

# Current Concerns

The international journal for independent thought, ethical standards, moral responsibility,  
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English Edition of *Zeit-Fragen*

## “Maintaining productivity at today’s level of self-sufficiency of at least net 54 percent” “Feeding the population reasonably on the basis of family farming”

Interview with National Councillor Markus Ritter, CVP SG, president of the Swiss Farmers’ Association



National Councillor  
Markus Ritter, CVP SG,  
President of Swiss  
Farmers’ Association.  
(picture thk)

thk. On 12 December, the second chamber of Parliament, the Council of States, discussed the bill on Agricultural Policy 2014 to 2017. After the National Council already made some changes, it is now the Council of States’ task to submit their concerns and

suggestions. Particularly controversial is Article 72, which regulates the supply security contributions on grassland. National Councillor Markus Ritter, recently elected president of the Swiss Farmers’ Association and therefore successor to National Councillor Hansjörg Walter, explains in the following interview what kinds of problems and why arise from this bill.

*How did the bill Agricultural Policy for 2014–2017 come about, and what is to be laid down in the new Agriculture Act?*

Agricultural policy in Switzerland is based on the Federal Constitution, Article 104. In 1996 the Swiss approved of this article by 77 percent. On this basis, the 1999 Agriculture Act in its present form was adopted in principle by the Parliament. The current revision of the act happens within the context of a motion for Agricultural Policy 2011 by the Council of States, in which the Council of States demanded to revise the law and submit a report saying whether the agricultural policy in Switzerland should not be aligned more closely with the Constitution. Subsequently, the Federal Council submitted a report on the further development of the direct payment system. Parliament could discuss and take note of this report. Based on these proceedings, the *Agricultural Policy for 2014–2017* (AP 14-17) was adopted by the Federal Council with a message to Parliament.

*What are the priorities of the new Agricultural Policy?*

It includes an increased focus on the objectives of our Constitution. The basic idea is that each constitutional objective is converted into concrete actions and appropriate instruments using an appropriate incentive process. The result is that the constitutional objectives, security of supply and maintenance of the countryside as well as the whole range of environmental services as decentralized settlement can be promoted.

*Does the Federal Council’s proposal to provide more area-based payments get closer to the constitutional objective of security of supply?*

The Federal Council has established a diverse work group for the further development of the direct payment system. Depending on the perspective or order, these people have joined the working group with different ideas and objectives. Of course, the different emphasis on the Constitution also led to different opinions: How much security of supply, how much ecology, how should the cultivation of the landscape be weighted and what means it should be equipped with. This fundamental debate has continued to this day in Parliament. This becomes evident in the various applications that have been identified during previous consultations.

*Does Agricultural Policy for 2014–2017 provide the right answers to the challenges of the years to come?*

It is crucial that the demands on the agricultural policies are now vehemently determined from outside. The situation regarding the supply and food security in view of the very rapidly growing world population – every year about 80 million –, with the increasing scarcity of fresh water, with large-scale floods and droughts does show the world that a greater importance should be attached to the security of supply. In the last three to

### Art. 104 Agriculture

<sup>1</sup>The Confederation shall ensure that agricultural sector, by means of a sustainable and market oriented production policy, makes an essential contribution towards:

- a. the reliable provision of the population with foodstuffs;
- b. the conservation of natural resources and the upkeep of the countryside;
- c. decentralised population settlement of the country.

<sup>2</sup>In addition to the self-help measures that can reasonably be expected in the agriculture sector and if necessary in derogation from the principle of economic freedom, the Confederation shall support farms that cultivate the land.

<sup>3</sup>The Confederation shall organise measures in such a manner that the agricultural sector fulfils its multi-functional duties. It has in particular the following powers and duties:

- a. supplementing revenues from agriculture by means of direct subsidies in order to achieve of fair and adequate remuneration for the services provided, subject to proof of compliance with ecological requirements.
- b. encouraging by means of economically advantageous incentives methods of production that are specifically near-natural and respectful of both the environment and livestock.
- c. legislating on declarations of origin, quality, production methods and processing procedures for foodstuffs.
- d. protecting the environment against the detrimental effects of the excessive use of fertilisers, chemicals and other auxiliary agents.
- e. at its discretion, encouraging agricultural research, counselling and education and subsidise investments.

\*Withf. at its discretion, legislating on the consolidation of agricultural property holdings.

<sup>4</sup> For these purposes, the Confederation shall provide both funds earmarked for the agricultural sector and general federal funds.

Source: [www.admin.ch/ch/e/rs/11/101.en.pdf](http://www.admin.ch/ch/e/rs/11/101.en.pdf)

**“Maintaining productivity at ...”**

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four years there has been a corresponding shift in focus. In this context it is important to attach greater importance to the producing agriculture and thus the security of supply. With respect to the ecological achievements Switzerland, which has some 120,000 hectares of ecological compensation area with a total area of 1 million hectares of arable land, has already reached a very large expansion. Increasing the quality and networking are the only things that can be done here. Therefore, we must lead the discussions with the partners.

*Where are the sensitive issues in the Agricultural Policy for 2014–2017 for productive agriculture, which we ought to continue expanding according to your statement?*

The implementation – and this is my criticism – will cause a significant amount of administrative work, as many of the new instruments, which are to be introduced, will require appropriate planning and controls prior to their implementation, right down to the cantonal and operational level. We are also concerned that the strong focus of direct payments on the surface will exacerbate the market with respect to the leased land with higher rents. The instruments, as they are now set, have an intensifying effect. Our concern is that the incentives for productivity are maintained on today's level of self-sufficiency of at least 54 percent net and increase in this direction.

*What would it take for the peasantry in order to maintain this coverage or, if possible, to enhance it?*

There are three points that I wish to address here. One is that we are trying to achieve a slightly higher number of animals on the pasture area relative to the surface; this concerns Article 72. Next, we aspire a contribution to the feed grain in Article 54. In recent years we have lost 30,000 to 40,000 hectares of cultivated area to the cultivation of feed grains. Swiss feed grain is important for the farmers so that we can feed our stocks of chickens and pigs in particular mainly with local cereals. Thus we are distinctly emphasizing the „Swissness“ and hence the quality strategy. The third point is that the increased benefit payments in the area of ecology are paid at a reasonable cost.

*Where do you see dangers when benefit contributions are linked more to landscape conservation than to the animal population?*

In Switzerland, we have 1 million hectares of arable land and of which annually 2,000 hectares are used in building, main-

ly in Central Switzerland, and 1,400 hectares, mainly in the mountain areas, face increasing reforestation. This side marked a clear loss of productive land. The second point is that with incentives for extensive agriculture productivity will be reduced with the overall effect that our self-sufficiency continues to decline. We are now close to 50 percent, and if we remember that the Swiss population is growing, this means a further deterioration of the business location Switzerland in times of crisis, especially when the international developments increase the way they do. A full-time supply of the population with food belongs to a country's security, however.

