

## 09: Ministry of Compassion

### **Maria Milisavljević:**

The Ministry of Compassion is a collective of art and cultural workers that was founded in 2018 and offers empathetic resistance against social coldness and also the brutalisation of language. What that means exactly is that we are a group that is not organised hierarchically. So for us it's like this: whoever participates is a minister of compassion and gets involved. Those who have time and capacity contribute more than those who have other commitments.

The whole thing works free of charge for us, or at a price that is an expense allowance, and then the fee that is there flows back into the ministry and is used for other projects or for further training on our part. In the context of compassion. And in the whole, the actions that we do are very diverse. We have the artificial figure of the Minister for Compassion. That means that when I say that everyone is a Minister of Compassion, it always means that as soon as one Minister of Compassion is in the room, all the people in the room are Ministers of Compassion from our perspective.

Because compassion, in our view, is both a political force and an attitude and decision that people can take. And yet, within that, there is this artificial figure of the minister. From her perspective, for example, there were texts that we wrote in which the minister speaks, expresses wishes and attitudes or conducts interviews. For example, an interview with Europe. And in this context she takes the position that compassion is a political force.

Other formats we had were, for example, a poster campaign for the Bundestag elections. Because we like to think about society from the position of the weakest and want to represent that politically. Another format is the minister's office hours. This is a discussion format in which the aim is to exchange ideas about solidarity, compassion or other aspects depending on the context. But to create a very conscious listening situation in which the person opposite is actually given all the space to speak. You are allowed to speak, but it is about listening, practising and through that, compassion.

And so the Ministry of Compassion is actually more of a place that is created where an action takes place, be it on the street, because I see one of the posters that says: "Compassion simply has no lobby" or "All unpaid, invisible extra work here" or within the office hours, which ideally do not take place in places of culture and art. We prefer to choose town halls or simply public places, places of public life, so that access is actually created, also for people who do not only come from this area of art and culture, of whom one often has the feeling that they have a willingness to commit themselves to solidarity and compassion anyway, without that now being an insinuation. But our aim is to act in society as a whole, which is indeed a challenge that we are constantly reassessing.