

# Shared values for our everyday activities and planning

Code of Conduct of the German National Library

Stand: 1. August 2025

The “Code of Conduct” of the German National Library (DNB) is based on our identity and our set of values set out in the Strategic Compass 2035.

This means that the “Code of Conduct” is explicitly not a legal document. General legal conditions are determined in particular in the Basic Law, the Law Regarding the German National Library (DNBG), in civil service, labour and budget law, as well as in our Rules of Procedure and our internal rules.

## 1. Preamble

The DNB is Germany’s central archival library and it collects, catalogues, documents, shares and preserves the national cultural heritage of literature, science and music. Together with the German Museum of Books and Writing, the German Exile Archive 1933–1945 and the German Music Archive, the DNB is therefore a library as well as an archive and a museum. Its collections, services and offerings can be accessed by anyone interested.

We are therefore dedicated to promoting freedom of information and opinion and central democratic values through our activities. We stand for variety, inclusion and diversity and respect the different experiences, needs and backgrounds of our users and visitors. Our services encourage active participation. We do not give space to anti-Semitism, racism, hate or agitation.

Our staff members are encouraged to act accordingly and breathe life into our values.

## 2. Identity and values: Who we are and what sets us apart?

Our shared values form the basis of our everyday activities and plans.

We stand for:

### Freedom of information and opinion

We make our collections available to people from around the world, to enable them to transparently seek information from different sources. This can encourage critical thinking and spark inspiration.

### Variety and diversity

We respect our users’ wide range of experiences, needs and backgrounds. Our offerings are designed to reach as many people as possible and to allow for active participation. We think of our users as active contributors who are working in and with our infrastructure as collaborators and explorers.

### Sustainability

In consideration of our task to permanently preserve the cultural heritage and to make it accessible, we are committed to environmental, economic, cultural and social sustainable action which we consider our contribution to a future characterised by accountability.

### Responsibility and expertise

We are a learning organisation and thrive on our staff members’ expertise and dedication. At the same time we seek to learn from our users with their knowledge, skills and creativity.

In our role as active cultural memory, we accept responsibility for preserving the cultural heritage and making it accessible, aiming to strengthen the central values of our democracy

### 3. Our concept of law and justice: In which framework do we operate?

The DNB is part of the federal administration and therefore a public service. This means that we are under a special obligation to respect justice and the law, and that we as staff members act within the law and in compliance with regulations. We refrain, in particular, from any punishable statements or action such as defamation, libel, slander, false allegations, bribery and corruption, hate speech, treason, or imperilment of the constitutional democracy.

We ensure that any misconduct and breaches are punished in line with the relevant laws (including service and labour law), regardless of the seniority and position of the person acting. To this end, we are creating a culture of error tolerance and a climate where everyone is able to communicate without fear, to make sure that any severe misconduct and breaches of applicable laws can be brought to attention.

### 4. Internal interaction: How we treat each other?

We treat each other fairly and open-mindedly, and our collaboration is characterised by tolerance, respect and appreciation.

We attach great importance to the diversity of our workforce. The way in which we treat each other is not affected by anyone's background and ethnicity, their religion or world views, their sex or gender identity, their age, social status or any disability. This is reflected in our approach to recruiting and staff development activities.

We work together to counteract any discriminatory behaviour and language. We seek to establish a working atmosphere that allows for errors and where we can learn from them. We encourage constructive feedback and accountability.

Our corresponding expectations and guiding principles that apply to all staff members (managers and employees alike) are stipulated and communicated in our binding management principles.

### 5. External interaction: How we engage with third parties?

Our work has external impact across various areas: we have numerous business relationships, and our work has an influence on society due to our involvement in cultural and political education. Our services are available to everyone and we freely share our knowledge and metadata, as well as cooperating with various institutions and individuals.

We think of ourselves as an open-minded institution whose network runs in many directions.

In our business relations we make sure that we are not affected by any conflicts of interest, and that there is no room for corruption or the granting of any advantages. We are committed to fair

competition and conduct transparent and lawful tender procedures for goods and services procurement in connection with operating our institution.

We are particularly dedicated to the protection of intellectual property. We comply with the applicable laws and observe legal boundaries when adding any media to our collection, as well as with regard to the use of such items. In line with this approach, we also urge our users to respect copyrights.

Promoting democracy and counteracting discrimination and exclusion are among our particular goals that we pursue in providing our services. In this context we also make sure to communicate respectfully and appreciatively at all times. We observe ethical communication principles such as honesty, fairness and transparency, especially in digital formats, aiming to build and strengthen trust in any statements made by the German National Library.

## 6. Handling information, data and artificial intelligence: Our conduct in these sensitive fields.

We handle a wide range of information and data as part of our everyday working life. This is why we treat such information with the required diligence and limit any processing thereof to what is strictly necessary. By doing so, we ensure a high level of confidentiality concerning business and trade secrets as well as personal data of our staff members, users and copyright holders alike. We only disclose such data and information to the respective authorised groups.

