

Stiftung Mercator

Mercator 2013:
Inspiring Ideas, Achieving Objectives

Mercator Foundation

Stiftung Merc

Mercator 2013: Inspiring Ideas, Achieving Objectives
The Strategy of Stiftung Mercator

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Dear Friends and Partners,

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A good ten years after its foundation, Stiftung Mercator implemented fundamental changes to its structure and organization. We embarked on a path of planned growth, were able to significantly increase the volume of grants allocated by the Foundation, recruited highly competent new colleagues to our team and moved into new offices. Above all, however, we undertook an intensive process of strategic realignment in 2008. The first step in this process was to clearly define our fields of activities, our attitude and our values; at the end of 2008, our management board approved our new strategy “Mercator 2013 – Inspiring Ideas, Achieving Objectives”. Over the months that followed, we gave concrete form to this strategy in our three thematic clusters of Integration, Climate Change and Cultural education, setting ourselves clear and measurable targets to be achieved in subsequent years:

- Climate 2020: We wish to prevent dangerous climate change
- Integration 2020: We wish to shape Germany’s immigration society and drive integration forward
- Cultural society 2020: We wish to increase the importance of cultural education in Germany

Our vision is fairness and equal opportunities for everyone to participate in central areas of society’s life. Fairness and participation are the basis and

Preface

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objective of all our endeavours. They are also the overarching aims that define our efforts to prevent dangerous climate change, to promote integration and to strengthen cultural education. Today's globalized world demands of us that we fight for these values on both a regional and a global level.

Having studied the work pursued by foundations around the world over the past 150 years, we believe it is only natural for us to adopt a strategic course of action. We are convinced that the future belongs to foundations whose work follows a targeted and strategic approach aimed at achieving the maximum possible impact.

In this brochure we would like to explain to you in more detail how we work and which targets we hope to achieve in which fields of activity. We take this opportunity to thank all our partners and friends who have accompanied and supported us during our strategic process and look forward to continuing to work together with you in inspiring ideas and pursuing our goals.



Dr. Bernhard Lorentz, President

Our Mission S

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Inspiring Ideas

Our world thrives on the ideas of committed individuals. We have to grasp, develop and implement these ideas. Our foundation provides social perspectives so that people can shape dynamic change processes to create tomorrow's world on the basis of mutual respect and peaceful cooperation.

Our Location – Our Identity

Retail entrepreneur Karl Schmidt from Duisburg and his family established our foundation at the end of the 1990s.

It is named after Duisburg cartographer and humanist, Gerhard Mercator (1512–1594). In a world characterized by fundamental change, he created the geographical maps and coordinates that improved the global exchange of goods and ideas.

Mercator's cosmopolitan attitude and his commitment to knowledge transfer are both inspiration and motivation for Stiftung Mercator.

Statement

New Approaches – New Ideas

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To move things that move people in an open society, you need creativity, visions and the commitment to implement these ideas.

Stiftung Mercator

// Supports science and research

// Advocates a comprehensive education for children, adolescents and young adults

// Promotes dialogue and understanding between people with different cultural backgrounds as the prerequisite for peaceful cohabitation

Our Objectives

Stiftung Mercator's objectives are:

// To set positive examples which encourage responsibility and imaginativeness as indispensable creative powers for social progress

// To support the creativity of decision makers and to support the ideas of committed individuals

// To initiate forward-looking projects independently and in conjunction with partner

// To set standards of transparency and quality which apply to both us and to our partners

Our Organizat

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Stiftung Mercator is organized into three centres: science and humanities, education and international affairs. Each centre focuses its work on selected fields of activity, tracks conditions and developments in these fields, and is actively involved in shaping them. Communication and administration are cross-functional activities.

We have also defined three overarching thematic clusters that will further broaden the profile of Stiftung Mercator in the coming years: integration – in the sense of learning and living in a society characterized by diversity – climate change and cultural education. These tie in with and build upon our existing competencies. In each of these clusters, we have set ourselves concrete, measurable targets which we intend to achieve through a combination of advocacy and practical projects. We will be investing a major part of our resources in these areas in the next few years.

