

## At a glance: Germany in the Eyes of the World – 2nd study 2015

In this second study, GIZ staff once again interviewed 179 individuals in 26 countries worldwide about their perceptions of Germany. What do people around the world see as Germany's capabilities, strengths and potential, and what are its weaknesses and the risks it faces? What does this mean for our cooperation with these countries? The findings are presented in the second edition of 'Germany in the Eyes of the World'.

There have been significant changes in global politics since the last Germany study in 2011/12. The consolidation of terrorist group IS, civil war and refugee movements in the Middle East, the Ukraine crisis, the intensification of the economic crisis in Europe and the NSA affair are just a few examples. All of this has placed high demands on Germany as it seeks to play its political role within international power structures and engage with social and cultural issues.

Against this backdrop, it is interesting to note the highly differentiated perspectives of the interviewees from many different sectors of society, including a Vietnamese DJ, Mongolian investors, a peace broker in Colombia and a Norwegian trade union spokeswoman. These perspectives are worth examining in more detail.

### Key insights

It is clear from the 4,500-plus core statements made by survey respondents that people around the world still have a surprisingly consistent and positive impression of Germany, despite greater instability in the political situation throughout the world. At the same time, while respondents' statements are more varied, indicating more differentiated and clearly defined perspectives, the way they rate various aspects is less clear, and leads to a degree of confusion. What follows

is an overview of the five key findings and expectations emerging from other countries:

1. Germany **continues to serve as a role model in many areas**: for example, it offers its citizens a high level of security, good quality of life and a strong sense of freedom thanks primarily to its solid democratic principles and co-determination rights. The country is still seen as leading the way in terms of **high-quality systems**, from vocational education and training programmes to recycling processes and 'perfect' public transport networks. There is a desire to engage in more intensive exchanges, in particular on systemic questions but also on environmental and energy issues. Other countries wish to learn from and with Germany, but without being lectured to. They want this **peer-to-peer dialogue** to take place in the spheres of business, policy-making, academia and research, and culture. Germany is welcome to offer its solutions far and wide, but it should also take other countries seriously and listen carefully to them.

*»Germany is the only country where you can drink the tap water without a second thought. That's unusual, and it shows how well designed and safe German processes and products are.«*  
**Mongolia**

2. Other countries increasingly **see inconsistencies in how Germany presents itself and what it does**. This can result in a lack of understanding, for example regarding Germany's decision to pursue an energy transition, and **causes some confusion here and there**. As such, Germany's political and economic activities are not being fully understood, with some actors even suspecting it has a hidden agenda.

*»Given this hesitancy and scepticism, how can we explain the success and the sheer innovative force of companies like BMW, Mercedes and Volkswagen? There is some part of the German character that cannot ultimately be defined but that is very successful.«*

**United States**

3. **Germany's key role in international power structures is no longer called into question**, as was the case a few years ago. For the survey respondents, it is a matter of how this role is performed. They are very clear about wanting Germany to show more decisiveness and step up its global commitment while at the same time integrating itself to a greater extent in multilateral systems. Germany's dominant role within the EU is accepted by many, though this comes with a clear catalogue of duties and with certain expectations in terms of exercising greater influence in developing a vision for Europe.

*»Germany has no vision or long-term agenda for Europe. What will become of Europe over the next few years? Too often, we get distracted from this question by all the day-to-day business.«*

**Netherlands**

4. Calls for Germany to do more also concern the question of visibility. It **should communicate its skills and expertise and articulate its interests more effectively**. Other countries would have greater opportunities for participation if German interests and positions were communicated more transparently. At the same time, this would dispel the suspicion raised by some respondents that Germany deliberately holds back at times for tactical reasons in order to secure a competitive advantage. The **'Made in Germany'** brand is still synonymous with high quality. The country's language, culture and soft power should have a more prominent role.

*»Germany does not pursue an active marketing strategy in India, not even in tourism. So the average Indian knows nothing about Germany. Other nations do much better.«*

**India**

5. The fifth message follows on from this, making a direct appeal for **Germany to be more innovative and exercise its creative power**. It should **take more risks** and do more to drive innovation, including in fields where there is greater uncertainty. There is a desire to see Germany making more innovative breakthroughs instead of steadily refining products and processes, especially in new areas such as digitisation. Germans should not get too discouraged if there are stumbling blocks along the way.

*»In Germany, a defeat is seen as a failure, but people in the USA take a more flexible view. We ought really to be celebrating all our defeats and failures!«*

**Viet Nam**

---

The study as a whole offers a multifaceted and in-depth look at Germany and will be available to download at [www.giz.de/deutschlandbild](http://www.giz.de/deutschlandbild) from September. The hard-copy edition can also be requested from September by emailing [punkt.eschborn@giz.de](mailto:punkt.eschborn@giz.de).