



## Electronics firms rating

# From Apple to Huawei: profit comes before workers' rights

**Berne / Lucerne, 21 November 2017. Exploitation of students as cheap labour, unpaid overtime and wages that are not enough to live on: in the mobile phone and computer industries labour rights are still a sore point. In particular the new market giant Huawei and HTC still have much to do. These are the findings of the third *Bread for all* and *Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund (Fastenopfer)* rating of the ten IT firms with the biggest market share in Switzerland. The development organisations are calling on Swiss universities to buy only responsibly produced IT equipment and to join the organisation Electronics Watch.**

The much-hyped launch of the iPhone X in early November led to turbulent scenes again outside many Apple stores – and to celebrations at the US group's headquarters. However, a decade after the smartphone era began the people who produce the most profitable electronic device in the world have little reason to celebrate. Workers' rights are violated on a grand scale in the Chinese factories that supply Apple. According to research by SACOM, a local partner organisation of *Bread for all*, the workers have to put in 80 to 90 hours of overtime a month to ensure a living wage. What is more, vocational school students are still being exploited as cheap labour under the guise of "internships". It is problematic that the brands often blame their suppliers for the abuses, although it is they that bear the main responsibility given the price and delivery pressure they exert on them.

The latest IT brands rating by *Fastenopfer* and *Bread for all* confirms the SACOM findings that much still remains to be done especially in the area of labour rights. Although Apple and HP have a good overall rating, both have slipped back since 2014. Dell, on the other hand, and the middle range brands Acer, Sony and Samsung have made up ground. At the tail end of the ranking are HTC and Huawei, the world's second largest mobile phone producer, which is pursuing an aggressive growth strategy in Switzerland. Transparency is completely lacking at both firms and they are tight-lipped over suppliers and production conditions.

### Improvement regarding conflict minerals

However, there are also encouraging signs, especially in the procurement of conflict minerals such as coltan and cobalt. This is primarily due to laws in the United States and the EU – further proof of the fact that companies only make progress in corporate responsibility if obliged to by regulations. Improvements are also noticeable in the environmental sphere. The companies leading the ranking – Apple, HP and Dell – are finally tackling the problem of toxic substances in their products, while those in the middle – Lenovo, Acer, Asus, Samsung and Sony – recognise the problem but are taking little action against it. At the bottom of the ranking, HTC and Huawei show a general lack of concern for the environment and the health of their workers.

The *Bread for all* and *Fastenopfer* rating is intended to serve as a guideline for consumers purchasing IT products. At the same time a public appeal is being made to Swiss universities to join the organisation Electronics Watch. This organisation supports public sector buyers to meet their responsibility to protect the labour rights of workers in global electronics supply chains. The same goal is being pursued through a series of events as part of a campus tour undertaken in collaboration with the student organisation AIESEC.

**Fact sheet:** [www.breadforall.ch/brand-rating-2017](http://www.breadforall.ch/brand-rating-2017)

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