

The Better Democracy.

Principles for a representative order



Konrad
Adenauer
Stiftung





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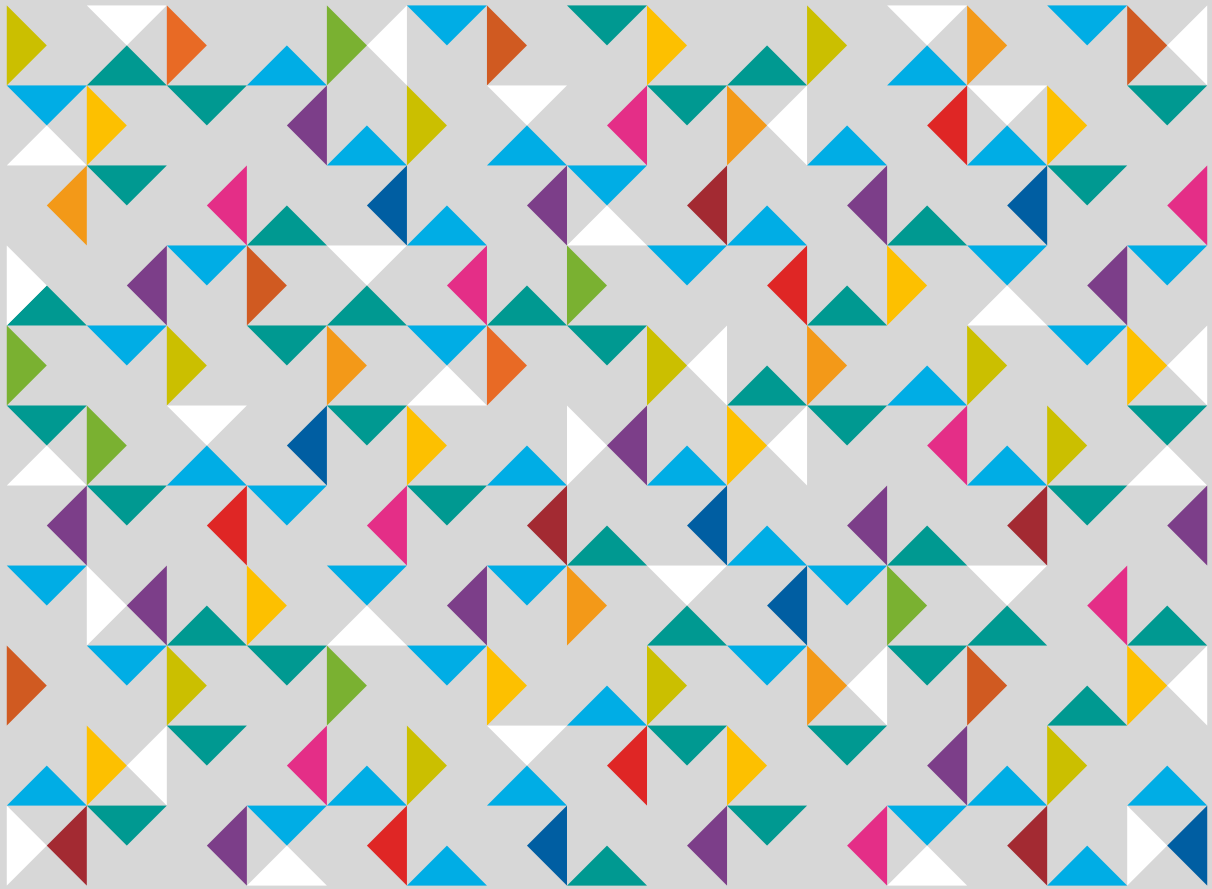
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Democracy creates acceptance and stability.

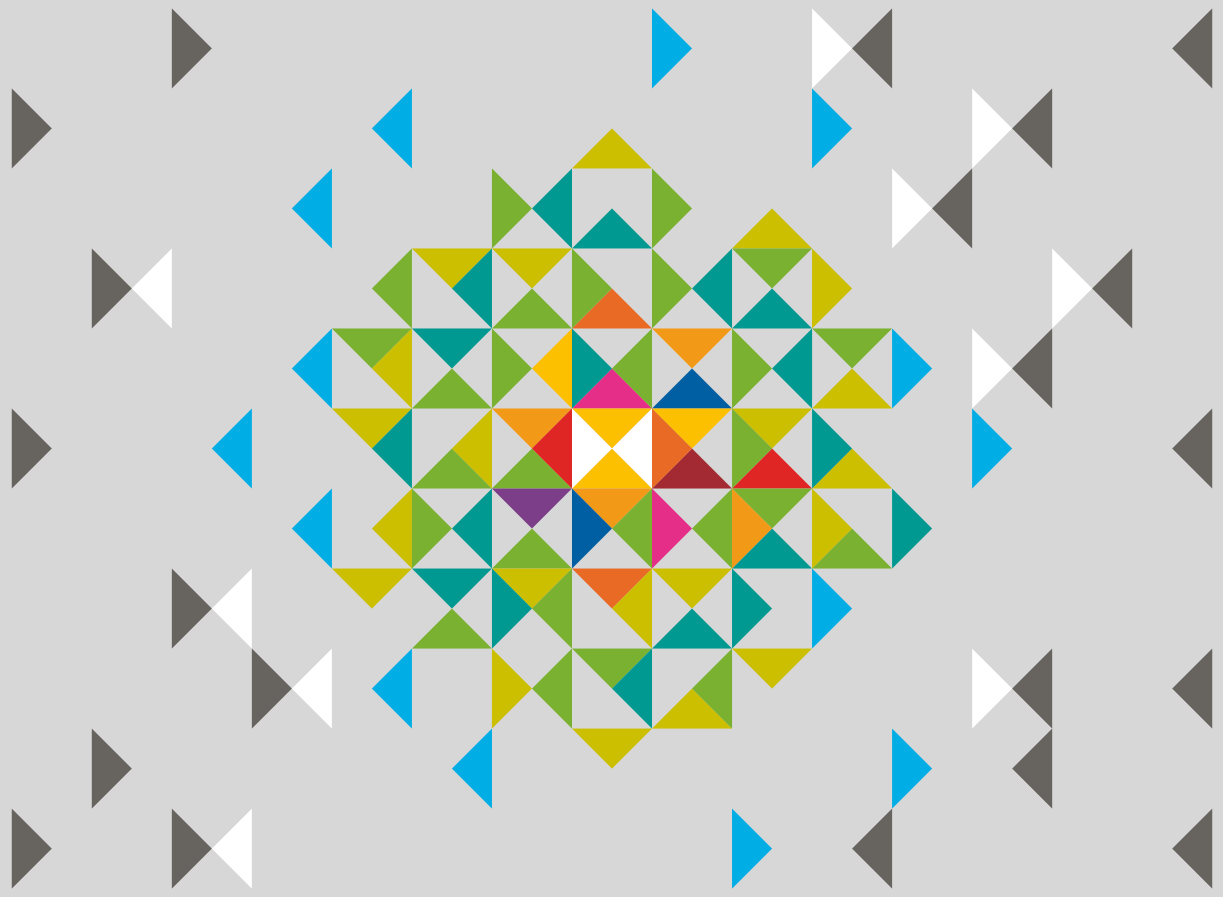
As strongholds of freedom, the law and people's welfare, democracies offer the best conditions for citizens living together.

