Annual focus 2022 of the Development and Peace Foundation (sef:)

Strengthening Resilience – Reducing Inequalities

In 2022, the sef: will focus its annual programme on "Strengthening Resilience - Reducing Inequalities". The resilience of societies, but also of political systems, is currently being increasingly put to the test. While people and governments around the world have to deal with the manifold effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been clear for some time, and not only for climate researchers, that the now unavoidable impact of climate change will require much greater adaptation efforts. Local strategies and approaches to solutions at all levels of politics, which place long-term effectiveness above short-term efficiency, will be fundamental for this. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic once again clearly shows that resilience – whether at the local level or on a global scale – is significantly influenced by various forms of inequalities. Therefore, they must be considered and actively addressed, out of ethical and human rights responsibility, but also in order to strengthen the cohesion of societies and peaceful coexistence in the global community.

With this focus, the sef:, in 2022, takes a look at two central challenges of our time: the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change.

Matrix: Focus of the sef: annual programme 2022
The pandemic has dominated public attention for the past two years, pushing other issues, not least climate change, to the sidelines, even though their impact is much more significant in the medium and long term. This gives rise to two sets of questions which will be addressed in different formats. On the one hand, there is the question of how the international community can better prepare itself for pandemics in the future, so as not to run the risk of being overwhelmed by another such event in the foreseeable future (strengthening international resilience). A global pandemic treaty is currently being drafted for this purpose. An important criterion for evaluating such an agreement will be the extent to which it can contribute to countering future pandemics in global solidarity.

The global consequences of the current pandemic are complex; they range from the overburdening of health systems to growing poverty and the promotion of authoritarian tendencies. We will, therefore also deal with strategies to overcome the multi-dimensional consequences of the pandemic. This raises the question of what follows from this for the reorientation and strengthening of international cooperation, as the UN Secretary-General is striving for with his report "Our Common Agenda" and its follow-up process. In line with the focus of the year, specific attention will be given to the question on how inequalities in the international system can be overcome.

Strengthening resilience and reducing inequalities within and between societies are also two of the key challenges in dealing with the effects of climate change, which – together with the continuing loss of biodiversity – is the greatest challenge to humanity’s survival. The sef: plans to look at two aspects in particular in 2022. Climate-related extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and intensity. Whether they end in disasters depends largely on how well societies are prepared for them. Disaster preparedness is becoming increasingly important, especially at the local and regional level. Here, the sef: would like to give impulses by presenting successful examples of local preparedness and discussing the latest scientific findings with political practitioners.

Both the consequences of climate change and the measures to combat it, trigger processes that can cause conflicts or exacerbate existing conflicts. This aspect will also be addressed by sef: in 2022. The aim is to identify instruments that help to recognise potential conflicts at an early stage and to develop and implement possible countermeasures. It is by no means inevitable that two negative trends, climate change and prevailing conflicts, reinforce each other. With the approach of environmental peacebuilding, the fight against the consequences of climate change can also act as a unifying element, especially at the local level.