
Table of Contents

Welcome to the Heidekreis	2
Greeting	2
Interesting facts about the district of Heidekreis	3
About Integreat	4
Integreat in sign language (video)	5
Fundamental rights in Germany	5
Grundgesetz (basic law) and human rights	5
Children's rights	6
Rule of law	6
Personal freedom	7
Gender equality	8
Non-violence	9
Right to vote	9
Freedom of religion	11
Freedom of opinion	11
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, inter* and queer+ (LGBTIQ+)	12

Welcome to the Heidekreis

Greeting

Dear users of the Integreat app,

on behalf of the entire district, I would like to welcome you to the district of Heidekreis. Finding your feet in another country is not easy. It requires courage and is a great challenge for many people. We are aware of this.

That's why we want to give you all the important information you need to get started with the Integreat app. Whether it's about everyday matters or important topics such as work and education - you will find support and guidance here.

The mobile guide is multilingual, offline and free to use. The district of Heidekreis currently offers twelve languages.

All the information that you previously found on our homepage in the "Integration and Foreigners" section can now be found in this app.

We hope that you are well received in the Heidekreis and look forward to shaping a bright future together with you.

With best regards

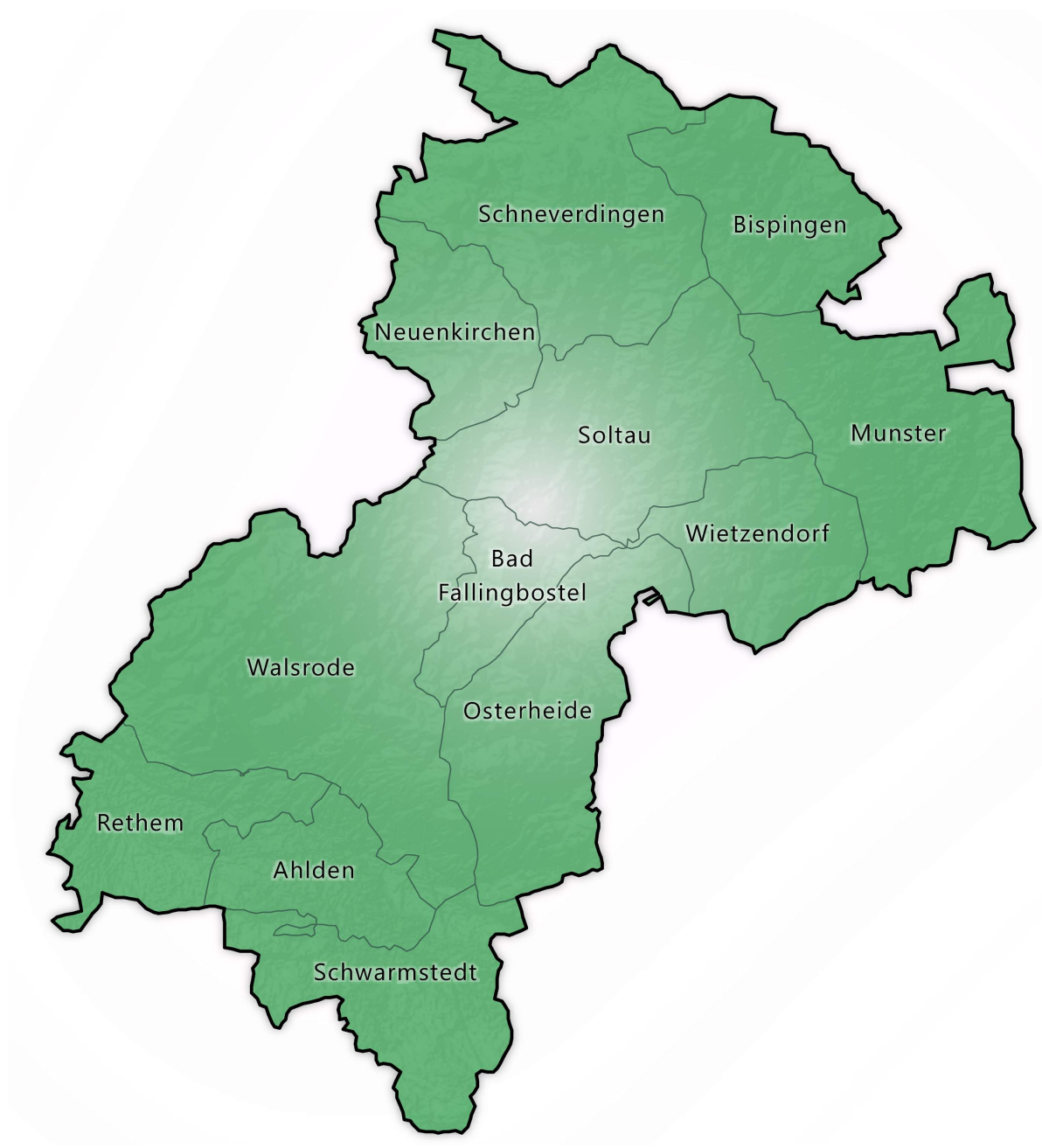
Yours

Jens Grote

District Administrator of the Heidekreis district



Interesting facts about the district of Heidekreis



The district of Heidekreis is located in the federal state of Lower Saxony. It has an area of 1873 square kilometres. It is known for its diverse cultural landscape, which is characterised by forests, moors and heathland.

It offers recreational opportunities and leisure experiences as well as an attractive economic area with the best quality of life.

Around 140,000 inhabitants live in the district of Heidekreis - there is plenty of room for everyone.

The district includes 11 towns, joint municipalities, municipalities and the municipality-free district of Osterheide.

These are:

-
- Ahlden
 - Bad Fallingbostel
 - Bispingen
 - Munster
 - New churches
 - Rethem
 - Schneverdingen
 - Soltau
 - Walsrode and
 - Wietzenndorf

The district administrator of the Heidekreis district is Jens Grote. He was elected to this office for five years in 2021. The district administrator is the head of the district administration and the highest representative of the district.

Further information can be found on the homepage of the district of Heidekreis at www.heidekreis.de.

