



FULL SPEED AHEAD: PROGRESS IN 2022+

A Decade for a Just Transformation

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The 2021 federal election heralded a political turning point for Germany. Not only has it sealed the end of the Merkel era, but for the third time in Germany's post-war history – the first being in 1969 and the second in 1998 – it has also paved the way for a fresh start of a new era of coalition politics. The election results of 26 September 2021 carried an unmistakable message: the voters showed they did not want just “more of the same”. For them, it is time for change. German citizens have strengthened those political forces associated with progress, even if they have different interpretations of what that might look like. A coalition of the progressive centre – led by the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Greens and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) – is now within reach. A three-party coalition – known as the “traffic light” government because of its three party colors being red, yellow, and green – is in a position to launch bold and forward-looking policies for the 2020s. But what ingredients are needed for a politics of progressive government in 2022 and beyond that dares to break new ground?

*A paper from Das Progressive Zentrum.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- *The new start is almost upon us. Most people in Germany are far ahead of politicians when it comes to a sense of the urgency needed to face up to the major challenges that stand before us. This is yet another reason why speed is of the essence: the new federal government must demonstrate its ability to act, while ensuring that policies are implemented without delay.*
- *A historic opportunity for the approaching decade of change to forge an alliance between highly heterogeneous societal groups is within reach. The combination of social, liberal and green policies is currently meeting with broad approval within German society.*
- *At the same time, real progress cannot be achieved in the long term through strategies of technocratic governance, but must be reached instead by convincing society as a whole – through content and communication – of the new government’s promise for the future.*
- *In this sense, there are two goals deeply rooted in the programmes of the “traffic light” parties: firstly, liberal social policies together with a politics of social mobility that promotes the happiness of present and future generations. And, secondly, the urgent reorganisation of our economy in line with the goals of achieving climate justice and of creating jobs that are good and secure, while making sure that the challenges of global competition continue to be met. It is in this transformation including all parts of society that the contribution to progress will lie.*
- *If the new “traffic light” government can succeed in combining the necessary progress in innovation, justice and climate protection with a high degree of rapidity, then it might not only be re-elected for further legislative periods, strengthening the Germans’ trust in democracy in the process, but might also become – as a coalition oriented towards the international arena and acting as a beacon for other European countries – a model for the pursuit of a successful politics of progress.*

The Federal Republic of Germany has an established history of coalition governments. Since its founding in 1949, the country has always been governed by coalitions – with only one notable exception in 1960/61, when Chancellor Adenauer and his party CDU/CSU governed as a majority. Otherwise, German governments have always been a two-party government. These coalitions were led by the conservative CDU/CSU in coalition with either the liberal FDP or the social democratic SPD, or, by the social democratic SPD in coalition with either the liberal FDP or Alliance 90/The Greens.

Most recently, Angela Merkel CDU led the country from 2005-2009 and 2013-2021 together with the SPD; and from 2009-2013 with the FDP. The Alliance 90/Greens most prominent coalition experience came under Chancellor Gerhard Schröder from 1998-2005. Following the outcome of the 2021 election, the political circumstances changed and required new forms of political collaboration. For the first time ever, three competing parties will form a governing coalition. This historic event was negotiated by the SPD, the Alliance 90/Greens and the FDP in just over two months. The coalition treaty is entitled „Daring more progress. Alliance for freedom, justice and sustainability“. The new government is expected to take office in December 2021 – The Federal Republic of Germany’s tradition of coalition-based government continues.

GERMANY 2021: A LOST DECADE

In the past 16 years under Chancellor Angela Merkel, Germany has failed to live up to its potential. Pathbreaking decisions were almost always made reactively in response to crisis situations. The European stabilisation policies adopted in the wake of the financial crisis, the nuclear phase-out, the humane policy towards refugees in 2015/2016, the agreement on the European Reconstruction Fund in 2020 – none of these decisions resulted from a proactive politics, even though the pressing nature of the issues had long been foreseeable.

