

## Steinmeier: We cannot lose sight of the other major challenges facing mankind

German President recognises German Environmental Award as “a particularly important message”

**Hannover/Osnabrück. German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier recognised the German Federal Environmental Foundation’s German Environmental Award as “a particularly important message” for us not to lose sight of “other major challenges facing mankind” in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The award, which comes with a remuneration of EUR 500,000, is one of Europe’s most prestigious environmental awards. This year it was split equally between climate economist Prof. Dr. Ottmar Edenhofer and the siblings Annika and Hugo Sebastian Trappmann, Managing Directors of Blechwarenfabrik Limburg. Entomologist Dr Martin Sorg received an Honorary Award, which comes with EUR 10,000 in prize money.**

At the awards ceremony in Hanover, Steinmeier, who held his welcome remarks via video message due to the fact that he was in quarantine, said that the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that change requires “more than just bans and sanctions”. Rather, it demands a willingness not to fully hand over responsibility to the state and society. “It’s up to us as individuals,” said Steinmeier. He emphasized “the major challenges that lie ahead of us”. Steinmeier called for the following: “We need to reflect, we need to rethink, and at times to radically rethink the way we work, what we manufacture, how our economy functions, how we get from point A to point B, and what we eat.” This will “require a great deal effort” from every one of us. “But we shouldn’t be worried when certain things change. We need to be worried if nothing changes!”

DBU General Secretary Alexander Bonde said that “the President’s remarkable opening statement” serves as both an incentive and a guiding principle for the German Federal Environmental Foundation (DBU). Bonde: “The President’s call for us not to lose sight of the major challenges we face in the future despite the difficult circumstances at the moment is all-too warranted. He inspires the DBU in its efforts to promote solutions for a green transformation of our economy and our society.” This is also one of

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the aims of the German Environmental Award. "The Foundation will not stop financially and technically supporting this necessary change, while, at the same time, ensuring that these changes are implemented in a responsible and just way, as Prof. Dr. Edenhofer has stated time and again," said the DBU General Secretary.

*An "at times feared" negotiator*

Edenhofer and Steinmeier's paths have crossed, in his own words, "for many years" and "not for the first time in a crisis situation". For example, after the global financial crisis, Edenhofer "provided orientation as to how to ensure that climate protection did not fall victim to the necessary economic recovery." Climate change, with its economic and social impacts, has been "the main focus of Edenhofer's life's work". He has advised the Pope as well as the World Bank and the German government, and is an internationally respected, "and at times feared," negotiator.

Honouring Managing Directors Annika and Hugo Sebastian Trappmann with the DBU's German Environmental Award, Steinmeier called the 150-year-old Blechwarenfabrik Limburg a "true piece of German industrial history". According to Steinmeier, the construction of a new manufacturing facility was a risk from a business perspective. "But they were convinced that the company needed to be modernised and use resources as sparingly and intelligently as possible in order to be viable in the future," said the German President. The results were impressive: "After the move, the expanded sheet metal factory now uses fewer raw materials and has cut 2,600 tonnes of carbon emissions."

*President warns against "falling back into a state of nationwide navel-gazing"*

According to Steinmeier, entomologist Dr. Martin Sorg, who received an Honorary Award from the DBU at the event, is characterised by his "dedication" and "passion". Thanks to Sorg and the Entomologischer Verein Krefeld (Krefeld Entomological Society), "we now know much more about what dramatic impacts the species decline in the insect kingdom is having on our ecosystem, and we are now discussing this as a society." Lastly, Steinmeier warned against "falling back into a state of nationwide navel-gazing". This will prevent us from winning the fight against the pandemic as well as the fight against climate change. Both crises could "impact all of us, but they do not impact us all equally." People in poorer countries in the southern hemisphere are "hit much harder". German President Steinmeier: "This means that the richer countries in the northern hemisphere need to take responsibility. It is our duty to take action."

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