

The Leitbild

Sonnenberg's Guiding Principles

"Learning from one another and acting together in an interdependent world"

- 1. It is our tradition to look forward.**
- 2. Variety is our strength**
- 3. Whoever wants to teach must want to learn.**
- 4. We take the market seriously, but it is not sacrosanct.**
- 5. Success is secured through our quality and our uniqueness**

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Preamble

The International Sonnenberg Centre has its origins in a conference held in January 1949. Danish and German teachers met at that time in the Harz rural centre "Sonnenberg" to reflect on the experiences of fascism and war and to look for new ways of international understanding. The meeting was based on the following premise: "Let us make a new beginning!" From this small group of people, who felt committed to peace, democracy and the realisation of human rights, there developed a framework of political education, which today is sustained by members and organisations in more than 25 countries. As societies have developed since those early days, there has been not only a change of content and educational methodology, but also of organisational structures and financial parameters. What, however, has remained unchanged are the shared convictions laid down in the early 1960s: "Talk together, overcome prejudice, understand one another, act responsibly". In the 1990s, the triad "international – democratic – ecological" provided the framework for our work.

Against this background, we present for the future the following guiding principles:

Guiding Principle One: It is our tradition to look forward

- 🌐 Educating and working for understanding *is* shaping the future. We stand in the tradition of the European Enlightenment and seek debate with other intellectual traditions.
- 🌐 We face up to the challenges of the present in order to be able to act responsibly for tomorrow today. This involves knowledge of historical, political, economic, cultural and ecological conditions.
- 🌐 Democracy, tolerance, social justice and environmental awareness are not self-evident. People, including those of future generations, must actively work for them again and again throughout the world.
- 🌐 The United Nations General Declaration of Human Rights and Agenda 21 are binding upon us.
- 🌐 The development of Sonnenberg is characterised by international voluntary commitment. A strong membership and qualified voluntary help secure our future.

Guiding Principle Two: Variety is our strength

- ☉ Our educational activity is directed towards all people irrespective of gender and age, educational level, social or professional status, political, religious or philosophical orientation and nationality.
- ☉ We actively support the free development of the personality and provide knowledge, abilities and skills to help shape society.
- ☉ Openness, human warmth and mutual respect characterise our work.
- ☉ At Sonnenberg people meet, who already embody a united Europe in an interdependent world.
- ☉ We are constructing a network for democracy, tolerance and friendship. One part of this is the International Sonnenberg Association with national Sonnenberg groups and individual members worldwide.

Guiding Principle Three: Whoever wants to teach must want to learn.

- ☉ Because we demand self-critical thinking in our dealings with others, we are also prepared to question our own activities.
- ☉ People and their environment arouse our curiosity. This is the fundamental pre-condition for intercultural, social and ecological learning.
- ☉ Learning processes, which we undertake together with conference participants, are guided without formal hierarchies.
- ☉ We exchange opinions, discover similarities and differences, work for understanding and search together for solutions to problems. To this end we employ creative learning methods and activities.
- ☉ Our approach as a learning institution is reflected in our organisation. Developing and pursuing common goals are features of our corporate culture.

Guiding Principle Four: We take the market seriously, but it is not sacrosanct

- ☉ We are an organisation based on ideals, active in a market-oriented society.
- ☉ We maintain that political education is a task for the state and to this end actively participate in networks.
- ☉ We work according to management principles in as far as they help our goals and our work. Commercial considerations, output orientation and sufficient resources guarantee our existence and independence.
- ☉ Through customer awareness we gain and retain clients, conference guests and members. The satisfaction of their needs and expectations is central to our task.
- ☉ Global thinking is complemented by local activity. We offer and seek co-operation at a regional, national and international level.

Guiding Principle Five: Success is secured by our quality and our uniqueness

- ☉ The yardstick for our quality is the praise and criticism of our guests and members.
- ☉ Quality begins with the professionalism and open-mindedness of the Sonnenberg Team. It is a constant and all-embracing challenge.
- ☉ Our unique position comes from the intercultural tradition of our work and the support from our international member organisations, but also from the position of our campus in the Harz National Park.
- ☉ Through reinforcing and drawing attention to that which makes us unique, we become more attractive, enhance our unmistakable profile and gain competitive advantage.
- ☉ The expression of our all-round quality is in the last analysis the actual match of Sonnenberg reality with these guiding principles.