

Launch of an international symposium

Berlin, 30. November 2015. 500 representatives of the Federal Foreign Office, German and international foundations, various associations and NGOs attended an international symposium in Berlin on 30 November 2015. It was hosted by the Federal Foreign Office, the Robert Bosch Foundation, the TUI Foundation, the Bertelsmann Foundation and the Schwarzkopf Foundation.

The symposium was entitled "The road towards a foreign policy of societies" and it served as the launchpad for dialogue between the Federal Foreign Office and German foundations. Its objectives are to identify common action areas, strategies and opportunities for collaboration.

Federal Foreign Minister Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier opened the event in the Foreign Office's "Weltsaal" and, in his welcome speech, he emphasised the important role played by private, non-profit foundations and political foundations as partners in public policy making. He also said it was vital that national and foreign civil societies be included in foreign policy processes and that foundations particularly embody organised civil society in the political and pre-political arena.

The symposium programme included several panel debates, including one on the subject of "Germany's goals and opportunities on the road towards a foreign policy of societies." During the afternoon session participants joined various working groups to discuss opportunities for strategic dialogue based on their experience, case studies or ongoing processes.

"Cooperation between the diplomatic sector, government and civil society is becoming increasingly significant in today's complex world. Foundations can support social change through their work, and they often perform a laboratory function by taking innovative concepts from theory to practice. Strategic dialogue between foundations and the Federal Foreign Office serves the purpose of networking and sharing ideas. Now everyone involved has to work towards developing a long-term partnership and enter into cooperations whenever possible.", Thomas Ellerbeck, Chairman of the TUI Foundation's Board of Trustees

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