

GemeinwohlAtlas Deutschland **Who serves public value?**

In Germany people believe, that companies do not make a particularly big contribution towards public value however the contribution is fundamentally positive. This is revealed by the *GemeinwohlAtlas Deutschland*. The Volkswagen scandal does not make this any better; the company's reputation has suffered. The Center for Leadership and Values in Society at the University of St.Gallen (CLVS-HSG) interviewed more than 7,000 people in Germany for this study.

GemeinwohlAtlas Deutschland: Fire brigades top – Volkswagen no longer in top position

30 October 2015. The *GemeinwohlAtlas Deutschland* shows the following picture for the public perception of public value in the Federal Republic: the fire brigades, the Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW), and the victim support organisation Weisser Ring occupy the first three places and thus stand highest in the German population's favour. The first enterprise only follows in 22nd place – the car manufacturer, Volkswagen, followed by Audi and the car component supplier, Bosch.

Enterprises criticised

Things look different at the lower end of the ranking. There, the last three places are exclusively occupied by enterprises such as Facebook, Deutsche Bank and the daily newspaper *Bild* published by Springer. All in all, organisations like ver.di, the ECB, the Federal Employment Agency, the Federal Government, FC Bayern Munich and the German Football Association are particularly controversial. They are in both high and low esteem among the population.

According to the survey, government institutions are also greatly appreciated, among them the Federal Police (5th place), the Federal Constitutional Court (7th) and the German armed forces, the Bundeswehr (32). The Federal Government must content itself with 42nd place. The survey is entitled *GemeinwohlAtlas Deutschland* and is based on a representative survey among 7,800 adults conducted by the Forsa polling institute on behalf of the University of St.Gallen. The interviewees were asked how great a contribution the 127 best known enterprises and institutions in Germany made towards public value in the fields of quality of life, solidarity, morality and attainment of objectives.

Volkswagen loses its prestige among the population

The emissions affair dented the Volkswagen Group's reputation a great deal, as is revealed by another survey conducted by the University of St.Gallen in cooperation with the weekly business magazine, *WirtschaftsWoche*, for which almost 800 people were interviewed. According to this study, Volkswagen's overall contribution to public value plummeted after the diesel manipulations became known and would fall from 22nd place to 101st place with the new public value score. The reputation of the Group's subsidiary Audi also suffered: with the current public value score, it would plummet from 25th to 46th place. Another word about the status of Volkswagen in October 2015: the Germans may punish the company but will not drop it as 90 out of 100 interviewees indicate that Germany would be lacking something without Volkswagen. And 67 out of 100 interviews find: "Volkswagen is and will remain a German flagship company."

The all-clear was sounded for the other car manufacturers and for the German economy as a whole. According to the survey, their contribution to public value has not suffered as a consequence of Volkswagen's emissions affair. In the later survey, Daimler, BMW and Ford registered a public value score similar to that of the main survey. Further enterprises which were included in the second survey did not perform any worse among the Germans than before the emissions scandal.

Differentiated perception of public value

All in all, the interviewees drew a very differentiated picture when it came to individual organisations' contribution to public value: on a scale of six, the 127 organisations were ranked between 2.4 und 5.7 (1 = lowest value; 6 = highest value). Thus a clear distinction is made between those which have a particularly positive impact on society and those which do not (or have not done so to date). First of all, there are no commercial enterprises among the top ten of all the organisations included:

1 Fire brigades

- 2 Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW)
- 3 Weisser Ring
- 4 DRK- German Red Cross
- 5 Federal Police
- 6 Maltese Emergency Services
- 7 Federal Constitutional Court
- 8 German Youth Hostel Association
- 9 St John's Ambulance Service
- 10 Workers Welfare Institution (AWO)

Digital enterprises and banks lose prestige

Taking into consideration the increasing significance of the internet, it is conspicuous that digital pioneers such as Apple, Google, Amazon and, in particular, Facebook are held in low esteem. Indeed, Facebook is in third but last place in the overall list and the actual tail-ender among international companies. Quite similarly to Switzerland, Germany's banking sector receives a bad rating. If the results are compared with those from Switzerland, UBS as the lowest-ranking bank is still doing better than the three worst placed banks in Germany (Targobank, Commerzbank and Deutsche Bank).

"Besides a number of differences between the *GemeinwohlAtlas Deutschland* and the *GemeinwohlAtlas Schweiz*, there are also amazing parallels: thus the Swiss Red Cross and the German Red Cross are not only both in the top group but this year score exactly the same value of 5.2," says Timo Meynhardt, head of the research project at the Center for Leadership and Values in Society. The professor at the University of St.Gallen and the HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management also notes a "similarly strong congruence for Microsoft".

Football clubs and the ADAC under public value scrutiny

One indicator of the differentiated nature of the results is also provided by the different weight accorded to the public value dimensions of individual organisations: "A good example is the ADAC and FC Bayern Munich," says Timo Meynhardt. "In each case, the interviewees make a clear distinction between their appreciation of the attainment of objectives and the moral reservations regarding the organisations' conduct."

Thus in sum, Borussia Dortmund is ahead of FC Bayern Munich but is "beaten" by the latter in the attainment of objectives dimension. "The question regarding their contribution to public value arises for organisations across a variety of sectors. For 85% of the interviewees are worried that all in all, too little attention is paid to public value in Germany. The responses from the population enable an appreciative discussion and open a new vista on what we call value creation," says project leader Timo Meynhardt.