Free elections enable all citizens to become engaged in state matters. In a democracy, every person has the opportunity of assuming responsibility and applying for official positions. Democracy reconciles the freedom of the individual with society's aspirations, generating a sense of the common good.

The government is bound to fulfil the will of the people. That is how democracy produces its own acceptance and stability. That is the secret to its success.

Democracies are very demanding in terms of the necessary prerequisites and can be organised in a variety of ways. In this brochure, we have set out the principles for a representative parliamentary democracy that we believe make for the better democracy.

Our purpose is to promote a representative parliamentary democracy.



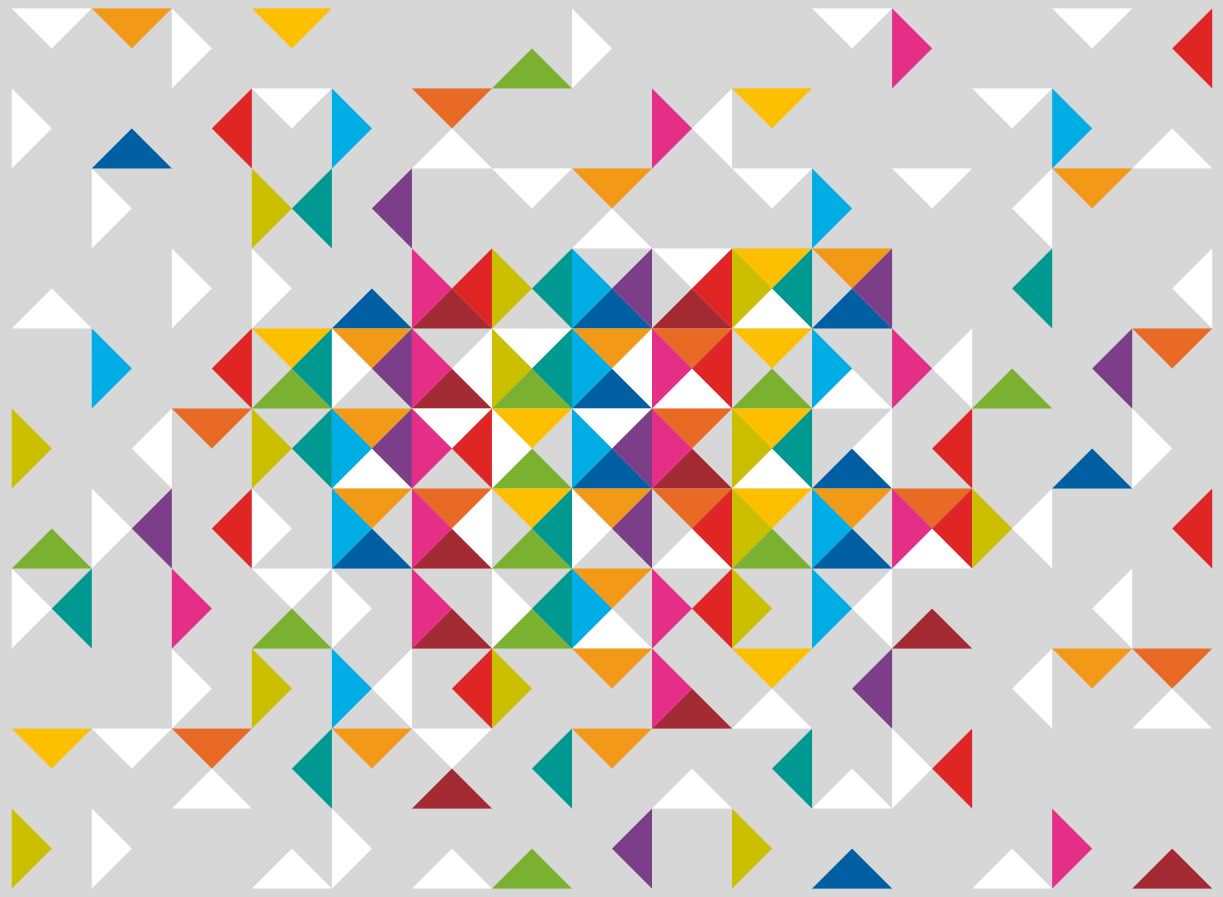
Human dignity is inviolable.

