

International perspectives on Germany in times of the Covid-19 pandemic

How is Germany viewed by the world? The DAAD, GIZ and Goethe-Institut have addressed this question together in the study “Außenblick – International perspectives on Germany in times of the Covid-19 pandemic”. From the perspective of science, culture, economics and politics. A particular focus of the study is the Covid-19 pandemic, which affects all areas.

Mixed methods design of the study

The study is based on a dual level mixed format: a combination of a structured online questionnaire and semi-narrative in-depth interviews. We contacted experts from the partner networks of the three organisations who know Germany well and are able to formulate the expectations, desires and fears they have of Germany based on their observations. 622 people from 37 countries responded to the quantitative online questionnaire. 48 interviewees from 24 countries were questioned on their perspective of Germany during the in-depth interviews.



COVID-19: A turning-point with consequences

Management of the Covid-19 pandemic in spring 2020 was to a large extent viewed as efficient and exemplary. This opinion changed in the **second wave**. A gradual reduction in discipline was observed in the population, as well as problems with sourcing, logistics and organisation in the vaccination campaign. The interviewees felt that the **lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic** include the necessity for stronger international cooperation, as well as the importance of a functioning healthcare system and the requirement for an effective crisis management strategy.



Reasons we are respected. Hard-working. Efficient. Reliable.

Germany's **political system** is seen as a stable democracy that follows a constitutional rule of law. The way different interest groups interact works well and is institutionally anchored. Germany is viewed as a leading **economic power** in the European Union, and "Made in Germany" still represents outstanding quality.

Accessibility of schools and universities, as well as an analytical approach to specialist topics, are considered to be great strengths of the German **education systems**. Furthermore, **research institutions** are attractive because of their interdisciplinary character and practical orientation. The **cultural programmes** in Germany are also highly valued and accessible to a wide range of people. The comprehensive health insurance cover and high quality of care are evidence of a strong **healthcare system**.

Other countries also feel that respect is due to Germany for coming to terms with the National Socialist period. Politicians and society had learned lessons from the past. The reunification of Germany and the acceptance of refugees in 2015/16 are perceived as further **major achievements**.

"At this time [2015/2016] the German government acted humanely and assumed global responsibility."



In the historical shadow of National Socialism

From an external perspective, German history is strongly linked with the history of National Socialism.

“When Germany is thinking about its future, the neighbours are thinking about its past.”

Reasons people shake their heads. Inflexible. Critical. Hesitant.

Germans are often over-cautious and over-critical, or simply **unyielding – with extremely high standards**. People think Germany needs to develop the **digital infrastructure** and improve conditions for **entrepreneurial innovation**.

“Which areas will see innovation in Germany over the next few years?”

Environmental protection is a huge topic in discussion, but isn't something companies are really focusing on. A discrepancy **between ambition and reality** is reinforced by recent scandals in politics and business. It was also noted that Germany has not adequately addressed its **colonial history**. **Academic hurdles and rigid hierarchies** in German university systems are perceived as effective weaknesses.



What people are warning us about. Reserved. Dominant. Smug.



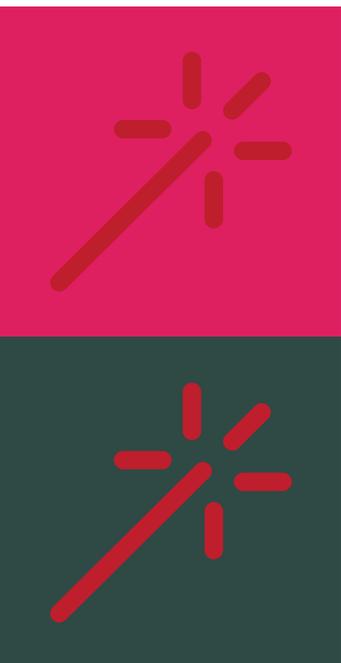
Populist and extremist tendencies are perceived as being on the rise in Germany – no other area of risk is under such diverse discussion abroad. Interviewees describe that they have experienced less tolerance and friendliness in recent years while staying in Germany. They are **feeling increasingly unwelcome**.

“I never felt discriminated against in Germany. But in recent years I did and that makes me incredibly sad.”

The assumption abroad is that these tendencies are the result of **deep-seated anxieties and social tensions** in Germany; for instance the fear of losing one’s job or identity. Germany is struggling to **find its own identity** and is torn apart in many respects.

Germany is expected to be very active at the international level, but at the same time it is warned against being too **dominant**. There is also a risk that Germany will **rest on its economic laurels** and be outpaced, especially in the area of digitalisation.

What people believe we are capable of. Solution-oriented. Trustworthy. Responsible.



Being **solution-oriented** and competent are attributes used to describe Germany in a wide variety of social areas. Germany possesses a **high level of credibility** and the interviewees are confident that Germany is able to reinforce democratic values and partnerships, and assume **international responsibility**. To this end, Germany needs to adopt a **clear stance**. Germany is firmly anchored in the European Union, which is why there is an expectation for Germany to join forces with other member states to **represent a strong Europe**.

“You can only understand Germany if you understand Europe – and you can only understand Europe if you understand Germany’s role in Europe.”

Speaking German, thinking German.

Without German skills it's difficult to gain access to Germany and the Germans.

At the same time, learning the German language is considered a great challenge.

“The easiest way to make Germany your own is to speak their language.”

What people hope. Open. Cooperative. Future-oriented.

Migration is seen as a reality now and in the future. The desire for an open Germany that embraces this diversity, is both great and global. People hope for an **open country and open hearts.**

“Germany should meet other cultures and diversity with open arms.”

The interviewees continue to expect **fair and multifaceted cooperation in external relations.** They consider Germany as a popular partner for joint projects and development of cooperation is desirable. The expectations are great that Germany will catch up fast, particularly with regard to digitalisation, and will contribute towards finding **solutions for the digital world of tomorrow.** A pioneering role is also expected of Germany in the areas of **environmental protection, climate change and sustainability.** The imminent departure of the German Chancellor in autumn 2021 is being followed attentively. Interviewees hope for **both continuity and a fresh start in politics.**





More info:

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