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The Smart Hero Award

Since 2014, the Stiftung Digitale Chancen (Digital Opportunities Foundation) and Facebook have been honoring projects that use social media for a good cause, by rewarding them with the Smart Hero Award. The intelligent use of social media for recognition, respect and tolerance is what makes these heroes “Smart”. The award celebrates people who, combining social media with creative ideas, stand up for a diverse, sustainable and fair society. The motto of this year’s Smart Hero Award is “SUSTAINABLY.COMMITTED”. The different dimensions of sustainability are reflected in the three categories of the competition.

The categories:

Social Commitment
Smart Heroes who stand up for a strong and socially responsible community. Among other things, they provide assistance in emergency situations or help people who are restricted by illness or disability.

Democratic Shaping
Smart Heroes who shape democracy, advocate equal opportunities and rights for all people. This includes for example promoting social dialogue and educating people about democratic values.

Ecological Operating
Smart Heroes who operate ecologically, are committed to protecting nature and resources. Among other things, they raise awareness of the issue of conscious consumption or make an active contribution to the environment.
Dear friends of the Smart Hero Award,

The past few months have shown how important it is that social commitment is firmly anchored online. During the Covid-19 pandemic, many people have connected with, helped and supported each other on social media.

The winners of the Smart Hero Award show how this commitment can successfully be made online and with a far reach. They show initiative and creativity and are therefore an inspiring role model for others. For the seventh time, Stiftung Digitale Chancen and Facebook are awarding people and projects that stand up for a diverse and fair society on social media with innovative ideas. In 2020 the motto of the competition is “SUSTAINABLY COMMITTED” - and there is a Special Award for Social Commitment during the Covid-19 pandemic.

I was very happy to take over the patronage in this eventful and challenging year and I am impressed how the Smart Heroes work in different ways for our society and common values, for their fellow human beings and our environment. They are pioneers and a source of inspiration for smart and social engagement online. This is exactly what matters in these times. I would therefore like to warmly congratulate all nominees and award winners and wish them continued success in their so important commitment - online and of course offline.

Your

Minister of State Annette Widmann-Mauz,
Member of the Bundestag
Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration
How to become a Smart Hero

Social commitment in social media is more popular than ever. This is also reflected by the fact, that more projects were submitted for the Smart Hero Award in 2020 than any year before. We will explain the different steps of selecting the Smart Heroes from hundreds of projects.

**Step 1**
First, the team of Stiftung Digitale Chancen checks whether there are duplications among the submissions and whether the submitted projects are in conformity with the law. This includes compliance with the German legal notice obligation and the legal data protection requirements.

**Step 2**
Afterwards, the competition’s catalog of criteria, which is divided into six categories, is applied. The catalog is updated each year to take current trends in the field of social media into account, such as new channels or forms of interaction.

**Step 3**
Next, a panel of experts examines the submissions that meet the competitions requirements. Based on their expertise, they then nominate a selection of entries for the jury’s decision.

**Step 4**
The high-ranking jury then chooses the winners in the various categories from the nominees. Parallel to this, the public decides via online voting which nominated project receives the audience award.
The criteria

**Quality**
This is where the quality and currency of the content shared on various social media channels is evaluated. Attention is paid to the relevance and contextualization and the values of recognition, respect and tolerance.

**Meaningful use**
This criterion focuses on the added value of social media to the overall concept of the project. Furthermore, particular attention will be given to ensure that the possibilities of the platforms have been used to their fullest.

**Addressing the target groups**
Appropriate targeting is essential for the successful use of social media. The users’ interaction with a project is considered an important factor for a successful approach.

**Reach**
The reach is evaluated on the basis of various factors, including people reached, followers, likes or fans. Furthermore, the website as well as the connection of different social media channels is taken into account.

**Creativity**
This is where we assess how creative a project’s approach to working with social media is, for example with the methods of addressing target groups, publicity and forms of interaction.

