved themselves practice diversity:

At **Gesundheit Nordhessen (GNH)**, which has employees from 69 nations, diversity is deeply ingrained in its everyday activities. GNH regards that diversity as a valuable resource and enrichment in working relationships. Intercultural competence and language skills are also vital in everyday work at the clinic in caring for the numerous patients with foreign roots and different religions and world views. “This diversity is part of Gesundheit Nordhessen’s corporate culture,” says HR Director Birgit Dilchert.

Employees from more than 30 nations worldwide also work at **HÜBNER**. “It is our firm conviction that our success as a company has a lot to do with our values and how we work together. We work with a spirit of mutual respect, tolerance and openness. It is immaterial what an individual’s nationality, religion or gender is,” says Nicholas Neu, Head

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of Marketing & PR at HÜBNER GmbH. And those are not just empty words, as evidenced by the fact that the length of service of employees is above-average – some have even been with the company for more than 40 years.

K+S supports a holistic approach to diversity and inclusion. “The different backgrounds, experience, and the knowledge and creativity of our employees make us more successful. We foster diversity among our global workforce and a working climate in which diversity is leveraged optimally to enable every individual and the company to be successful,” says company spokesman Michael Wudonig. With its many measures to recruit and retain talents and develop its organization, the K+S Group practices and promotes workforce diversity and an inclusive working environment at its Kassel location, in Germany and worldwide.

“We believe diversity makes us strong,” says Ingo Buchholz, Chief Executive Officer of **Kasseler Sparkasse**. “Diversity is a hallmark of our workforce and corporate culture and keeps on enriching our interaction and work day in, day out. Employees of Kasseler Sparkasse have a wide range of different nationalities, just like our customers. That’s why being open to diversity comes naturally to us at Kasseler Sparkasse.”

Museumslandschaft Hessen Kassel (MHK) regards openness and tolerance as part of its mission. “MHK is a state-run institute in Hesse that aims to preserve and continue the around 600-year legacy of the Landgraves and Electors with their passion for collecting. And our visitors, who come from all over the world to visit our museums, palaces and parks, are just as diverse as the many art and cultural treasures in our collections,” says Professor Martin Eberle, Director of the MHK. “We pursue our mission to promote cultural education by conveying insights into historical interconnections, including to refugees, for example.

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Refugees can use their ID card to obtain free admission and tours at all our establishments.”

Diversity is part and parcel of **Wintershall**: “We regard diversity as an enrichment and it’s our conviction that employees are more motivated in their work and identify more strongly with the company if their individual qualities are perceived and respected. We can and aim to benefit from the different perspectives our employees contribute from their various backgrounds,” states Wintershall’s spokesman Michael Sasse. The international oil and gas producer has employees from more than 50 nations.

Diversity at Wintershall begins at the company’s two daycare centers – WiKi and KiWi – where children aged 3 months and above and from a wide range of different nationalities are looked after in German and English. Internationality is also practiced at the Swiss International School in Kassel, which is funded by Wintershall. Wintershall also offers ten scholarships to it for children from the region.

The two most recent diversity initiatives at Wintershall are the company network for women (Wintershall Women’s Network), which is committed to transparency and greater equality of opportunity, and the initiative to develop the corporate culture further (CorporateCulture@Wintershall). Employees in both projects organize their own work, which is aimed at establishing an open, flexible and tolerant corporate culture with new measures and formats.

Information on distribution of the door signs:

Citizens and businesspeople from Kassel wishing to join in the initiative can request door signs free of charge. Orders can be placed by phone (+49 561 203-1476) or e-mail to offenfuervielfalt@gmail.com and the

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newspaper Hessische/Niedersächsische Allgemeine (HNA) will continue to send out copies for free.

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