

Strategic Plan 2026—2029

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Carsten von Nahmen

Editor

Evelin Meier

Proofreading

Ole Tangen Jr

Layout

Lisa Jansari

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1 Foreword

Free media. Free expression. Free societies. That is what DW Akademie stands for. Together with its partners, it promotes freedom of expression, independent journalism and media literacy in approximately 60 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East. Never has this mission been more important than it is today. For we live in a time of multiple crises. The rules-based international order has been weakened. Democracies are on the retreat. Dictatorships are investing heavily in the global battle for narratives and interpretive authority.

Authoritarian rule leads to fragility. Autocracies lack avenues for social understanding, both internally and externally. Against this backdrop, development cooperation to promote freedom of expression and press freedom—in short, media development cooperation—serves a preventive function: When people have access to relevant, reliable information, they can make responsible decisions and are less susceptible to disinformation. When they can freely express their opinions, an open social discourse emerges. Dialogue builds trust. Trust builds security.

Since 2025, the operating conditions for DW Akademie and other organizations working to promote media freedom have become significantly more challenging. The abrupt withdrawal of the United States from development cooperation—and, by extension, from its commitment to media freedom—has triggered a funding crisis. In many places, the end of US support meant the end for newsrooms that had countered the propaganda of authoritarian governments, the power claims of oligarchs, and the abuses of criminal organizations with independently researched facts and a diversity of perspectives. Local initiatives working to defend the human right to freedom of expression and free access to information have been weakened or forced to shut down.

According to the OECD, Germany is now the leading donor in international development—albeit with steadily declining budgets. Funding for media development cooperation is also declining, both in Germany and in other European countries, despite the dangers in the digital information space and the efforts of countries such as Russia and China to fill the gaps left by democratic states in ways that serve their own interests.



*Carsten von Nahmen, Managing Director
DW Akademie*

DW Akademie is working to counter this trend wherever it can, even though this is becoming increasingly difficult in light of reduced resources. It is aware of its responsibility as the largest remaining actor in media development and as a strategic partner of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. Together with our partner organizations on the ground, we must resolutely tackle the enormous challenges facing journalists in many regions of the world.

One of these challenges is artificial intelligence. In January 2026, at the invitation of the DW Akademie, some 200 experts from media, politics, the tech sector and media development from over 50 countries gathered in Berlin. Together, they discussed how journalism can remain economically viable and become future-ready in the age of AI and platform dominance. How can global information integrity be protected in the age of AI? At preliminary regional conferences in Thailand, Mexico, Jordan, Moldova and Kenya, participants had developed ideas on this topic and initiated collaborations.



This example illustrates that fostering exchange and networking is a particular strength of DW Akademie. We recognize how important it is to forge new, global alliances and to cooperate across sectors. We work closely and in a spirit of trust with long-standing partner organizations and listen carefully to their specific needs. To ensure that the law of the strongest does not prevail unchecked, everyone must have the opportunity to voice their concerns. In its projects, DW Akademie is therefore primarily committed to strengthening the rights of marginalized groups—such as women, ethnic and religious minorities, and indigenous populations.

The coming years will bring further uncertainties. The climate crisis, old and new conflicts, migration, and hunger remain key challenges of our time. That is why it is important to emphasize that investing in strong, independent journalism pays off. In countries with free, diverse media landscapes, there are demonstrably fewer human rights violations, less corruption and greater legal certainty. When people can access reliable information and engage in constructive dialogue, crises can be better managed. In other words: Journalism saves lives and creates the conditions for sustainable economic development. And Germany and Europe find natural allies and partners in free societies with independent media.

The present document, DW Akademie's Strategic Plan 2026–2029, complements Deutsche Welle's legally required Strategic Plan 2026-2029 (DW-Aufgabenplanung 2026-2029).

Carsten von Nahmen
Managing Director
DW Akademie

Bonn/Berlin, October 2026

2 DW Akademie: Deutsche Welle's center for international media development, journalism education and training, and knowledge transfer

Our mission

DW Akademie strengthens the human right to freedom of expression. With our work, we empower people worldwide to make free decisions based on reliable facts and constructive dialogue. DW Akademie stands for free media, free expression and free societies worldwide. As an integral part of Deutsche Welle (DW), Germany's international broadcaster, DW Akademie works in the fields of international media development, journalism training and knowledge transfer. Its work is grounded in the fundamental rights to freedom of expression and access to information—indispensable prerequisites for everyone to form their own opinions and participate in public discourse.

