

June 4, 2009

Bertelsmann Stiftung Mission Statement

The Bertelsmann Stiftung Mission Statement presents our core beliefs. It serves as a guideline for our employees, stating the goals of our work and the manner in which we strive to achieve them. In addition, it provides a framework for how we collaborate with each other.

The Bertelsmann Stiftung was founded by Reinhard Mohn in 1977 based on his conviction that financial wellbeing entails social responsibility. As he himself has stated, “Surely every responsible citizen in a democracy is concerned when the social order fails to live up to its promise. It was precisely this concern that prompted my desire to help make a difference.”

Our values

In the global competition between social orders, we put our faith in representative democracy and a social market economy. Both are based on fundamental values that we share: freedom, solidarity, competition and goodwill. Individual freedom and the ability to pursue one’s goals and vision are essential preconditions for self-fulfillment and happiness. Solidarity is the foundation for social cohesion, particularly in a democracy. Competition provides people with an important incentive to develop their potential and contribute to the community. At the same time, competition must be subject to certain limits, so that every member of society is afforded a fair chance. A humane society is founded on goodwill and a profound respect for the inviolable dignity of all human beings, as well as their backgrounds and individuality, their cultural and religious beliefs.

Our motto

“Inspiring People. Shaping the Future. Participating in a Globalized World.” This motto summarizes the work carried out by the Bertelsmann Stiftung. Effective participation in society requires both the ability to act and the opportunity to do so. The Bertelsmann Stiftung’s programs are designed to strengthen society by helping individuals realize their full potential, and to further develop the systems necessary to achieve this goal.

Germany is facing enormous challenges resulting from globalization, demographic change, diversity and the country’s transition to a modern, knowledge-based society. Through our programs, we seek to provide people with the knowledge and skills they need to participate – economically, politically and culturally – in our increasingly complex and interconnected world. In short, our work focuses on the individual.

Our goals

If people are to participate they must be given a chance. Accordingly, our programs promote a society based on equal opportunity, democratic values, economic security and social integration. We therefore carry out projects in a number of sectors, such as education and healthcare, while promoting corporate social responsibility.

Globalization and technological progress are crucial factors determining whether society opens its doors to all of its members, which is why we take them into account in our project work. All of our programs maintain an awareness of global issues such as democracy, migration and sustainability, as well as global economics, developments in the global community and the technological opportunities offered by a knowledge-based society.

While globalization cannot be stopped, it can certainly be influenced in a positive way. We focus on the disadvantaged, those who have not been able or allowed to

make use of their opportunities. They too need to be integrated into society. While globalization has brought prosperity to millions, it has also led to injustice, both between and within nations. Like many others, we see a need for change in the social order, both in Germany and the global community.

Accordingly, we help people participate in our globalized world. Every individual must have the opportunity to contribute if he or she is to share in the fundamental values of freedom, democracy, solidarity and goodwill.

Our work

The Bertelsmann Stiftung is a politically nonpartisan organization where people look toward the future as they seek opportunities to bring about positive change. We are not content merely to identify good ideas. We want to proactively “help to improve our world,” to quote our founder, Reinhard Mohn.

In accordance with his vision, the Bertelsmann Stiftung is structured as a private operating foundation. Unlike grant-making or charitable foundations, we do not fund the projects of individuals or other organizations, as stipulated in our Articles of Incorporation. Instead, we dedicate our resources to projects that we design, initiate and – where possible and desired – support as they are implemented. To that end, we work in close collaboration with a range of partners.

Our aim is to identify and implement viable solutions to pressing social problems. In order to strengthen society, provide individuals with greater opportunities and shape Germany’s future, it is important to learn from best practices developed elsewhere, as we do with the help of our offices abroad. The Bertelsmann Stiftung employs numerous methodologies and approaches in its work; based on the target group and desired outcome, these might range from conducting surveys and organizing panel discussions to developing complex applications.

Like others, we are subject to the rapid changes currently reshaping the world we live in, and we seek flexible solutions in response. Using a flat hierarchy and with an emphasis on teamwork, we remain willing to challenge ourselves and to address the necessary changes with innovative ideas. At the same time, programs that have proven effective or that need time to reach their full potential must be allowed to continue.

We want to make an impact – but not in secret. The Bertelsmann Stiftung therefore focuses on being transparent. We make our findings available to the public, through free downloads from our website, for example. This is our contribution to the public debate, and we aspire to no greater role than that, since we are only one actor in the democratic whole. We live and work in an open society. Our political leaders and society at large are therefore the ones who ultimately decide whether our proposed reforms become reality.

Bertelsmann Stiftung Executive Board and Management