This approach has meant that major challenges in many crucial fields of the future are still awaiting solutions. A political reset did not take place following the global financial crisis of 2008/09, partly because the progressive parties were unable to win the confidence of a sufficient number of voters. Today, Germany is playing far below its potential in too many areas – for example, where it concerns the green transition, the social permeability of society, the ability of the administrative authorities to act, and the digitalisation of society and economy.¹ Societal

developments – such as declining trust in democratic institutions or decreasing social cohesion – also point to an overwhelming need for action.² Even with regard to the self-imposed goal of a “climate-neutral Germany” or the strategic positioning in the systemic competition with China and other countries³, there is a glaring discrepancy between aspiration and reality. The quality of life in Germany is comparatively high, but obvious social grievances and unused economic potential are not being tackled aggressively enough. That needs to change.

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1 See European Commission, The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2021, retrievable at: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/desi>.

2 See OECD, How's Life? 2015: Measuring Well-being, Paris 2015, retrievable at: <https://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/germany/>.

3 In the Climate Change Performance Index, Germany now comes in at 19th place, that is, below the EU average, see Jan Burck / Thea Uhlich / Christopf Bals / Niklas Höhne / Leonardo Nascimento, Climate Change Performance Index: Results 2022. Monitoring Climate Mitigation Efforts of 60 Countries plus the EU – covering 92% of the Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Germanwatch, NewClimate Institute & Climate Action Network, 2021, retrievable at: https://ccpi.org/wp-content/uploads/CCPI-2022-Results_2021-11-10_A4.pdf

GERMANY 2022+: FEATURES OF A PROGRESSIVE CENTRE COALITION

A politics of progressive renewal must shift into the mode of proactive shaping; it must become a driver of progress. This new beginning has its demands: a coalition of renewal must be bold, inclusive and European. And it must accelerate the policy-making process without steamrollering people with proposals for reform.

1. SPEED: A new government will only be successful if it manages to inject more speed into the process of change. If we want to achieve social progress and climate neutrality, our democracy must in many respects get a move on. A key to reaching this goal is the drastic shortening of planning and approval procedures. For example, a more rapid pace is needed in the expansion of infrastructure – for power lines and wind turbines, for broadband and mobile communication facilities, for railways and hydrogen pipelines. We need more speed in the digitalisation of the German administrative authorities, of the education and healthcare system, and in housing construction. Only if substantial progress can be made on these issues within the new legislative period will this government live up to its own expectations and those of the people of Germany.

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2. BROAD AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETAL ALLIANCES: The parties in a social-green-liberal coalition have received their political mandate from very different groups within society. The majority of blue-collar workers, the unemployed, white-collar workers and older people voted for the SPD, which also won the largest number of direct mandates – in urban and rural areas and in eastern and western Germany. Many self-employed people and entrepreneurs voted for the FDP, many city dwellers and civil servants for the Greens – and the younger generation too came out strongly for the Greens and the FDP.⁴ At the same time, the coalition must see itself as a forger of alliances among a broad church of societal groups that encompasses those committed to civil society (from Fridays for Future to Civic Tech), social players concerned with social balance (trade unions, social associations and the like), as well as the business community (SMEs, start-ups and DAX companies).

3. COURAGE FOR CHANGE: It must be clear to all those carrying responsibility that the challenges of today are at least as great as those of the late 1990s. Back then, Germany was stuck in an economic and social trough as the “sick man of Europe”. It is certainly true that today we are living in relative economic and political stability – but only at first glance. Just as in the 1990s, fundamental, structural changes are necessary – and these could become rather “uncomfortable” every now and again. People in Germany

4 See Tagesschau, Bundestagswahl 2021: Wen wählten Angestellte und Arbeiter? [2021 Federal Election: Who did white- and blue-collar workers vote for?], 27 September 2021, retrievable at: <https://www.tagesschau.de/wahl/archiv/2021-09-26-BT-DE/umfrage-job.shtml> (in German)

are fully aware that constant change is a prerequisite for maintaining prosperity, security and stability.⁵ Progressive politicians can expect citizens to put up with their demands so long as the federal government clearly communicates the goals associated with them, implements the necessary measures in dialogue with the voters, and proactively balances out the blows caused by the processes of change by means of measures aimed at improving social security.

- 4. EUROPEAN:** From climate policy to migration – the major tasks can only be solved on a pan-European basis and in international alliances. Europe and the world are looking to Germany. This, taken together with our political and economic strength, bestows a special responsibility upon us. That is why the self-absorption of a medium-sized power at the heart of Europe needs to be thoroughly scrutinised as a subject in its own right.