*The self-supply of our country seems to me a very important point. This is also a requirement of the World Agriculture Report, to which Swiss scientists have contributed significantly. In the long term, the small-scale, regionally based and cooperatively organized agriculture on family farms are a solution to the world hunger problem, the report says. To what extent these findings of the World Agriculture Report are taken into account in the Agricultural Policy for 2014–2017?*

It is one of the positive developments associated with the *Agricultural Policy for 2014–2017* that the food sovereignty has been confirmed in the Agriculture Act both by the National Council and the Committee for Economic Affairs and Taxation (CEAT). Next week and the week after next, the Council of States will also decide that we write down these fundamental values in the law. This is very important in view of the aforementioned future challenges that we have the opportunity to decide on food sovereignty independently and also to determine what kind of agriculture we want. I consider the model of family farms for Switzerland to be the right one. Family farms that offer both an existence and a home, they produce healthy food and can be run economically while offering room for traditions and culture. This is very important for us. On the other hand, we have no other choice but to feed the world population wisely on the basis of family farms. Large-scale monocultures lead to very unstable international markets, which are associated with strong price fluctuations, which lead to a situation that poorer parts of the population cannot live on a balanced diet. This leads to very large waves of hunger, accompanied by corresponding troubles as we have seen in North Africa two years ago.

*During the session the Council of States will once again have the opportunity to have a corrective impact on Agricultural Policy for 2014–2017. What is up for discussion?*

Of course we have a whole range of proposals that have been approved in the Council of States by the Committee; moreover, there are proposals, but they are minorities in Parliament; and of course there are also individual proposals. We will have to converse with individual Councillors of States and present them our arguments, and then keep the debate running in the Council of States.

*Which issues would be important there?*

Article 9 includes an extension of the competence of the Federal Council concerning the general applications. This is important especially in our asymmetric markets, where many producers are facing fewer buyers. For us Article 54 is also important because it includes that the feed grain is promoted; here we want to set the tone for a local food base. In Article 72 is important that the land contributions are subject to a slightly stronger production. And that Parliament confirms the proposals of the National Council and the CEAT in the global credit.

It is crucial that our agriculture produces sustainably and that it grows. We produce in an integrated manner; we only use as many adjuvants as necessary. Ecological performance requires this standard today. It is also true that good seeds on fertile soils with a healthy water supply and a purposeful fertilization can achieve good yields. With good yields we can achieve the objectives of supply security. But I am also convinced that the training of the next generation is very important so that we will have the know-how in our farms to cultivate the land properly. In Switzerland we are already at a high level. Therefore, efforts need to continue in this direction. It is also important that the performance of agriculture on the markets is rewarded in the market by corresponding percentages of the value added. Agriculture still gets an average of 20 percent or better 20 cents of a consumer franc, which is spent on food. We need cost-covering prices for agricultural products, so that we can maintain and develop our farms.

*The Agricultural Policy for 2014–2017, as stated in the message, also has the objective of preparing agriculture in terms of a further opening to the markets. What do you think about this issue?*

It is a very broad range of topics that is addressed here. Swiss agriculture, and we must be aware of this, has the capacity to supply the population in Switzerland. Foreign markets can be supplied only to a very limited degree. On the one hand, we have very good products in the area of cheese that are also established in foreign markets. Moreover, it is hardly possible to supply foreign markets with more

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# The Council of States is presided by the canton of Ticino

by National Councillor Jakob Büchler, CVP SG



President of the Swiss  
Council of States  
Filippo Lombardi  
(picture Parlamentsdienste  
Bern)

The new President of the Swiss Council of States is called *Filippo Lombardi* and has acquired the highest position in the small chamber. The Christian Democrat from Ticino was elected by 39 votes and thus succeeds to *Hans Altherr* from Appenzell Ausserrhoden.

Filippo Lombardi is delegate to the Board of Directors of Tele Ticino and Radio 3iii. He studied law and economic policy at the University of Freiburg, Switzerland.

Lombardi was elected in the winter session on 26 November 2012 for the term of 2012/2013 and is the first President from Ticino in this function in 25 years.

The people in Ticino place high expectations on Filippo Lombardi. They hope that

"[...] My second thought – which connects me with the address of the outgoing president – concerns us all, ladies and gentlemen, and particularly the institutional role that we are endowed with as representatives of the cantons under the dome of the Federal House. We learned in school, and often it seems like a ritual mantra: Switzerland is based on federalism, and the Council of States is its institutional guarantee. It is true, we know, but how often do we really think of it in our daily parliamentary work? How often are we pursuing our political priorities in noble and understandable zeal and forget the existence of the cantons and of the institutional role that we should fulfill? How often do we accept that the policy and the administration of the Federal Government ignore – not to say mistreat – the cantons and their institutions? How often do we forget to consult them, or ignore their opinions or even treat the Cantonal initiatives rather as petitions? Ladies and gentlemen, the federalism is not a relic we can let gather dust in the historical library of our country. Federalism is the strength of Switzerland and the most useful and effective instrument to guide today's society and to build the one of tomorrow which is becoming increasingly complex. It is a genuine service to the citizens, at the level that is closest to them, and which enables them every day to realize their own identity as active members of a vibrant community where they really have a say rather than being a mere social security number. Let us defend this federalism, let us defend our cantons as we defend the direct democracy and our neutrality [...]."

*From the speech of Filippo Lombardi on the occasion of his election to the Presidency of the Council of States on 26 November 2012, held in his native Italian language.*

(Translation Current Concerns)

with Lombardi the Italian part of Switzerland will get a greater hearing in the rest of the country. There are many problems in the south, the declining financial sector, the increasing spate of cross-border workers, wage dumping and high unemployment. Many citizens in the canton of Ticino feel neglected since the resignation of Federal Councillor *Flavio Cotti* in 1999. For more than 13 years, the canton of Ticino

has no longer been represented in the Federal Council.

Lombardi is one of the few politicians from Ticino who operate on the national stage and are being heard. For thirteen years the gifted communicator and networker Lombardi has been politicizing in the small chamber. He has always lobbied for the interests of Southern Swit-

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## "Maintaining productivity at ..."

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products in the required style. With a self-sufficiency rate of net 54 percent it is not possible to conquer foreign markets in a reasonable way.

Secondly, higher costs for agriculture in Switzerland are a reality. We are talking about an additional 1 billion Swiss francs of higher external costs which Swiss agriculture requires compared to agriculture in neighboring countries, such as in Bavaria and Baden-Wuerttemberg. Against this background, it is also very important that the Swiss agriculture has a customs border, so that these higher costs can be mitigated. The liberalization efforts of the eighties and nineties have come to a virtual standstill. First, it is the WTO Doha Round, which was launched in 2001 and which is no longer progressing. The reasons are that it was started much too soon after the Uruguay Round, that the objectives are outdated, that no country wants to take on leadership responsibility anymore and that the former efforts for liberalization have been replaced by the in-

dustrialized countries' concerns in terms of their monetary problems and indebtedness. Against this background, parliament adopted the objectives of an agricultural free trade with the EU, whose driving force were the WTO negotiations. This does no longer meet with a political majority. What we need to observe are the negotiations on a free trade agreement with China. Here we are in close contact with the farmers and the responsible federal agencies to be able to early incorporate the agricultural concerns. We will follow the proceedings very closely and protect our interests.

