

German business leaders endorse Chancellor Merkel's foreign policy – DIAS Study

First German Study on Foreign Trade Policy Matters

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Despite their public objections to sanctions against trading partner Iran and the chilling effect of the Dalai Lama audience on relations with China, the top executives of German companies remain highly pleased with the foreign policy initiatives of Chancellor Angela Merkel.

This is the most striking result of the first **DIAS Study**, a comprehensive countrywide opinion survey of the captains of German industry on the business-related foreign policy performance of the chancellor and the German government.

All but 2% of the surveyed panel of decision-makers – selected from 800 German companies in all geographic regions and all branches of private industry – assigned favorable ratings to their chancellor's foreign policy stance. Those ratings ranged from 68% who described Merkel's policy engagement as "good" to 12% who found it "very good" and 18% who checked off "satisfactory".

Somewhat less favorable was the evaluation assigned by **DIAS Study** respondents to the general thrust of the German government's foreign policy affecting the companies and their business conditions. In response to this survey question, only 58% assigned a rating of "good". Another 34% of the respondents chose "satisfactory", while 2% found the government's general policy to be "very good".

The corporate executives were far more critical in their assessment of the effectiveness of the government's general support of German businesses engaged in international commerce. Only 1% of those responding assigned a grade of "very good", another 37% checked off "good" and 35% found this support "satisfactory". And a majority of respondents were generally critical of the business support routinely rendered by Germany's worldwide network of foreign embassies. The grades here were 11% "poor", 35% "satisfactory" and 17% "good".

The **DIAS Study** – the first foreign economic policy survey of its kind in Germany – was initiated by DIAS, the Düsseldorf Institute for Foreign and Security Policy (Düsseldorfer Institut für Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik) in partnership with Handelsblatt newspaper and Droege & Comp. With 800 personal telephone interviews, this DIAS survey was conducted from Hamburg by polling organization PSEPHOS-Institut für Markt-, Politik und Sozialforschung during the period May 6-28, 2008.

Respondents were chosen to provide a statistically representative cross-section of Germany's private industrial companies with at least 100 employees. With a confidence level of 95%, the specific results of the PSEPHOS opinion survey are statistically valid within a deviation of no more than 3.3 percentage points in either direction.

The participating executives were selected for their level of responsibility as corporate decision makers. The active respondents' pool of 1,300 survey panelists is composed exclusively of chairmen of German companies, managing board directors, executive directors, general managers or the managers of plants or key operating divisions.

Responses to survey questions are broken down by industry, region, age of the responding executive, size of the company and in some cases by export exposure of the companies. Specific responses are grouped, for example, by corporate size in three categories based on payroll employment: more than 100 but fewer than 500 employees, 500 to 5,000 employees and more than 5,000 employees. The random survey sample includes all major branches of private industry in both the services and manufacturing sectors.

Since this is the first survey made for the new, semiannual **DIAS Study** editions scheduled for publication in June and December, comparative figures are unavailable.

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DIAS Study

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DIAS, the Dusseldorf Institute for Foreign and Security Policy, was founded in 2003 by young scientists at the Heinrich Heine University of Düsseldorf and experts from the private economy. **DIAS** is an independent, nonpartisan and interdisciplinary think tank which also offers strategy consulting for clients from the public and private sectors. As a platform for foreign and security policy, the institute enables and moderates the dialogue and exchange of ideas between future leaders in politics, economy, academia and society. The institute is headed by *Dr. Dimitrios Argirakos, Marc André Gimmy, Prof. Dr. R. Alexander Lorz LL.M. (Harvard), John Kayser, Dr. Burkhard Theile, and Dr. Barbara Weber*. On a regular basis, **DIAS** invites competent and prominent speakers and dialogue partners to hold speeches and panel discussions in Düsseldorf, the capital of the most densely populated "Land" in Germany. **DIAS** has made a commitment to the three pillars of "research, vocational training, consulting" and is understood to be the independent German network for foreign and security policy in the 21st century.