Respecting the dignity of every individual is at the heart of politics.
A person is not an object for the state to control. The state is there for the people.

In everything it does, the state is bound to observe people's basic rights.
The basic rights protect us and guarantee our freedom.

The important basic rights include the following: right to life and physical integrity, equality before the law, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion, inviolability of the home, property rights, gender equality and freedom of movement.

Anybody whose basic rights are violated can demand redress in a court of law.
There can be no democracy without basic rights.

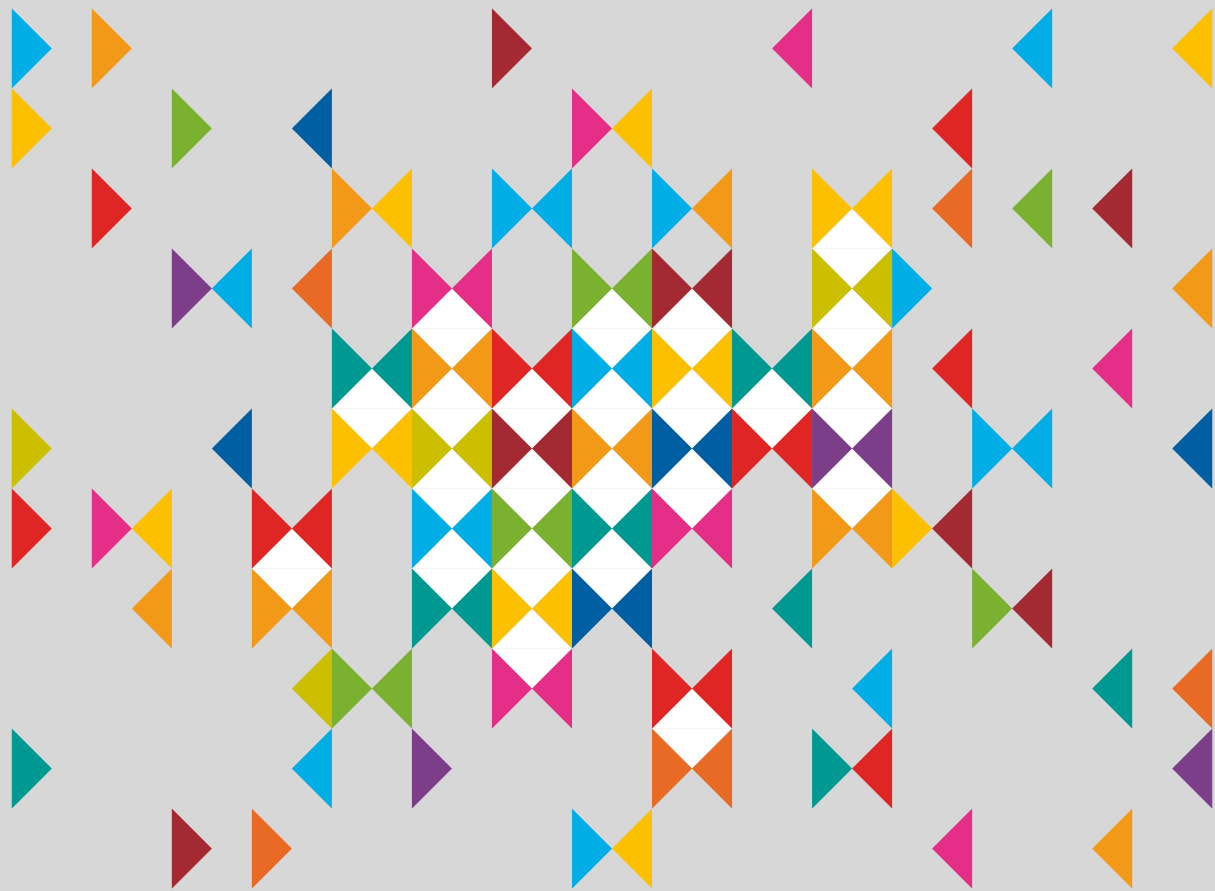


Diversity contributes to the common good.

Modern societies are diverse. Different opinions and ways of life characterise our shared lives. Democracy creates a framework in which citizens can express their individual interests.

Political parties, associations and action groups combine interests. They make efforts to influence the political course. Fixed rules ensure that the decisions taken are in the interest of the common good.

Political decisions gain acceptance as a result. The existing diversity and focus on the common good contribute to the stability of democracy.