The new government can do so much more than just be a mediator in Europe. It should be both driver and agent of change. An active mediating role with clear positioning when it comes to violations of the rule of law and proposals for comprehensive reform of the architecture of the European Union is also conceivable. The goal is a new foreign-policy course based on a clear sense of values that refrains from dominant behaviour and hegemonic posturing.

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COMPONENTS FOR A SOCIAL-GREEN-LIBERAL UNITY NARRATIVE

No single party can claim exclusive rights to the vision of renewal. SPD, Greens and FDP are all progressive parties driven by the conviction that they can change and improve the world. All of them emerged from emancipatory movements, although their historical contexts, formative milieus, patterns of development and political goals still differ from one another to this day.

The founding mothers and fathers of social democracy in the 19th century, for instance, toiled under adverse conditions – and joined together in the belief that they could climb the ladder of social progress both individually and collectively. Since then, they have been fighting for

the rights and social protection of workers, for the emancipation of women, and for equal and beneficial opportunities in education and life for as many people as possible. The roots of the Greens lie in the environmental and anti-nuclear movements, in the women’s movement and the peace movement. In addition, both the SPD and the Greens share common roots in the environmental, civil rights and freedom movements of eastern Germany. Their joint ultimate goal is the democratic and sustainable shaping of a “crisis-proof society”, as the Greens’ basic programme puts it. The German liberals emerged in the first half of the 19th century as a movement for freedom and progress. In the spirit of

⁵ See See Yasemin El-Menouar / Kai Unzicker, Klimawandel, Vielfalt, Gerechtigkeit: Wie Werthaltungen unsere Einstellungen zu gesellschaftlichen Zukunftsfragen bestimmen [Climate Change, Diversity, Justice: How Values Determine Our Attitudes Toward Societal Issues of the Future], Bertelsmann Stiftung, Gütersloh 2021, retrievable at: <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/publications/publication/did/klimawandel-vielfalt-gerechtigkeit>. (in German)

the Enlightenment, they fought from their earliest days for national unity, constitutionalism, democratic reform, and equal civil rights. Since the end of the 1960s, at the latest, the FDP has seen itself as a party of reform that aims to enable social advancement for broad sections of the population through more innovation in the economy, state and society. As was the case in the social-liberal coalition from 1969 to 1982 under the chancellorships of Willy Brandt and Helmut Schmidt, the current constellation offers the FDP a great opportunity to present itself as a force for renewal.

Despite all programmatic differences, the orientation towards progress in its various facets is a unifying feature for all three parties in the coalition. The central question that the progressive coalitionists now need to answer is what their specific narrative is going to be. For the coalition urgently needs a narrative that connects the respective party milieus with one another, while being capable of captivating society and gaining within it a majority in favour of its goals, so that it can justify, endow with meaning and legitimise the changes that are on their way. Setting off – but where do we go and how do we get there? Asking about the larger picture, about concrete goals, but also about credible ways of realising those defined aims is of cardinal importance.

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In order for the cooperation of the three parties to succeed, the coalition partners should first openly discuss their respective ideas about progressive politics and come to grasp them as complementary. Fundamentally – and this is their greatest common denominator – they are united by the idea of a liberal and enabling politics that is dynamic and oriented towards both renewal and the future. In view of the challenges lying ahead, a pillarised government of parties focussing on a strictly segmented division of labour would not only be far too little; it would also amount to a careless squandering of the – perhaps unique – opportunity to break through to a society that really pits itself against the major green, social, digital and economic challenges and makes our country fit for the future by means of a transformation that includes all parts of society.

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The guiding formula for this social-green-liberal renewal can be a contemporary interpretation of the concept of freedom as a central component of a modern liberalism, that is, a regulative or “embedding” liberalism as proposed, for example, by the sociologist Andreas Reckwitz⁶ and based on the empowerment approach of Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen. According to this theory, a liberal society is strong when it provides strong infrastructural, material and legal frameworks that actually enable people to lead self-determined lives. It is not least a question

6 See Andreas Reckwitz, *Das Ende der Illusionen: Politik, Ökonomie und Kultur in der Spätmoderne* [The End of Illusions: Politics, Economy and Culture in the Late Modern Age], Berlin 2019, p. 239–304. (in German)

of re-conceiving our market economy, which can gain new strength precisely from these fair and socio-ecological rules.