We are aware of possible risks in connection with a careless use of our IT systems and attacks from outside. We therefore act prudently and in line with the information security guidelines.

Artificial intelligence is a tool that we use to optimise and facilitate our work (e.g. through automated cataloguing), as well as for offering customer-oriented services to our users and visitors (e.g. through chatbots). Artificial intelligence does not replace the intellectual and content-related work of human beings. Based on this approach, we use artificial intelligence tools with care and within the limits of what is ethically and legally acceptable.

## 7. Promoting sustainability: How we contribute to an environmental, economic and social sustainable present and future

We think of sustainability as an attitude:

### Environmental

We steadily review and improve our energy supply and resource consumption to ensure a considerate use of natural resources and protect global ecosystems.

### Economic

Sustainable management is all about the reconciliation of performance of our tasks and protection of the environment, resulting in low-resource economic activity for which regenerative energy is used wherever possible.

### Social

Creating a stable society that allows all members to participate and guarantees employment and human rights for generations to come means working together to meet social needs and overcome challenges.

More specifically this means that:

The German National Library accepts responsibility for protecting and preserving the national cultural heritage and takes a wide range of measures to ensure that sustainability goes beyond a theoretical concept at the DNB.

The collection of Germany's cultural heritage from the fields of social journalism, literature, academics and music that has been built up since 1912, is accessible to all interested individuals in our society, now and in the future, without respect of person. This allows us to not only preserve the knowledge but to also create opportunities for education and for knowledge to be sustainably passed on from generation to generation.

We address issues related to remembrance culture with the collections of the German Museum of Books and Writing and the German Exile Archive 1933–1945, thus promoting historical awareness and sensitivity with regard to comparable present-day developments.

We make sure that eco-friendliness and energy efficiency are considered in any construction and refurbishment measures. This includes the use of sustainable materials, energy-efficient lighting and air conditioning systems, the use of renewable energy (green electricity) and the implementation of smart building management systems.

We also consider environmental, social and economic sustainability aspects in our procurement activities for supplies and services. These criteria can be safeguarded in the tender procedures, for example by including requirements concerning environmental certification, minimum wages, tariff agreements, and occupational health and safety aspects.

In our everyday work we seek to protect the environment, for example, by avoiding waste and reducing paper consumption by digitising business processes. We pursue a low-resource approach in this sense.

In the area of mobility, we encourage our staff members to use public transportation, for example by offering a subsidised job ticket, and we avoid business travel by using new communication and information formats.

We promote an inclusive, cooperative and diverse working environment and think of ourselves as an attractive and sustainable employer that facilitates internally and externally meaningful work.

## 8. Implementation of the Code of Conduct

We have created this Code of Conduct as a guideline that helps us to ensure that our everyday activities and interaction are based on trustworthiness, tolerance, ethical behaviour and compliance.

Each of us should never cease to ask themselves the following questions:

- ✓ Have I observed the relevant legal regulations?
- ✓ Did I seek comprehensive factual information and consult the parties involved before making a decision or statement?
- ✓ Did I act impartially when making decisions or statements?
- ✓ Did I act in the interest of the German National Library?
- ✓ Did I consider public perception? Are my actions acceptable if scrutinised by third parties?
- ✓ Am I acting with a clear conscience?

## 9. Contact partners:

Please contact your supervisor or the contact partners listed below if you have any questions. The following contact partners are available to answer your questions related to their respective areas of expertise and responsibility

- | Central Domain Administration: [compliance@dnb.de](mailto:compliance@dnb.de)
- | Complaints body pursuant to AGG (Legal Counselling): [Beschwerdestelle-Z@dnb.de](mailto:Beschwerdestelle-Z@dnb.de)
- | Contact point for whistleblowers: Link for anonymous communication: [Hinweisgeberschutz - Z | Verwaltung - DNB-Intranet \(ddb.de\)](#)
- | Equal Opportunities Officer: [Gleiba@dnb.de](mailto:Gleiba@dnb.de)
- | Staff representatives:
  - at the Leipzig site: [Personalrat-L@dnb.de](mailto:Personalrat-L@dnb.de)
  - at the Frankfurt site: [Personalrat-F@dnb.de](mailto:Personalrat-F@dnb.de)
  - for matters concerning all sites: [Gesamtpersonalrat@dnb.de](mailto:Gesamtpersonalrat@dnb.de)
- | Local Disabled-Employee Officer:
  - at the Leipzig site: [info.sbv-l@dnb.de](mailto:info.sbv-l@dnb.de)
  - at the Frankfurt site: [info.sbv-f@dnb.de](mailto:info.sbv-f@dnb.de)
  - General Disabled-Employee Officer: [gsvb@dnb.de](mailto:gsvb@dnb.de)
- | Data Protection Officer: [datenschutzbeauftragter@dnb.de](mailto:datenschutzbeauftragter@dnb.de)
- | IT Security Officer: [it-sibe@dnb.de](mailto:it-sibe@dnb.de)

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