*According to your clear explanations, it is extremely important that the agricultural policy is adapted where these foreseeable developments have been considered too little so that we have an agricultural policy in terms of food sovereignty and food sovereignty.*

Yes, the Swiss agriculture plays an important role in the future of our country. We are an important wheel in the economic development of Switzerland, on the one hand in relation to the pro-

duction of healthy foods. We farmers are also those who care for nearly half of our country in areas in which we can experience recreation and where tourism takes place. I think, especially with the growing population in Switzerland and the growing service economy, it is increasingly important that a variety of habitats and a healthy flora and fauna are present. This is also the place for ecological balance. It is these areas that are so important for the recovery and well-being of our population. I am firmly convinced that the frequently mentioned battle for the world's best talent, which will be discussed again by the economic leaders, can be won by Switzerland only if the whole family like us, if they like to live here and hence our employed society is motivated at the workplace. This makes the Swiss agriculture a very important contribution to the future and the development of our country as a leading living space and economic area in Europe.

*National Councillor Mr Ritter, thank you for this interview.*

# Filippo Lombardi – a citizen from Ticino, who stands for the federalist Swiss model

*mw.* On 26 November 2012, the Swiss Council of States elected *Filippo Lombardi* from Ticino as President for 2013. Filippo Lombardi made the consideration and strengthening of federalism the principal objectives of his political activity.

The distinct federalist system of our country is of great importance for our fellow citizens beyond the Gotthard as they play a special role in our federal state with their geographic situation and their Italian language.

## Federalist structure in the federal state of 1848

The federal state of Switzerland was founded in 1848 after long tensions between Catholic-conservative land cantons and liberal-radical town cantons which culminated in the Sonderbund War of 1847. Unlike after civil wars in other countries, the liberal winners did not aim at subjecting the vanquished land cantons – to the Swiss, who have always been accustomed to democracy, such aims were strange. The founding fathers rather wanted a federal state in which all cantons should consider themselves full member states and their inhabitants as a co-determining part of the sovereign. As Maya

Graf said in her inaugural speech: “If we look back on the founding of the federal state, it is striking that after the end of the civil war the victors approached the vanquished, integrated them and provided for compensation.” (cf. page 5)

## Council of States and majority of cantons

For this purpose the Federal Assembly was established as a parliament with two chambers endowed with equal rights and being on equal terms – no law is passed in Switzerland which has not been approved by both councils. 200 seats of the National Council are distributed according to the number of inhabitants in the various cantons: At the moment Zurich as the most populous canton has 34 seats, the little populated mountain canton Uri has only one. However, the Council of States was introduced in 1848 as a guarantor for small cantons: In the Council of States every canton obtained two seats (one seat each for the six half cantons), so that the land cantons and mountain cantons did not have to fear being overrun by the populous cantons like Zurich, Bern or Vaud.

As the second federalist security mechanism serves the majority of cantons. With

constitutional amendments or the membership in international organisations like UN or the EU double approval is required: In addition to the majority of votes of the entire Swiss population, at least 12 cantons (from 20 full cantons and 6 half cantons) must approve by a majority of votes.

## Quadrilingual Switzerland

Respect of the national languages in quadrilingual Switzerland is a matter of course: It goes without saying that Italian is the official language in the canton Ticino and the first language taught in schools; but also the correspondence of the federal administration with the administrative authorities of Ticino and with the single citizens is in Italian, the voting documents are in Italian, and if a citizen of Ticino takes legal action before the Federal Court, the whole procedure takes place in Italian language. All federal decrees, federal court decisions and administrative documents are available in three languages: in German, in French and in Italian. The Rhaeto-Romanic language in some parts of the Grisons is protected by the Federal Constitution and promoted with federal money. •

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zerland. In recent times, he requested the second road tube through the Gotthard with emphasis. For him, a closure planned due to the renovation of the Gotthard road tunnel is not an option, if the second road tube is not installed. Thus

he anticipated the decision of the Federal Council, who subsequently came to the same decision, although not unanimously.

Lombardi speaks mostly Italian when presiding the chamber, even if he is able to express himself in an eloquent German. Of course he cares for the Italian language of the Ticino very well.

As an inhabitant of Ticino, he also advertises the sun-lounge Ticino as a resort for many German-speaking Swiss people. The tourism canton of Ticino offers him a good platform.

His presidential year will provide a valuable service for the cohesion of the country especially for the appreciation of the Ticino. •

# “Integration of forces, taking the opinions of others seriously, genuine reflection and listening leads to consensus-based solutions”

Maya Graf elected for “highest Swiss”



President of the National Council  
Maya Graf (picture thk)

thk. On Monday, 26 November, Maya Graf was elected President of the National Council. The brilliant vote, 173 of 189, confirms the respect and recognition that Maya Graf is paid across all party lines. For one year, she will hold the office of the highest Swiss and preside the Great Chamber. Her colleagues in Parliament appreciate her honest and natural manner, her expertise, her ability to listen, and her calm and deliberate way of engaging in discussions.

The competent politician and – as the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” of 26 November writes – “one of the greatest talents in authenticity” has built up a reputation by her advocacy for the moratorium on genetic engineering. Together with like-minded people from other parties, she launched the people’s initiative, which was approved by the people and cantons in 2005. To date, the moratorium has been extended once and is to be extended one more time together with the *Agricultural Policy 2014–2017*. A blessing for the country and the people, because this way Switzerland has been spared from genetically modified foods. This is an achievement of extraordinary importance which has met with wide attention across the borders. By means of several parliamentary initiatives Maya Graf, who also runs an organic farm with her family, has campaigned for healthy food and promoted food sovereignty.

Maya Graf has been interested in environmental issues since her school years, when she debated such topics with her peers. Her commitment to the people and the environment emerged

“If we look back on the founding of the federal state, it is striking that after the end of the civil war the victors approached the vanquished, integrated them and provided for compensation. [...] The fact that the present parliament works so well, despite disparities between town and country, between conservatives and progressives, is also a legacy of the founding period. The integration of forces, taking the opinions of others seriously, genuine reflection and listening – not the blind parroting of right or left ideology – leads to consensus-based solutions. This needs to be preserved. We can be proud of this legacy, and I think this spirit of that time is required more than ever, today. We have to solve many tasks in the context of sustainable development, not only for our living together in Switzerland, but also in cooperation with our European neighbors.

As the President of this Council I will live these still modern ideals with absolute commitment: I promise to be a fair and competent chair and a true democrat in the representation of the parliament. I will be a ‘première citoyenne’ who feels closely connected to the citizens of our country and who wants to show them that we can be proud of our diversity, our good cooperation in this parliament and of the democratic institutions of Switzerland. This is what we need above all to solve our many tasks for a sustainable Switzerland together.”

