

PRESS RELEASE

Strengthening the values of civil society

In these challenging times, the Bertelsmann Stiftung is working to strengthen the values that underpin civil society. It is supporting efforts to help Ukraine, promoting social cohesion and focusing more on the concerns of young people. The foundation also wants to use its work to address the findings from current studies, which it presented at its annual press conference in Gütersloh. The findings show that social cohesion has improved slightly in Germany, but also that Germans have been feeling more uncertain since the start of the war in Ukraine.

Gütersloh – May 31, 2022. A new survey by the Bertelsmann Stiftung shows that only about 20 percent of Germans feel as secure as they did before the outbreak of war in Ukraine. Almost 70 percent of those surveyed say they worry that the war could spread to Germany. Yet a clear majority also say they are in favor of supporting Ukraine – only about 10 percent oppose such support. Even though the number of Covid cases decreased slowly this spring, people in Germany are once again cautiously optimistic. And although just short of 80 percent of respondents said in May that they view social cohesion in Germany as being in jeopardy, that is still four percentage points less than in February.

Those findings were presented by the Bertelsmann Stiftung at its 2022 annual press conference, whose participants included Ralph Heck and Brigitte Mohn, the members of the Bertelsmann Stiftung Executive Board, and Liz Mohn, president of the Liz Mohn Center and the foundation's worldwide representative. "The Bertelsmann Stiftung is committed to helping create a strong Europe, and to promoting freedom and democracy as well as solidarity and goodwill," explained Heck, chairman of the foundation's Executive Board. "The foundation and its employees are engaged participants in civil society. Civil society throughout Europe is currently challenged, and we at the Bertelsmann Stiftung also face the task of finding solutions that will allow us to live together in peace and freedom."

Liz Mohn, president of the Liz Mohn Center, which was established at the end of 2021, emphasized during the press conference how important it is to support democracy, especially now. "In light of recent developments, there is one thing we cannot forget: Democracy has been the most successful form of government in the West since the Second World War. Yet if we take democracy for granted, that itself is a threat to democracy. Democracy must continue to develop. It must continue to evolve. It must become more diverse, timely and sustainable," Mohn said. The Liz Mohn Center continues Mohn's engagement at the Bertelsmann Stiftung in order to ensure her wide-ranging expertise and international network remain accessible. The center focuses on the four fields of International Relations, Future Leadership, Power of Culture and the new focus area Global Talents, which is designed to aid the younger generation in its participation in society and its personal development.

Help for Ukraine

The Bertelsmann Stiftung is participating in the Alliance4Ukraine partnership and assisting schools in welcoming and providing online instruction for Ukrainian students. It also supports aid programs run by community foundations and has launched a project called Strengthening Communities in the Ukrainian Crisis, which enables experts to help in the integration of refugees.

“Germany and the world face increasingly complex challenges: the war in Ukraine, climate change, global pandemics, the aging of society, the digitalization of all areas in life – in other words, creating a world the next generation can live in. We must design, develop and test solutions that can achieve that goal,” explained Brigitte Mohn, member of the foundation’s Executive Board. What is needed is a comprehensive and global transformation of the economy and society toward a sustainable way of life. The key to this is innovation. The Bertelsmann Stiftung is working to strengthen innovation in Germany and Europe.

Successfully completed strategy process

In order to respond more effectively to the challenges currently facing civil society, the Bertelsmann Stiftung implemented a strategy process, thereby pooling its projects in six major programs. The new programs are: Democracy and Social Cohesion, Europe’s Future, Sustainable Social Market Economies, Digitalization and the Common Good, Education and the Next Generation, and Health.

Discussing the foundation’s future work, Heck said: “With our strategy, we want to focus more on the concerns young people have in particular. Young people don’t feel that school is preparing them adequately for life. We want to change that – especially through the work we’re doing in our new program Education and the Next Generation. Other new focus topics include promoting digitalization so that it benefits the common good and creating a sustainable economy that is fit for the future. We’ve integrated the topic of sustainability into our activities, a topic I believe is integral to all the work we do.”

Since it was established 45 years ago, the Bertelsmann Stiftung has made some €1.8 billion available for its nonprofit activities, including €66 million in 2021. The foundation employs 326 people at its offices and affiliates in Gütersloh, Berlin, Brussels, Washington and Barcelona.

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About the Bertelsmann Stiftung: Inspiring people. Shaping the future.

The Bertelsmann Stiftung is committed to enabling social participation for everyone – politically, economically and culturally. Our programs include Education and the Next Generation, Democracy and Social Cohesion, Digitalization and the Common Good, Europe’s Future, Health, and Sustainable Social Market Economies. In our work, we focus on people, since only they can change the world and make it better. We share knowledge, promote expertise and develop solutions. A nonprofit foundation, the Bertelsmann Stiftung was established in 1977 by Reinhard Mohn. **For more information, please visit: www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de**