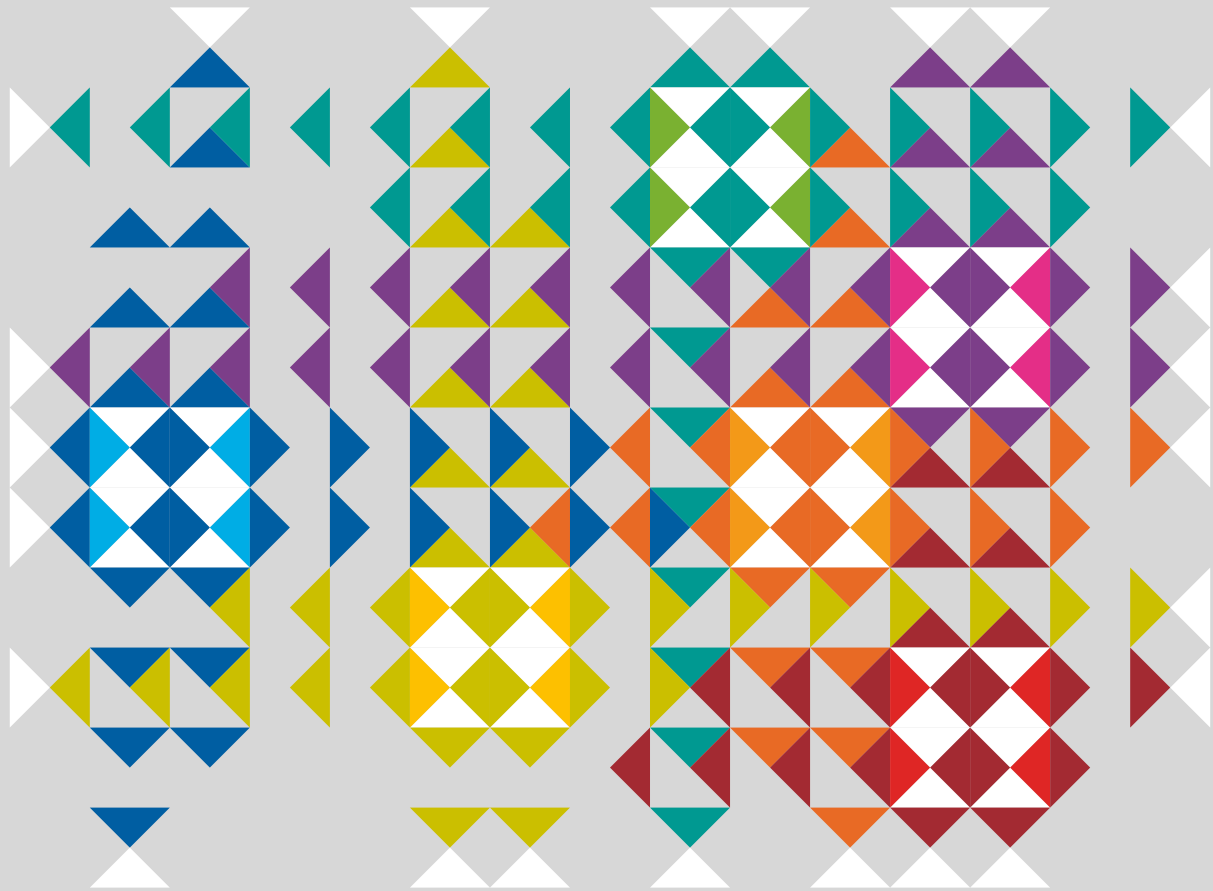


Good decisions have an integrative effect.

Decisions determining the course in politics, the economy and the social sphere affect us all. We consequently need good decision-making.

Good politics require an intensive exchange of different arguments. But not everybody wishes or is able to become involved on a regular basis. In a democracy, citizens delegate the decision-making to elected individuals, who consider the arguments and make informed decisions.

The elected representatives can thus make qualitatively better decisions, which foster trust and farsightedness in politics.



Political parties make politics comprehensible.

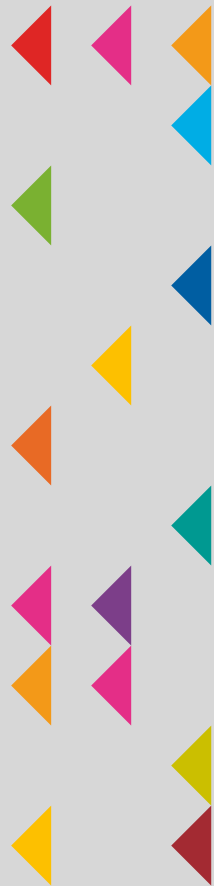
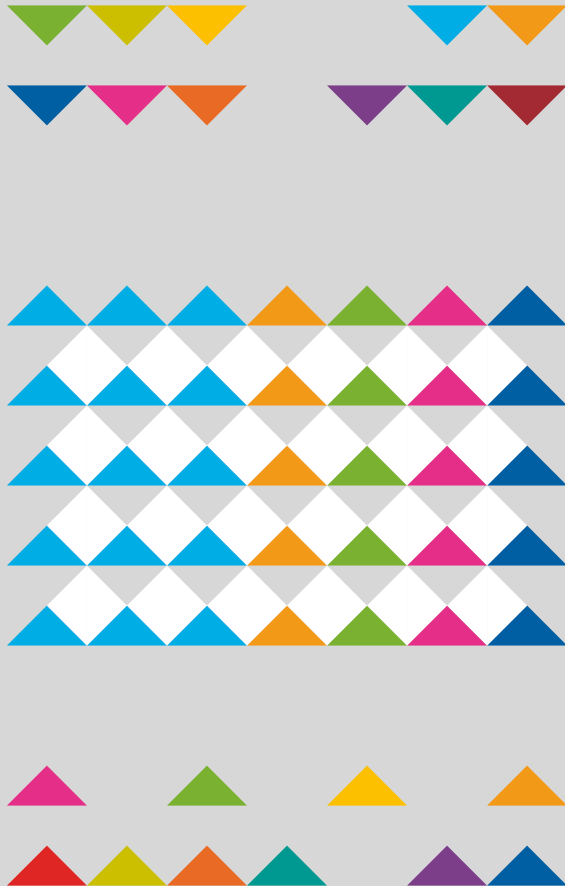
Democracy lives by participation of its citizens. Political parties are the appropriate vehicles. They bring together interests and represent people with a similar outlook.

