

Our Projects

Code of Responsible Conduct for Business

In 2010, leading German companies of different sectors and sizes developed the “Code of Responsible Conduct for Business”, moderated by the WCGE. At present, the initiative comprises more than 50 enterprises and organizations.

Africa Program

In 2006, the WCGE held an Africa Conference with 150 participants from 30 countries. Subsequently, several workshops with diplomats and development organizations have taken place. In 2013, a process for responsible business in Uganda has been initiated together with the GIZ.

Chemical Dialog

The Employers’ Association (BAVC) and the Industrial Union of the Chemical Industry (IG BCE) elaborated a joint code of ethics with support of the WCGE in 2008.

Middle East Initiative

From 2003 to 2008, the WCGE with support of the Daimler AG moderated six meetings between business representatives from Israel and Jordan in order to promote the peace process in the Middle East.

Wittenberg Leadership Colloquium

Since 2012, the WCGE has been preparing future top executives for the social dimension of their leadership responsibility. They are trained on the theory of business ethics and discuss their positions with eminent leaders from practice.

Young Leaders Seminars

Since 2002, the WCGE has been conducting workshops for students and young professionals on the topic of responsible leadership in Wittenberg as well as in African countries.

Wittenberg Energy Academy

With support of the RWE Stiftung the WCGE has been discussing the ethical challenges of the German energy transition with students from various disciplines since 2012.

PhD Program “Ethics & Responsible Leadership in Business”

In cooperation with the Leadership Excellence Institute Zeppelin and funded by the Karl Schlecht Stiftung young international scholars have been researching on questions of economic, business and leadership ethics since 2014.

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Our Mission

The Wittenberg Center for Global Ethics (WCGE) provides principles of responsible conduct, suitable for everyday use, to present and future decision makers in business, politics, and civil society.

Our fundamental principle is the conviction that social cooperation is based on trust. For the establishment of trust law and order are necessary albeit not sufficient conditions. Furthermore, the individual's understanding of responsibility is decisive: In exercising his or her freedoms, evaluating the actions of others and shaping the rules of living together. For this we provide ethical orientation.

The WCGE was established in 1998. Eminent persons and organizations from politics, business, academia, religion, and civil society support its activities. It is an independent, non-party, international, and interdenominational initiative.

Our Approach

We work on the basis of a scientifically sound conception, combining philosophical traditions and economic method. Our approach aims at emphasizing shared ethical ideals, particularly freedom and solidarity, with respect to the possibilities and limits provided in practice such as scarcities, conflicts of interest, and cultural differences. The following assumptions illustrate our core concepts:

Globalization is an opportunity

Global cooperation is the key to solving the major social problems – foremost poverty and social exclusion. It is our conviction that trade and exchange promote peace and offer opportunities. However, global cooperation has to be designed in a way that serves the well-being of all people.

Moral obligation and practical feasibility

Ethical expectations and demands have to take reality into account. Analyzing societal conflicts therefore requires reflecting existing empirical conditions in terms of the different actors' scopes and limitations of action.

Act according to the Golden Rule

Social cooperation requires adequate fundamental trust among the people. All social groups have to invest in mutual trust – in individual actions, generally valid rules and a common understanding of responsibility.

Our approach is constantly enhanced by theory-practice dialogs. Sustainable conflict solutions require a solid theoretical backing. At the same time, a well-established theory always has to prove itself in reality. We therefore understand our work on "everyday" ethics as a societal learning process.

Our Offers

The WCGE works in two program areas:

Market Economy and Corporate Responsibility

Ethics and business are no contradiction. Values, such as respect, integrity, and trust are prerequisites for sustainable entrepreneurial success. If companies face a lack of trust, they will hardly find any customers, employees, and business partners. On the other hand, no society can exist without successful companies. Therefore, it is our goal to strengthen the principles of responsible conduct in business and to raise awareness for the conditions of market economy and entrepreneurship in society.

Global Cooperation

The global challenges require cooperation across states and sectors. Therefore, we connect companies with political institutions, academia, and civil society organizations in order to jointly elaborate new approaches for sustainable development. Our aim is primarily to promote principles of responsible leadership. In our opinion, peace, prosperity, and progress can only flourish where people – and first of all, the decision makers – fulfill their responsibilities in words and deeds.

Our activities in both areas comprise of three formats:

In **dialog processes**, we support negotiating partners and conflicting parties in finding joint positions and solutions to problems.

In **seminars**, we offer an introduction to value-oriented leadership and its implementation in everyday life to both individuals and groups.

In cooperation with partners, we conduct **research projects** concerning questions of economic, business and leadership ethics.