Source: [www.admin.ch](http://www.admin.ch)  
(Translation Current Concerns)

early: at the age of 21 she became a regional board member of the Reformed Church. After finishing school, she completed her training as a social worker. In 1988 she was elected the youngest member of the community commission of Sissach, and in 1995, with 33 years, she held a seat in the Parliament of Basel-Country. Since 2001, Maya Graf has been a member of the National Council for the Green Party.

Maya Graf’s early interest in politics has probably to do with her father, who was a district administrator. Even though she put her political focus differently, this experience has been beneficial for the office as President of the National Council, namely for the task of dealing with different political views, a quality that is extremely important especially for Switzerland’s concordance democracy. In her inaugural address immediately after her election, she therefore paid tribute to the foundation of the Swiss federal state in 1848 as a historic achievement and emphasized that this spirit still determines the political life in our country (see box).

In this sense, she will act and create connections and build bridges between the different points of view and opinions, and thus give further impetus to the unique Swiss democracy. *Current Concerns* wishes her every success. •

## Current Concerns

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# Renewal of the GM moratorium

## For quality and independence of our food

As part of the *Agricultural Policy for 2014–2017*, parliament is about not to grant any license for commercial cultivation of GM crops for another four years. The debate on agriculture is the right place for the moratorium renewal. The National Council has already decided in September: with 112 votes versus 62; it thus followed the motion of the pre-consulting Committee on Economic Affairs to continue to give no permits for agricultural cultivation of genetically modified plants. The moratorium is to last until the end of 2017 instead of expiring in 2013. It can be expected that the Council of States will also follow this line. In November its Committee on Economic Affairs has confirmed the decision of the National Council and recommended the renewal of the moratorium to the Council of States.

The fact that issue of renewing the moratorium was linked to agricultural debate is justified by its very nature. The moratorium applies to the agricultural sector. It is the commercial cultivation of GM crops for which no permits are issued. Research trials and all medical applications are subject to the law of genetic engineering for the human and the non-human sphere. The renewal of the moratorium was triggered off by a motion of National Councillor *Markus Ritter* (CVP), an organic farmer in the Rhine Valley of canton St. Gallen (*gentechfrei-info* GMO – free info of September). The motion met with wide approval in the National Council and could go down in history as “Express-Motion”.

Soon after having been passed by Parliament, the motion was already converted by the decisions on *Agricultural Policy for 2014–2017*.

### Quality strategy and food sovereignty

The parliamentary debate on *Agricultural Policy for 2014–2017* has brought the quality strategy as the future orientation of Swiss agriculture and food industry to the fore. The strategy is to improve market opportunities. The absence of genetic engineering is one of the profiles of Swiss food on the market.

The principle of food sovereignty has newly been enshrined in the *Agriculture Act*. The Federation is to configure agricultural measures in such a way that Switzerland independently ensures its food supply. Taken seriously this order includes that animal feed imports may not continue to increase and the procurement of seeds needs to be less dependent on global agricultural trusts.

### Extraordinarily rapid political implementation

Due to the rapid political implementation, Switzerland will renounce GM foods countrywide. This will strengthen the food supply and is broadly accepted and appreciated by farmers and consumers on both sides. Food manufacturers and the trade will be spared from the additional cost of separating their products. Even in science the clear starting point is an advantage. Because there is more time to deepen the knowledge about the risks of genetically modified organisms for the

### Political success in a short time: GM-free agriculture until 2017

**March 2012:** National Councillor *Ritter* (and 121 signatories) request by motion to renew the moratorium on genetic engineering in 2017.

**August 2012:** The Committee on Economic Affairs of the National Council wants to embed the renewal already in *Agricultural Policy for 2014–2017*.

**September 2012:** The National Council supports the Motion *Ritter* (123 Yes: 62 No) and votes in favor of a renewal until 2017 (112 Yes: 62 No) in the *Agricultural Policy for 2014–2017*.

**November 2012:** The Committee on Economic Affairs of the Council of States follows the decision of the National Council.

**December 2012:** The Council of States will pass resolutions about *Agricultural Policy for 2014–2017* and Motion *Ritter*.

**March 2013:** final votes in the National Council and in the Council of States about the *Agricultural Policy for 2014–2017*.

Source: *sag gentechfrei-info*, November 2012

environment and health, after a new study from France has again revived the controversy.

Source: *sag gentechfrei-info*, November 2012

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

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# Small family farming has a future

## Conference of GM-free regions at Lake Constance in St. Arbogast near Götzis

Michael Götz, freelance agricultural journalist LBB-GmbH, Eggersriet, Switzerland

*Agriculture in accordance with the location and without genetically modified (GM) crops preserves natural resources. By providing regional products, farmers create values in the population and increase revenue.*

“The structure of small family farms in our agriculture is no obsolescent model”, ministerial director *Wolfgang Reimer* of the Ministry of Rural Affairs and Consumer Protection Baden-Wuerttemberg is convinced. From the national economic point of view small family farming is more beneficial than industrialized agriculture. However, in order for their products to be appreciated on the market, brands and quality labels are necessary, such as “Ecoland Vorarlberg – regional and fair” or simply “Allgäu” or “Baden-Wuerttemberg”. These brands may distinguish themselves by higher standards in animal care and production without genetically modified organisms, but also by offering alternatives. “Why shouldn’t we be able to grow soy here as well?”, the referent asks.

### The world is no plate

“We should realize that the world isn’t some sort of plate with the same ubiquitous conditions in all places”, says *Martin Ott*, master agriculturalist at the Rheinau estate and president of the foundation’s management council of the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) in Switzerland. Every location is different, and hence not only cultivating crops and keeping livestock, but also the breeding of animals and plants has to be adjusted accordingly. Contrary to common opinion, agriculture is no merely technical procedure which can be optimized that way. A biotechnological corporation may deliver their seeds world-wide today, although these are by no means adjusted to the different regions. *Martin Ott* warns the farmers against letting themselves be fooled into dependency on some global seed corporations. Added value will be cashed in by others that way. “I want the cream on my milk for myself”, the farmer epitomizes his aim.

### GM bans are jeopardized

*Eva Claudia Lang*, head of the office of genetic technology at the Austrian Ministry of Health sees the independence of EU member states in danger. The *European Food Safety Agency* (EFSA) is apparently very open towards genetically modified food and rarely considers the

arguments of its critics. Their experts keep reiterating how safe genetic engineering in agriculture was, despite various scientific studies showing also potential hazards. Not once has it been possible so far to find a two-third majority against the approval of yet another GM product within the European parliament, *Benny Härlin* of the *European GM-free Regions Network* deplores. The EU states are divided regarding this issue, so that the current ban of growing GM crops is in danger.

*Josef Gross* of the *Bavarian State Research Center for Agriculture* in Freising heads the project “action program for local protein feeding stuff”. This program aims at replacing soy imports from overseas by domestic animal feed. Thereby the dependency on foreign countries would decrease, GM-free products could be grown and regional agricultural added value be enhanced. *Matthias Krön* of the society “Donau-Soja” opines that growing GM-free soy in the Danube states of Romania and Serbia could provide an alternative to GM soy from overseas; both countries cover their needs of soy to 100% by domestic products.