Political parties are organisations established for the long term. Its members devise models and propose solutions for many circumstances of people's lives and for problematic issues.

In a democracy, political parties respecting the basic democratic principles can be founded at any time. Anybody can become involved in a political party.

Without political parties, opinion-forming and decision-making processes would not be possible. We would all talk across each other. Parties make politics "user-friendly".

In a democracy, each political party represents only part of society. Free competition between the political parties is what makes a multi-party system profoundly democratic. Assuming that the parties are organised on democratic principles internally, they ensure a better, because more stable democracy.



Parliament is at the heart of democracy.

In parliament, the citizens' opinions, concerns and interests are debated in public. Elected members of parliament express these, find compromises, and pass and change laws.

The composition of parliament reflects the diversity within the particular society.

In parliamentary systems, the government depends on a parliamentary majority. MPs, particularly those of the opposition, keep a check on the government. The government aligns its policies with the diverse interests of society, as conveyed by parliament.

MPs are free to make their own decisions. This allows them to respond to unforeseen circumstances and to evolve their personal thinking in dialogue with other parliamentarians. This in turn ensures that parliament remains capable of taking action. Regular elections mean that the MPs can be held to account by the electorate.

Opposition is necessary.

Political disputes are a desirable part of democracy. Nobody has a monopoly on absolute truths. When seeking the best solutions and ideas for the common good, the democratic battle of opinions is the only effective approach.

Everybody is allowed to express their opinion and to agree or disagree with the government. It is the role of the parliamentary opposition to focus the dissent and give it a voice.

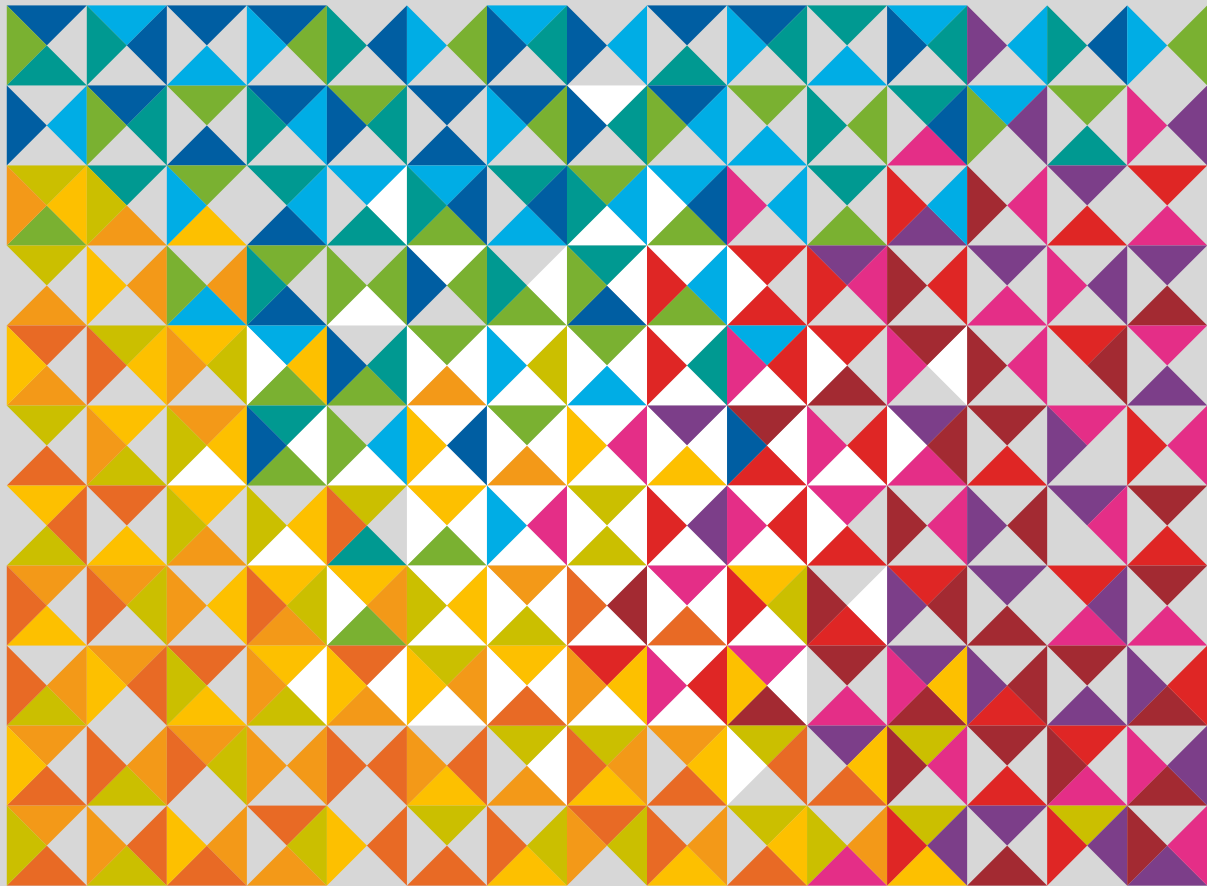
The opposition keeps the government in check. Its rights enjoy special protection. The parliamentary rules ensure that the opposition's viewpoint is listened to and receives attention in the public sphere.

Elections guarantee participation.

Free elections allow citizens to determine which party will represent their interests in parliament or in government for a limited period of time.

Proportional representation ensures participation, a balance of interests and peaceful conflict resolution. It means that even minor parties and interests are represented in the distribution of seats.

