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Article

"Improving the quality of care for the elderly is of high relevance for all age groups": Six questions for Marco Giesselmann

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SIX QUESTIONS FOR MARCO GIESELMANN

»Improving the Quality of Care for the Elderly is of High Relevance for all Age Groups«

1. Mr. Giesselmann, you studied how eligible voters in Germany judge the importance of various policy goals in 2013 and again at the beginning of this year. Which policy goals appeared in your survey? We asked questions about direct economic aspects, including per capita income as well as indicators of income and wealth. Secondly, we asked about social aspects such as the employment rate, education rate, life expectancy, and the preservation of democracy. A third area our surveys addressed was ecology, for example reducing greenhouse gases and preserving biodiversity.
2. Which policy goals were most important to the voters? There are four policy goals on which the population reached a general consensus: preserving democracy, fighting crime, improving the quality of care for the elderly, and creating jobs. Across all population segments, we find very high rates of agreement—over 90 percent—that these four should be considered key policy guidelines for Germany.
3. People are not only interested in economic prosperity? Yes and no. Of course indirectly, these policy goals are all related to economic prosperity. On the other hand, raising per capita income, the policy goal that comes closest to the concept of economic prosperity, was not rated very high.
4. To what extent have the attitudes of the respondents changed since the 2013 survey? We were surprised to see a high level of stability in the mean ratings. The

goals of creating jobs and preserving democracy were also highly weighted in 2013. And the order in which respondents ranked the policy goals has basically remained unchanged. However, the voters' attribution of importance to two policy goals did experience statistically significant changes. First, the goal of reducing sovereign debt received significantly higher ratings four years ago than it did recently. Second and to our surprise, the ratings for raising the education rate, such as investing in training and promoting education, were not as high as they were four years ago.

5. Among which of society's groups did you find the largest differences in weighting policy goals? We find some substantial regional disparities. In eastern Germany, policy goals located in the work environment, such as commuting time reduction and satisfaction with work, are considered more important than they are in western Germany. Gender is a second important measure of distinction. It has an effect on policy goals related to ecology and sustainability: women's ratings show them significantly more important than men's. A third important determinant of differences in ratings is political party affiliation.
6. Which finding surprised you the most? The high weighting of the policy goal to improve the quality of care for the elderly across all age groups did. This implies that younger generations are also strongly aware of the issues involved in caring for the elderly. It was so surprising because the question deals with living conditions in a future that is relatively far away for today's younger voters.

Interview by Erich Wittenberg



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