About Integreat

Integreat is a guide that supports you in your everyday life. You will find important addresses, contact persons as well as tips and tricks that can help you find your way around.

This guide has several chapters. Each chapter deals with a different topic. Among other things, you will find information on doctors, schools, German courses or other institutions. There is also a chapter with ideas on what you can do in your free time. The information and leisure activities change. Your municipality updates them regularly. That's why it's very good if you check your mobile app often. You will always be informed about current activities and events. You can rely on the information in Integreat.

Download Integreat from your [app store](#). You can also use this app offline if you don't have internet access. When you are back online, the app will update itself.

Sharing information

You can download and share important information, for example, as a PDF in the web app. In the mobile app, you can share interesting content directly, for example via WhatsApp, Facebook or email.

Latest news

With the Integreat smartphone app you can also receive push notifications. You can agree to receive them in the app's settings. Important or short-term information is sent to you via push notifications.

Feedback

You can contribute to the development of the Integreat app in your municipality. You can give feedback using the smiley icons. This feedback ends up with the people who create the content.

You can praise or criticise. If you have ideas or criticism, write down as many details as possible.

Read aloud function

The content of the Integreat app can also be read aloud. To do this, the read aloud function must be switched on in the settings of the smartphone. This works in all languages.

We very much hope that we can simplify your life in Germany with this app.

Integreat in sign language (video)

This video explains how Integreat works in German sign language. You will learn what is possible. Click on the image to watch the video on YouTube.



Fundamental rights in Germany

Grundgesetz (basic law) and human rights

In every country there are rules that **everyone** has to abide by. The most important law in Germany is the Basic Law. It is a collection of 146 articles. Each article stands for a law, meaning a rule. These rules determine how we **live together in Germany**. The basic rights protect the freedom of each individual. They are set out in Articles 1 to 19 of the Basic Law (catalogue of basic rights).

