



Information on the opening of Publix

Status: 08.11.2024

- Why do you support journalism? - Five questions for Hans Schöpflin, founder of the Schöpflin Foundation
- Publix projects
- The network: The organisations in the house
- Publix director Maria Exner

This material is also available digitally in our press section: www.publix.de/presse

“We have a culture to defend!”

Publix is an initiative of the Lörrach-based Schöpflin Foundation. Founder, Hans Schöpflin, tells Maria Exner how protesting in the USA turned him into a philanthropist, and why he invests in journalism.

Hans Schöpflin is an entrepreneur and Chairman of the Board of the Schöpflin Foundation. He was born in 1941 to a family of entrepreneurs from Lörrach who made business history with their mail order company founded in 1907. Hans Schöpflin spent 40 years in the USA, first as an executive and then as a successful entrepreneur.

Mr Schöpflin, you’ve had a long career as an entrepreneur and investor, what does journalism mean to you?

I’ve always enjoyed reading the papers, I’ve always been interested in politics and topics concerning civil society. That said, I must admit that I’ve only ever taken to the street as an activist once. That was in 2001, I was at the Summit of the Americas in Quebec with the anti-globalisation movement. We went and raised our voices against the fact that large corporations had been consolidating their power and were intent on further exploitation. I experienced police brutality first hand with tear gas, water cannons, and so on. I was radicalized within two days.

Was that a turning point for you?

Definitely, the intense discussions around globalisation that followed the WTO conference in Seattle in 1999 were a real jolt in terms of how I looked at and thought about things until then. It became clear to me that you can’t sit on the fence about these things, you need to have an opinion and to stand up for it. And that is simply not possible without a free press that covers the news from a variety of perspectives. What does freedom of expression mean? What does freedom of assembly mean? These are actually rather fragile things.

Do you remember if there were particular positions or perspectives that you felt were lacking in media coverage concerning globalisation at that time?

Globalisation wasn’t questioned at all, and the damage it causes was only really addressed by the NGOs that were dealing with it seriously, scrutinizing corporations who would abuse their power under the guise of free trade, for example. It was then that I experienced for the first time what it’s like to have a view that does not line up with the current government and the mass media.

Was that what made you – as a philanthropist still living in the United States – want to support independent journalistic projects and institutions?

Yes, that's how it started. Shortly thereafter, I met with journalist, Amy Goodman, who was well known for "Democracy Now". She and I funded educational programmes for journalists. I went on to support the founders of the "Radio Ambulante" podcast, who had been working in the US to provide Spanish-language news content since 2012. I then became involved with "Voice of San Diego", however, and that was a very important experience for me. I had been living in San Diego at the time and saw for myself what happens when investors buy up, exploit, and essentially ruin a local media outlet, it's the same thing Elon Musk is doing with Twitter today. In the absence of any reliable local newspapers, I supported the launch of "Voice of San Diego", a digital media platform providing local content. It has since grown to include more than 100 local media outlets across the USA, all charitably funded.

You've been funding Correctiv here in Germany for some ten years now, in addition to a number of other organisations that provide journalists with further education as well as critical facilities and equipment. What would you say are the requirements to receive funding from the Schöpflin Foundation?

Well, it's hard to say which comes first: the people involved, the problem they tackle, or the idea behind it. I think it starts with the problem. If I go around thinking about an issue that's particularly important to me, there's a sort of osmosis that occurs, suddenly I'll meet someone working in that area, or I'll find the right doors opening. Where I'm involved in deciding who receives funding, I rely on my own experiences and on what I've learned from past mistakes. Above all, though, I rely on my intuition. It's not always about finding high flyers but rather about people's enthusiasm for a particular issue, their curiosity. Combine that with drive and with a certain determination, a certain stubbornness... that needs to be there for me to take the risk of backing something.

There's no guarantee it will work out, of course, but as long as you're right 50 percent of the time, you'll be successful.

Does that apply to both business and philanthropy?

It's the same thing as far as I'm concerned. You get responsible managers and entrepreneurs just as you get irresponsible ones. Unfortunately, the irresponsible ones get a lot more attention, which is why the business world has such a bad reputation.

Does the political orientation of a media project play a role when you, or the Schöpflin Foundation, make funding decisions?

It's important to me that people can get information from a variety of perspectives. Ideally, there should be real biodiversity in the media, so to speak.

That's an incredible asset. It's not a question of progressive and conservative, nor left or right. Every position can be dogmatic. Fundamentally, I'm against dogma and in favour of diversity.

I think that can be seen in the investments the Foundation makes in journalistic endeavours.

I agree. By funding Netzwerk Recherche, for example, we support the real labour of journalism in a bid to provide well-researched news. Again, it's not a question of upholding a particular political position. Take the new Media Forward Fund – which we co-founded – they promote the development of viable business models for media organisations that bridge specific gaps in news coverage, such as in local news, for example. The goal is to provide everyone with access to reliable information from a broad range of perspectives.

