

Soziale Marktwirtschaft: All inclusive?



Unternehmen

ABSTRACT

The German economy is doing well. Yet perceptions regarding the state of German society are more sobering, as public, policy and academic debates are increasingly concerned with rising inequality. The public is losing trust in Germany's social market economy and its capacity to ensure social benefits. Larger segments of society find the promise of economic advancement beyond their reach, increasingly more questions are raised about Germany's model of a social market economy.

Policymakers, business leaders and civil society must find answers to these questions. Does the social market economy still deliver on its promise? How robust and vulnerable to crises is our economic system? What do citizens expect the German economic and social order to deliver? What economic and societal challenges do we face?

In a series of roundtable discussions the Bertelsmann Stiftung and the Progressive Zentrum debated these topics and how to best address them. The concept of inclusive growth for Germany has proven to be a crucial overarching theme in the discussion and developing measures to ensure the viability of a social market economy. The theme-oriented papers emerging from these discussions will be published for public access. The goal here is to provide constructive input to a broader public debate on the future of German society and economy.

This volume is devoted to business men and women. While Germany is indeed the land of poets and thinkers, it is, unfortunately, much less frequently the land of founders and entrepreneurs. And yet, dynamic societies

thrive on entrepreneurial innovation and productive competition. We rely on courageous entrepreneurs who take risks but also assume economic and social responsibility. For many entrepreneurs and companies, the idea of behaving responsibly towards their fellow universe – that is, working to achieve social goals and protect the environment and future generations – is not a burden, but instead the very driving force behind what they do. We see modern examples of this in established companies today in the form of in-house learning processes in the realms of corporate philanthropy, compliance and corporate social responsibility.

The structure of social problems is becoming ever more complex. An individual person, a single company, a single social sector, and even the state itself cannot find these solutions alone. It is therefore necessary to establish and encourage new networks that reach across civil society and both the private and public sectors that enable comprehensive solutions. One viable path might be to create synergies by bringing together social entrepreneurs, startups and small and medium-sized companies. These synergies would also not be an end in themselves: ultimately, the question must always focus on how to fully leverage social potential for the sake of individual well-being. In other words, if social and cultural integration is most successful when individuals are able to participate in the working world, then it is our permanent task to expand this participation, especially for disadvantaged groups in the labor market.

In his essay, Christopher Gohl explores the historical dimension of social entrepreneurship and its devel-

opment into its modern-day form. He concludes that many companies already take on social responsibility to a great extent, thus underpinning the “social” element in our social market economy. Armando García Schmidt describes the startup dynamics emerging from migrant entrepreneurs in Germany and the potential here for diversity in entrepreneurship. He calls for pro-active and sustained support for entrepreneurship among those with a migrant background that ranges from providing measures in early education to those involving tailor-made assistance.

Markus Sauerhammer describes the role of social entrepreneurship in the German economy. When taking stock of political conditions, however, he reaches a quite pessimistic conclusion, arguing that political support, financial programs and basic infrastructure are all still lacking. Founder Nihat Sorgeç came to Germany in the 1960s without any major prospects and today hosts one of the most prestigious professional training facilities in Berlin. In an interview with Benjamin Dierks, he speaks about his work, the adversities of educational funding and the relevance of comprehensive integration.