

Profit from your issues

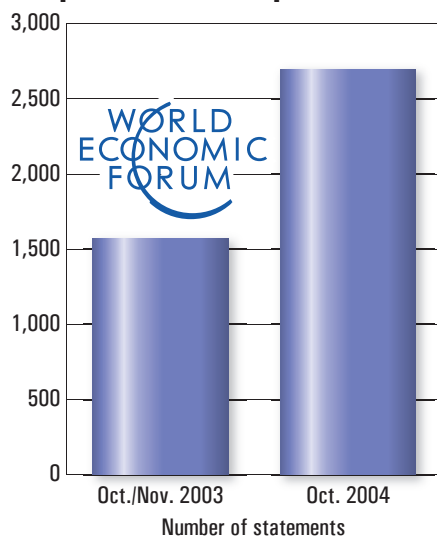
The Global Competitiveness Report in the media coverage of the World Economic Forum, 2003 – 2005

www.weforum.org/site/homepublic.nsf/Content/Global+Competitiveness+Programme

All of the World Bank's statistics in recent years have shown that, over the last 100 years, wealth and equality of opportunity have been created more quickly in countries that have switched from a planned economy to a market-oriented economy. Whether or not a country's economy is successful, after all, is in no small part a question of whether it can compete in the global market place.

Ever since its founding by Professor Klaus Schwab, the World Economic Forum has put particular emphasis on searching for the best-suited economic models and putting them into practice. Initially only in Davos, then on all five continents, the Forum has held conferences that served as a platform for meetings of corporate executives with politicians, scientists and NGO representatives where economic concepts could be discussed and where, in subsequent years, their success or failure could be analyzed. But for the public image of the World Economic Forum, it has become increasingly important to be associated with the essence of its mission to avoid an overt dependence on the success of its conferences. It thus made sense for the Forum not to publish the annual Global Competitiveness Report, an analysis of the ability of national economies to compete with

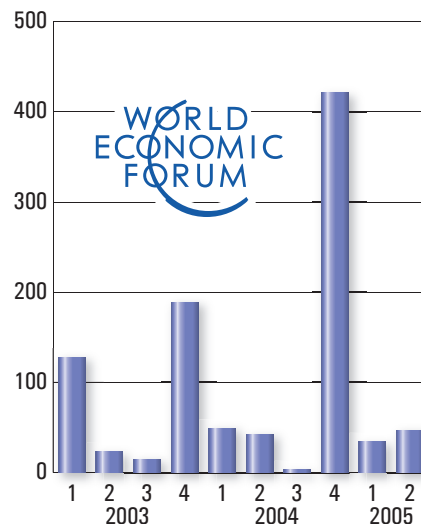
Chart 1: Coverage of the Global Competitiveness Report, 2003/2004



Source: Media Tenor, 10-11/2003; 10/2004
Basis: Statements about/from the World Economic Forum in leading international media

The great popularity of rankings of any kind among journalists made it much easier to communicate these complex issues and guaranteed the media's attention for years to come.

Chart 2: Competitiveness issues, International media, 01/03 – 06/2005



Source: Media Tenor, 01/01/2003 – 06/30/2005
Basis: Statements about/from the World Economic Forum in leading international media

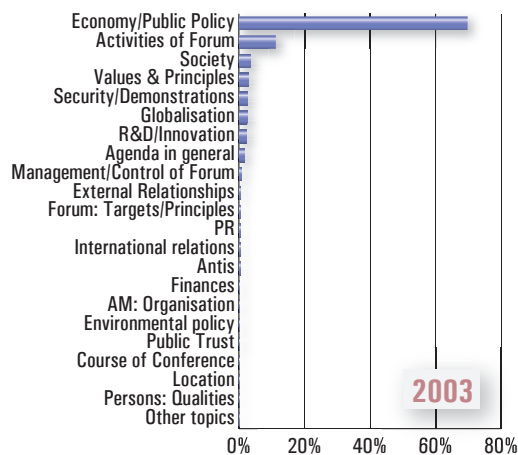
each other, at the Davos meeting, but to brand it as a separate study.