DW Akademie applies its expertise in collaboration with DW, one of the most successful and relevant international media organizations. DW offers high-quality, dialogue-promoting journalistic content in over 30 languages, reaching 337 million users worldwide per week (as of 2025). Cultural diversity is a top priority: The work of DW and DW Akademie is shaped by employees from over 150 countries.

Our values

We believe that independent media and responsible journalism are essential worldwide. Against the backdrop of Germany's violent 20th-century history, particularly with regard to the inhumane Nazi dictatorship, we believe that people should be able to freely express their views and have access to independent sources of information. We consider this to be an important prerequisite for peace, equality and democracy. We support the development of independent, transparent media systems, quality journalism and media literacy. We help rebuild media in the aftermath of crises and conflicts and contribute internationally to the professional training of media workers. We respect the cultural identity of our partners and work closely together in designing our

projects. In doing so, we ensure that these projects are always practice-oriented, interactive and innovative. Our work is successful when our partners drive change and are able to shape reforms.

Foundations of our work

DW Akademie's work is based on freedom of expression and access to information—human rights enshrined in Article 19 of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Advancing these fundamental freedoms contributes to the fulfillment of other political, cultural and economic rights, such as the right to vote, the right to freedom of association and assembly, or the right to education.

DW Akademie's development cooperation projects are consistent with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, they contribute to SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) with target 16.10 (ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms).

An important framework for DW Akademie's work are the Principles for Relevant and Effective Support to Media and the Information Environment, published in 2024 by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). They give six recommendations for donors and media development actors to strengthen media development internationally and tailor it specifically to the needs of partners.

DW Akademie aligns its projects with the daily realities and needs of underrepresented and marginalized groups, such as rural and indigenous populations, and follows the action plans and guidelines developed by the German Federal Government and the European Union.



In its work, DW Akademie systematically considers the goal of gender equality and inclusive social participation. Women are the driving force behind human development. That is why DW Akademie is committed to a world in which all women and girls have equal access to information and can express their opinions freely and without fear, both online and offline.

The work of DW and DW Akademie is based on the German constitution, the Grundgesetz, and, specifically, on the Deutsche Welle Act (DW Act). The DW Act has been in force as a federal law since 1960 and has been repeatedly adapted to changing circumstances ever since.

The DW Act defines Deutsche Welle as an independent broadcasting corporation enabling the public to form independent opinions through comprehensive, truthful and factual reporting.

Part of DW's mandate is to promote exchange and understanding among the world's cultures and peoples. Regulations for management and staff are set out in a Code of Conduct. DW is governed by the Broadcasting Council and the Administrative Board, each of which is composed of representatives from various social and political groups in Germany. One committee of the Broadcasting Council specifically accompanies the work of DW Akademie.

DW and DW Akademie: Mission and vision

Our Brand Core

Unbiased information for free minds

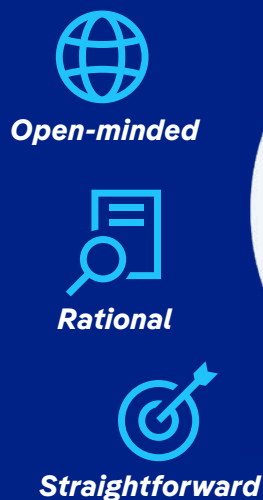
Our mission

As an unbiased, German media organization,
we provide news and information to people worldwide,
giving them the freedom to make up their own minds.

Our vision

In 2030, DW is the leading voice of freedom from Europe.
As a credible media brand, it engages its regional target audiences
with dialogue-driven content that highlights multiple perspectives.
DW Akademie is the world's leading organization for media development.