[Here](#) you will find the Basic Law in 11 languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Italian, Persian, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Turkish and German.

How the German constitutional state functions is illustrated in this film: [German](#), [Dari](#), [Arabic](#), [English](#), [French](#), [Pashto](#), [Urdu](#).

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Human rights are important rights that always and **apply to all people around the world**. Human rights are rights that every person has by virtue of being human. They protect the dignity of every human being. They apply to every person equally. No distinction is made between anybody.

There are 30 rights. **The most important are:**

- All people are of equal value.
- Everyone is allowed to have their own opinion.
- All people have the right to live in peace and safety.

Children's rights

As a child, you need special protection. That's why you have special rights. These rights are established in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This Convention was passed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is divided into four sections: the right to life and personal development, equal treatment, their wellbeing, and to be involved. In detail, that means:

- Every child has the right to everything they need to live. This includes food, drink and medical treatment.
- Children also have the right to go to school, and the right to play and have free time.
- All girls and boys have the same rights, and no child should be treated worse than other children.
- Every child has the right to grow up in a healthy environment where they are cared for and protected from violence.
- Every child has the right to live with their parents, or, if their parents live separately, to have contact with both parents.
- All girls and boys have the right to form and stand up for their own opinions.

💡 Are there any questions that concern you as children? Then the adults must listen to your opinion and take it into account when making decisions.

🌐 You can find a declaration of the 10 most important children's rights here: [German/Arabic](#) and [German/Persian](#).

Are you experiencing violence? Do you feel you are being treated unfairly? Then the [youth welfare office](#) can advise you.

Rule of law

Germany is a **democratic constitutional state**. The Basic Law guarantees human dignity, freedom and justice. In order for human rights to be respected, there are laws.

Political decisions are made by representatives of the people. **The representatives of the people are elected by the Germans in free elections.**

The laws apply equally to all people in Germany. The state must obey the law. All people living in Germany must also abide by German laws.

This means, for example:

- If people think that other people or the public administration is wronging them, they can go to court. These courts are independent. This means The government must not tell the courts how to decide.
- State courts decide whether someone is punished or not. This punishment could take the form of a fine, community service or prison. There is no death penalty in Germany:
- The [police](#) have the task of ensuring that everyone can live in freedom and safety.
- The practice of religion must not violate any laws. Laws always take priority over religion.

This is **not permitted** in Germany, for example:

- To incite hatred or violence.
- To fight the democratic system and its values.
- These offences can lead to imprisonment.

After serving their sentence, non-German nationals can lose their right of residence under certain conditions and be deported.

Personal freedom

All adults are allowed to make decisions for themselves and their own lives. No matter whether man or woman, young or old, with or without disability, no matter what skin colour or religious affiliation.

All people may do what they want as long as they obey the laws and do not restrict others in their freedom.

This means , **for example**:

- All people can decide what they want to wear. For example, women can decide whether they want to wear trousers, dresses, long or short skirts, tight or loose clothing or a headscarf. For example, men can decide whether to wear a suit and tie, a T-shirt and jeans, a turban, a hat or a beard.
- All people are allowed to eat what they want and what they like. The decision whether to eat meat (also pork or beef) is made by people on their own. There are no generally valid or religiously based dietary rules from the state.
- The consumption of alcohol is allowed for adults. The consumption of alcohol is prohibited for children and youth.
- Every woman and every man is allowed to decide herself or himself whether and whom she or he wants to marry. Every woman and every man is allowed to divorce.
Unmarried couples are allowed to live together and have children.
Members of different religions and faiths are allowed to marry each other and have children.
- Contraception is allowed for both sexes. A person's decision to use contraception must be respected.
- Same-sex partnerships are recognised in Germany. Same sex couples can get married. The rights of a civil union are similar to those of a heterosexual marriage.