More than just a conference

In contrast to traditional foundations, charities or activist organizations, the World Economic Forum does not have a message that appeals directly to the moral conscience of any audience. While shocking imagery of starving children or oil-encrusted sea gulls easily capture the attention of viewers, securing awareness as well as moral and material support for the NGOs working on such issues, the message of the World Economic Forum appeals primarily to the human intellect. The majority of problems and conflicts the media delivers to newspaper readers and TV news audiences could probably see significant help and improvement through the efforts undertaken by the World Economic Forum's global platform for cooperation between governments, corporations, economic associations, media and NGOs. However, what's missing is the immediate appeal targeting the human conscience, along the lines of recent demands to "End poverty now!"

In light of this background, the World Economic Forum runs the risk of being perceived merely as the organizer of an annual meeting of powerful personae in Davos. This risk is made even greater by another factor – due to the prominence of the participants in the meeting, their reputation might taint that of the Forum. This potential consequence is worrisome, especially in the current

Chart 3: Topics of the World Economic Forum 2003

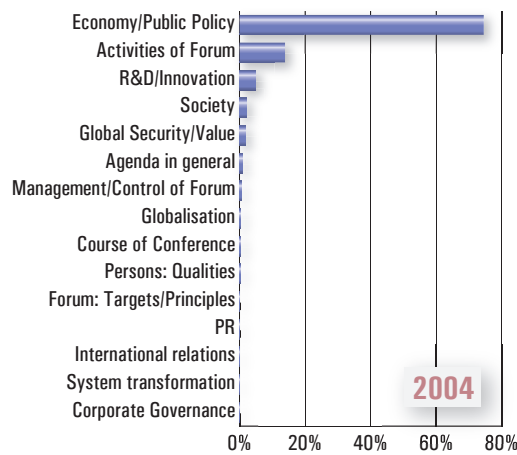


Share of all statements referring to the competitiveness report

Source: Media Tenor, 10-11/2003

Basis: Statements about/from the World Economic Forum in leading international media

Chart 4: Topics of the World Economic Forum 2004



Number of statements in stories referring to the competitiveness report

Source: Media Tenor, 10/2004

Basis: Statements about/from the World Economic Forum in leading international media

In 2004, the number of extraneous issues in reports on the Global Competitiveness Index was visibly smaller than in the previous year.

geopolitical climate. The reputation of the U.S. has suffered greatly around the world, and European media in particular have been portraying the country as the ringleader and prime beneficiary of globalization, at the cost of less powerful nations and local constituencies.

Competence and compassion

With the scientific analysis of international competitiveness and the annual publication of a meaningful ranking, the World Economic Forum achieves several goals: The media’s attention is sustained even outside of big events like the annual meeting in Davos and the Forum establishes itself as an expert in a field that remains contested and hotly debated on national and international levels. After all, the establishment and safeguarding of national competitiveness served as one of the key arguments for the de-regularization of slow-moving markets, especially in Europe.

The great popularity of rankings of any kind among journalists made it much easier to communicate these complex issues and guaranteed the media’s attention for years to come. As the increase in coverage of the Global Competitiveness Index in 2004 shows, the media has swallowed the bait (chart 1).

Concentrating on one central message simplifies the task of news reporting for the media and reduces white noise in its coverage of the World Economic Forum. In 2004, the number of extrane-

ous issues in reports on the Global Competitiveness Index was visibly smaller than in the previous year (charts 3 and 4). Public awareness of the Forum has grown in breadth at the same rate as the coverage of the competitiveness of national economies has increased. The self-referential tendency of the media has led to a point where established media are increasingly regarded as primary sources for other journalists.

Controversy instead of conflict

How to measure the competitiveness of national economies is not an uncontested issue in the scientific community. But for sheer media presence, arguments about such an essential issue clearly have a beneficial effect – theses and antitheses are keeping the discussion and the media’s interest alive.

A few years ago, it still looked as if the World Economic Forum could make headlines only with mass demonstrations of violent anti-globalization activists, blocked roads in the Swiss Alps and the outsized personalities of some of its participants. Now real issues are coming back to the fore. The Global Competitiveness Index is thus a prime example for gaining attention by addressing hard issues and demonstrating competence. ck

Basis:

Media: Analysis of about 100 international print, TV and online media

Period of Analysis: 01/01/2003 – 06/30/2005

Analysis: Examination of all news stories mentioning the World Economic Forum for at least 5 lines/seconds