Our activities are thus structured by a contents-based matrix of centres and thematic clusters. Stiftung Mercator pursues its socio-political objectives in its three clusters of integration, climate change and cultural education within the context of the special and changing conditions of science and humanities, education and international affairs. Thus the centres determine their own fields of activity, while at the same time contributing to the achievement of the strategic targets in the thematic clusters.

Our Approach

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We set ourselves goals which reflect our own competencies and promote a competition of ideas in order to achieve these goals. The focus here is on fields in which we can employ our strengths to gain maximum impact: as a foundation, we are able to act independently of the market and of politics. The central question for us therefore is not where the greatest socio-political demand lies, but where we as a private foundation can deploy our resources better than all other actors and where we can make a difference. This is important, as foundations have limited financial resources at their disposal as compared to government budgets. Effective foundation work, in other words, involves a great deal more than simply spending money. Foundations tend to achieve greater success when they pursue long-term goals beyond traditional grantmaking and where they themselves play a role as socio-political actors. This is the only way in which they can fully exploit their potential. In addition to financial commitment, this also requires us to utilize our networks, our knowledge and our reputation. We want to make sure that our activities are always understood and perceived as a long-term investment in processes of social reform.

to Work

To pursue and achieve our targets, we combine practical projects with socio-political advocacy. For us, advocacy means publicly fighting for the issues we feel strongly about and for our goals, taking a stance and generating sufficient attention to these issues whenever this is conducive to achieving our targets. Alongside concrete practical projects, we also wish to take an active part in social discourse on our areas of thematic focus. We engage only in fields in which we have our own practical experience and competencies. We follow a targeted and strategic approach in our work, and canvass for approval and majority support for our activities. Being an independent private foundation, we are also able to bring together different sectors and networks. This is how we wish to achieve impact on a systemic level.

Our approach to work is business-like, professional and international. Our aim is to initiate and promote entrepreneurial solutions to socio-political challenges. For us, entrepreneurial means using our results as the yardstick for our success. These are what we measure ourselves by. We evaluate and learn from our work. We establish lasting organizational structures in the interests of capacity building, and our projects continue to have an impact even after they have finished. International benchmarking is an important part of our work in all areas. As a private foundation, we can try out new methodologies and also take risks when it comes to supporting ideas for the public good.

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Transparency and communication are core elements of our work. Our reputation depends not only on whether we achieve our goals, but also on whether, as a non-profit organization, we make these goals and our paths to them transparent. We thus make our governance structures, decision-making processes and selection criteria public and explain them. Professional communication is of central importance if a foundation's strategic work is to be effective. Because we believe in communication, we always give consideration to communication targets and channels in each of our thematic areas, and actively accompany our projects with campaigns whenever this is necessary. We are also keen in this respect to blaze new trails and are not afraid to take risks.

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Our Attitude

Our Thematic

Integration, Climate Change and Cultural Education are the three central themes, in the form of overarching clusters, that constitute our profile. We have set ourselves targets in each of these thematic areas:

Clusters

// Integration 2020: To jointly shape Germany's immigration society and drive integration forward

// Climate 2020: To prevent dangerous climate change

// Cultural society 2020: To increase the importance of cultural education in Germany

Our target

Integration 2020: We wish to shape Germany's immigration society and drive integration forward

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We live in a society of immigration that is characterized by cultural and linguistic diversity. To ensure that this society continues to thrive in the future, it is crucial that advantage be taken of the potential offered by everyone living in Germany and that they be given the opportunity to take part in central areas of society's life.

A key prerequisite for successful participation is education. We are therefore committed to eliminating the inequalities which exist between people of migrant and German origin in terms of school and university qualifications.

Our goal is to reduce by 2025 the inequality in Germany in terms of school and university qualifications achieved by people of migrant origin aged 15 to 30 by 70 percent, based on the 2005 level. As an interim target, we are working to reduce these discrepancies by 30 percent by 2015.