**Sustainability**
How well a project networks with other relevant projects is evaluated here as well as the transferability of the project idea. In addition, past achievements and future prospects are also considered.
The Jury selects the award winners from the nominees

Kerstin Andreae
Chief Executive Officer, Bundesverband der Energie- und Wasserwirtschaft e. V.

Prof. Dr. Maria Böhmer
President, German UNESCO-Committee

Dr. rer. nat. Karamba Diaby
Member of the executive committee of the Bundestag faction, SPD

Jürgen Dusel
Federal Government Commissioner for the Interests of People with Disabilities

Kübra Gümüşay
Journalist & activist

Thomas Krüger
President, Federal Center for Political Education

Thomas Leppert
Managing Partner, Heldenrat GmbH

News-WG
Smart Heroes 2019
Petra Pau  
Vice President of the German Bundestag, DIE LINKE

Donata Schenck zu Schweinsberg  
Chairwoman of the Board of Trustees, Foundation „Daheim im Leben“

Dr. Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann  
Deputy Federal Chairwoman, FDP

Aminata Touré  
Vice President of the Schleswig-Holstein State Parliament, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen

Detailed information on the expert committee and the jury can be found on www.smart-hero-award.de.
The Committee of Experts

The committee of experts selects the nominees

Dr. Chadi Bahouth
Political scientist, journalist and trainer

Franz-Reinhard Habbel
Former speaker, German Association of Cities and Municipalities

Dagmar Hirche
Founder, Wege aus der Einsamkeit e. V.

Stefanie Hoffmann
Department of Digitalization, Protestant Church in Germany

Sandy Jahn
Consultant for Education & Digital Competencies, Initiative D21 e. V.

Dr. Ansgar Klein
General Manager, Bundesnetzwerk Bürger-schaftliches Engagement

Dr. Sebastian Kohlmann
Consultant, Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth

Dr. Susanne Lang
Managing Director, Centrum für Corporate Citizenship Deutschland

Tabea Mewes
Media scientist and founder of the Online-Initiative #notjustdown (Smart Heroes 2019)

Alexander Westheide
Aktion Mensch e. V.
Cancer Unites – Krebs verbindet

Cancer Unites - Krebs verbindet is a (self-)help platform from cancer patients for cancer patients. The network connects cancer bloggers and contact points on various platforms that are committed to patients and their relatives. As a strong and experienced team, they stand up for cancer education. Cancer Unites offers patients free assistance in coping with a cancer diagnosis.

Are Smart Heroes because they:

- provide a sensitive and authentic framework for education and exchange for people with cancer
- strengthen the community and create a sense of solidarity
- provide a deeper insight into topics that are particularly relevant to the target group via panel discussions

@cancerunites
@cancer_unites
In the beginning there was an idea: to bring a truck with donated relief goods to the Greek islands as emergency aid for overcrowded refugee camps. With this idea, Wir packen’s an e. V. started an avalanche of helpfulness and mobilized hundreds of volunteers, who are now working in the region and on the external borders of Europe. The work is closely linked to the current political discourse on refugee and asylum issues.

Are Smart Heroes because they:

- provide a personal insight into the work in Germany and the Greek refugee camps through their platforms
- create approachable content and thus promote empathy and understanding for the situation of refugees
- motivate their community to commit in a sustainable fashion

Wir packen’s an e. V.
Team Bananenflanke – Bananenflankenliga e. V.

Maybe a Bananenflanke (a cross with a lot of spin and the trajectory of a banana) isn’t for everyone, but everyone can play soccer - at least in the Bananenflanke team. The Bananenflankenliga is a nationwide soccer project especially for children with mental disabilities. The focus is on soccer, but there is much more to it: through experiential educational influences, emotions are awakened that contribute to the development of personality and social skills. The focus is on conveying a sense of achievement and the associated development of a positive self-esteem.

