

Hot off the Press 19!

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The BBC Radio 4 programme on William and Caroline Herschel is now on BBC Sounds.

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The world's best country? Germany

Germany

Oliver Moody Berlin

Germany has been named the world's best-regarded country for the fifth year running in an international soft-power survey that asked 60,000 people to score states on categories including culture, governance and exports.

Britain fell from second place to fifth, dropping below Canada, Japan and Italy. The US recovered a little from tenth to eighth following the end of the Trump presidency.

Each year since 2008 the British political scientist Simon Anholt and the pollster Ipsos have assessed countries' "nation brands" by measuring how they are perceived on six different scales. These range from the friendliness, tolerance and competence of their people to their apparent quality of life

and their appeal as a destination for tourism and investment.

In the early years the table was dominated by the US but in 2017 it was dislodged by Germany. This year the Germans defended their title with a slightly improved score of 71.1 per cent, up from 69.1 per cent last year.

Germany received high marks for the quality of its products, its government's work to alleviate global poverty, and the employability of its people. It also did well on its reputation for excellence in sport, despite going out of the European football championship first round of the knockout stage, and coming ninth in the medals table at the Tokyo Olympic games.

Britain's overall score also rose from 68.1 per cent to 70 per cent, only a short distance behind Germany and marginally ahead of France. Its achievements

in science, technology, sport, education and culture were highly regarded. However, it was narrowly overtaken by three other countries. Ipsos said that its "relative reputation weaknesses" were its governance and its "people", who were seen as less welcoming than before.

Further down the table of 51 countries, China rose four places to 31st and India fell by six to 40th. The bottom three were Panama, Qatar and the Dominican Republic. All 46 countries that featured in both the 2020 and 2021 studies recorded a better total score this year.

Willingness to visit other countries also reached a new high, possibly reflecting wanderlust as the second anniversary of the pandemic approaches.

Germany is wunderbar but far from perfect, leading article, page 33

- The Times 5.11.21.

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German Oompah

The Times 5.11.21

The federal republic may be wunderbar but it's not quite the paradise many imagine

For the fifth year in a row, Germany has topped an Ipsos poll that asks respondents to rate the desirability of national brands. Britain has slipped from second to fifth. Were this demotion not such a blatant travesty, some might detect the whiff of sour grapes in what follows. We merely point out that German nationals choosing to live in the UK outnumber British nationals making their home in Germany by about three to two.

Obviously, Germany has much to recommend it. And yet its many virtues, when taken to an extreme, can become vices. For instance, while straight-talking is admirable, it can trespass into

the territory of bad manners. The result is often poor customer service, an absence of socially lubricating small talk and an unseemly willingness to issue public reprimands to total strangers for minor or indeed imagined misdemeanours. On occasions, especially in Berlin, directness is indistinguishable from plain rudeness.

Similarly, while following the rules is the basis of civilised society, uber-obedience can get ridiculous. Most cultures think it's permissible to cross a deserted street, even if the green man isn't illuminated. German pedestrians wait patiently for the lights to change and tut-tut at those who don't.

The obsession with rules tends towards excessive bureaucracy and stilted formality in personal exchanges. Too much order and etiquette stifles creativity. Germans are politically welcoming to outsiders while remaining personally chilly — yet keen to remove their clothes at any opportunity.

To repeat, Germany is a wonderful country and Germans are a wunderbar people. But they're not perfect. Perhaps voters in the next Ipsos poll might care to consider this short critique, offered, we emphasise, in a spirit of constructive criticism. Hence the steadfast refusal to make any cheap jokes about towels on sun loungers.

You can also find the 2 articles above by clicking the link below (Ctrl+click). The font is bigger so easier to read. You can also find another article about the pandemic in Germany

[The Times and The Sunday Times e-paper](#)

