

Press release

Berlin Demography Forum promotes dialogue between the generations

- Young experts engage in discussion prior to the forum and agree that starting a family is more difficult now than it was before
- Prof. Lehr, retired German minister, called upon people to "not contribute to demographic change but have the courage to start a family!"

Berlin, December 5, 2012 – The second Berlin Demography Forum, which is held in Berlin from January 9-10, 2013, will center around issues relating to "Generations - Learning - Prosperity". Alongside numerous presentations, the forum will feature a "young expert panel", in which young academics will discuss the challenges posed by, opportunities offered by, and possible solutions to demographic change with representatives from the 80+ generation. On Friday, November 30, 2012, the twelve "young experts" got together for an initial discussion in Munich. The "young expert panel" is sponsored by the Robert Bosch Foundation.

The young experts - aged between 24 and 30, all graduates, as yet childless but keen to have children - engaged in lively discussion about the desire to have children, the activity of senior citizens, immigrant integration and finding a balance between family and career. By the end they agreed on two key topics that they wanted to debate with representatives from the 80+ generation at the Berlin Demography Forum: "the desire to have children" and "active senior citizens".

"The desire to have children"

The young experts didn't take long to agree: starting a family is more difficult nowadays than it was in the past. There are several different reasons for this. Due to a "surfeit" of possibilities in one's own future, the desire for self-realization increasingly tends to rank above the immediate desire for children. On top of this is the fact that young people are now required to be mobile, something that they themselves also want. Trips abroad and frequent moves make it difficult to find a long-term partner. Even if the desire for children does take priority, family and career are often perceived as impossible to reconcile with one another. Fixed-term employment contracts are seen as the most significant preventative factor: "fixed-term employment contracts - particularly at universities - are not the exception, but the rule", says one of the young experts.

Moreover, the essential question came up of whether we actually need a society with plenty of children, or whether a shrinking society might be acceptable after all. This is a central aspect of the whole demography debate.

"Active senior citizens"

On the subject of senior citizens, getting them active is a top priority for the young experts. This includes both physical and mental mobility. Amongst other things, there was discussion of the topics of communal flats for senior citizens or multi-generation houses, and increasing their level of participation in society, e.g. through voluntary engagement and "activity on prescription". The young experts' first conclusion was "don't make it too easy for the senior citizens" - well aware that they will later be in that very position themselves.

Among the representatives from the 80+ generation who will take part in the discussion with the "young experts" at the Berlin Demography Forum are retired German minister Prof. Ursula Lehr and editor at large for the German weekly "Die Zeit" Theo Sommer.

Prior to the Berlin Demography Forum, Prof. Ursula Lehr called upon young people: "Don't contribute to demographic change, have the courage to start a family! Don't just see children as a cost factor! Children create joy, children enrich lives!"

The Robert Bosch Foundation, which sponsors the young expert panel, is one of the large company-linked foundations in Germany. The foundation's work concentrates on the areas of science, international understanding, education and society. They want their sponsorship to contribute to structuring demographic change in our society. "The young expert panel gives the younger generation a voice and a chance to change the emphasis in the structure of demographic change through direct exchange with well-established experts", says Professor Joachim Rogall, director of the program division "International Understanding in Central Europe, South-East Europe, the CIS, China" for the Robert Bosch Foundation.

The Berlin Demography Forum will be held for the second time in January 2013. Among other top names participating in the forum are the Federal Minister for Family Affairs, Dr. Kristina Schröder, Minister for the Interior, Dr. Hans-Peter Friedrich, Sabine Bätzing-Lichtenthälter MP (SPD parliamentary group), Yves Leterme, deputy General Secretary of the OECD, Vladyslav Kosiniak-Kamysz, Polish Minister for Employment and Social Affairs, Dominique Bertinotti, French Minister for Health, Family and People with Disabilities and Prof. Elsa Fornero, Italian Minister for Work, Social Policy and Equality.

The Berlin Demography Forum will be opened by Michael Diekmann, Chief Executive Officer at Allianz.

About the BDF:

The Berlin Demography Forum is an inter-party, international platform for debate on demographic change. The forum brings international politicians, scientists, economists and representatives of society together to debate potential solutions and to contribute to sustainable development. The idea is also to raise the general public's awareness of the significance of demographic change. The forum is held once a year; the first event took place in January 2012. It was initiated by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ) and Allianz. Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger and Prof. Jörg Rocholl, PhD, are in charge of the conference. The forum is being organized by the ESMT European School of Management and Technology.
<https://www.berlinerdemografieforum.org>

Press contact:

CNC – Communications & Network Consulting
Helmut Kranzmaier
Spreedreieck
Friedrichstraße 140
10117 Berlin
T +49 30 408 17 66 17
helmut.kranzmaier@cnc-communications.com