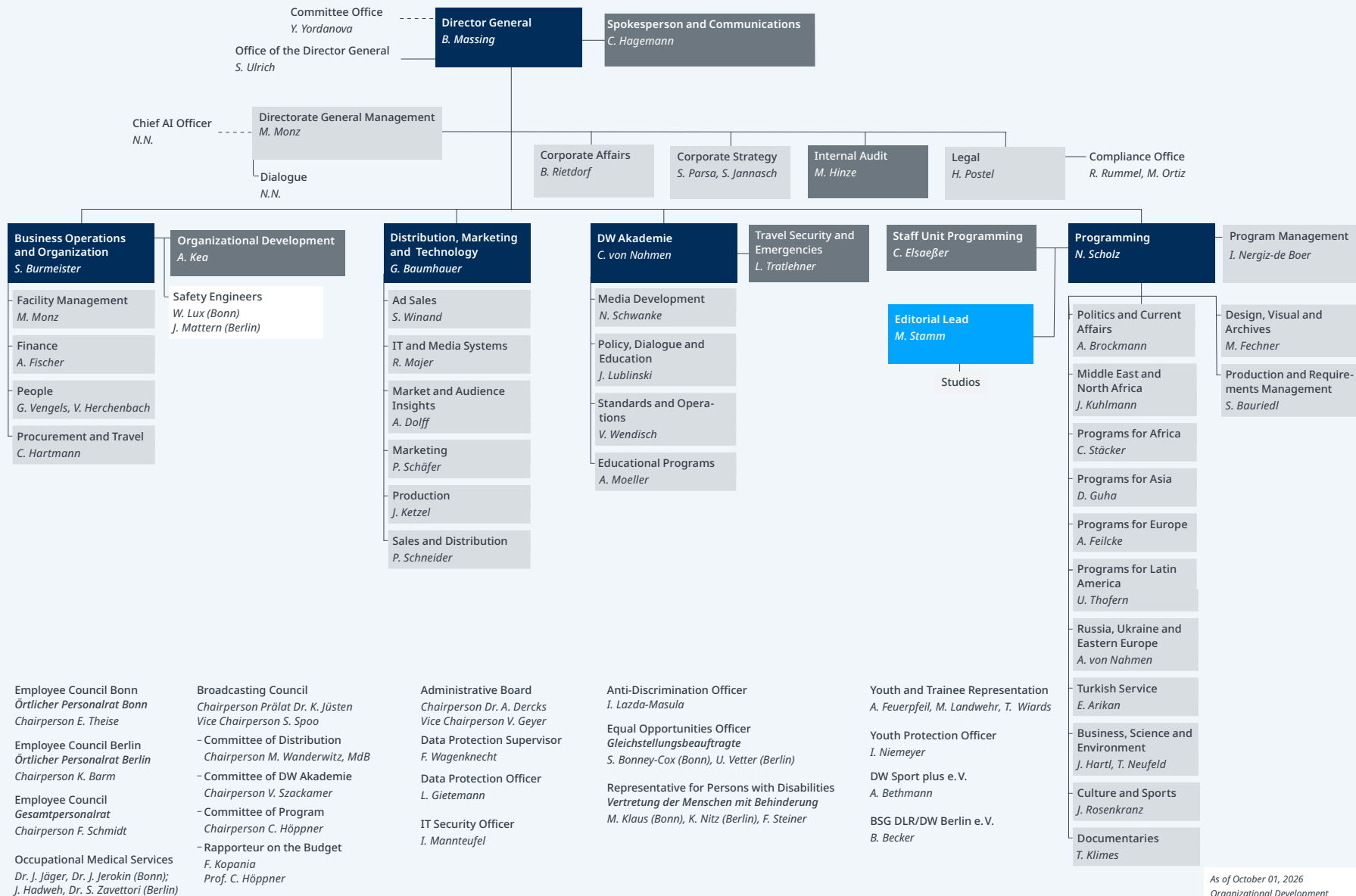
Our values



What we stand for



DW: Organizational chart



As of October 01, 2026
Organizational Development

Our activities

With projects in about 60 countries worldwide, and together with partner organizations from all regions across the globe, DW Akademie develops tailored, innovative and long-term solutions to strengthen freedom of expression, unhindered access to information, media viability, quality journalism and constructive dialogue. In recent years, DW Akademie has received funding primarily from Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the European Union and the German Federal Foreign Office (AA).

DW Akademie's media development work dates back to 1965. At that time, the DW Training Center (DW-Ausbildungszentrum) began offering training sessions for journalists from various African, Asian and Latin American countries. These activities were extended in subsequent years and, starting in 1978, have been largely funded by the German government as part of Germany's international development cooperation efforts. In 2004, DW Akademie was established under its current name.

To further increase the effectiveness of its work, DW Akademie has gradually expanded its presence in partner countries over the past 12 years. It currently has offices

in Colombia, Ghana, Lebanon, Mexico, Namibia, Pakistan, Tunisia, Uganda and Ukraine, staffed by mixed teams of local employees and seconded experts. In addition, there are local contract employees in a number of other countries, such as Syria, Yemen, Bangladesh, Thailand (for projects in Myanmar), Côte d'Ivoire and Guatemala.