Are Smart Heroes because they:

- post in a very approachable manner and thus convey a sense of community on social media
- were able to win over committed prominent ambassadors
- with a colorful mix of content invite the community to follow, donate and have fun with soccer
Are Smart Heroes because they:

- motivate the community to participate with creative content, surprising campaigns and great initiatives
- report on their work in a manner that easily engages their audience and provide information on hygiene measures during the pandemic
- were able to build a strong network of prominent supporters

Viva con Agua de St. Pauli e. V. – #stream4water

Viva con Agua? Aren’t those the people who always collect reusable cups at concerts and in order to use the revenue to provide people all over the world with access to clean drinking water and to ensure adequate sanitation and hygiene? But what do they do if there is a summer without festivals? No problem: Within a very short period of time, they set up the digital festival #stream4water. Thanks to numerous prominent supporters, more than twice as many donations could be collected as hoped for. This is how you festival in 2020!
Wooligans – gemeinsam sträkeln für eine warme Gesellschaft

The Wooligans knit and crochet for people without shelter and are already known to the Smart Hero Award. They won a social media coaching in 2018 and are now showing what they have learned. Their work focuses on cohesion and strengthening of community and neighborhood as well as direct help for homeless people and others in need. The aim of the Wooligans is to break down prejudices, promote understanding, counteract loneliness and isolation and raise awareness for people in precarious situations.

Are Smart Heroes because they:
- provide an approachable start to volunteering and show the joy of community spirit
- produce creative content and encourage their community to participate
- expand the project beyond Hamburg to other cities within a few years
In their podcast, Marcel and Malcolm surf the net on the **Kanackische Welle** (German for wave) and talk about pop culture, racism, sexuality, religious tensions and life as a POC (Person of Color) in a western society. In a humorous and authentic way, they deal with important social and political issues from a post-migrant perspective - easy to understand and thought-provoking.
Schule ohne Rassismus – Aktion Courage e. V.

The project **Schule ohne Rassismus**, Aktion Courage e. V. has been working against the increasing spread of right-wing extremist and racist views among young people since 1995. Unfortunately, these topics continue to be relevant as they play an increasingly important role in the digital media. With the help of this project, pupils at different schools all over Germany are enabled to deal with these issues directly and to stand up against racism, antisemitism, classism and other ideologies of inequality without having to commit themselves to a political party.

Are Smart Heroes because they:

- reach a wide variety of people through their channels
- report directly from participating schools and thus encourage discussions about racism
- have established a nationwide network with which (not only) young people can stand up against racism
Ellen and Steffi are two pastors in the countryside of Lower Saxony that are married to each other and are YouTube celebrities. Through their viewers can follow them into their everyday life through different formats, such as talks, Q&As and vlogs and they don’t beat around the bush: sperm donation, queer life within the church, LGBTQ+ rights - everything is discussed and shared with the community. Anders Amen is colorful, loud and always ready to surprise you.
Auf Klo

“Girls always go to the bathroom together...” The YouTube channel Auf Klo would like to clean up prejudices like this by interviewing people about rather untypical “girl topics”. In each episode, one of the presenters meets a guest “on the loo” and talks about topics such as body & self-love, mental health, disability, LGBTQ+ or sex & love. In a relaxed and entertaining atmosphere, stereotypes and prejudices about femininity and gender are discussed.

Are Smart Heroes because they:
- create a positive space for discussion and a have a very respectful approach to sometimes sensitive issues
- invite the community to join in and encourage constructive debates
- target their audience very well and appreciate where their audience and its concerns are coming from
Are Smart Heroes because they:

- prepare their content in a diverse, creative and targeted manner – peer to peer
- communicate with their target audience on eye level
- succeed in transferring young people’s participation and political commitment into the digital space

**TINCON e. V.**

Young, dynamic, creative - at TINCON, the interdisciplinary festival for digital youth culture, the target group designs the program itself. Young people can submit their own contributions or actively shape TINCON by joining the youth advisory board or the U21 team. This enables young people’s participation and encourages them to become politically involved. TINCON doesn’t only work as an offline event, but as shown this year, can also be moved into a digital realm.
“A tip: tap water”, the motto of the association a tip: tap is as simple as that. The association is committed to a water change in Germany and advocates the consumption of tap water and the avoidance of plastic waste. In addition to raising awareness of the issue via social media, a tip: tap promotes the construction of public drinking fountains in Berlin and reaches children and young people with their project “Tap water friendly school”.