As the head of a funding body, how do you ensure the independence of the editorial offices and journalists you invest in is maintained?

By never trying to get involved when it comes to content. That would be simply unacceptable. I believe in the people I choose to support and I give them full autonomy. We can't just turn up and say: "you should do a piece on this topic". What we can say is: "take a look at this, do you think it's a topic that might interest you?" That way, we start a conversation but we don't exert any influence.

As part of its support for independent media, the Schöpflin Foundation has now brought Publix into being. What would you like to see happening here?

I'd like to see journalism flourishing and the content improving with every piece of research carried out. Again and again, we find political and economic interests interfering in journalistic practice. Ultimately, money exerts enormous influence.

At the same time, a lot of privately funded and quality media outlets long adhered to very effective standards. The financial and the editorial sides of things were kept strictly separate.

Absolutely, but current economic constraints have clearly been undermining those principles. With resources so scant, the dependence on advertising customers and financial backers increases.

Of course, you're a financial backer yourself.

That's true but the difference is that our funding model seeks to reinstate this separation that you mentioned between economic and editorial concerns, to really place it front and centre. We want to bolster journalistic freedoms and establish a

broad range of opinions. Philanthropic support is perhaps the best way to prevent any interference when it comes to content. It is a fundamental part of foundations' DNA to support funding recipients in their independence. At least, that's the proven practice of the Schöpflin Foundation.

In Germany, there aren't many Foundations left that invest in journalism. A total of eleven founders have had to pool their money in the Media Forward Fund, for example. What can we do next?

Independent journalism is so fundamental to the survival of civil society, for our democracy. That's my plea to existing foundations: come to your senses! Ideally, each and every foundation would dedicate five to ten percent of its funding to journalistic projects. We've fought hard for our democracy in the last 200 years, we have a culture to defend. There've always been ups and downs but what sense is there in giving up the ghost now?

Publix projects

Publix initiates and realizes projects with a focus on journalism and the public sphere. These activities take place in cooperation with partners and are supported by funding organizations.

Publix Collaboration program

Publix is a project by many for many. At its core is the conviction that the work of all those involved gains in quality and effectiveness through exchange, knowledge transfer and collaboration. This is why Publix launched a long-term collaboration program in September 2022, around two years before the opening, moderated by betterplace co:lab of betterplace.lab. A one-day conference by and for residents in November 2023 was a first milestone for the program. 150 people from more than 20 different organisations came together for this event. Since August 2024 they all work together at Publix. At the Opening in September 2024 the network has co-created the program of the Opening Conference as well as for the Open House.

Nina Grunenberg Fellowship

The fellowship for education journalism is aimed at freelance journalists and those based at local and national media and news agencies. The grant provides funding for journalists and media professionals interested in conducting in-depth reporting on schools and the education system in Germany. The Fellowship was initiated by the Wübben Stiftung Bildung, ZEIT STIFTUNG BUCERIUS and Schöpflin Stiftung.

Pipe Up! - die Wortwerkstatt

In cooperation with the initiative *Weiter Schreiben* and lead by Neukölln journalist and filmmaker Schokofeh Kamiz, Publix is designing the project "Pipe Up! - die Wortwerkstatt" for children and young people from the Berlin district. The program will start in 2025 in collaboration with schools in Neukölln. The aim of the "Word Workshop" is to create a space in which young people can find their voice and develop their skills in writing and media projects.

Media Forward Fund

Publix has evaluated the feasibility of a media fund in collaboration with the Schöpflin Foundation to ensure that public-interest-oriented journalistic projects receive funding beyond the start-up phase in future. This project was initially funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media. As a result the Media Forward Fund was started in July 2024. It is a new funding instrument that supports innovation projects and start-ups in the field of journalism for the common good in Switzerland, Austria and Germany.

Publix press contact:

Anne Gröger, Tel. ++49 (0) 151 -22 96 49 14, presse@publix.de
Hermannstr. 90, D-12051 Berlin



Civic Journalism Fellowship

The Allianz Foundation and Publix are joining forces to support promising players in journalism that is geared towards the common good. As part of the cooperation, the Kurdish journalist and political scientist Nalan Sipar will be funded as the first “Civic Journalism Fellow” in 2024. Since May 2024, she and the team from the digital publishing house MedyaN, which she founded, have been using the workspaces and studio infrastructure at Publix in Berlin Neukölln. Sipar is working on various formats aimed at increasing diversity in the German media landscape.

Technology Fellowship

With the Publix Technology Journalism Fellowship, journalists will deepen their knowledge in the areas of technology and technology policy as part of an advanced training program. They will gain insights into the history and development of artificial intelligence, look into reporting on technology beyond hype and mainstream and deep dive into investigations on tech policy. The program was developed with leading tech journalists and received funding from the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media as well as the ZEIT STIFTUNG BUCERIUS, Stiftung Mercator Schweiz and the Schöpflin Stiftung.

