

# Welcome Address by Minister of State Claudia Roth, Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media

Thanks to the many years and broad range of efforts successfully carried out by the Coordination Office for the Preservation of Written Cultural Heritage (KEK), the preservation of this heritage has become firmly established as a matter of national concern. Governments at federal, state and local level all regard it as their shared task. In the KEK's more than thirteen years of existence, its work in building strategic networks has made it the key point of contact for the nationwide coordination of preservation efforts.

One milestone in the history of the KEK was the publication of its *National Recommendations for Action* in 2015, which helped to increase policy-makers' awareness of the importance of preserving written heritage as a national task. Based on a thorough inventory of threats to the written cultural heritage in Germany, the recommendations formulate strategic goals for coordinating the preservation of original written materials across subject areas and federal state boundaries.

The next logical step came in 2017, with the start of the special programme of the Office of the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM) for the preservation of the written cultural heritage, when additional funding of one million euros was made available for the first time. The programme was gratefully accepted, and funding was increased further in the following years. Federal funding of some 18.5 million euros has made possible more than 600 projects to date. Federal co-financing of up to 50% and the necessary collaboration with the participating state and local governments and institutions also had a significant impact on the preservation of original written materials in Germany. The special programme encouraged many federal states to create their own funding programmes.

After more than thirteen successful years, and together with the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States, which contributed to funding for the pilot projects from the start, we can look back on an impressive amount of support: a combined total of some 23.8 million euros in KEK funding for pilot projects and funding from the BKM special programme, which together have supported some 1,070 projects since 2010. This result was made possible by the enthusiastic and skilled efforts of the KEK, for which I am sincerely grateful to the KEK's director, Ursula Hartwig, and her team. In these times of increasingly difficult conditions and tighter budgets, it is important to secure the KEK's future and to continue working hard together to help preserve original written materials.

Preserving written cultural heritage means more than just saving the physical substance of books and documents. It also means preserving knowledge, under-

standing cultural identities, enabling future generations to experience history – and ensuring legal certainty. Because nothing can take the place of authenticity and the fascination of the original.

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