

Drawing on people power

In this interview, co-CEOs Uta-Micaela Dürig and Joachim Rogall discuss how the Robert Bosch Stiftung is responding to the latest **international challenges** and positioning itself for the future.

Social responsibility and charity were two constants throughout Robert Bosch's life - and the Robert Bosch Stiftung continues the philanthropic work of the company's founder. Since being established in 1964, the foundation has disbursed more than €1.4 billion in the course of its charitable activities. It has continued to expand the issues it serves, and is now one of Europe's largest company-affiliated foundations.

How do you envision the next ten years in terms of the work being carried out by the Robert Bosch Stiftung?

Joachim Rogall: The foundation has constantly reinvented itself over the twenty years I've been here, focusing and refocusing on the pertinent issues of the time. The dividends we receive from the company as its largest shareholder have also risen over time. Having bigger budgets and a larger staff to work with allows us to achieve the impact we set out to have with our charitable work. With this also comes greater responsibility and forces us to adapt our structures and strategy.

Uta-Micaela Dürig: And may I add that we want to have a long-term impact on societies, drawing on people power, as Robert Bosch would have wanted. We are doing so by identifying bold individuals and relevant topics, drawing on our extensive knowledge, and jointly developing solutions to problems.

Could you give a specific example of this?

Dürig: In mid 2015, we talked and discussed with all of our associates the global challenges, as well as our current and future strategy, the topics of today and tomorrow, and our structures at present and in the future. From there we set about making changes. We've identified three areas we are addressing and focusing on at the moment across the foundation, based on how important they will be in the coming years. These are: "migration, integration, and inclusion," "social cohesion in Germany and Europe," and "future-oriented living environments." Beyond this, we are also focusing our efforts on health, science, education, society, and international relations - areas of support we have also concentrated on in the past.

Rogall: An alliance recently formed to fight cancer would be one example I could give.

Topics in focus at the foundation

The Robert Bosch Stiftung is active in five areas of support: health, science, society, education, and international relations. It picks up on social issues at an early stage - and, through its projects, develops exemplary **solutions for the future**. Moreover, in the years to come, the Foundation will increasingly be directing its activities across all areas of support toward three focus areas: "migration, integration, and inclusion," "social cohesion in Germany and Europe," and "future-oriented living environments."



The foundation is headed by Joachim Rogall and Uta-Micaela Dürig.

Photos: Björn Hänssler, Theodor Barth (2), Jan Zappner

As part of the alliance, we are working with the Robert Bosch Hospital, the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ), the University of Tübingen, and Robert Bosch GmbH to lay the groundwork for cutting-edge cancer research, and to put the findings into practice to facilitate prevention and treatment.

What projects and initiatives are you funding in the three new focus areas?

Rogall: We are expanding activities in Africa in the focus area of "future-oriented living environments." One of the prime focuses here will be on science. To that end, we are supporting young researchers on the continent and funding the Next Einstein Forum, an international scientific platform for all of Africa. We are also active on the ground in the areas of education, peace, and international relations. We are working together with other foundations and public institutions in seeking to tap more effectively the vast potential Africa holds. In terms of social cohesion in Europe, we are striving to bring target groups far away from Europe on board. In addition to this, we are creating platforms for Europeans involved in this area to share their ideas on the issues of tomorrow.

Dürig: Our expert commission came up with 99 recommendations regarding

Germany's refugee policy. At the same time we are also supporting exemplary projects that reveal new approaches to increasing social cohesion and strategies to integrate refugees into formal education, society, and the culture. On a more regional basis, we are increasingly focused on multilateral projects in North America, Asia, Europe, and Africa. Entering into partnerships is critical to achieving a greater overall impact. As an example of this, we are taking a strategic approach to team up with international partners from across all sectors and with African foundations in the area of education on the continent. We are closely monitoring the situation in countries such as Iran, which has recently rejoined the international community after years of isolation, and beginning to set priorities.

Your aim is to create focus areas, thereby allowing you to more effectively respond to the challenges that are currently facing society. Will you also be changing how you work at the foundation?

Rogall: We've reduced bureaucracy and devolved decision-making authority. This begins at the foundation's top-level committee, the board of trustees, who previously decided on all projects over €150,000. Starting this year, the trustees have been serving primarily in an advisory role, approving only the multimillion-euro framework budgets for each of the focus areas. We as management have delegated decision-making powers to associates. This has been made possible by the new collaborative culture that we have developed - a culture that is founded in trust and designed to foster and promote each individual associate based on performance and merit.

Dürig: Two aims are being pursued in seeking to have a long-term impact in these areas. One is to empower associates in every position at every level of the company. Another is to foster team spirit. A number of modern tools are being used here, including IT systems.