Obviously, the notions of freedom and progress held by the “traffic light” parties differ from each other – in part significantly. While it is true that all three parties are fundamentally committed to their responsibilities for ensuring the freedom of future generations, it has to be said that some emphasise economic and fiscal freedoms and, especially on the climate front, rely more on economic-technological solutions arising from the market and not from the state, while others emphasise the socio-ecological dimension of sustainable development and address in a more proactive way the conceptions of freedom held by those who will form part of the generations of the future. For the latter, progress can also mean that the state imposes restrictions in the here and now – that is, reduces freedom in the present to increase freedom in the future. How can this “freedom in the future” be guaranteed? To this end, the “traffic light” parties must come to a common understanding.

One thing is certain: the common foundation of the three coalition partners is that they refuse merely to accept as given the deficits of the present. Their perspective does not lie in the pre-

servation of an idealised past, but in the creation of a *new future*. A future that enables as many people as possible to lead self-determined lives and to fulfil their true potentials. Although the three parties come from political movements with different focal points, deductive reasoning and patterns of argumentation, they strongly agree on the same fundamental political goals, namely, more real freedom and “chances in life” (Ralf Dahrendorf), less inequality and exclusion, more participatory rights and participatory democracy and less discrimination, greater effort on the climate issue, a state capable of acting decisively and fewer obstacles to economic action. Ultimately, this means that “positive and negative freedom” (Isaiah Berlin) – that is, the positive freedom “to do” something (for instance, become involved in politics) and the negative freedom “from” something (for instance, paternalism) – are not played off against each other, but brought into a new balance.

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FIELDS OF ACTION FOR AN AGENDA OF REFORM: THE THREE I’S

The “traffic light” parties will have to formulate common political goals on the basis of a new common self-image and embed them in a coherent narrative. To this end, we regard a transformation that includes all parts of society as an appropriate objective. Following the ideas of Wolfgang Schroeder, we propose to place the concepts of “innovation”, “investment” and “integration” – in short, the three I’s – at the heart of this endeavour.

INNOVATION

The new government must be a government of innovation that promotes technical innovations, leads by example and reforms the state itself – flanked by the expertise of universities and research institutions as well as by small and medium-sized enterprises, large companies, start-ups, social entrepreneurs, and the public administration. Innovation must also extend to non-technical, social fields. The administrative

authorities and the judiciary must become faster, more efficient and more convincing, more service-friendly, closer to the citizens, more far-sighted. The “modern state” then becomes in itself the subject of governmental work. In this way, the long-standing debate between “more” and “less” state can be resolved – it will then first and foremost be a question of the better, the faster, the provident and the partner-like state.

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Democracy and climate crisis: innovative instruments for three areas of tension

There are at least three areas of tension between our democracy and the climate crisis. Constructive instruments must be developed to deal with them:

Speed: *While democracy per se is slow in bringing about major changes, the climate crisis is moving fast and generating massive pressure for action. It seems to make sense to save time in administrative planning procedures, but not in societal discussions about the socially acceptable form that future climate policy should take. Important leverage: administrative culture and digitalisation.*

Geography: *While democratic processes are mostly organised nationally, the climate crisis is a global phenomenon. Ideas such as an international climate club (of the willing) make sense, as do proposals to support so-called developing countries on the path to climate neutrality. A two-speed Europe would set the framework for binding treaties to be concluded.*

Generations: *Democracies tend to focus on the needs of living or – to be more precise – voting adults. However, the climate crisis will primarily affect the younger and future generations. Voting rights from the age of 16, an advisory council for future-related matters or ombudspersons for future generations could help give young people a stronger voice.*

The German economy has long recognised that its future lies in climate-neutral products, services and production processes. Achieving the necessary transformation to a climate-compatible economy within only about two decades is a gigantic challenge. At the same time, many workers are uncertain about what this new industrial revolution will entail for their jobs and working conditions. The central task of the new government must therefore be to form a broad alliance between working people and businesses

– one that concerns itself with combining innovation, ecology and attractive jobs.