-
- Everyone decides for themselves how and where they want to live. For non-Germans, this right may be limited until the approval of an asylum application.
 - Sexual acts between adults may only take place by mutual consent. Any sexual act with children is prohibited.
 - Private property is allowed for every man and woman in Germany. Owning a house or a plot of land is allowed. Many companies are privately owned.
 - Women and men have equal inheritance rights.

Important:

One's own freedom ends where it violates the freedom or human dignity of the other person or violates laws.

Gender equality

Women and men have the same rights.

Women and men have the same duties.

This is reflected in the laws and in daily life.

This means , for example:

- Girls and boys go to school together and receive the same lessons. They take part in sports education together.
- Women are allowed to study or learn a profession. All professions are fundamentally open to both genders.
- Women play important roles in society, for example as police officers, doctors, teachers or in government offices and public authorities. Their instructions must be followed.
- Women decide themselves which career they want to have. They can spend their money as they wish.
- Women do not need to ask their husband, parents or other family members for permission to work, open a bank account, or sign contracts.
- Women are allowed to dress as they like.
- Women decide for themselves who, when and if they marry.
- Mothers are protected in particular. They must not and may not work six weeks before and eight weeks after birth. They may not be dismissed because of their maternity.
- The tasks and roles in the family are not fixed.
- Women participate in public life. They attend cultural, political or sports events, restaurants and bars.
- Women can vote and be elected to political office.
- Women and men have equal inheritance rights, daughters as much as sons.
- Sexual contact, comments or demands are only allowed if all parties agree. A "stop" or "no" must always be respected.

The following behaviour is not allowed in Germany:

- Any form of violence against women, including within marriage.
- No one is allowed to sexually harass another person.

-
- Rape – including within marriage – is punishable.
 - No one can be forced to marry. The coercion of a marriage by force or threat will be prosecuted.

Non-violence

Everyone has the right to a life without violence. This means that all people have the right to life and physical integrity. This refers to both the **physical and mental health** of a person. This also applies to the private domain.

This means, for example:

- Conflicts should be resolved without violence.
- If someone needs help because of danger or conflict, they can call the police.
- The instructions of the police must be followed.
- Vigilante justice is not allowed. A state court will decide in the case of a person's own rights being violated.
- The state must act without violence. It may use force only exceptionally if all other means have been exhausted.
- There is no death penalty or corporal punishment. Torture is forbidden.

This is **not permitted** in Germany, for example:

- Physically abusing, hurting or killing another person. This also applies among families, in schools and on the streets.
- Taking part in a fight in which people are killed or seriously injured.
- Vendettas (blood revenge) or murder in the name of honour.
- Any kind of violence to women and children at any time, anywhere.
- Human trafficking (smuggling people), slavery or forcing people into prostitution.
- Sewing closed, cutting or removing female genitals.

💡 Sewing up, cutting or mutilating the female genitalia is also known as [female genital mutilation or circumcision](#). **This is a criminal offence in Germany.**

💡 You can find information on **domestic violence** [here](#).

Right to vote

People in Germany have the right to vote. They can vote for politicians. That is written in a law.

Elections are the centrepiece of democracy. As such, they are particularly worthy of protection.

And these are the most important elections in Germany:

State parliament elections

You elect politicians for the state parliament in your federal state.
The state parliament decides things for the federal state.

A new state parliament is always elected after 5 years.

Bundestag election

You elect politicians for the Bundestag.

The Bundestag decides things for the whole of Germany.

A new Bundestag is elected every 4 years.

[Here](#) you will find multilingual information on the 2025 Bundestag election.

You can find a video about the Bundestag election [here](#).

In the context of the Bundestag election 2025, an increase in foreign disinformation in Germany is to be expected, among other things. Disinformation is false or misleading information that is deliberately disseminated. In the course of foreign manipulation and influence campaigns in the information space, for example, false information could be spread via falsified social media accounts and websites of individuals, parties, media companies or authorities. The Federal Ministry has published the publication ["Together against manipulation"](#). This has been translated into English, French, Arabic, Turkish and Russian. It helps to recognise false information.