Since 2024, an international panel of twelve experts has been advising DW Akademie on strategic issues. The *Global Reference Group* contributes a wide range of experience and expertise, provides feedback on DW Akademie's work, and proposes its own topics and ideas. These regional perspectives enhance the relevance and impact of our project work.

Since 2013, a Memorandum of Understanding with the BMZ has formed the basis for DW Akademie's work in international development. A joint declaration of intent signed in March 2023 reaffirms the strategic alliance between DW and BMZ.

DW Akademie offers consultancy services to the ministry on issues regarding freedom of expression and media freedom from a development policy perspective and highlights the importance of these topics in international forums.



In 2023, DW Akademie opened an office in Mexico City, the second office in Latin America. In the middle: Carsten von Nahmen, Managing Director DW Akademie.



© J. Eimermacher/DW

To kick off the new semester, students of the International Media Studies program get to know each other at welcome events in Bonn.

Within DW Akademie, a think tank consolidates insights and debates on media freedom and freedom of expression, as well as digital challenges in international development cooperation in the media sector. DW Akademie's think tank conducts research and collects data, builds networks, and, together with international partners, develops strategies for free, open and resilient information ecosystems worldwide. Once a year, the think tank's experts publish the *State of Media Development Report*.

Through the *International Media Studies* master's program, DW Akademie has been offering a unique, full-time, English-language degree program for young media professionals since 2009 in cooperation with Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences and the University of Bonn. The program combines the fields of media and development, journalism, communication studies, and media economics. Graduates of the four-semester program are awarded a Master of Arts (M.A.) degree from Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences. The French-language program *Master francophone en journalisme international*, established in 2024 in cooperation with the University of Tours in France, is expected to continue through August 2027.

In addition, DW Akademie organizes DW's in-house journalistic traineeship on behalf of DW, an internationally recognized bilingual program that provides a multimedia-based practical training for young journalists.

On behalf of DW, DW Akademie's internal journalistic masterclass program, DW Kompakt, contributes to DW's knowledge management and advanced training of employees. In addition, DW Akademie offers media training for employees of nongovernmental organizations and public institutions.

Promoting the German language is part of DW's statutory mandate. In recent years, DW Akademie has further expanded upon the success of its web-based and multimedia German language courses. The offerings, which are available on its own platform as well as through various other channels (newsletters, social media), generated an average of over 30 million views per month among a total of approximately 7.6 million registered users, subscribers and followers. The current program will be transitioned into a new offering at the beginning of 2027, which will then be housed within DW's Program Directorate.

DW Akademie in the world



9

regional offices

187

partner organizations
around the world with which
we work closely in 2025/26
as of April 2026

57

emerging economies and developing
countries where we have projects
as of April 2026

78

DW Akademie projects in 2025

330

people around the world whom we employ
on a full or part-time basis
as of April 2025

12

DW trainees per cohort

318

alumni of the “International Media
Studies” master’s program since 2011
as of April 2026

20

students of the “Master francophone
en journalisme international” degree
program
as of April 2026

37.33

million euros in project funding from the German Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation and Development, the German Federal
Foreign Office, the European Union and other donors
Budget 2025

3.74

million euros in funding from the Federal Government Commissioner
for Culture and the Media, for work we do on behalf of Deutsche Welle
Budget 2025

3 Conceptual and strategic framework



An indigenous community journalist from Rede Wayuri in Brazil speaks during the trip to COP30.



Cambodian teenagers are playing a media literacy role-playing game as part of a DW Akademie project.

Human rights-based approach

If sustainable development is to be achieved for all, the focus of development cooperation projects must be on the implementation of human rights standards and principles. Human rights and development are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Promoting human rights is promoting development.

Human rights, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, international conventions, and a growing body of national laws, case law, rules and norms, are the foundation of DW Akademie's work. This means DW Akademie consistently strives to:

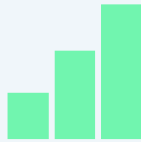
- empower rights holders to know and claim their rights—with a focus on particularly disadvantaged groups
- hold state duty-bearers accountable and enable them to fulfil their duties
- support other social actors to warrant their responsibility for human rights
- respect and promote the human rights principles of non-discrimination and equal opportunities, participation and empowerment, and transparency and accountability in all fields of work
- make reference to human rights and human rights-related information.

