

Meet the 50 German Leaders transforming our world

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“Europe is forged in crises”

In the immediate vicinity of the Bundestag, TBD Media invited to the “50 German Leaders” Summit on 26 September 2022. Leading, medium-sized German companies came together at the Ritz-Carlton. The companies were all part of the campaign of the same name, in which TBD Media documented innovation leaders and hidden champions of the German economy.

The summit was intended to provide food for thought and give the companies a chance to exchange ideas during different panels.

The moderator Maxi Sarwas led through the day. To kick off the event, the moderator announced the first high-profile guest from the world of politics: Wolfgang Bosbach. The former member of the German Bundestag got the participants in the mood for the coming discussion rounds with a humorous speech. Thus, the topics of the conference can be described with a few keywords: global crises, transformation processes, the economic success of Germany and the energy crisis. In view of these changes, a central goal of the event was to show how they can also bring about positive change. For despite all the uncertainties that the economy is feeling in these turbulent times, one should not capitulate, according to Bosbach. The lesson to be learned from the various crises of the last decades is that societies and their economies can adapt and continue to exist.

The crisis as a permanent state

The two events that are currently having the greatest impact on the global economy are the Corona pandemic and the Ukraine conflict. The impact of these events was discussed with representatives of companies that are mainly active in the manufacturing sector. In the course of the panel, the problems that companies are facing emerged. It was agreed that the major challenges are not related to material shortages, but to disrupted supply chains. A restructuring of trade relations and more resilient supply chains are the most important tasks that need to be addressed in this field. It also became clear here that companies must remain flexible in order to adapt quickly to changes.

“Made in Germany”—from warning signal to quality seal, but what next?

In his opening speech, Mr Bosbach explained the history of the “Made in Germany” seal. Introduced by the English in the 19th century, it was first intended as a warning not to buy products from enemy production. Over time, however, the perception of this seal has changed drastically. It has gradually developed into a seal for high-quality products. Today, the German economy still enjoys a high reputation, and German products stand for quality and innovation. In another panel of the Summit, strategies were discussed on how the German economy can continue to be innovative. Two principles for action were met with a particularly positive response. On the one hand, companies should dare to continue to creatively try out new things. Mr. Franz-Peter Falke of the textile company of the same name emphasised that Germany is, after all, the land of inventors. Or at least it used to be. In order for companies to be able to follow this path, politics should create the right framework. This brings us to the second point. Germany is also a country of bureaucracy. If there is too much bureaucracy, this leads to reduced competitiveness. After a lively discussion, the participants were able to agree that government intervention is also needed in certain situations. For example, to give new, sustainable products a chance to establish themselves on the market.

“Europe is forged in crises.”

The conference was rounded off by the former President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso. As another voice from politics, he was able to enrich the discussion with exciting impulses. In view of the various crises of our time, he emphasised that these should also be used as opportunities for development. The way to achieve this is by no means to declare the end of globalisation. The pandemic is the best example of the need for more global cooperation.

Germany should therefore continue to maintain its high quality standards, promote innovation at home and be part of multilateral systems. Then progress can take place in cooperation with the European Community. In this context, Barroso recalls the following quote from the French pioneer of the European Union, Jean Monnet: “Europe is forged in crises.”

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