

Press Release Germany | Edelman Trust Barometer 2021

## Advance in the crisis: German trust increases, but global infodemic spreads mistrust

- **Defying the crisis:** Social institutions continue to gain trust despite pandemic
- **First time at the top:** For the first time since 2012, government (59%) is the most trusted institution in Germany, ahead of business (54%), media (52%) and NGOs (46%)
- **Positive momentum:** Institutions must now reconcile competence and ethics to continue positive trust trend
- **Media confronted with mistrust:** 43% of Germans think journalists deliberately try to mislead people with false information

**Frankfurt am Main, 16 February 2021.** After almost a year of the coronavirus pandemic, trust in government, business, media and NGOs has continued to grow in Germany, as shown by the 21<sup>st</sup> Edelman Trust Barometer. This is in stark comparison to global results – based on a survey of 33,000+ respondents across 28 countries – which show year over year a sharp decline in trust among many institutions.

In the global trust ranking of the general public, Germany ranked 14th out of 27 countries and achieved 53 index points, compared to 46 index points in the previous year. Despite an overall increase in trust in Germany, individual institutions are still struggling to convince Germans to rate them as trustworthy and many now fall into the neutral trust range. Government is seen as the most trustworthy institution in this country (59%; +14%points), now followed by businesses (54%; +6%points), the media (52%; +3%points) and NGOs (46%; +3%points). The trust gap between the informed and general public has also halved in Germany (2021: 10 points).

"The Edelman Trust Barometer 2021 shows that trust in German institutions remains surprisingly high. Government and businesses have seen a particular increase in trust, despite all the challenges posed by the pandemic, but they'll need to work on gaining trust in the long term so that the trust bubble does not burst," says Christiane Schulz, CEO of Edelman Germany.

Looking at trust rankings captured throughout the past year, the Edelman Trust Barometer 2021 reveals that trust peaked in spring 2020. While Germans' trust in the four institutions had risen sharply from January 2020 to May 2020 (government +19 %points; business +8 %points; media +4 %points; NGOs +7 %points.), this rapid growth had slowed down significantly or even reversed by January 2021. The factors for the slowdown are complex.

### Concern about misinformation is fundamental challenge

The results of the Edelman Trust Barometer 2021 show that people's pandemic needs have fundamentally changed. Germans currently attach significantly more importance to the fight against misinformation than they did last year (+39 points).

Only then do the issues of poverty in one's own country (+37 points), climate change (+33 points) or the improvement of the education system (+36 points) follow.

The results of the question on "information hygiene" are worrying: 43% (globally: 39%) of those surveyed in Germany have poor information hygiene (20% good, 37% moderate; globally: 26% good, 35% moderate). Meanwhile, 42 % (globally: 57%) say that they like to pass on information they find

exciting. Only one in five (globally: 29%) of those who share information they find exciting have good information hygiene.

"We're in an 'infodemic' – not only in Germany, but on a global level. Without trustworthy sources, people cannot know where or from whom they can get reliable information. Consequently, there is a danger that trust among the German population will gradually decline again," says Christiane Schulz.

### **Media face a question of trust**

The Edelman Trust Barometer 2021 shows a negative trend with regard to media and information: Germans approach journalists with mistrust when it comes to whether they are doing the right thing (47 %, -3 %points). This means that although journalists are still ahead of CEOs (36%; +3 %points) and government officials (42%; +8 %points) in terms of trust, they have lost trust compared to the previous year and to other groups of people. For the media in this country, respondents have clear feedback: 59% of Germans (globally: 61%) feel that media are not doing a good job when it comes to objective and non-partisan reporting. Furthermore, 42% (globally: 59%) say that news organizations are more concerned with supporting an ideology or political position than informing the public. Alarming, 43% (globally 59%) of respondents say journalists and reporters deliberately seek to mislead people by providing false and exaggerated information.

### **Employers – in demand as a reliable source of information**

A good half of Germans (54%; globally: 63%) trust their own CEO to do the right thing. "There are conditions attached to this lasting trust: 68% of those surveyed in this country want CEOs to act when the government fails to find answers to societal challenges (global: 68%). 58% believe that CEOs themselves should be accountable not only to shareholders and boards, but also to the public (global: 65%). 57% also say that CEOs should take the lead in change instead of waiting for the government (global: 66%)," emphasizes Christiane Schulz.

"Right now, we are experiencing a special momentum of trust that needs to be built upon," Christiane Schulz summarizes. "Trust is created when ethics and competence come together in equal measure. It is now important for all institutions to follow words with actions, to ease people's worries and give them security. This can be the beginning of a great 'trust journey'."

### **About Edelman Trust Barometer**

The 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer is the firm's 21st annual trust and credibility survey. The survey was powered by research firm Edelman Data & Intelligence (DXI) and consisted of 30-minute online interviews conducted between October 19 and November 18, 2020. The 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer online survey sampled more than 33,000 respondents, which includes 1,150 general population respondents across 28 countries and 200 informed public respondents in each country, except China and the U.S., which have a sample of 500 informed public respondents each and Nigeria which has 100 informed public respondents. All informed public respondents met the following criteria: aged 25-64, college-educated; household income in the top quartile for their age in their country; read or watch business/news media at least several times a week; follow public policy issues in the news at least several times a week.

### **About Edelman**

Edelman is a global communications agency that helps companies and organisations develop, promote and protect their brands and their reputations. In Germany, around 300 experts with offices in Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne and Frankfurt am Main deliver communications strategies that enable our clients to lead, act with conviction and win the lasting trust of their audiences and stakeholders. For more information, visit [www.edelman.de](http://www.edelman.de).

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