### There is a trend in favor of regional products

“The trend towards regional food products continues”, says *Erhard Höbaus* of the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management. About half of the Austrian households prefer regional products, which are usually GM-free. The *Eurobarometer* shows, that the Austrian population is particularly skeptical regarding GM food. On the other hand, a healthy diet is no priority in the daily routine of Austrians. More and more often meals consist of instant products. “For me, healthy food is as important as knowing how to read and write”, says *Christine Singer*, master of home economics and farmer from Upper Bavaria. She wants to teach awareness of the inner value of food to the consumers again and to show them how to prepare proper meals from staple foods.

It is mainly the regional products which fulfill the consumers’ wish for healthy and environmentally sustainable food products. There are different approaches to the task how to market them. One is the association “Our Land”. “It is a network for sustaining the foundations of life”, as director *Nikolaus von Doderer* describes the objective of the association. Biodiversity and regional plurality are equal aims to the added

value. Not all of the products are under the label “organic food”, but they all are GM-free. The network comprises 10 associations based on the principle of solidarity as well as non-profit organizations around Munich and Augsburg. Not only agriculture, but craftsmanship, consumers, churches as well as environmentalists belong to the network. “We need people with heart, brain and belly”, as the director puts it. The products may be purchased in 900 stores, but wholesale companies are excluded as distributors, since regional producers oppose delivering standardized goods.

### Producing responsibly

“I want to demonstrate that we don’t need genetic engineering”, says *Josef Braun*, farmer in Freising and deputy president of *Bioland Deutschland*. In GM-free agriculture healthy farming ground is particularly important. It is indispensable for growing healthy plants. However, this requires a technique adjusted to regional needs and mixing cultures. Earthworms belong to healthy ground. By enriching humus it contributes to sustaining long-term ground fertility. The ground needs herbaceous soil covering throughout the year in order to be enriched. The adviser views agriculture not as an end of its own, but part of a greater system. In his opinion agro-forest systems also belong to the future of agriculture.

“Is there a shortage of something in Vorarlberg?”, was the question *Bertram Martin* of the *Martin Estate* in Buch asked himself and he decided to add 3,000 laying hens to his dairy cows. The demand for eggs soon outgrew the supply. Instead of increasing the number of his own hens, the farmer created a network with other small structure partnering farms in the region in order to market the eggs together. At the same time a pasta production facility was created in order to level out seasonal fluctuations in the demand for eggs. The spelt flour used for the pasta is supplied by already more than 30 Vorarlberg farmers growing spelt on 80 hectares. Thanks to the initiative of one single man other production opportunities have become available to other farmers in the region, too. “The crucial thing is to create the demand”, says *Bertram Martin*. •

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(Translation *Current Concerns*)

## German EU and euro policies

**Redistribution continued****The Germans are to be deceived up to the next general election**

by Karl Müller

*With the 26/27 November-agreements taken by the euro Finance Ministers and the IMF on Greece in combination with the 27 November-verdict of the European Court of Justice in an Irish case against the IMF the leaders of IMF, EU and the euro zone have continued their concerted policy of redistribution from citizen towards financial institutions. In Germany in particular, the government also tries to deceive the public about the true content of their agreements, and above all about the content of their plans. The German "Handelsblatt", certainly not suspected of political radicalism, hence headlined its 27 November-issue, "How the euro rescuers take the tax payer for a fool". On 28 November, the "International Herald Tribune" reported that right now the German Chancellor Merkel spares no effort to cover up the truth about the real cost for the German tax payer until after the parliamentary elections next year.*

In an interview with *Deutschlandfunk* on 29 November, *Hans-Werner Sinn*, Director of the Munich-based *Ifo-Institute* reacted in particular to the coherencies of the latest agreements (see box). Professor Sinn explains in how far the public is misled about the true cost of the 26/27 November-agreements on Greece. A real solution to the Greece-issue is postponed. The creditor banks in Greece are about to burden all their now worthless debt securities of the Greek state, which will not be repaid in the foreseeable future, onto the tax payers. Billions of additional liabilities are heading the tax payer's way. Sinn comments, "In as much as we perform these large rescue operations now, we permit the creditors all over the world to pull out of it and secure their assets, whereby we and our children become the creditors of the Southern Europeans. Good for them, they feel becalmed. The capital markets are becalmed, but as far as I am concerned, this process gives reason enough to all of us for concern."

**Merkel intends to disguise the truth with tricks**

On 20 November already, in an interview with the *Deutschlandfunk Frank Schaeffler*, German Member of Parliament of the FDP, had commented on the issue of the impact the former so-called euro bailout measures up to now – of which the politicians say,

they were guarantees only and never due – and how to continue with Greece.

When asked, whether the German taxpayers, despite all promise by politicians were not to pay for the bailouts by now, Schaeffer replied, "Yes, the losses have already occurred, the funds just have not come into effect yet. The attempt has been made to further push them off with some trick. In the end, however, the bitter truth will come up. At the end the bailout policy, the so-called rescue policy, will become effective and taxpayers and money savers shall be burdened."

Neither Greece nor the Greeks were helped through the measures taken. Greece is on the path of Weimar. Between 1928 and 1932, Weimar has lost 32 percent of its economic output. Greece has lost almost 19 percent of its economic output in the past four years. That means, this is no solution, no way to make things better. Debts will be converted from private into public debts. These debt certificates are in fact kept by the public sector and no longer by private creditors."

Without any real perspective for Greece, no new debt cut would help either. It is only at the taxpayer's expense. Shifting liability to the taxpayer – which has been happening since 2010 – has to be supplanted again by the principle of "who takes a risk will be liable for it", "We have to bring risk and liability in line again. We have to hold those responsible, in the best sense of wording, who have taken the risk. And this is what we are not doing." Hereby, Schaeffer refers to the financial institutions which, for years have pumped money into Greece and collected interests for it. Now, they do not want to be made liable for it, instead make all European citizens come up for the Greek debts.

Upon the question of whether also his colleagues in politics knew that people are going to lose a lot of money, Schaeffler replies, "Yes, everyone believes it by now." Although, the attempt was made to conceal the truth with a few tricks until the upcoming parliamentary elections, it is most likely going to be unsuccessful.

**IHT: Merkel's concern is not Greece but the election victory**

On 28 November, the "International Herald Tribune" (IHT) reported also of the political background of the 26/27 No-

vember-agreements on Greece. In the event of a real solution to the euro crisis, Germany most likely was to make large political and financial sacrifices. Chancellor Merkel was trying to cover this up by all means, solely having in mind her objective of re-election. The actual plans shall be made public and implemented only after the elections. The newspaper quotes *Lüder Gerken*, Director of the Centre for European Policy in Freiburg as follows: "They [the euro Finance Ministers and the IMF] did not solve one single long-term problem. They simply bought a little time for a lot of money." The German Finance Minister *Schäuble* is cited as follows, "Everyone, including the IMF, was aware of the fact that this [the agreements of 26/27 November] does not solve the problems." Schäuble is said to simultaneously confide to *Christine Lagarde* of the IMF that at a later point Germany might be prepared for restructuring the Greek state debts – i.e. a radical haircut, but at that time mainly at taxpayers' expense. The SPD-opposition leader *Steinmeier* informed of more time details, "The haircut could be prevented. It has been postponed until after the next parliamentary elections." The IHT continues, Merkel was hoping for an electoral victory, possibly a clear majority with a grand coalition for "unpopular agreements" – the modern word for agreements taken past the people.