Thematic background and relevance

In 2004, the German Immigration Council defined integration as the opportunity to participate in central areas of society's life on as equal a footing as possible. This is a reciprocal process whereby the majority society must evolve to become a society which embraces immigration.

In Germany, a society characterized by immigration of growing diversity is evolving. In total, 20 percent of Germany's population is of migrant origin; the figure is even higher among children and young people. Demographic changes will give rise to even greater linguistic, cultural and religious diversity.

Integration

In a society in which liberty and social justice prevail, diversity must be associated with open opportunities in life. The chance for everyone to take part in central areas of society's life is also crucial for social peace. Germany relies on the best possible utilization of all the talent available in the country, as the social and fiscal costs of any wasted potential are high. Creating equal opportunities, in other words, is not a matter of social charity but a socio-political challenge that must be overcome in the interests of the immigration society as a whole. If the potential tied up in social diversity is to be fully leveraged, however, viable institutions must be developed to manage it. This is why we are keen to bring about a systemic change which will offer people of migrant origin equal participation opportunities.

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We have chosen to concentrate on education, as this is the key prerequisite for successful integration and participation. In the area of education, the aforementioned diversity is currently coupled with social inequality: immigrants are three times more likely than Germans to leave school without any qualifications. They are three times less likely to take the Abitur – the higher education entrance qualification – and three times more likely to obtain no vocational qualifications; last but not least, they are less likely to achieve a university degree. These educational disadvantages are also experienced by second-generation immigrants born in Germany.

Methods

Education plays a critical role on the road towards equal opportunities. The education system is the only process which every young person in Germany has to undergo; as such, it is a central mechanism of socio-political effect. Social advancement nearly always presupposes an improved educational level. Educational institutions are thus the places where social advancement is made possible outside and independently of the family, or where inequality is reinforced.

Stiftung Mercator concentrates its work in the area of education on children and young people of migrant origin, a target group which is potentially at a particular disadvantage. The reasons for the lack of integration are to be found in a country of immigration which long refused to acknowledge precisely this fact, namely that it is a country of immigration. It is also noticeable that insufficient integration tends to go hand in hand with social problems. Only once this cycle is broken will activities aimed at promoting and supporting particular groups in society become focused less on integration and more on social milieu.

The genuine equality in education that is the goal of Stiftung Mercator differs both from formal equality and from an equality that is based on outcomes. An education system that gives equal merit to equal performance yet fails to give sufficient consideration to unequal starting points simply cements social inequalities. By the same token, education is no guarantee of success; even with optimal support it by no means succeeds for everyone.

To give the immigrant and majority populations genuinely equal opportunities in the area of education, the approach followed by Stiftung Mercator is

primarily systemic in nature. It aims to take preventive action to ensure that everyone involved in the education system (pupils, teachers, parents) is able to competently handle the requirements arising from growing diversity, thereby improving the individual educational results of children and young people and enhancing the performance and efficiency of the system as a whole. Compensatory measures are chosen where an acute need for action is identified.

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Private foundations can achieve a great deal more in the field of education than they can in other fields in which inequalities exist between people of migrant and those of German origin. After decades of inadequate integration policy, today's education system is characterized by dynamic change and great complexity in the way it deals with migration and diversity. This offers foundations a chance to achieve particularly great impact through focused intervention.

What is more, within Germany's federal system it is the federal states that are responsible for education. Innovations require strong local initiators who are able to involve partners on a cross-sectoral basis. In addition, educational innovations aimed at greater equality must be communicated across the different levels (local, state and federal). Private foundations can use their networks and their reputations to bring these different levels together and arrange dialogues between decision-makers in the various areas.

If fundamental and strategic influence is to be exerted on the education sector in this manner, an international dialogue is also required in order to learn from good practice in other countries. Stiftung Mercator is sufficiently well-connected in international networks to achieve this.

Fields of action

In our efforts to help more children, adolescents and young adults achieve better educational qualifications, we are keen to address the core educational institutions, that is to say schools and universities. Our aim is to improve the structure of the educational system, the educational process and the qualification of key actors within the system.