At the core of DW Akademie's human rights-based framework lies the right to freedom of expression, which is not only a human right in itself, but also enables the realization of many other human rights.

Fields of action



**MEDIA AND
INFORMATION
LITERACY**



**MEDIA
VIABILITY**



**INNOVATION
FOR DIALOGUE**



**MEDIA AND
JOURNALISM
EDUCATION**



**MEDIA
SAFETY**

DW Akademie regularly measures the success of its projects and continuously refines its approaches to achieve long-term impact for greater freedom of expression and media freedom in partner countries. On this basis, DW Akademie has defined five areas of action in which its work primarily yields results: Media and Information Literacy, Media Viability, Innovation for Dialogue (#I4D), Media and Journalism Education, and Media Safety. A cross-cutting theme is Digital Rights.

Media and Information Literacy

DW Akademie strengthens people's ability to use, analyze, critically evaluate and shape media themselves. Media literacy also involves people understanding their right to freedom of expression and access to information, and knowing what that means in practice. In this way, DW Akademie supports people around the world in using media responsibly and exercising their own rights.

Media Viability

The goal of DW Akademie's work is to strengthen media ecosystems within which media organizations can produce quality journalism in the public interest—and thereby remain financially viable. Only in this way can the entire population have lasting access to reliable information, especially in the age of AI. DW Akademie supports media companies, for example, in managing their operations professionally, becoming more attractive to their audiences or improving their organizational structure.

Innovation for Dialogue (#I4D)

DW Akademie is deeply engaged with the digital transformation of public discourse and the associated

opportunities and risks. New technologies open up numerous possibilities for sharing information and participating in public debates. The downsides: unequal access, language barriers, biases in AI language models, disinformation and surveillance. Through its #I4D field of action, DW Akademie promotes innovations in partner countries that foster a better culture of debate in the digital sphere. This ensures that people can truly express themselves freely, without restrictions and protected from interference and manipulation.

Media and Journalism Education

DW Akademie firmly believes in the social importance of quality journalism. Given DW Akademie's many years of global experience in this field, the training and continuing education of journalists is an integral part of its identity. Through interactive and participatory training programs, DW Akademie fosters journalistic skills while also encouraging critical engagement with the role of journalism in society.

Media Safety

The safety of media professionals and media organizations is a top priority for DW Akademie. The number of attacks against journalists remains alarmingly high. Added to this are attacks in the digital sphere aimed at silencing unwelcome media professionals. In the area of *Media Safety*, DW Akademie provides support in particular to journalists in exile so that they can continue their work.

Cross-cutting theme: Digital Rights

Online censorship, online surveillance, internet shutdowns—in many parts of the world, governments use

technology to restrict fundamental rights in the digital sphere. The protection of human rights in the digital sphere is therefore a cross-cutting theme in DW Akademie's work. Through its projects, for example, it strengthens the digital security of media professionals, supports civil society efforts against digital authoritarianism and promotes the participation of underrepresented groups online.

Media development and digital technologies

Digital technologies and platforms, including the latest developments in artificial intelligence (AI), are fundamentally transforming journalism and global information ecosystems. In an increasingly AI-mediated information environment, there is a need for reliable journalistic actors who uphold high editorial standards, conduct thorough research and provide careful context.

DW Akademie's work in the digital sphere is guided by Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the BMZ's development policy guidelines and directives in this area, and the Principles for Digital Development Cooperation, which were developed in 2014 and updated in 2024.

DW Akademie is committed to ensuring that media can continue to fulfill their functions even in media systems shaped by AI, and that media users are able to exercise their rights to freedom of expression and unhindered access to information. Our top priority is to ensure the reliability of journalistic information and to strengthen pluralistic public spheres.

The focus is not on technology, but on media professionals, media organizations and users. DW Akademie aims to help ensure that AI systems serve all people and not exclusively the interests of providers and platform operators.

People and media organizations must be able to use and shape digital technologies in a self-determined and sovereign manner. A particular emphasis is placed on access to the data on which AI systems are based and with which they are trained. The responsible handling of this data forms the foundation for diverse, transparent and values-based AI systems.