A picture of Angela Merkel, pale as a corpse, is shown in the IHT article. However, her worries obviously do neither concern Greece, nor the euro or the German taxpayer. Obviously, she simply cares about her retention of power.

**Citizens have the right to be informed**

With keeping secret their euro policy, Angela Merkel and her government violated their oath of office and infringed the imperative of democracy within Germany's Basic Law. Citizens are entitled to specific information in the matter. They have to know what is to become of their money. They are entitled to know that alternatives to the current policy may be debated openly and the public may decide on it. Angela Merkel and the German government are obliged to fully inform the public of their plans. No government has the right to continuously mislead their citizens. •

## "I do not know how long the citizens here will let themselves be fooled"

*Extracts from an interview with Prof Dr Hans-Werner Sinn, director of the "ifo-Institut", Munich*

*Hans-Werner Sinn:* Up to now Greece has received altogether 380 billion in credits and in payments due to a haircut. Further credits have been announced so that there might be 490 billion in total. Those are loans and haircuts which have already been granted. The whole thing just goes on and on. My impression is that there is hardly any difference whether you name them credits or whether you are talking about presents right at the outset. We are in the political process of gradually insidiously transferring loan claims into the category of presents. This is done by formally maintaining the claims but by simultaneously saying we will lower the interests down to zero. Now we have renounced any interests for the sums which Greece has received out of the EFSF, for the last 15 years. Those are already 2 billion a year, and 30 billion in total. That is quite an enormous sum that is being heaped up. If you have a claim towards a debtor, let us say a claim of 100, there will be interests on it for a year; if you cut the interests by half and if the claim is granted for eternity, it means that the claim is worth only half. If you cut the claim by half at once, it will be the same in substance, but you will have to integrate it into your budget. And if you cut the interests by half, you can extend the process with time, and the future

generations will have to cope with it. But the matter is exactly the same, and now they are choosing that second way.

But I do not know how long the citizens will let themselves be fooled. Unfortunately the reality is quite different from what we are being led to believe. The crisis is not at all solved, Germany is losing financial claims and fortunes in gigantic dimensions. We have built up fortunes abroad due to our export surplus: Now we are at a stage where these claims are being shifted from market economy claims into mere balance demands addressed to the Central European Bank, claims resulting from public financial aid packages and these claims are being devaluated step by step afterwards. The way to do this is by diminishing the interests for them to be paid which were originally agreed upon. And in the end a major part of our fortunes abroad will have gone, let us not be fooled about that.

*Deutschlandfunk:* Who will actually profit from this aid package that shall be decided tomorrow?

*Hans-Werner Sinn:* Well, primarily it is the investors who will profit from it. You have to consider: Three groups are players here: First the international creditors who lent money to the Southern coun-

tries, the Southern countries themselves which are indebted, both of them have a problem with each other. And the third group consists of the tax payers who live in the countries which are still financially healthy. And as the debtor cannot pay back anything to the creditor, they seek the assistance of the tax payer. The latter has to pay back instead of the debtor in order to allow the creditor to buzz off. Well, we are the creditors, for one part, by way of our banks and our life insurances, but only for one part. The French banks are the principal creditors of Southern Europe, and besides investors from all over the world, of course: American pension funds, there are Chinese involved, whoever else. By doing these big rescue actions, we allow the creditors all over the world to get out of the affair and to save their fortunes, and we and our children will become the creditors of the Southern countries instead. That is a good thing for all of them, they may feel calmed down, aren't they are talking about that: the financial markets have been calmed down? But I believe that this process gives everybody cause to be very alarmed.

*Source: Deutschlandfunk, 29.11.2012*

*(Translation Current Concerns)*

## An incriminating report about the lack of adequate austerity measures in Brussels

*by Emmanuel Garessus*

Last week the *European Court*, the guardian of financial interests of EU citizens, published the Report 2011. In it he declared that the payments were "marked with errors to a considerable extent". By the way, for the 18<sup>th</sup> time in series the auditors refused to sign it.

The media has hardly taken any notice of the report. It was pointed to by the new think-tank *Open Europe*, Berlin, an institution on whose advisory board we find the Swiss *Charles Blankart* and Prince *Michael of Liechtenstein*.

It is worth taking a closer look at the conclusions of the audit office: 3.9% error rate for a budget of 127 billion euro. This equals 5.95 billion Swiss francs. It's not just the sum that is scary, the error rate has increased by more than 2% compared to 2010 (3.7%). The Commission is fully satisfied that the error amount is only \$ 5 billion and passes the responsibility on to the national parliaments. In Brussels' jargon it is a lack of a "substantial mistake" if the error rate is less than 2%.

The auditors explain that "the checked control and monitoring systems are par-

tially effective to ensure the legality and regularity of the transactions and their underlying events. The areas of agricultural policy: market support and direct payments, rural development, environment, fisheries and health, regional policy, energy and transport, employment and social affairs, as well as research and other internal policy areas are marked with errors to a significant extent".

The British reaction was not long in coming. The government has warned that such auditing will cause that "the credibility of the financial management of the EU will raise serious questions." It is a fact that this independent European Court has established that the controls over 86% of the budget was only "partially effective". Its president, *Vitor Caldeira*, complained that he has found too many cases, in which "the money has not met its destination or only with partial success."

In this context it is necessary to pay more attention to this crushing report.

For example the Audit Court cited two of such incorrect cases in Lombardy and in Galicia. Estate which was intended to

be used as permanent pastureland, was "entirely or partly covered with dense forest, or was unsuitable for other reasons."

The error rate is "significant" in the area of agricultural policy (2.9%), the largest item in the EU budget. The Commission argues that the error rate "remains within the normal range of statistical fluctuations and no aggravation is detected." The reader may decide. The auditors noted, for example, an aid request for animals that do not exist. A farmer received a special allowance for 150 sheep, the payee does not own a single of these animals.

Every criticism is commented by the Commission. It explains that it is "aware of the problems" and is trying to find a remedy together with the respective member states. In some cases it gets down to action and reclaims undue payments.

