



MAECENATA FOUNDATION

MENA Study Centre
Centre for the Study of the Middle East

The Maecenata Foundation's **MENA Study Centre** was launched in February 2019. Its mission is to give research support to the Foundation's other programmes and projects in as far as these touch on issues concerning the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) and Islamic issues in general. Furthermore, the centre conducts its own research, policy, and convening projects in order to contribute to intercultural dialogue and understanding.

Background

Since it was founded in 1997, the **Maecenata Institute for Philanthropy and Civil Society**, an independent research and policy centre, has touched on topics concerning Islamic religion and societies governed by Islamic principles. In particular, it has conducted extensive research into intercultural and interreligious dialogue and drawn attention to civil society viewpoints of Islamic activities in Germany, with a particular focus on philanthropic and civic action. A multi-year research project on **Religious Communities and Civil Society in Europe** has recently been completed.

Since the incorporation of the Maecenata Institute into the **Maecenata Foundation** in 2010, and the launch of the **Europe Bottom Up Programme** in 2011, there has been an increased focus on Islamic culture. In 2012, within this programme, the **Europe and the Mediterranean Project** convened four fora with participants from nearly every country that borders on the Mediterranean and other European countries. The increasing interest in intercultural dialogue and Islamic and Middle Eastern affairs led to the establishment of a specific MENA Study Centre.

The MENA Study Centre was involved in the establishment of the **European *wasatia* Graduate School for Peace and Conflict Resolution** at the Europa-Universität, Flensburg in 2021, and reinforces its work in terms of content and with organisational support. Its Director is also Co-Editor of the series **Reconciliation and Conflict Resolution (ReCo)**, which is produced by the publisher Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft (WBG) in collaboration with the School.

The Maecenata Foundation plans to broaden its perspective in relation to the MENA region and the Islamic world in general, and to focus particularly on a civil society, intercultural, and interreligious dialogue. In this context, the position of religious and ethnic minorities, both in Europe and the MENA region merits special attention. The MENA Study Centre will contribute its expertise to this endeavour.

Working Principles

Situated **between academia, policy, and the field**, the MENA Study Centre will

- monitor and comment on developments in the region between North and Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, the Caucasian region, and Central Asia;
- participate actively in debates concerning the resolution of conflicts and tensions in these regions;
- scrutinise German and European policies relating to the MENA region;
- offer a space for debate to political and civil society leaders from the MENA region;
- provide academic support to all programmes and projects of the Maecenata Foundation relating to the MENA region;
- engage in pressing issues by convening experts from academia, politics, and the media for meetings and conferences of various formats and invite them to submit papers for publication.

All aspects of civil society and the role of civil society actors in the MENA region will receive the centre's special attention.

The MENA Study Centre is a small working unit within the Maecenata Foundation. It operates independently, but in close cooperation with the Foundation's other programmes. In order to succeed and be visible in the overall policy domain, networking with other organisations is of utmost importance. The value added offered by the MENA Study Centre lies in its ability to react spontaneously to events and developments and to offer in-depth analyses at short notice.

The MENA Study Centre is based in Berlin, Germany.

Director

Prof. Dr. Udo Steinbach

Offices

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The Mena Study Centre is part of the Maecenata Foundation, Oberföhringer Straße 18, 81679 Munich.

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