Are Smart Heroes because they:
- convey a very current topic through well produced and humorous videos
- create a high recognition value with creative texts and images
- invite the community to join in through practical tips, a wide range of information and specific calls for action

@atiptap
@a_tip_tap
Are Smart Heroes because they:
- create a high recognition value with their attractive design
- prepare informative content and thus successfully educate people on food waste
- encourage the community to join them and to become food saviors themselves

SIRPLUS

Saving food and talking about it - that is the everyday life of SIRPLUS, the Germany-wide impact start-up against food waste. What’s behind all this? It is actually quite simple: surplus groceries are brought back into circulation by being sold in their “rescue markets” and an online store. The concept of food rescue is becoming a mainstream topic through their social media and they encourage society, politics and economy to rethink.
Are Smart Heroes because they:

- use Instagram's individual functions in a targeted manner to make topics informative, comprehensive and sustainable
- interact well with their community, answer questions and take comments into account
- research their content very well and prepare it in diverse ways

**OZON**

“Your daily environmental protection” - With OZON, Pia, Fabian and Vio bring climate and environmental questions into people’s daily Instagram feed. They focus on a specific topic each week, which they view from multiple perspectives: with compact information, explainers, easy-to-implement everyday tips and common challenges they vividly explain the issues. The focus is on information and tips about a sustainable lifestyle and the responsible use of our resources.
Are Smart Heroes because they:

• create a sense of closeness to the animals by offering additional information online that complements the information provided on sight in the forest.

• use various social media-tools to educate about animal welfare in a creative and entertaining way

• prepare shared content and information in a high-quality and target group-oriented manner

Bärenwald Müritz

#smartlikeabear – under this hashtag, the Bärenwald Müritz has brought bears closer to big and small nature lover’s hearts. This forest of bears is committed to animal and nature conservation far beyond the functions of a zoo, by rescuing brown bears from poor housing conditions and finding them a home close to nature. Topics such as keeping animals in a species-appropriate manner, sustainability, zero waste and upcycling all play an important role. Through environmental education activities, the community is encouraged to contemplate, participate and “replicate”.
Ecological Operating

**Gutmensch Alex**

Collect a handful of garbage every day. With this initiative, the environmental activist *Gutmensch Alex* is sending a strong signal. He is committed to a collaborative, tolerant and climate-friendly world and motivates others to do the same, both online and offline. On his social media channels, he uses vlogs and Instagram stories to provide insights into the life of an activist as well as tips for sustainable action and social commitment. He focuses not only on problems, but above all on sustainable solutions.

*Is a Smart Hero because he:*

- keeps close contact with his followers in a likeable way
- prepares and conveys content in various types in an understandable, low-threshold and entertaining manner
- skillfully uses the functions of the individual platforms for a positive exchange

@gutmensch_alex

Gutmensch Alex
Corona School e. V.

- **Corona School** - the name says it all. The aim of the project is to provide free digital educational support for pupils and to relieve parents of the burden of home schooling. Volunteering university students offer pupils of all grades digital support in the completion of school tasks. This strengthens social action in society and enables interaction and assistance between different generations.
Special Award for Social Commitment during the Covid-19 pandemic

Straßenkinder e. V. – Digital-Coaching

Straßenkinder e. V. has been caring for street children, children, adolescents and young adults affected by child and educational poverty for 20 years. In order to avoid further discrimination caused by the Corona crisis, they provide digital coaching for children and young people who already have difficulties in fulfilling their learning goals. Among other things, they provide laptops and surfsticks for students and offer a comprehensive range of digital learning and support services.

