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Promoting reform in times of change

In 2017, 40 years after its founding, the Bertelsmann Stiftung was actively engaged in 70 projects. A greater focus will now be put on the megatrends of digitization, globalization and demographic change.

ANSPRECHPARTNER



Dr. Thomas Wittek

Gütersloh – March 13, 2018. In 2017, the year it celebrated its 40th anniversary, the Bertelsmann Stiftung was engaged in some 70 projects in the areas of education, democracy, social affairs, health, culture and economics. It invested a total of €55 million directly in its program activities. The foundation currently has 380 employees. In 1977, in view of his success as a business leader, Reinhard Mohn acknowledged his duty to give back to society. "The overriding goal of the Bertelsmann Stiftung is to make it possible for everyone to participate in society and to promote the reforms needed to make that happen," said Aart De Geus, chairman and CEO of the Bertelsmann Stiftung.

The Bertelsmann Stiftung faced a number of special challenges in 2017, the year of Germany's parliamentary elections: the fears many people have about the future, the nationalist tendencies making themselves felt in Europe,

growing populism, economic protectionism, and the lengthy process required to form a government in Germany, all of which resulted in a tense and critical atmosphere and a growing sense of uncertainty. "We firmly believe that the time of wake-up calls is over," De Geus said. "We heard the calls quite some time ago. Now we must show that pluralistic societies and democracies are the best environment for living in freedom, security and prosperity."

In 2017, the Bertelsmann Stiftung therefore used its evidence-based studies and projects to create an arena for informed debate and, in times of change, to advocate for broad-based social participation. In doing so, it moved the agenda forward significantly in its six program areas of education, democracy, social affairs, health, culture and economics. It proposed reforms for Germany's political system, for example, and action plans for the eurozone. Under the banner of "Smart Country" it further advanced digitization efforts. In cooperation with German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, it launched the event series Bellevue Forum for the Future of Democracy. Moreover, it released much-cited forecasts of the growing number of school students and severe shortage of teachers in Germany. In addition, NEUE STIMMEN celebrated its 30th anniversary.

Greater focus in 2018 on the megatrends of digitization, globalization and demographic change

In 2018, the Bertelsmann Stiftung will remain committed to these activities while putting a greater focus on the three megatrends of digitization, globalization and demographic change. "We are living in a world that is being fundamentally transformed. This is providing us with a better understanding of today's major issues and reform drivers and leading us to engage more intensively with the topics that will determine our future," De Geus said. In addition, the Bertelsmann Stiftung will continue taking an international perspective. The foundation's international affiliates will play a key role here, for example the Bertelsmann Foundation North America in Washington, DC, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2018 and which realigned its work at the beginning of the year.

Reinhard Mohn Prize 2018: "Living Diversity – Shaping Society"

Dedicated to the topic "Living Diversity – Shaping Society," this year's Reinhard Mohn Prize is examining the issue of how participation works and cohesiveness can be improved in diverse societies. Religious, ethnic and ideological diversity have become more apparent in recent years; at the same time, they have been subject to increasing criticism. On June 7, the Bertelsmann Stiftung will honor former German President Joachim Gauck in Gütersloh Theater as a bridge-

builder in a culturally diverse society. In preparation for the event, the project team has identified innovative approaches and exemplary solutions from around the globe. "German society is changing and is now home to people of different cultural backgrounds, religions and values," explained Liz Mohn, vice-chairwoman of the Bertelsmann Stiftung Executive Board. "This diversity has increased in recent years as a result of immigration and the arrival of refugees. We therefore need a new sense of community in Germany."

Early democracy promotion and analysis of digital health-care systems

Since 2009, the Bertelsmann Stiftung has been engaged in helping young children learn how to make democratic decisions. The project cooperates with 16 institutions responsible for 1,000 preschools and 13,000 educators. To reach them all, 100 individuals were trained over the last 18 months to show educators how they can introduce councils and constitutions in their preschools. This year the Bertelsmann Stiftung will also develop free massive open online courses (MOOCs) for preschool and school teachers to provide them with practical support.

Germany's health-care system must find new solutions if it wants to respond to the challenges resulting from demographic change and make care provision more efficient. The Bertelsmann Stiftung wants to help the country achieve that goal by learning from the experience gained elsewhere. In 2018, it will therefore be using the international Digital Health Index to examine and compare the digitization strategies of 17 different health-care systems. The international study will answer a series of questions, including which technologies can be used effectively, which roles and responsibilities should be assumed by which policy players, and the overall opportunities and limits of a digital health-care system. "In order to make use of digitization's health-care potential more consistently than has been the case in the past, we believe we need three things: a clear goal, a comprehensive national strategy, and politicians who take responsibility, lead and move things forward," said Brigitte Mohn, member of the Bertelsmann Stiftung Executive Board.

Participation in the educational system: Integrating low-qualified individuals into the labor market

The Bertelsmann Stiftung uses a number of projects to increase the visibility of occupational skills. In Germany, for example, many people have years of employment experience, but no official qualification. The same is true of refugees, many of whom worked in their native country but are unable to produce formal documentation. At the same time, a number of industries have a

growing need for skilled workers, with the Federal Employment Agency listing almost 800,000 open positions, 10 percent more than a year ago. "We want to give people the opportunity to show what they can do, get a better assessment of their chances on the job market, acquire additional qualifications and, as a result, find an adequate job that is recognized appropriately," said Jörg Dräger, member of the Bertelsmann Stiftung Executive Board. The Bertelsmann Stiftung already offers "competence cards" and "career cards" that facilitate the necessary assessments.

The Bertelsmann Stiftung also operates meine-berufserfahrung.de, an online platform that allows people without formal qualifications to make an initial self-assessment for eight occupations in six languages. "Increasing the visibility of informal skills is an important step for many people," Dräger said. "We will continue developing and expanding our offerings in this area."

Links

[To the annual report \(complete report\)](#)

[To the annual report \(extract with interactive charts\)](#)