

PRESS RELEASE

Kickoff with Germany's Chancellor: Bertelsmann Stiftung presents its 2024 topic "Strengthen democracy!"

Democracies are under pressure around the world. Elections will be held in many regions – the US, Europe and Germany – in 2024, a year that will determine what comes next politically. As a result, the Bertelsmann Stiftung wants to increase its efforts to strengthen democracy. The foundation's activities in 2024 will therefore focus on making democracy more efficient, more resilient and more responsive to people's needs. The kickoff will take place at a panel discussion with Germany's Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Berlin.

Gütersloh – March 14, 2024. Democracy will be put to the test worldwide in 2024. Elections for the European Parliament and the presidential election in the US will be especially decisive for the future of liberal democracy. In Germany as well, parliamentary elections in three of the country's eastern states could result in far-reaching changes in the political landscape. Social cohesion has become more fragile, political debates are more polarized – in government institutions, in the media and on the streets. "Strengthen democracy!" will therefore serve as the focus topic for the Bertelsmann Stiftung's activities in 2024.

To launch the year's activities, the foundation will welcome Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz to its Berlin premises this coming Monday, March 18. Germany's head of government will be joined by Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev to discuss the topic "How to bolster our democracy effectively" before an audience of political, business, civil society, academic and media representatives. The previously unpublished key findings from the Bertelsmann Stiftung's new Transformation Index (BTI) will then be presented. In 2022, the BTI showed that autocracies outnumbered democracies for the first time. The subsequent panel discussion with international experts in Berlin will therefore concentrate on the question of how democracies can be strengthened worldwide. The event will be streamed live on the [Bertelsmann Stiftung website](#).

"Bring the idea of a free and just society to life"

"Since its founding by Reinhard Mohn, the Bertelsmann Stiftung has worked to promote democracy and ensure it remains vibrant. Democracy must become more efficient, more resilient and more responsive to people's needs if it is to renew its appeal. In 2024, a year of crucial elections, democracies will have major international challenges to face, since new and inclusive governance systems must be developed in Europe and around the world. We want to use our work and expertise to help achieve that goal – and to bring the idea of a free and just society to life," say Bertelsmann Stiftung Executive Board members Ralph Heck, Brigitte Mohn and Daniela Schwarzer.

Protecting democracy from disinformation

This year, the Bertelsmann Stiftung will be putting a special focus on combatting disinformation. Fake political content and statements that are deliberately disseminated on the Internet and social media can severely undermine trust in democracy and its institutions. As a result, the foundation is dedicating the current Reinhard Mohn Prize to the topic "Strengthen democracy – counter disinformation." To that end, the affiliated project [Upgrade](#)

[Democracy](#) brings together scientific analysis, concrete solutions and exemplary initiatives from Europe, North and South America, Asia and Africa. The ceremony to award the prize is planned for autumn 2024.

In other practical projects, the foundation is concentrating on raising awareness of disinformation among the public and sharing methods people can use to protect themselves from it. For example, it launched the [Forum gegen Fakes \(Forum Against Fakes\)](#) at the beginning of the year. People throughout Germany can use the participative platform to discuss disinformation and to develop recommendations on how to deal with it that will be passed on to policy makers. Raising awareness and getting people actively involved is also the goal of the pilot project [faktenstark \(strong on facts\)](#), which the foundation recently launched in the state of Saxony together with a number of partners. Workshops and events organized locally are addressing the topic of disinformation, especially in light of the state elections scheduled to be held in Saxony on September 1.

Focus on young voters

If democracy is to have a viable future, young people must take an interest in politics and get involved. That is why the Bertelsmann Stiftung has partnered with the European Youth Parliament to launch the project [#NowEurope](#). The aim of the project is to show young people in Germany aged 16 and older how they can help shape the EU themselves, thereby inspiring them to participate in the European elections on June 9.

The presidential election in the United States on November 5 also plays a crucial role, since the decision on who will reside in the White House is one of global political importance. The Bertelsmann Stiftung will therefore be cooperating closely with its US-based affiliate, the Bertelsmann Foundation North America, to make numerous analyses and informational materials available, along with practical projects on democracy education.

Additional information and materials on the Bertelsmann Stiftung's democracy projects will be available as of March 18 on our [website](#).

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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**