In the context of economic reforms, the tension between data protection and data security will need to be discussed too: people in Germany have traditionally held especially critical views on how their personal data is stored and used. But in public administration, in health care, and in the digital economy as a whole, our data protection policies have repeatedly proven to be an

obstacle. And this in a world where data has become one of the key economic drivers of growth. Not until now, however, in Germany.

INVESTMENT

Policies of innovation and renewal are only possible with massive investments: on the one hand, in the infrastructure that delivers the fundamental services that form the “basis of quality of life for all” (Andreas Reckwitz); on the other hand, in an infrastructure for climate-neutral and environmentally sound economic activity. These investments make sure that the protection of our natural resources is taken into account and, at the same time, the basis for maintaining sustainable economic prosperity is created. Such far-sighted investments are far less costly than having to repair the consequences of social exclusion or even of reaching ecological limits. Access for everyone to key public goods and

services can only be achieved by strengthening and renewing public institutions. Public institutions consist not only of the core administrative authorities, but also of spaces where people use these public goods and services: day-care centres, schools and universities, public parks and public transport, youth centres and cultural centres, hospitals and care facilities, district centres and job centres.

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Levelling up the living conditions in structurally underdeveloped areas: money, agenda-setting power and gaining a say

In these times when ecological survivability is at stake, an important challenge for the new coalition will be to address regional imbalances. About one in six Germans lives in structurally underdeveloped regions where the winds of change do not always blow in the direction of progress. Here, people want a policy of regional levelling up that strengthens local infrastructure and improves the prospects for young and old sections of the population alike. We need to turn the people living in these affected regions into the agents of change, particularly by investing in the local economy. In this regard, it is crucial to increase the financial leeway of the municipalities (for instance, by reforming tax splitting, introducing bonus systems with social and economic indicators, or taking over the old debts of structurally weak regions). This also includes giving local citizens on the ground more influence and a greater say (agenda-setting power and a louder voice), for example by granting them more direct influence in the form of committees that have the right to make proposals and which represent broad sections of regional society (for instance, more influence in shaping the legislation on structural development).⁷ In addition, people in the eastern German states with their extensive experiences in transformation processes must be more comprehensively represented and must become more visible.

⁷ See Paulina Fröhlich/Tom Mannewitz/Florian Ranft, Disregarded: structurally weak but rich in experience, Regional perspectives and their significance for the Great Transformation, Das Progressive Zentrum & Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Berlin; Bonn 2021, retrievable at: <https://www.progressives-zentrum.org/disregarded/?lang=en>.

The goal must be to achieve equal living conditions in cities and rural areas. Many promises have been made in this respect; it must be the ambition of a reforming government to follow up the declarations of intent with concrete first steps and without delay. Investments are needed in, among other fields, broadband and mobile phone networks, the infrastructure of charging points for electric vehicles, energy and power grids, fast and reactivated railway lines, and in networked forms of mobility. These investments are not only of elementary importance for the creation of equal living conditions and social cohesion, but also the prerequisite for a climate-friendly industrial policy and, consequently, for a successful German export economy too.

INTEGRATION

In the past, political debates about topics of the future often focussed on economics. They addressed the relationship between policies oriented towards demand-side and supply-side economics, as well as economic growth or – triggered by high unemployment – the mechanisms of the employment market. These questions are still undoubtedly important, but, with the exception of the central issue of how to finance the socio-ecological transformation, they have lost their absolute urgency. For example, in the macro-economic debate about the “black zero” – a balanced budget – in times of low interest rates, there has been a clear shift in the discourse; nevertheless, the debt brake remains in force and will limit the coalition’s flexibility in its fiscal policies. In addition, the unemployment numbers are much lower today than, for example, in the early 2000s. Today, Germany’s future will not

any longer be solely determined by economic issues significantly linked to the combating of the climate crisis – but will also be determined by ensuring that political reforms do not divide society even further.