Are Smart Heroes because they:

- provide a comprehensive and diverse online service for support and advice
- disseminate well-prepared information on current Corona relief efforts via social media
- sustainably make their developed concepts an integral part of the association’s work
Are Smart Heroes because they:

- use social media in a targeted manner to inform about their events
- provide a behind-the-scenes look on Instagram to add value to online events
- leave it up to the audience to decide how much money they want to donate by purchasing solidarity tickets

Culture Cast

Imagine your favorite band is playing and you are not allowed to go see them. Cultural activities are strongly affected by the Corona pandemic - Culture Cast counteracts this by offering a streaming channel. The team of freelance technicians, bookers and presenters organize concerts and other cultural events that are being streamed directly into your living room. By purchasing “solidarity tickets”, where each individual can choose the amount of money they are willing to pay for a ticket, viewers equally support the artists, the Culture Cast team and a non-profit organization.
Eine Welt Netzwerk Thüringen e. V.

In a time of information overload, the Eine Welt Netzwerk Thüringen is responding to the pandemic with a clever and informative campaign: In their Corona blog, people from all over the world speak out in video messages and report on the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on their region and their own personal situation. This enables a change of perspective and provides targeted information on global political, social, economic and ecological correlations and effects of the pandemic.
Are Smart Heroes because they:

- innovatively turn something ordinary into something that is good for society
- post varied, visually appealing and well-researched content
- seek exchange with the community and encourage debates on sustainable consumption through their work

Spendehosen

Sorting out for a good cause: This is the concept of Spendehosen, a charitable initiative recently launched by five friends from Cologne and Munich who collect donations for aid organizations by selling masks and second-hand clothes on Kleiderkreisel and Instagram. The donations are currently going to projects that are particularly in need during the Corona pandemic. However, the project is intended to last longer and to raise awareness of sustainable consumption and current problems.
Special award for Facebook groups

With the special award for Facebook groups the Smart Hero Award not only honors highly active groups whose activities contribute to a good cause, but also underlines the added value of such communities for society.

Abenteuer Familie – Leben mit Kindern

In the group Abenteuer Familie - Leben mit Kindern like-minded people meet online to sing, dance, bake, paint or do arts and crafts together with their children. The group was started in mid-March 2020 to provide family entertainment and activities for each other during the Corona period. With over 3,000 members, the group has managed to share collective knowledge and creativity within a very short time: every day there are several interactive live offers to join in and have fun. The parents’ exchange of experiences is also important: in the group chat, experiences and tips on the topics of family, upbringing and everyday life are shared. In the meantime, the group has been organized in such a way that it will last beyond the lockdown period and can be used by families on a long-term basis.
NetzwerkStatt Krebs – Virtuelle Selbsthilfegruppe

NetzwerkStatt Krebs is a virtual self-help group that gives young cancer patients room for mutual exchange and encouragement. The group is explicitly aimed at young people who, when the diagnosis comes, are in the middle of their life and have their own wishes, worries and needs: those affected are either parents or still have a desire to have children, are at the beginning or in the middle of training or work, have to experience physical changes too early and have to think about breast reconstruction or hormonal changes. NetzwerkStatt Krebs uses various forms of media, bundles information and offers online self-help groups. The motto is clear: encourage each other instead of just getting pity. Frauenselbsthilfe Krebs e. V. stands behind this strong project.

Transgender Germany – TGG

Transgender Germany (TGG) offers opportunities for exchange and empowerment for all those who do not want to continue living in the gender that was assigned to them at birth. The thematic focus is on trans*- and inter-gender people of all ages. Relatives and people seriously interested in the topic are also welcome to join the group. In order to create a safe space, the group can only be joined after answering some of the admins’ questions. In addition to the main group, there are other more specific groups, for example for exchanges among parents and relatives.
Also nominated for the Facebook Group Award were:

The group **In Quarantäne? Nachbar hilft! #Corona-hilfe #mehrgemeinsam** linked people seeking help with people offering help during the corona lockdown via a zip code database.

In the group **Free Your Stuff Mannheim** members can bring joy to others by giving away used household items or by finding used treasures themselves without spending money.

In the group **GründerMütter** (expecting) mothers are offered (zoom) workshops on topics such as press work, accounting and taxes and they can discuss business ideas.

The group **Menstruationstasse** helps its community with a questionnaire to find the right menstrual cup and informs about sustainable alternatives to common menstrual products.