The areas rural development, environment, health and fishing are for their part affected by faulty transactions by 57%. The error rate comes to 7,7% here. The Commission "takes note" and admits the aggravation. The auditors noted ten cases

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## “The euro will blow up Europe”

*Interview with Stephan Werhahn, top candidate of the “Free Voters” in the German “Bundestag” elections 2013*

km. In Germany, things are beginning to move in regard to the EU-and euro-debate. On 24 November, coming year's top candidate of the “Free Voters” for the Bundestag elections, Stephan Werhahn, has explained in an interview for the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” why he criticizes the euro policy. Werhahn is a grandson of Konrad Adenauer, was a member of the CDU for many years and has now quit the party. Werhahn says that the previous euro-policy has burdened the taxpayers with more and more liability risks, while this policy has actually never been “without alternative”. It need not be that only the banks benefit. He also says: “The euro blows Europe up, rather than merge it.” And he demands fair referendums on fundamental European policy decisions.

“Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung”: Mr Werhahn, your grandfather Konrad Adenauer wanted the European integration. You present yourself now as euro-skeptic. Why?

Stephan Werhahn: We are not euro-skeptics, but we are euro-realists. This is an important difference. There are better alternatives to the bailout policy of Chancellor Merkel, in order to not only benefit the banks but to protect the taxpayers. Such solutions have been suggested by renowned scientists [...] The “Free Voters” see the so-called euro-bailout at any price very critically.

But you are too late with your protest. The permanent crisis fund European Stability Mechanism (ESM) is resolved. The Federal Government and the financial markets are praising it as an important tool to calm the crisis. Why are you worried? Ultimately the ESM is a permanent aid for non-performing member states. With the first aid for Greece in May 2010 the prin-

ciple of Maastricht was broken for the first time, the principle saying that no country should be liable for the debt of another member state. The temporary bailout package EFSF with 480 billion represented the next breach of this principle. The ESM now means a liability worth 700 billion euro, of which 500 billion can be lent out. The sum should be levered yet so the liability risks for Germany and the German taxpayer will be even bigger.

But the Federal Government stresses that there is support only in exchange of strict reform conditions.

Well, the question is whether that will work. The EU Commissioners and crack-down Europeans are trying by force to turn those southern European countries into something that they aren't. Greece fails in the Monetary Union. It is currently not competitive. Now unrest is developing in Europe – in the North, where the citizens do not want to pay into a bottomless pit, as well as in the South of Europe, where citizens suffer under the enforced savings and say, that in reality only the rich tax evaders and investors, that bought government bonds, will be saved.

The Federal Constitutional Court in its judgment on the ESM has built two protections for Germany: Liability must not unlimited be, and the “Bundestag” must agree before a billion loan. Is this not enough for you?

But the limitation of liability is undermined by the ECB President Mario Draghi. He announced that he could buy unlimited bonds if crisis countries will comply with the requirements of the ESM screen. If he buys bonds, Germany is liable to its 27 percent share of the ECB for the default risk. Thus, the liability limit that is called for by the Constitutional Court will open up to

190 billion without the consent of the “Bundestag”. With the ECB's policy, as well as with Germany's target balances of more than 700 billion at the ECB the amount of rescue financing is actually veiled.

Many financial experts warn that major turbulence would break out if the funding of the rescue package were stopped.

I think this is exaggeration and pure bank lobbying. Of course many privates as well as public investors would have to accept losses then. Unfortunately there are still no regulated procedures for a state insolvency, which is a problem. But Greece and possibly even Spain are bankrupt. You cannot restore their competitiveness within the euro. The next aid installment of 31 billion euro to Greece and the whole second package will not be enough, even more billions would have to flow to keep this country in the euro by force.

What is your alternative?

It would be better, the EU would perform an orderly insolvency of these states. Next the EU with a kind of Marshall Plan for distressed countries could finance a new start, and give them assistance to modernize and streamline administration. The devaluation of their currency would help them to increase exports and reduce imports. We do not say that these member states should stay out of the euro forever, they may come back later. But if it is not possible to make these states competitive again, then they are not suitable for the Monetary Union. It means that the euro is blowing Europe up rather than merging it.

For many European politicians, the euro is more than just a currency, but also a symbol of unity and peace.

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### “An incriminating report ...”

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where farmers ignored the legal environmental obligations in the agricultural sector. It also happens that the cashier himself is the payee of European grants of a total amount of 5 million euro. In Italy, a construction project for a fruit processing building had “the essential characteristics of a private residence and not of an agricultural building”.

The offers of the public procurement department are quite often incorrect. For a project for processing and waste disposal of sludge there was only one offer was asked for. The receiver of this facility assessed it to be unacceptable because

of the exorbitant price, the cost was more than two times higher than the estimated budget. There were negotiations. Finally, the deal was accepted at a discount of only 1% of the initial offer.

In the area “Employment and Social Affairs” finally 40% of the payments were faulty. The auditors give an example of the overestimation of personnel costs. Thus an association for the support of SME (Small and medium enterprises) was granted an income support, although not a single document could be presented, verifying that they had spent any time on the project.

The issue would be worth to be broadcasted loudly. The EU Commission and the EU Parliament endorse cost-cutting measures, however, they request, an in-

crease of 11% for their own expenses from 2014 to 2020.

In fact, the debate on the budget is blocked, and the period in which you could hope for a long-term reform of the budget will be over soon. A working paper by *Open Europe Berlin*, endeavoring to reform the process, has developed an alternative with which a cost reduction by one-third would be possible. But the status quo is likely. The budget (about 1% of the assets of the EU) does not strive for an economic optimum, but a balance between the particular interests of any government. In addition, each member state may use its veto.

Source: *Le Temps*, 14 November 2012

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

# The 2012 peace price is unlawful and cannot be paid to the EU

Letter to the Nobel Foundation in Stockholm, Sweden, of 28 November 2012, with a copy to the Swedish Foundation Authority

The European Union, announced by the Norwegian Nobel Committee as the winner of the peace prize for 2012, clearly is not one of “the champions of peace” Alfred Nobel had in mind when he described the purpose in his will. We ask the Board of the Foundation to clarify that it cannot and will not pay the prize from its funds.

We would like to remind you of the decision of the Swedish Foundations Authority (Länsstyrelsen) on 21 March 2012, requesting the Board to examine the purpose Nobel described in his will, underlining that all prizes must comply, and clarifying that the Swedish Foundations Act places the supreme authority and responsibility also for the Norwegian decisions in the Board of the Nobel Foundation.

## Unauthorized transformation of Nobel's purpose

Instead of an unspecified prize for “peace,” Alfred Nobel in his 1895 testament explained in precise terms the champions of peace (“fredsförfäktare”) whose work he wished to benefit. Nobel intended to support the political work for a demilitarized global peace order (“folkens förbrödande”), based on co-operation, law and disarmament.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee has redefined and reshaped the prize in a way

“The euro will blow up ...”  
continued from page 10

We, the “Free Voters” are opposed to exaggerating the euro at a romantic symbol. If the euro turns mellow, we have to lose a lot.

*Can one have a referendum about complicated issues like the euro bailout? The opponents of direct democracy say this would mean an over-simplification.*

Of course before such a vote there must be a fair discussion, and the question may not be posed in a manipulative manner. Basically, I believe that the population is clever enough to decide on important issues, whether on a large infrastructure project or on the currency. A referendum forces politics to clearly work out the alternatives. And it achieves that the population is informed. There is currently much resignation among the citizens, because they find the problems in Europe too complex, because the sums are so large and because they are not consulted. Therefore crucial democratic legitimacy is definitely lacking in Europe.