DW Akademie guidelines:

- We understand the context: The impact of digital technologies depends heavily on local and cultural conditions. In our work, we always take into account the existing social, technological and legal landscape.
- We integrate digital technologies into our projects through a process of testing and learning: Projects with a digital focus are never complete but require constant improvement. We will therefore continuously evaluate, test, redesign and improve our methods.
- We work in partnership: Together with our partners, we always develop our digital projects in a participatory manner and actively involve our target audiences in the process.
- We draw on interdisciplinary expertise: Digitalization and artificial intelligence are complex. We cannot be experts in every field, but we will always incorporate the necessary expertise. We place special emphasis on expertise from the Global South.
- We consider the competent handling of data, algorithms and AI systems as a central challenge for the future of journalism. Media organizations must be able to use AI responsibly, critically assess its impacts, ensure transparency toward their audience, and develop sustainable editorial and business strategies for a media landscape shaped by AI.

4 Organizational standards

Quality management, monitoring and evaluation

Quality assurance is a top priority for DW Akademie, which cultivates its organizational expertise and continuously improves its work.

DW Akademie adheres to internationally agreed-upon standards for monitoring and evaluation in development cooperation. Long-term projects funded by the European Union and the BMZ are regularly evaluated by independent evaluators according to the criteria of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC).

External evaluations always take place in the final year of a project's duration. For follow-up projects, the results are incorporated into strategy development. In addition to ensuring accountability to donors, the evaluations serve as a means of internal learning.

In 2025, a total of seven multi-year, BMZ-funded projects in three regions of the world were evaluated. Among the aspects highlighted by the evaluators were regional networks and strategic partnerships, as well as the projects' high adaptability to crises and volatile contexts. The creation of innovative and short-term financing models was cited as an area for improvement.

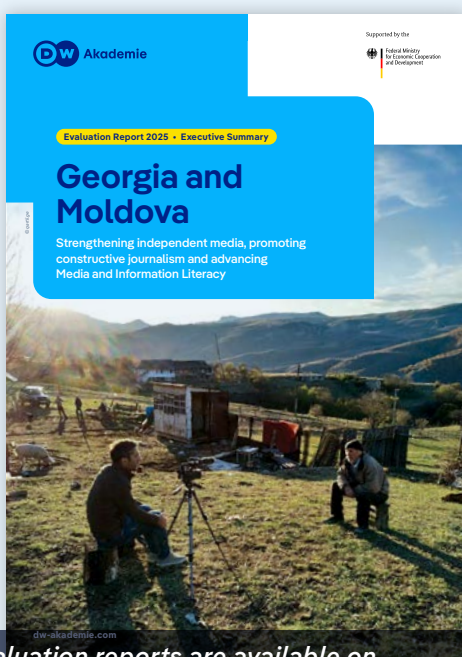
Summaries of the evaluation reports are available on DW Akademie's website. Lessons learned and recommendations are analyzed at the overarching level at the end of each evaluation cycle.

During project implementation, DW Akademie employs results-oriented monitoring. This is based on theories of change and logframes with indicators aligned with the SMART criteria (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound). Due to DW Akademie's partnership-based approach, the majority of monitoring is carried out by the partner organizations. DW Akademie supports its partners where necessary.

Safety procedures

DW Akademie has developed a travel security concept that is implemented throughout Deutsche Welle. The team Travel Security and Emergencies is responsible for mitigating travel-related risks and for ensuring the secure implementation of projects and activities abroad.

The security team covers the entire operational area of DW. The team's work comprises hazard and risk analysis, security planning and emergency management (including a 24/7 call availability), as well as follow-up measures on high-risk assignments.



All evaluation reports are available on DW Akademie's website.

5 Financial information

Deutsche Welle's funding is primarily based on allocations from the budget of the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM). DW Akademie, for its part, primarily receives project-specific funding from

various donors (see table) as well as approximately 3.5 million euros from BKM's budget for tasks on behalf of DW.

DW Akademie: Funding 2023–2027

ALLOWANCE (IN MILLION EURO)	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027*
BMZ	29.9	23.0	24.6	24.5	21.5
AA	4.5	4.5	2.4	3.0	2.4
EU	4.0	3.8	5.8	4.8	3.5
Other donors ¹	2.3	2.6	2.9	2.5	2.3
Total	40.7	33.9	35.7	34.8	29.7

*estimate

¹ Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW); others.



DW Akademie is Deutsche Welle's center for international media development, journalism training and knowledge transfer. Our projects strengthen the human right to freedom of expression and unhindered access to information. DW Akademie empowers people worldwide to make independent decisions based on reliable facts and constructive dialogue.

DW Akademie is a strategic partner of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. We also receive funding from the Federal Foreign Office and the European Union and are active in around 60 developing countries and emerging economies.

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