Election thresholds prevent too many parties entering parliament, which in turn ensures the capacity to govern and helps to stabilise the state.



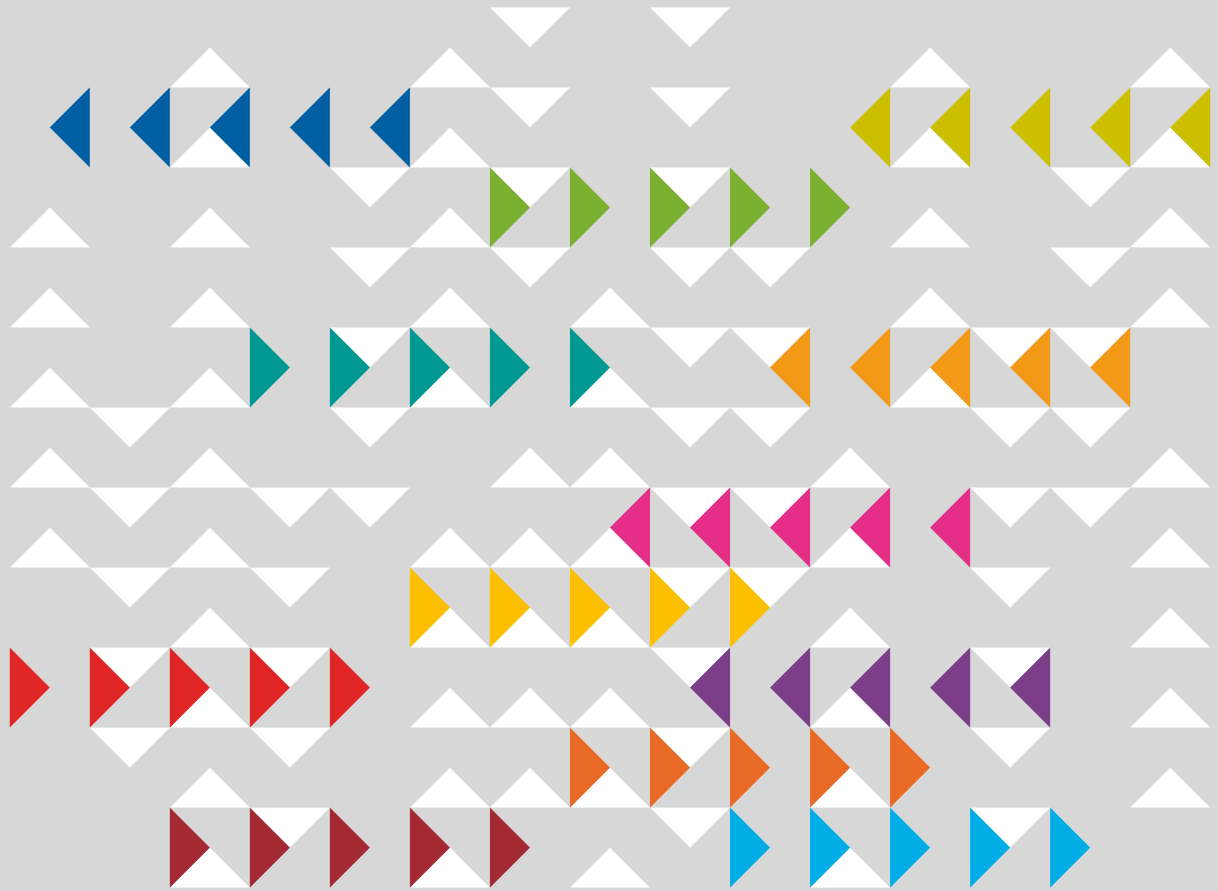
Mutual supervision prevents abuse of power.

Everybody should be allowed to live in peace. The state ensures order and security.

In a democracy, citizens grant the state power to this end. To avoid abuses of power and despotism, power is split between different institutions. These institutions keep a check on each other.

However, the separate institutions also need to be able to cooperate. Otherwise society as a whole would disintegrate. In a parliamentary democracy, the government depends on support from the parliamentary majority. Nevertheless, the MPs, primarily those of the opposition, keep the government in check.

Without the separation of powers, democracy would be tyranny.



There is no democracy without the rule of law.