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Economic success, social cohesion, green politics, individual freedom – all these goals can only be reached if there is trust within society, if we push back against discrimination and racism, if we are open to different kinds of personal backgrounds and – on this foundation – if we discuss and accept common ground rules. And we must enable social mobility and make sure that newcomers are swiftly integrated. In view of demographic trends and labour shortages, it is indisputable that we need much more immigration and, accompanying the latter, integration. Immigration is also crucial if we are to be able to finance our social-security systems in the future. Otherwise, Germany will not be able to maintain its current level of prosperity. However, this requires a new policy of inclusion and integration.

Proactive welfare state 2.0: the courage to make systemic reforms

The green transformation of industrial society will not function without a proactive welfare state that enables it. To this end, the welfare state must also be scrutinised in terms of its financing, access, infrastructure and benefits. For in view of the impositions on the labour market associated with the transformation, and in view of changed family structures, the inadequate integration of social and education policies, the new challenges in housing policy and, not least, the shifts in the demographic structure, the welfare state will not be able to continue to play its productive role without far-reaching reforms. Such a welfare state must adopt measures that go far beyond the already agreed increase in the minimum wage to 12 euros and a reform of unemployment insurance, and it must start at the systemic level – with pensions, in the labour market, and in the care and health sectors. Above all, this welfare state must be proactive and far-sighted.

There is an urgent need for action, not least on the issue of pensions. Demographic change and the ageing society threaten the promise of “secure pensions” and the principle of inter-generational justice.⁸ In 2020, the federal government had to subsidise the statutory pension insurance scheme to the sum of 100 billion euros.⁹ New levers are needed to ensure that broad sections of the population will have more money available when they grow old. Among other measures, the introduction of the so-called equity pension scheme could be the herald of a paradigm shift that will bring dividends in the future. The “traffic light” coalition should aim to reach a fundamental understanding on key pension-policy issues.

⁸ See Marcel Fratzscher, Ohne Rentenreform keine Generationengerechtigkeit, July 9, 2021, retrievable at: <https://www.zeit.de/wirtschaft/2021-07/gesetzliche-rente-deutschland-rentenreform-demografischer-wandel-generationengerechtigkeit-rentenversicherung/seite-2>. (in German)

⁹ See Institut Arbeit und Qualifikation der Universität Duisburg Essen, Bundesmittel an die gesetzliche Rentenversicherung 2020, Duisburg-Essen 2021, retrievable at: <https://www.sozialpolitik-aktuell.de/files/sozialpolitik-aktuell/Politikfelder/Alter-Rente/Datensammlung/PDF-Dateien/abbVIII35.pdf>. (in German)

A new policy of societal integration must include a commitment to anti-discrimination measures and a liberal immigration law. Equally, it must include organising career opportunities for everyone, providing targeted support for children from low-income families, guaranteeing reliable pensions, and also ensuring adequate old-age security for the self-employed. Finally, a

politics that addresses all parts of society must extend to a new concept of family that takes into account the diversity in German society. It is precisely on these socio-political issues that the progress-oriented “traffic light” parties are to a great extent in agreement – and these issues also meet with broad approval in society.

MODERN GOVERNANCE: A MATTER OF COOPERATION

Every new political beginning is also a question of form and style. First impressions count. From day one, the progressive-centrist coalition should work energetically, cooperatively and constructively.

A discursive, appreciative and cooperative style will shape the trust among the parties and between government and citizens. Winning over the population for new ways, ideas and concepts requires a political approach that involves innovative forms of political control. This could start with a more “open” coalition agreement, which agrees on political projects and determines concrete milestones – though less along the lines of a detailed and unswerving plan, but rather through realistic and quantifiable goals. The precise tools to achieve these objectives could then be developed in the course of the governmental work. This should apply, in particular,

to cross-cutting issues and political “missions” (Mariana Mazzucato) on which different governmental departments need to work together. The same applies to aligning the governmental work with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the German Sustainability Strategy.

In order to strengthen trust in the legitimacy of state policies, the role of citizens and experts in a modern government agenda must be considered. In the case of complex decisions, it would make sense to have politicians initiate representative formats that take greater account of the views and experiences of those affected. On the one hand, this would initiate broad and multifaceted public debates, and, on the other, the results and recommendations could be better communicated to the public.

