

The passive audience is the largest part of the audience, which usually remains politically passive and appears in statistics as bearers of the "public opinion". An example is a study among managers conducted by the Droege & Comp. management consulting company, which concludes that 59% of respondents are in favor of "levying lower taxes than now", and 60% are in favor of "making stronger use of the existing penalties than now" (Handelsblatt, 29.2.2008, 6).

→ **Conclusion:** The active audience had very different opinions, depending on the viewpoint from which the current case was observed.

6.5.5 Political actors

Political actors are representatives of the executive and legislative branches and are supposed to realize social goals and ideals. The determination of political priorities is influenced by the public opinion, and political actors in turn influence public opinion (see Eichhorn 2005, 154).

Institutions and interest groups may be linked with each other at different levels. The social role of politics allows it to access the media. In this way, the political system and all persons and institutions acting in its environment or in its name become a mighty actor in the definition of public agendas. Sometimes, the relationship is characterized by conflict – when the interest groups try to impose their priorities on the media – and sometimes by cooperation – when both have the same understanding of the problem or their interests coincide. This could be observed in the Zumwinkel case, when the cameras were already waiting in front of his home in order to broadcast his arrest. The public prosecutor's office (or whoever it actually was) apparently had an interest in publicizing its activity, and the mass media had the same interest. Practice moreover has shown that links at the individual level can be at least as effective when the goal is to make "one's own" topics public via the media (see Eichhorn 2005, 150) – for instance the statement launched by Federal Minister of Finance Peer Steinbrück in SZ of 19 June 2008 that one might "contemplate the use of torture instruments for Liechtenstein" (exact quote: "In the Grand Coalition, we are now thinking about penalties for tax offenses. For instance, imprisonment might be imposed more frequently than fines," p. 22).

While in the first few days, from 14 to 17 February, the main actors appearing in public were the Bochum public prosecutor's office and the mass media, the political actors were the ones announcing their opinions and interests in the tax affair via the mass media beginning 18 February. Within this group, we already see major differences in the "social objectives" represented here: not only diametrically opposed differences between the political actors in Germany and in Liechtenstein, but also within each of the countries. Chapter 6.6 discusses in more detail the topics associated with the "social objectives" that were expressed during the tax affair.

Political actors in Germany

Under the given circumstances, the following political actors can be identified:

- Government members (Federal Chancellor, Federal Minister of Finance, Federal Minister of the Interior, Federal Foreign Minister)