// School and university structures: The structure and the environment in which learning takes place play an important role in successful teaching and the achievement of good qualifications. We are committed to developing the optimal institutional framework conditions to support learning in and with diversity.

// Educational processes in schools and universities: We want educational processes to be geared better to the needs of students, a group which is becoming increasingly heterogeneous. In this context, our focus is not only on generating a stimulating culture of teaching and learning – one which is sensitive to different cultures – but also on designing appropriate curricula in schools and universities. Giving particular consideration to individual potential must become a fundamental principle when redesigning educational processes.

// Qualification of key actors: Our long-term goal is for school and university students of migrant origin to achieve more and better qualifications. For this to happen, the key actors who influence the development of this target group must learn how to handle the needs of a heterogeneous student body and how to satisfy their individual tuition requirements. All actors – teachers, head teachers, parents, professors, lecturers and student counsellors,

not to mention governmental department heads responsible for education and education ministry staff – should be trained so that they are able to design high-quality tuition programmes, promote individuals and work in a participatory and culturally-sensitive manner.

Stiftung Mercator attributes particular importance to the areas of language teaching and the monitoring of educational biographies, which it sees as key aspects of integration work in schools and universities. Additional areas of thematic focus can also be pursued in connection with the aforementioned fields of action.

Since migration and integration are embedded within a transnational context and thus also require European standards and cooperation in addition to local endeavours, we support initiatives in our fields of action that place German integration policy in a European context and develop effective and fair policies and legal standards for Europe.

Climate Change

Our target

Climate 2020: We wish to prevent dangerous climate change

Steps must be taken to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. This poses a particular challenge in terms of global solidarity and fairness. For Germany, this means maintaining and expanding its international forerunner role in the area of climate protection, while at the same time living up to its responsibility as an industrialized country by setting itself particularly high targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

We are therefore committed to reducing the human-caused emissions of greenhouse gases included in the Kyoto Protocol in Germany by 40 percent by 2020 and by at least 80 percent by 2050, measured against the 1990 levels.

Thematic background and relevance

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing humankind. Man-made global warming is a fact that has now been acknowledged by scientists, politicians and society alike. Its consequences are already visible today in many regions of the world, ranging from melting glaciers and ocean ice

masses to droughts, torrential rain and flooding, with the accompanying dramatic effects on regional populations. It is thought that more than 200 million people each year are already directly affected by climate change consequences. If global warming continues at its current pace, the impact on the world's entire population will be enormous.

Although it is true that the global climate system also changes as a result of natural factors, the major part of the long-term warming trend is nonetheless attributable to human activity and to the anthropogenic emission of greenhouse gases. The sole factor we can influence in order to slow down the rise in the earth's mean global temperature and to prevent an irreversible change to our complex climate system is thus to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This is all the more pressing given that the warming process would initially continue, even if emissions stopped immediately, on account of the longevity of some greenhouse gases and the inertia of the climate system. Because a shift towards establishing a sustainable economy with low use of greenhouse gases – a “great transformation” – would involve making far-reaching changes to our current, largely fossil fuel-based economic system, we must begin this process right now. The longer we wait, the more serious the effects will be on our ecosystems and on human life on earth. We must be in no doubt about the fact that the decisions we take in the next two decades

will have significant consequences for the living conditions of our children and grandchildren.

If we consistently pursue this transformation, numerous opportunities will arise, and the extent to which we will have to adapt to those climate change consequences that can no longer be avoided will be less dramatic in the long term. This is why we at Stiftung Mercator will concentrate our work and support on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in order to prevent unabated global warming.

Methods

In our climate change cluster, our activities will be geared towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Germany by 40 percent by 2020 and by at least 80 percent by 2050, measured against the 1990 levels. We are fully aware of the fact that our commitment alone will not suffice to achieve these targets; it must rather be seen as a – not easily quantifiable – contribution on the part of Stiftung Mercator. We follow a systemic approach in our work, and are committed to finding lasting and sustainable solution strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We select our projects according to how much they contribute towards achieving this goal. We will monitor scientific,

political and social trends at all times and if necessary adjust our activities in order to attain the maximum impact in each case.