Nature conservation as a community effort: in the **Rhein Clean Up Dormagen Zons group**, clean-up campaigns and “Rhein Clean Ups” are organized around the town of Dormagen.

The private group **VanLove Girls** offers women who want to convert a car into a camper van and live in it temporarily or permanently, the opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas.
The motto of the Smart Hero Award 2020 is “SUSTAINABLY.COMMITTED”. What is your personal connection to this topic?

**JC:** Sustainability is an aspect that covers all areas of life. Many projects that have already taken part in the Smart Hero Award were started spontaneously in order to solve a problem and are now permanently committed to society. Personally, I also see the work of the Stiftung Digitale Chancen as a piece of sustainability. Since 2002, we have been working to ensure that everyone is able to participate in the information society; we experienced how important this is during the pandemic.

**EMK:** The topic of sustainability has been very close to my heart for a long time. Not only in my personal life, but also in my work at Facebook, I have been driving the issue forward continuously.
for some time now. With this year’s focus, we also want to do justice to current social issues and challenges and honor those projects that are passionately, successfully and sustainably committed to a good cause.

What role does social media play for social commitment?

**EMK:** Social media offers socially committed people new and effective ways to communicate, to organize themselves - and thus also to represent their own interests and concerns more effectively. The contribution that digital platforms like Facebook make is precisely that: they enable people to connect with each other and exchange information with like-minded people about the things that are important to them. In this way, significantly more people can be reached and mobilized, which strengthens the overall social commitment.

**JC:** The current commitment report of the German government also demonstrates the importance of social media: more and more initiatives and associations are using its potential to draw attention to their concerns and to make the commitment of volunteers visible.

What distinguishes this year’s Smart Heroes?

**JC:** We are always amazed at how creatively and diversely the Smart Heroes show their commitment to society. Whether for children, the elderly or families, for animals and the environment, or in a Facebook group for a very personal concern, social media helps to connect those active and spread the message that commitment is worthwhile.

**EMK:** The projects reflect what is increasingly important in our society: they are committed to the climate, to cohesion in our country or to a fair and democratic society. In doing so, they also show how diverse sustainability can be - and how high Germany’s commitment in this area is.

The Smart Hero Award will be awarded for the 7th time this year. What significance has it gained during this time for the Stiftung Digitale Chancen?
**JC:** The task of the Stiftung Digitale Chancen is to get people interested in the possibilities of the Internet and to support them in using it. Through the Smart Hero Award we have become acquainted with a large number of projects and initiatives in recent years whose commitment in and with social media is a model for others. We are pleased that we are able to honor this commitment in close cooperation with Facebook and thus contribute to more people using the potential of social media for themselves and others.

**Facebook not only draws attention to social commitment on the Internet through the Smart Hero Award, but also, for example, through the #mehrgemeinsam (#moretogether) campaign. Why is this important for Facebook?**

**EMK:** We believe that good things can happen when people come together and work together. Facebook groups in particular underline the added value of such communities. Worldwide, 400 million people are members of such groups and especially now during the Corona crisis, numerous people have come together on Facebook to be there for each other and support others despite isolation. If social cohesion can be strengthened in this way, then much of Facebook’s mission has been achieved.
NETZKULTUR
STATT
HETZKULTUR
Since the establishment in 2002, it is the remit of the Digital Opportunities Foundation to research the social impact of digitisation, to campaign for equal access to the internet for all people, and to advance digital literacy. Our objective is digital inclusion of all societal groups and counteracting the digital divide. We work in cooperation with public, civic, and private partners. Our projects are funded by federal and European programs as well as by industry. The foundation is working under the patronage of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy and the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth.

Founded in 2004, Facebook is dedicated to empowering people to build communities and to bring the world closer together. Our products provide a platform for three billion people around the world to share ideas, support each other and make a difference. With Facebook, nonprofit organizations, associations and businesses can get people excited about their cause and draw attention to the issues that matter to them. This is increasingly happening in Facebook groups, which play an important role for over 400 million members worldwide - whether large or small, local or global.
Imprint

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