Shared Reading

In 2025 the project “Shared Reading” starts as an offer to the neighbourhood. It is proven method for reading together and bringing people together with literature across cultural, social and generational boundaries. In small groups, guided by a trained facilitator, world literature is read aloud and accompanied by discussions on the content that has been heard and read.

Salon 5

Salon5 is the youth editorial office of the non-profit media company CORRECTIV. The project teaches a conscious approach to media, imparts journalistic skills and supports young people in implementing their own ideas and topics editorially - with podcasts, videos and social media contributions. Salon5 organizes cultural events, holds workshops in schools, offers excursions, summer camps and educational trips and organizes meetings with actors from politics and civil society. Over seventy youth reporters work for Salon5 across Germany. From 2025, the activities are to be expanded to Berlin-Neukölln. Publix is supporting the preparations.

www.publix.de

Publix press contact:

Anne Gröger, Tel. ++49 (0) 151 -22 96 49 14, presse@publix.de
Hermannstr. 90, D-12051 Berlin

Network: Organisations based at Publix

These organisations work at Publix

are we europe Foundation

Non-profit media collective dedicated to innovation and diversity in the European media landscape

www.areweeurope.com

CORRECTIV

Non-profit independent newsroom specialising in investigative reporting, fact checking and a variety of journalistic projects

www.correctiv.de

Gesunde Erde Gesunde Menschen

Foundation advocating for solution-oriented communication to protect planetary health

www.stiftung-geg.m.de

GOOD IMPACT

Magazin for social change through constructive journalism

www.goodimpact.eu

Headliner

Combines journalism and culture to create an inspiring stage show

www.headliner.eu

Investigate Europe

European cooperative of cross-border journalists

www.investigate-europe.eu

JX Fund

European Fund for exile journalism

www.jx-fund.org

klimareporter

Independent Newsroom for reports and analysis on climate change, energy transition and environmental policy

www.klimareporter.de

laif foundation

Foundation for independent photojournalism
www.laif-foundation.org

Lie Detectors

European organisation for media literacy education in schools
www.lie-detectors.org

Media Development investment Fund

Provides financing to help independent media build strong businesses and safeguard their editorial independence
www.mdif.org

Media Forward Fund

Fund facilitating media diversity and the development of new business models in media organisations serving the common good
www.mediaforwardfund.org

More in Common

Think tank concentrating on social cohesion and strengthening democracy
www.moreincommon.de

Netzwerk Recherche

Association of investigative journalists promoting public interest reporting
www.netzwerkrecherche.org

Reporterfabrik

Online academy for journalists and curious citizens
www.reporterfabrik.org

Reporter Ohne Grenzen

International human rights organisation protecting journalists and press freedom
www.reporter-ohne-grenzen.de

SEEK initiative

Initiative educating in investigative research methods for the democratisation of knowledge in the public interest
www.seekinitiative.org

**Superrr Lab**

Feminist initiative on digital policy issues and the future of the media

www.superrr.net

Tactical Tech

Organisation with educational and consultational programs on the influence of digital technologies on society

www.tacticaltech.org

tell me why

Production company for documentaries on issues relevant to society

www.tellmewhy.media

Vertical 52

Satellite journalism for investigative research

www.vertical52.org

Wort und Bild Verlag

Media organisation developing health communication

www.wub-media.de

Allianz Foundation

Foundation aiming to enable better living conditions for the next generations

www.allianzfoundation.org

Deutsche Postcode Lotterie

State-licensed private lottery for the public benefit

www.postcode-lotterie.de

www.publix.de

Publix press contact:

Anne Gröger, Tel. +49 – (0)151 -22 96 49 14, presse@publix.de

Hermannstr. 90, D-12051 Berlin



Publix Director Maria Exner

Maria Exner was born in Dresden in 1984. After attending school in Dresden and Erlangen, she studied journalism at the AMD Academy for Fashion & Design in Munich and cultural sociology and urban studies at the London School of Economics.

She completed her traineeship at the Axel Springer Academy in Berlin. She then worked as a reporter for Die Welt, Welt am Sonntag and Berliner Morgenpost. From 2011, she worked as culture editor, later deputy editor-in-chief and managing editor at ZEIT ONLINE. In 2020, she moved to the editorial board of ZEITmagazin and became editor-in-chief together with Sascha Chaimowitz in 2021.

She has been Director and Managing Director of Publix since 2022. In this role, she is responsible for the company's programme as well as the development of the Publix network and the 20-strong Publix team.

Awards, special projects, honorary posts (a selection):

2016

Foundation of the Z2X festival for young people by ZEIT ONLINE

2017

Foundation of the dialogue project 'Deutschland Spricht'

(honoured with the Jean Monnet Prize for European Integration, the Grimme Online Award and the IPRA President's Award)

2021

kress Award 'Magazine Editor-in-Chief of the Year' with Sascha Chaimowitz

2023

Thomas Mann Fellow in Los Angeles

since 2023

Member of the Future Council

'Council for the Future Development of Public Broadcasting', appointed by the Broadcasting Commission of the Federal States in Germany