European elections

You elect politicians to the European Parliament.

The European Parliament decides things for all countries in the European Union.

A new European Parliament is elected every 5 years.

In Germany there are 2 different electoral rights:

1. the right to vote

You have a **German passport**. And you are **18 years or older**. Then you have the right to vote. This means **that you can vote**.

For example in these elections:

- Bundestag election
- State parliament election
- Local elections
- Mayoral election
- Senior citizens' council election

2. the right to stand for election

You have a **German passport**. And you are **18 years or older**. Then you have the right to stand as a candidate. This means **that you can be elected by other people**.

You can then work as a politician. For example, you can then work

- For the German Bundestag

-
- For the state parliament
 - For the local council
 - For the Foreigners' Advisory Council
-

You are an EU citizen.

You can then vote in these elections in Germany:

- Local elections
- European elections

Freedom of religion

Religion and faith are private matters in Germany. The state does not dictate to anyone whether and in which God he or she should believe. **State and religion are separate.**

This means, for example:

- All people have the freedom to choose and practice their religion and beliefs themselves.
- All people have the freedom to not follow a religion and to state that fact openly. If someone does not believe in God, they are free to state this publicly.
- Members of different religions and faiths are allowed to marry each other and have children.
- Marriage is only considered legally valid if it is recognised by the Standesamt (registry office). Marriages that have only been performed in a religious context are not considered legally binding in Germany.

This is **not permitted** in Germany, for example:

- Putting religious rules or traditions above the laws of the German state. One example would be a man married to multiple women at the same time, or slaughtering an animal without a special permit.
- Boys can only be circumcised if it does not negatively affect their well-being.

Many people in Germany now work to ensure that there is dialogue between religions. The aim is the peaceful co-existence of people who are religious, those who are devout and those who do not belong to any religion. **The state is committed to ideological neutrality.** Provided that practising a religion does not endanger democracy or the separation of state and religion, it will be protected.

Freedom of opinion

Everyone is allowed to have their own opinion and to express and share it freely. These opinions may also be expressed publicly. All newspapers, TV stations and other media are free and everyone can get information there. When someone speaks their mind, they must be careful to respect the honour and dignity of other people.

This means, for example:

- You are allowed to criticise the government.

-
- You are allowed to criticise religion.
 - Artistic works are allowed to be provocative. Nobody is allowed to tell writers, musicians or visual artists what their work should be about.
 - The government and religions can be the subjects of satire and critical art.
 - Anyone who feels insulted or whose personal honour or dignity has been violated can contact the police or a court.

This is **not permitted** in Germany, for example:

- The use of unconstitutional symbols and calls to overthrow democracy.
- Insulting statements of opinion that denigrate other people.
- Defamation of character or libel regarding other people.
- Incite hatred or violence.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, inter* and queer+ (LGBTIQ+)

Many different people live together in Germany. They have different religions. They are of different genders. They come from different countries. They have different political views. All these people live together peacefully. They have the same rights.

The same applies to people of different sexual orientations or gender identities. This includes

- Lesbians
- gays
- bisexuals
- Transgender and intersex people.

In Germany, you can have your gender officially registered. There are three options:

- male
- female
- diverse

Transgender people can change their gender in Germany.

Women are allowed to love and marry other women in Germany. Men are allowed to love and marry other men in Germany.

👥 Many LGBTIQ+ people have fled to Germany. They were persecuted in their home country. Have you fled? Are you lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex? You can contact one of the many organisations in Germany. There you will find support and social contacts. You can find contact details and information at the LSVD project "Queer Refugees Deutschland":

LSVD: Lesbian and Gay Association in Germany

Queer Refugees Germany" project

🌐 www.queer-refugees.de

@queer-refugees@lsvd.de