A COALITION THAT CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

If we want to live in comfort and security tomorrow, we must get things moving today: people in Germany are ready to dare a new beginning that they have long known is necessary and right. What is needed is progress with a sense of proportion and pragmatism. If the progressive coalition is successful in this regard, it could become an alliance for the new beginning:

- as a **coalition for innovation** that combines the transformation of industrial society with the creation of new jobs and climate-friendly competitiveness;
- as a **coalition for effective climate policy and protection of biodiversity** that finally takes the set targets seriously, while also taking into consideration technical innovations and modern infrastructure;

- as a **coalition for a modern state**¹⁰ that finally digitalises the way the country is administered by its public servants and speeds up planning procedures to ensure the necessary pace in trendsetting decisions;
- as a **coalition committed to helping the disadvantaged**, for example by promoting better life chances, better education, better-quality support for children from educationally disadvantaged families, and retirement security for the self-employed;
- as a **coalition of an open-minded society** that effectively promotes the integration of individuals into our society, fights against discrimination and racism and lives diversity;
- as a **coalition of recognition and participation** that works to build a society of mutual respect and not only recognises, but also rewards, performance, effort and commitment at all levels, and that renews democratic structures and processes (voting age, citizen participation or a citizen-oriented public administration) in keeping with the times;
- as a **coalition that understands itself as player and beacon in the international arena**, boldly tackles reforms where necessary (for example in climate and digital politics) and in this way serves as an example of a successful progressive politics that can ignite a spirit of renewal both in individual European countries and in the European Union as a whole.

The public and the media, indeed the whole of German society, as well as many people in Europe, are watching the start of this new coalition with enormous expectations. During the exploratory and coalition talks, the potential government partners fulfilled these expectations with professionalism and seriousness. The pressure to solve the various problems is high. The tasks lying ahead are comparable in their dimensions to those that were faced during the reconstruction of eastern Germany.

After 16 years of waiting and stalling, this coalition must now make a fresh start and firmly look to the future. This concerns the content, the political style and the pace of implementation. This must be what a progressive coalition stakes a claim to achieving, and the task will demand everything of its members. At the same time, this huge effort offers a historic opportunity – both for Germany and for the three parties themselves. Now is the time for this opportunity to be seized.

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¹⁰ See Patrizia Nanz / Julia Borggräfe / Anke Hassel / Jan-Ole Beyer / Engel Hessel / Katharina Hölzle / Thurid Hustedt / Anne-Gaelle Javelle / Thomas Krause / Rafael Laguna de la Vera / Christina Lang / Dirk Meyer / Jörg Müller-Lietzkow / Frank Nägele / Michael Pachmajer / Markus Richter / Jascha Rohr / Benjamin Seibel / Kathrin Thomaschki / Ulrich Weinberg / Sven Weizenegger, Eine moderne Verwaltung ist Voraussetzung für Deutschlands Zukunftsfähigkeit und Demokratie: Acht Handlungsfelder für die nächste Bundesregierung [A Modern Public Administration is a Prerequisite for Germany's Future Viability and Democracy: Eight Areas of Action for the Next Federal Government], 11 October 2021, retrievable at: <https://zenodo.org/record/5560895#.YWPzJS8RoqW> (in German)

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“PROGRESSIVE GOVERNANCE 2022+”

Progressive governance is at the core of Das Progressive Zentrum's work. The Berlin-based think-tank has organised the [Progressive Governance Summit](#) (PGS) on a yearly basis since 2017, providing a space for high-ranking progressive politicians and thought leaders to discuss how we can achieve a more socially-just and green world and how to raise capacities for progressives to govern. As part of the PGS series, we publish papers, blog posts, and

organize events year round. The paper “Full Speed Ahead: Progress in 2022+” is helping us relaunch our blog series “Progressives Regieren 2022+”, a compilation of articles by academics, journalists, and political actors on how progressive politics can lead in Germany. From the beginning of 2022, new blog posts will be made available at: <https://www.progressives-zentrum.org/progressives-regieren-2022plus> (in German only)

ABOUT DAS PROGRESSIVE ZENTRUM

Das Progressive Zentrum is an independent, non-profit think-tank founded in 2007, devoted to establishing new networks of progressive actors from different backgrounds and promoting active and effective policies for economic and social progress. It involves next-generation German and European innovative thinkers and decision-makers in the debates. Its thematic priorities are situated within the three programmes: “Future of Democracy”, “Structural Change” and “International Dialogue”, with a particular focus on European integration and the transatlantic partnership. The organisation is based in Berlin and also operates in other European countries (including France, Poland and Great Britain) as well as in the United States.



