

Mission Statement

Values – Mission – Goals – Work





Bertelsmann Stiftung Mission Statement

The Bertelsmann Stiftung Mission Statement presents our core beliefs. It also 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 the belief that financial wellbeing entails social responsibility. In establishing the foundation, Mohn was acting on his conviction that material wealth brings with it an obligation to help others.

“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.”

Reinhard Mohn

In the global competition between social orders, we put our faith in representative democracy and a social market economy. Both are based on values that we believe to be fundamentally important: freedom, solidarity 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. A humane society is founded on goodwill and a profound respect for the inviolable dignity of all human beings, as well as respect for their backgrounds and individuality, their cultural and religious beliefs.

“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, cultural 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.

Inspiring people. Shaping the future.

If people are to participate they must be given a chance. Accordingly, our programs promote a society based on equal opportunity, democratic values, economic stability and social integration. We therefore carry out projects in a number of sectors, such as education and health care, 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 economic and political developments, and the 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.

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

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 improve our world,” to quote our founder, Reinhard Mohn.

In accordance with his vision, the Bertelsmann Stiftung is involved in designing all of the projects it promotes. We dedicate our financial and human resources to activities that we plan, initiate and – where possible and desired – support as they are carried out. To that end, we work in close collaboration with a range of partners within society.

Our aim is to identify and develop viable solutions to pressing social problems so we can help implement them on site. In order to strengthen society, provide individuals with better opportunities and shape Germany’s future, it is important to learn from best practices developed elsewhere, which we do with the help of others, including 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 discussions to developing applications.

For us, competition is a key driver of social change. It provides people with an important incentive to develop their potential and contribute to the common good. At the same time, competition must take place within a framework that ensures every member of society is afforded a fair chance.

As is true of others’ work, our efforts are subject to the rapid changes currently reshaping the world, and we seek flexible solutions in response. Using a flat hierarchy and with an emphasis on teamwork, we remain willing to challenge our-



selves as we develop innovative approaches. Yet we also give programs time to reach their full potential that have proven effective or that are meant to bring about sustainable change.

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 a number of channels, including information users can download from our website free of charge. This is our contribution to the public debate, and we aspire to no greater role than that, since we are only one participant 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.

Gütersloh, May 2023

Executive Board

Dr. Ralph Heck (Vors.)

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