Measures to protect the climate must be implemented both on the level of politics and state regulation and on the level of the individual consumer. In view of the urgency of the problem and the scale of the tasks ahead of us, however, we believe that the most important step at present is to bring about a change of tack at the political level. After all, it is only here that the necessary far-reaching decisions can be taken, pointing the way forward. In turn, politicians cannot take these decisions in such a highly complex field as climate protection without the help of scientists, as it is they who generate the necessary knowledge and make it useable for decision-makers. Scientists cannot take the decisions for politicians, however – they can only offer options and information.

In order to achieve the target set for our climate change cluster, we will make the most of our strengths as a private foundation. One of our central strengths is our convening power. Being independent actors, we can take risks and use our reputation to take up positions and raise issues, win over majorities and bring different stakeholders together to talk to one another.

This is how we intend to employ our resources and our approach – that is entrepreneurial, professional and international – to achieve the greatest possible effect for our targets. As far as climate change is concerned, we will therefore start by focusing above all on the interface between politics and science. We intend to make available scientifically founded concepts to achieve a rapid policy shift towards a low carbon world and to communicate these to specific political decision-makers. Together with our partners in science and academia, we will identify knowledge gaps relating to forthcoming political and social discourse and initiate projects aimed at filling these gaps. The results of these projects will provide advisers and decision-makers with information, instruments and mechanisms with which to implement appropriate policies and strategies. In addition, we are working to create intersectoral networks and to bring together decision-makers, experts and information disseminators – not only from politics and science but also from business, non-profit organizations and other third sector institutions – in order to search jointly for solutions and implement them.

We also involve international partners, scholars and colleagues in our projects. Our target places the central focus on reducing greenhouse gases in Germany because, as a German foundation, we can achieve the greatest impact in our own country. Climate change is a global problem, however, and cannot be solved solely on a national level. An internationally coordinated approach is therefore a prerequisite to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Germany's voice will carry all the more weight internationally the more action we take nationally and the more we set a good example within the framework of the European Union. Germany's own climate policy will thus have effects that are felt far beyond the country's own boundaries. Climate research is also to a large extent an international field of endeavour. Scientific findings generated nationally have an international impact, and vice versa. Given these interrelationships, projects that strengthen international cooperation in the area of climate protection and aim to bring about a common understanding of the action that is possible and necessary will contribute directly to the achievement of our target.

Fields of action

From the various emission sources, we have selected three fields of action on which we intend to focus particularly over the next few years: energy, transport and land use.

// Energy: Transforming the energy system to make it low emission and low carbon is a central factor in the achievement of our target. The energy sector is one of those with the greatest potential for reduction. In addition, any success in this area will have direct positive effects on other emission sources that are currently largely dependent on fossil fuels (especially transport and industry)..

// Transport: The transport sector not only offers high reduction potential in Germany, but can also be used to leverage emission reductions at European and international level due to the fact that emerging automotive markets follow the lead of the European market. Strong EU policies, with respect to fuel consumption for example, will thus have global impacts.

// Land use: This field of action encompasses not only agricultural issues but any form of land use by humans. With their massive consumption, not only of energy but also particularly of land, cities are hot spots of climate change (80 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions are generated in cities), and will continue to grow. We will therefore focus among other things on the area of urban and infrastructure development.

Our target

Cultural society 2020: We wish to increase the importance of cultural education in Germany

Education plays a key role in forward-looking societies that understand that individual development goes hand in hand with social justice and the protection of the natural environment. Stiftung Mercator is therefore committed to a high quality programme of education that is accessible to all and involves cognitive, emotional and aesthetic processes. Education that is taught through the arts significantly encourages the personal development of children and young people. We see cultural education as general education embedded in the medium of the arts.

Stiftung Mercator's goal is to anchor cultural education permanently within the formal educational system and, above all, within the framework curricula of North Rhine-Westphalia and three other states in Germany by 2015, and in all of the country's federal states by 2025.