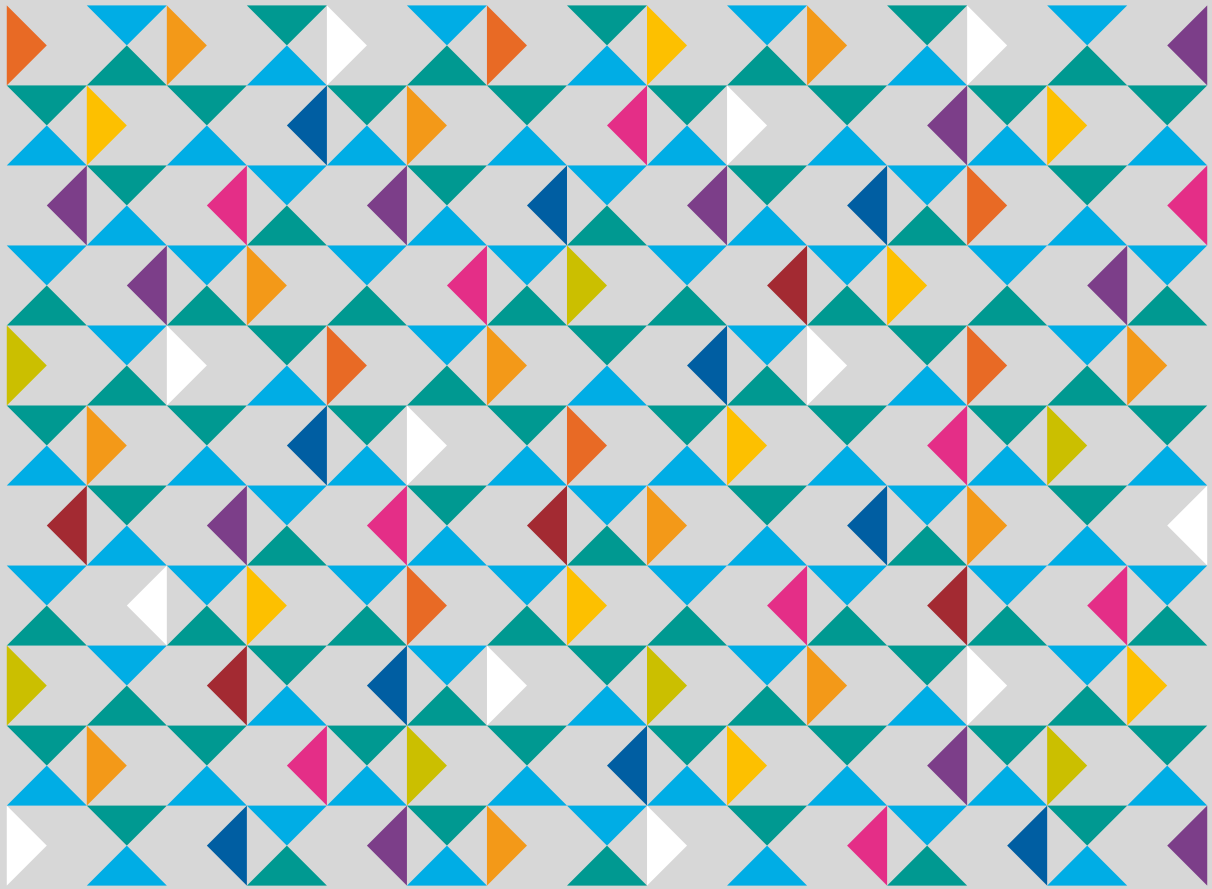
If many people are to live together harmoniously, there is a need for common rules.

A constitutional state based on the rule of law is characterised by the fact that legal provisions do not only apply to the interactions between citizens, but also to the relationship between the state and the citizen as well as to the state itself.

All government action is bound by laws that are transparent to the citizens. This creates safety for the citizens.

In a constitutional state, citizens are protected against arbitrary interventions by the state by independent courts of law. Their human rights are safeguarded. All citizens are equal before the law.

Effective rule of law therefore represents the basis for any democracy.

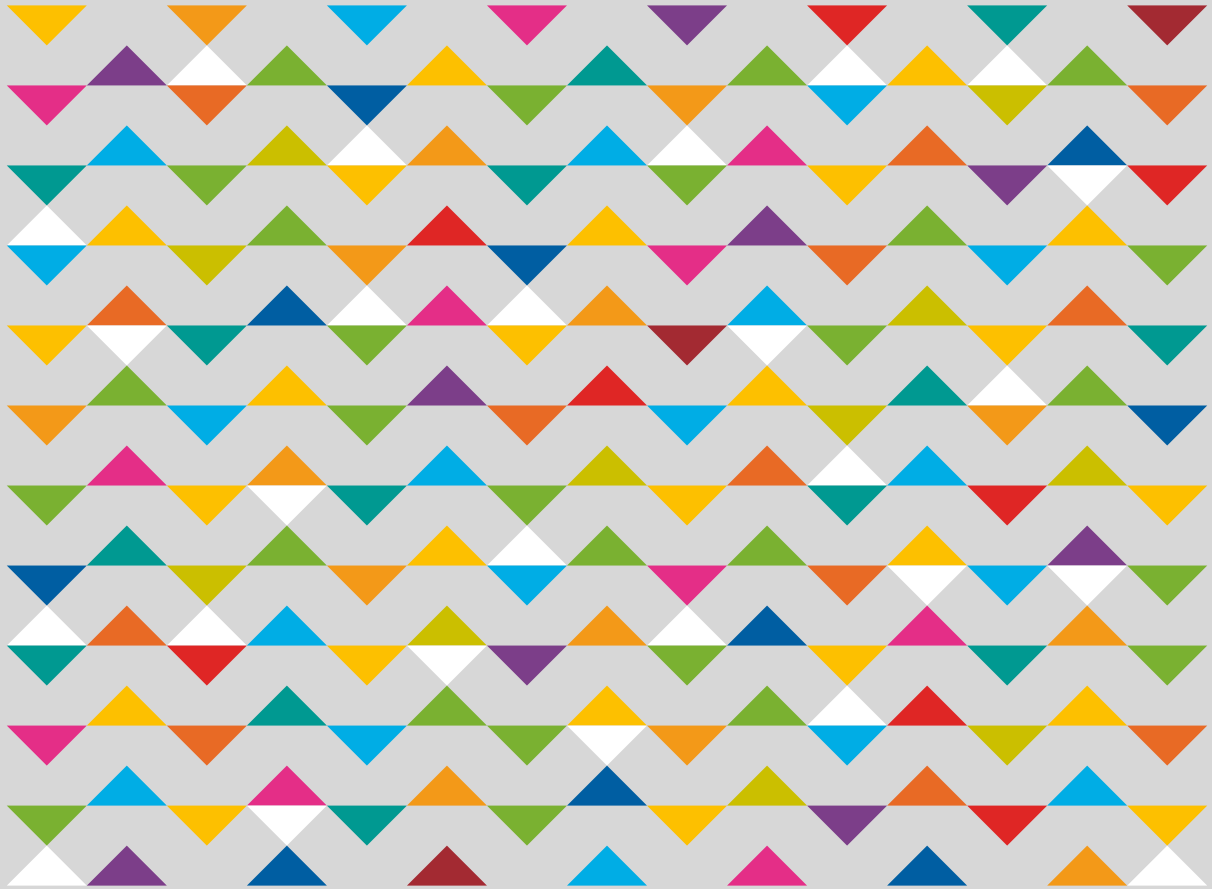


Democracy needs an informed public.

