
Media information

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Volkswagen takes action in response to criticism of social media clip

- Volkswagen to create independent board with diversity experts
- Employee training on critical content and symbols to be intensified
- Investigation reveals: no racist intentions in production of video

Wolfsburg, June 11, 2020 - In response to the rightly criticized Internet clip to promote the Golf 8, the company has decided to take a number of actions. This is to ensure that the production and publication of inappropriate content will be prevented in future.

“Our controls are clearly insufficient when it comes to ethical judgment. We recognize that we have to question with much greater sensitivity whether content could be discriminatory, offensive, or potentially disturbing for people.” says Jürgen Stackmann, member of the Volkswagen Passenger Cars Board of Management responsible for Marketing and After Sales.

The actions in detail:

1. Improvements in processes by establishing a permanent approval checkpoint at our company and on the agency side. To this end, we will create a board with diversity experts outside of the creative process, who will review creative content for potentially offensive, discriminatory and otherwise critical elements.
2. Significantly boost training on ethics and culture in our own team and on the agency side.
3. Ensure heterogeneity and greater diversity in our teams.
4. Create a horizontal social media organization for better response and control.

At its last meeting, the Group Board of Management discussed the results of Group Audit’s investigation and resolved to take action. “On behalf of the Board of Management, I want to formally apologize for offending people as a result of a lack of intercultural sensitivity and professionalism. This was a violation of values for which Volkswagen stands,” explains Hiltrud D. Werner, member of the Volkswagen Group Board of Management responsible for Integrity and Legal Affairs.

As part of the investigation, Group Audit analyzed around 400 files with a data volume of more than 16.5 GB and conducted interviews with employees, primarily in marketing, procurement and the legal department, as well as with the external agencies involved. “On this basis, we can state that racist

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intentions did not play any role whatsoever. We found a lack of sensitivity and procedural errors. And we are now taking targeted steps in response,” continues Werner.

Jochen Sengpiehl, Chief Marketing Officer, confirms: “The critical point is that we failed to spot the racist elements of this video. I want to apologize for this error of judgment, also on behalf of the team. A key finding of the investigation is that we need an out-of-context review. Each individual clip must be unequivocal and non-critical, even without the general context. I will personally make sure that the actions resolved will be implemented in day-to-day business operations.”

One of the seven Volkswagen Group Essentials is “We live diversity”. This is a crucial part of the Group’s DNA. Volkswagen stands for humanity and diversity and speaks out strongly against racism, discrimination and xenophobia.

Further quotations by Hiltrud D. Werner, Jürgen Stackmann and Jochen Sengpiehl can be found by following this link:

[Statement Hiltrud D. Werner.](#)

[Statement Jürgen Stackmann.](#)

[Statement Jochen Sengpiehl.](#)

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Volkswagen AG

Deputy Head of Corporate Communications

Contact Dr. Christoph Ludewig

Phone +49-5361-9-875 75

E-mail christoph.ludewig@volkswagen.de | www.volkswagen-newsroom.com



Volkswagen AG

Head of Litigation Communications

Contact Nicolai Laude

Phone +49-5361-9-250 97

E-mail nicolai.laude@volkswagen.de | www.volkswagen-newsroom.com



About the Volkswagen Group:

The Volkswagen Group, with its headquarters in Wolfsburg, is one of the world's leading automobile manufacturers and the largest carmaker in Europe. The Group comprises twelve brands from seven European countries: Volkswagen Passenger Cars, Audi, SEAT, ŠKODA, Bentley, Bugatti, Lamborghini, Porsche, Ducati, Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, Scania and MAN. The passenger car portfolio ranges from small cars all the way to luxury-class vehicles. Ducati offers motorcycles. In the light and heavy commercial vehicles sector, the products range from pick-ups to buses and heavy trucks. Every weekday, 671.205 employees around the globe produce on average 44,567 vehicles, are involved in vehicle-related services or work in other areas of business. The Volkswagen Group sells its vehicles in 153 countries.

In 2019, the total number of vehicles delivered to customers by the Group globally was 10.97 million (2018: 10.83 million). The passenger car global market share was 12.9 percent. Group sales revenue in 2019 totaled EUR 252.6 billion (2018: EUR 235.8 billion). Earnings after tax in the fiscal year now ended amounted to EUR 14.0 billion (2018: EUR 12.2 billion).