Thematic background and relevance

Empirical studies and practical experience gained over the course of many years confirm the potential offered by cultural education: it not only has an intrinsic value which lies in the production and reception of the arts, but also

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an added value in that it promotes personal, social and methodological skills. Both these dimensions are inextricably linked to one another. In calling for cultural education, we wish to give all children and young people access to art and culture, and thus to a full and comprehensive education. Our definition of culture is wide-ranging and encompasses in equal measure all the different life and work models to be found in a society, as well as all its different attitudes and behaviours. On the one hand, Stiftung Mercator is interested in making possible an understanding of art and culture that is based on people's own practical experience and includes everyday culture, lay culture, mass culture and popular culture. On the other hand, we are committed to ensuring that young people are given the chance to develop a critical view of themselves, their present, past and future within the medium of the arts.

Cultural education in Germany is characterized by a wide variety of actors and educational places. It falls within the remit of various political fields: youth, education, school, social and cultural policy. In legislative terms it is anchored in Germany's child and youth protection law, and is publicly promoted via the children and youth plans of the country's federal and state governments. Cultural education primarily takes place at local authority level, which in turn makes public funding available. Furthermore, a large number of non-governmental and private bodies invest in cultural education: foundations, churches, associations and individuals.

The relevant studies in empirical education research (interstate comparisons conducted by the Institute for Quality Development in Education, IGLU/PIRLS; TIMSS and the PISA studies) have shown that schools are still failing to create equal opportunities through education and to teach relevant skills such as the ability to reflect and solve problems. It has also become apparent that schools are not able to overcome this complex challenge on their own. They need partners who advise and support them in the creation of a programme of education that incorporates cognitive, emotional and aesthetic dimensions. Cultural education is able to combine these different aspects. A number of good programmes and projects exist in the non-school sector, yet there is virtually no structural anchoring of cultural education in the formal education system that goes beyond additive approaches. To ensure that all children and young people can be reached, it is important for cultural education to be reliably integrated into schools.

We therefore want to make cultural education a mandatory and permanent feature of the formal education system. Arts should be reinforced, expanded and reevaluated in everyday education at German schools. This includes theatre and music, visual arts and dance, literature and new media – but also art in the circus or museum. Cultural education should become firmly anchored in the framework curricula of Germany's federal states. These frameworks govern school curricula and regulate what is taught at schools. If these framework curricula include cultural education, it must be taught.

Methods

We follow a systemic approach in our projects. In our cultural education thematic cluster, this means using practical projects, school development, training and continuing education and research to tackle all relevant sub-systems of the educational system simultaneously. It is a question of giving everyone involved in cultural education professional mentoring and empowering them such that they can expand their ability to act, manage a change process themselves, become integrated into networks and achieve a visible long-term impact through evaluation.

Structurally anchoring cultural education within the formal education system serves the higher-level purpose of enabling children, adolescents and young adults to determine themselves how they develop their potential and skills in a way that best suits their own personality, and to successfully shape their own educational career path. To ensure that this happens in a permanent and lasting manner in schools, our projects focus on the mediators active in this field, that is to say on teachers, school heads and all actors with a decisive influence on the education system: artists, art mediators, culture pedagogues, cultural youth work professionals, parents, scholars, political decision-makers etc. In this way, we can indirectly reach children and young people, especially from primary school to upper secondary age.

Children and young people profit only if the cultural education they are offered is of good quality. To improve the quality of cultural education, we use sustainable practical projects to set a good example and support our partners

in their efforts to design effective cultural education programmes. We have our projects scientifically monitored in order to make their impact visible and in order to draw conclusions about further-reaching quality development from their results. Few empirical studies on cultural education exist as compared with other education segments, which is why we want to stimulate research in three areas which support our goal of enhancing the quality of cultural education: investment in cultural education through infrastructural analyses; the effects of cultural education on specific art disciplines; the importance of cultural education for skills development and cognitive teaching and learning processes.

Despite all the successes that have been achieved, cultural education is still not regarded by the worlds of research and politics as having the same weight as general education. Through expert reports, empirical studies and strategic alliances, we are investing in broader recognition of cultural education.