The media are our windows to the world, where a great deal is happening. Everybody should be able to inform themselves freely about what is going on and to express their opinion freely as well. We need free, strong and diverse media to allow that to happen.

Media inform the public, uncover background facts and contribute to opinion-forming. They monitor politicians as well as state institutions, Churches and associations.

In a democracy, the free media act as important intermediaries between the political sphere and the population. It is only through and via the media that the public gains public access to political objectives and programmes. Political parties need the media as a public conduit to be able to form democratic majorities in the population.

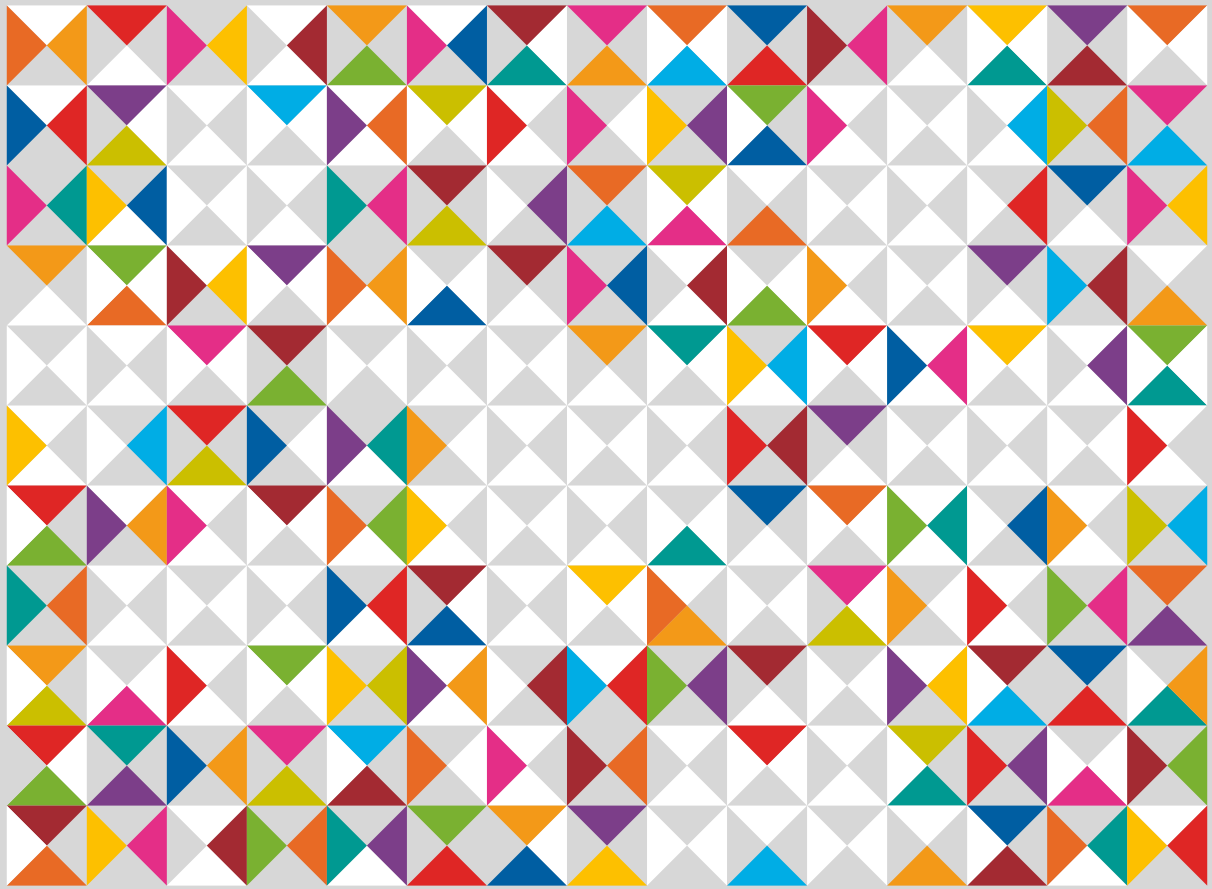


The better democracy has a social dimension.

The Social Market Economy is the economic order of the better democracy. It guarantees competition in line with fair rules and protects weaker citizens.

Social interactions in people's daily lives are important to the state. The welfare state guarantees a life lived in decent conditions. Examples of social benefits include insurance schemes to protect employees in case of illness or job loss as well as pension schemes.

In the welfare state, policies aim at creating equality of opportunity.



The citizens are in the driving seat.

Democratic institutions need support from the citizens.

Citizens play an active part. The individual's life is only good when society as a whole works effectively.

Democracy needs compromises instead of rows. Democrats listen to each other and can endure hearing opposing opinions. A better democracy needs serious arguments and a moderate tone.

A liberal democracy is modern and open-minded. Love of one's homeland and republican principles go together. The democratic constitution contributes to a country's political identity. Everybody can belong to the community as long as they respect its rules and live its values.

Together, citizens form a society they can be proud of.







This brochure is also available in German, French and Spanish.

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