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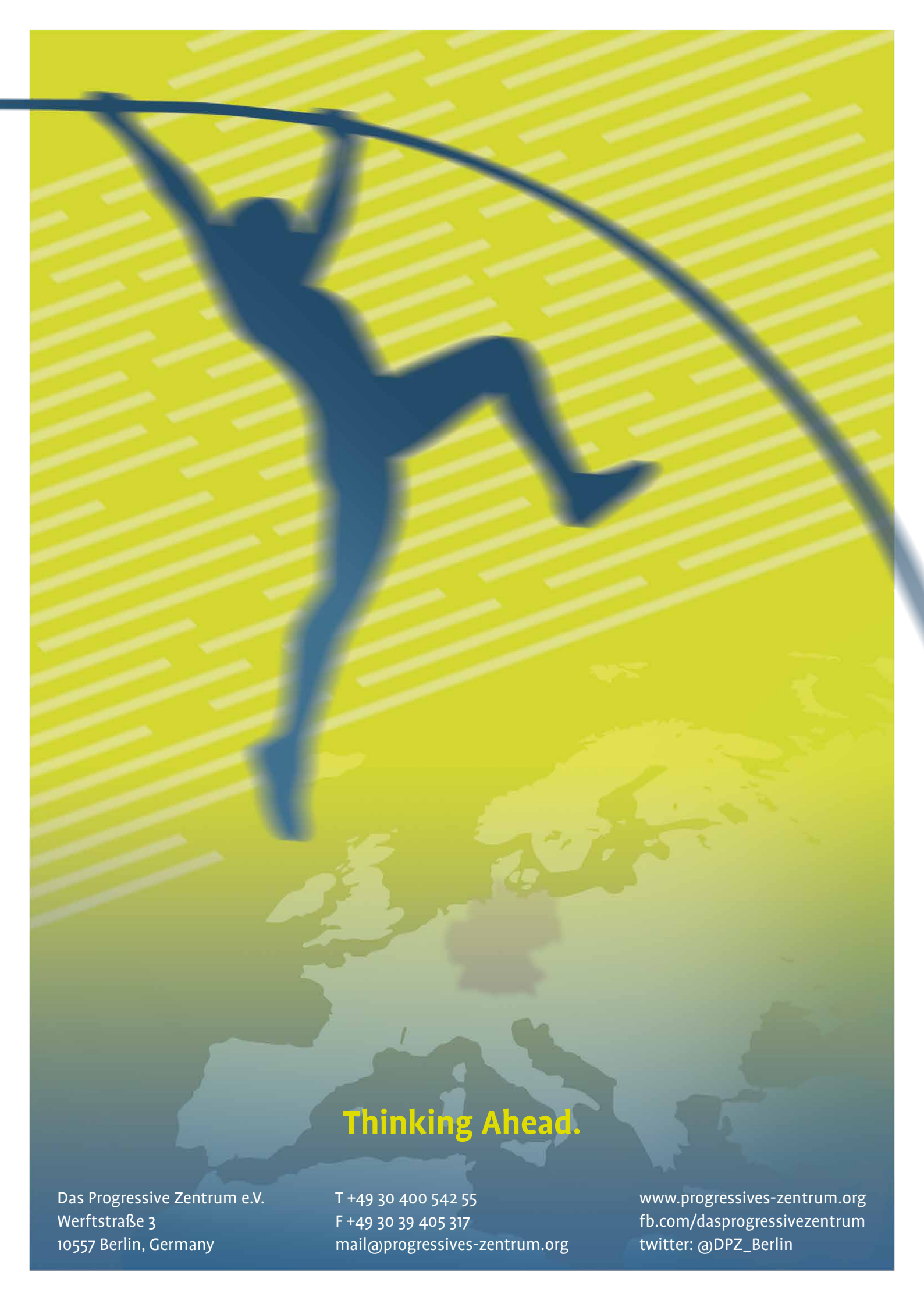
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