Fields of action

In light of the situation outlined above, we have identified the following fields of action in which we can achieve a particularly strong and lasting impact:

// Qualification of key actors in the area of cultural education: Stiftung Mercator has placed the focus on quality assurance in cultural education. To achieve permanent and lasting quality, the activities pursued in this thematic cluster aim to bring about quality via the field's key actors. Everyone involved in cultural education, including teachers and head teachers, are to be given the necessary training and continuing education to enable them to develop high quality cultural education programmes and cooperate with one another.

- // Creative culture of teaching and learning: In the interests of a holistic education, we are committed to establishing a creative culture of teaching and learning in schools. Teachers and those responsible for school administration, professionalization and teacher training are to be given training in arts teaching methodologies so that these can be implemented in all subjects in future. In turn, cultural education specialists and artists are to expand their teaching skills and familiarize themselves with the structures of various educational institutions.
- // School development through cultural education: Our aim is to bring about a lasting improvement in the quality of teaching in arts subjects at school and thereby to counteract the marginalization of these subjects. By establishing a creative culture of teaching and learning, we want to enable schools to develop their own artistic profile – a process that generates structures and systems – and to firmly anchor cultural education in schools as an interdisciplinary element.
- // Cultural education and integration: Courses and programmes of cultural education have an integrating effect because they make heterogeneity a subject in its own right. Implementing cultural education in schools means familiarizing children and young people with the feeling of what it is like to grow up in a heterogeneous society and helping them broaden their ability to deal with cultural differences and different backgrounds. In this sense, Stiftung Mercator's two thematic clusters of cultural education and integration join forces to achieve equal opportunities and participation in social processes for everyone through education.

Our Centres

In addition to its management, communication and administration sections, Stiftung Mercator is organized into three centres: science and humanities, education and international affairs. Each centre focuses its work on selected fields of activity and tracks their modalities and developments.

The centres actively determine their own fields of activity, while at the same time contributing their expertise with a view to achieving the targets of the overarching thematic clusters.

Centre for Science and Humanities

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Society has high expectations of science and humanities. Their influence on almost every sphere of human life is constantly growing, and they are in increasing demand. However, what counts is not only the benefit – the economic benefit, for example – brought by science and humanities to society as a whole. The term “scientific society” refers to the fact that communication and decision-making are no longer possible in any key sector of 21st century society without the involvement of science and humanities – not in politics, not in law, not in business and also not in education. Thus the ability of people to actively participate in society increasingly depends on their having been given science-based training or education.

The overarching goals of Stiftung Mercator in its promotion of science and humanities are the benefits to and improved participation in society. In this context we take advantage of the special strength that foundations have when it comes to linking science with further-reaching social aims, without immediately adopting a (party) political stance. This is why we pursue academic projects in our Centre for Science and Humanities with a view to achieving the targets defined in our interdisciplinary clusters: the prevention of dangerous climate change; improved integration; and the promotion of cultural education. One genuine challenge for foundations is to place such targets within the horizon of science and humanities and to canvass for their contributions to solutions.

Science and

For science and humanities to maintain permanently high standards of research and teaching, their institutional conditions must be analysed and improved at critical points. With this in mind, we have identified three fields of action:

- // Support for the institutional development of universities and the higher education system: in Germany, the further development of universities is determined by a process in which profiles and tasks are becoming increasingly differentiated. This imposes challenges on every single institution, and also entails great dynamism of the system as a whole. Our aim is to use exemplary projects to achieve an impact on both levels.
- // Improvement of the quality of higher education courses and teaching: among other things, the process of differentiation demands that the wide-ranging tasks and services of higher education institutions be better acknowledged and promoted. We believe that this requires a commitment first and foremost to improving quality and attributing greater importance to teaching.
- // Development of promising “exploratory” fields of research: Together with scientists, we will give proactive impetus – without being afraid to take risks – to the development of new research topics.

Equal access to education is an essential prerequisite for greater participation and fairness. We strongly believe that education is a basic civil right that should be enjoyed by everyone, and that it plays a key role in any society that is ready to face the future and understands that social justice goes hand in hand with the protection of the natural environment and economic development. All children, adolescents and young adults living in Germany should have the opportunity to obtain education. We are therefore committed to ensuring that everyone is given access to education that enables individual and autonomous learning in groups and enables students to make full use of their potential. This is all the more necessary given that participation in 21st century society requires not only conventional “knowledge” but also a portfolio of skills that allows knowledge to be applied in different contexts and situations and involves everything from developing creative strategies to dealing with diversity.

Exploiting people’s individual potential and enabling them to take active and creative part in a heterogeneous society is the overarching goal of Stiftung Mercator in its promotion of the education system; in this context it pursues interdisciplinary targets based on values and competencies, taking Germany’s federal structures into account. Our aim in our Centre for Education is thus to meet the targets we have set ourselves in our interdisciplinary clusters: to improve cultural education to ensure our society is ready to face the future; to shape Germany’s immigration society by promoting integration; and to prevent dangerous climate change. One genuine challenge for foundations is to bring these targets into discussions of education policy and into pedagogical practice, and to increase the capital for social solutions.

To raise the quality of education and optimize the framework conditions for educational success a systemic approach is required which includes all groups involved in education and which combines strengths by interlinking schools within regional educational networks. With this in mind, we have identified three fields of action:

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// Teaching and learning as the core of the educational process: on the basis of a humanistic view of mankind, children and young people are to be given the chance to develop and put to the test their culture, talents and individual competencies and to contribute these to the shaping of society and the environment.

// The culture of organization and communication in educational institutions: we regard education as a challenge to be addressed by a partnership between teachers, parents and external experts who, acting as mentors, offer children and young people an ideal environment for learning; nurseries and schools serve as cultural district centres that cooperate in educational associations and networks.

// Leadership and management: our aim is to employ systemic qualification measures to empower the leaders of schools and other educational institutions to use their leadership to create a democratic and participatory culture of teaching and learning.

Education

In the age of globalization, key challenges of our time such as climate change, migration and integration can no longer be resolved solely on a national or regional level. Only by working together can we lay the foundation for a fair, sustainable world in which we can all enjoy a life that is worth living. Understanding and trust are central prerequisites for successful international cooperation. To this end, we promote an exchange of people and ideas in keeping with our guiding philosophy: understanding one another, learning from one another and jointly overcoming challenges.

In the Centre for International Affairs, we are committed to the targets set in our interdisciplinary clusters – integration and migration, the prevention of dangerous climate change, and cultural education – by pursuing international cooperation and contextualization. To achieve these targets, we concentrate particularly on three regional areas of focus that we believe are key regions for Germany in a globalized world:

// Europe: as a German and European foundation, we believe that the European Union is still the best possible model for the future of our continent. In order to tackle global challenges like climate change and to make an impact in a complex, multipolar world, we Europeans must work together. In this regard, we see Germany as having a special responsibility. To counter growing disinterest in Europe and the rise of nationalist tendencies, what is needed above all are visions for the future that can give Europe a focus and evoke greater emotions. This is the fundamental goal of our initiatives.

// Turkey: Turkey is a vibrant hub of economic and scientific development and cultural creativity. German-Turkish relations are influenced by the many people who are at home in both countries. We want to take full advantage of this potential. Our aim is to positively redefine the often distorted perception the people of our two nations have of one another. This will contribute to better mutual understanding and help people consider questions of coexistence in Germany and Europe in a more balanced and differentiated manner. Together with our Turkish partners, we want to help a forward-looking Europe grow closer together.

// China is the most important new economic and political actor in the emerging multipolar world and a country with extraordinary potential. International development without China is now, quite simply, inconceivable. Germany is a valued and influential partner in China; we are committed to ensuring that the great potential of German-Chinese relations is harnessed in the best possible interests of both countries and with a view to resolving global challenges such as climate change. In Germany in particular, this presupposes a better and more differentiated understanding of Chinese reality. This is what we aim to achieve in long-term partnerships and cooperation agreements.

Affairs

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