Source: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* from 24 November 2012, © All rights reserved Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung GmbH, Frankfurt. Provided by the Frankfurter Allgemeine Archiv.

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

that is not in accordance with the law. The choice of the EU for the 2012 prize fails on at least two counts:

1. the EU is not seeking to realize Nobel's demilitarized global peace order,
2. the EU and member states condone security based on military force and waging wars rather than insisting on the need for an alternative approach.

The purpose of the peace prize is clarified by recent research. In 2008 *Fredrik S. Heffermehl*, a Norwegian lawyer and author and a former IPB Vice President, published the first known legal study of the prize and its purpose. In 2010 he published “*The Nobel Peace Prize*”. *What Nobel Really Wanted* (Praeger, 2010) with later updates in Chinese, Finnish, and Swedish (Leopard, 2011).

The case for declaring the 2012 prize unlawful further rests on facts widely known

## Three Nobel laureates protest 2012 peace prize for the EU

Three Nobel peace laureates Wednesday demanded that the Stockholm-based Nobel Foundation revoke the 2012 peace award to the European Union. The three, *Mairead Maguire*, *Desmond Tutu*, and *Adolfo Peres Esquivel*, joined by seven co-signers, in a letter claimed that Nobel intended to support those working for a demilitarized global peace order based on co-operation, law and disarmament, and this global peace ambition is not at all a stated purpose of the EU. “The union is building military strength rather than the alternative approach,” the three laureates noted in their letter, which was co-signed by a.o. *Bruce Kent*, a past president of the *International Peace Bureau*, the 1910 peace laureate which last week asked the Swedish authorities for an injunction to bar payment of the EU prize.

The problem is that the awarders have lost focus, today we have a prize for “peace” in general, says IPB co-president *Tomas Magnusson*, who regrets that the Norwegian Parliament appoints committees that dislike Nobel's idea and neglect his purpose. Based on an unauthorized redefinition of the prize the committee is using entrusted funds to benefit its own political agendas. According to Magnusson this never was clearer than in 2012 and, he says people everywhere, in all parts of the world, having been deprived of a great gift to protect their survival and prosperity, have reason to be very angry.

Source: *United Nations Association Germany, Branch of Baden-Wuerttemberg*, Press release, 29 November 2012

and mentioned in comments following the announcement and we implore the Foundation to act in defense of the Nobel Peace Prize and its creator Alfred Nobel. Loyal promotion of Nobel's global peace order is the committee's main obligation.

Even accepting some flexibility with technical rules, the 2012 prize for the EU is particularly problematic in relation to Nobel language on “the last expired year” and that the winner should be a “person.”

We would appreciate an urgent clarification from the Foundation.

Sincerely,  
*Mairead Maguire*, Nobel laureate, Northern Ireland,  
*Archbishop Desmond Tutu*, Nobel laureate, South Africa  
*Adolfo Perez Esquivel*, Nobel laureate, Argentina

Co-signed by the following in their personal capacities (organizational affiliation only for identification and relevance)

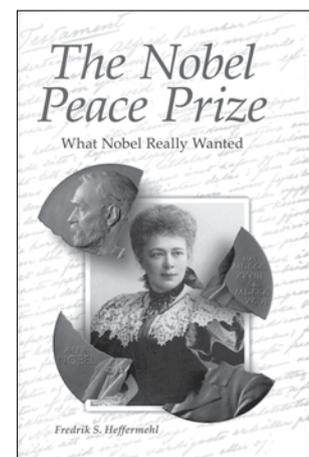
*Bruce Kent*, former president of the International Peace Bureau, IPB (UK)  
*Robert Hinde*, professor, Movement for the Abolition of War (UK)  
*Peter Kolbe*, Board Member, UNA Branch of Baden Württemberg (Germany)  
*David Swanson*, author, warisacrime.org (USA)  
*Tomas Magnusson*, Co-president, International Peace Bureau (Sweden)  
*Ståle Eskeland*, professor of law, University of Oslo, Norway  
*Fredrik S. Heffermehl*, lawyer and author (*The Nobel Peace Prize*), Norway

Nobel laureates demand 2012: c/o Peter Kolbe, Werderstr. 36, 69120 Heidelberg, Germany, p.kolbe@nobelforpeace-summits.org

November 28, 2012

The Nobel Foundation P.O. Box 5232, SE-102 45 Stockholm, Sweden

cc.: The Foundations Authority, Stockholm County (Länsstyrelsen)



Letter to  the Editor

## People are told to shut up about IMF billions

IMF loans are not subject to the referendum. This was recently decided by the National Political Commission of the National Council. This means for us citizens: we have to pay billions for the euro mess abroad and we can't even fight it. The people is levered out once more and fleeced – the citizens are forbidden to give their views on this billion dollar loan. And then they tell us again, we would have to save at home or raise taxes. Once again The SVP

(“Schweizerische Volkspartei”) was in the minority, when it spoke out clearly against further IMF disbursements. The center-left majority in parliament continues to carry things to the extreme.

With additional IMF loans Swiss politicians make their contributions to the continuation of the European debt malaise and to the economic environment around us drowning in misery, because the necessary reforms are not tackled. Without

national currencies, the crisis will progressively worsen. You can not assemble totally different countries like Greece and Germany under one currency. This is economic nonsense. However, not before the violent demonstrations of the South extend to the whole EU will our politicians take notice of these facts.

Olivier Kessler

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

## “Give young people the chance to learn to cultivate the soil again” Patoinos – a project to restart agriculture

Interview with Joseph Zisyadis

*cc. Greece is not (yet) allowed to quit the euro; the crisis needs to be conserved. This is the only way to keep up the madness of “emergency credits” and the austerity measures at the expense of the Greek people connected with them – in order to allow the risk adventurers of the large global banks and the arms industries in the US, Germany and France (see Current Concerns, No 47, 13.11.2012) to extract money from the euro countries into their own pockets. The tax payers in the euro countries which the ESM is now compelling to pay billions will get the invoice later: by higher taxes, pensions reduced to almost nothing and decreased social-welfare benefits. But, of course, all this only after the next elections ... While the governments are obviously unable – or have chosen to be so – to find real solutions, citizens are setting out to do what is answering to common sense and the common good, using the means at their disposal: They do not rely on foreign investors, “global markets” or ever increasing streams of tourists but mainly on their own forces, their local settings, combining their tradition and experience with the knowledge available today and the possibilities to develop a regional economy providing a livelihood and a perspective for the people living there. Joseph Zisyadis, retired member of the Swiss National Council with Greek roots, has initiated such a project on the island of Patmos. It might become popular – not only in Greece.*

*Current Concerns: You said that you have been concerned about the fate of Patmos for 25 years. What do you mean by that?*  
I am Greek and Swiss. But I was born in Istanbul and I do not have any relatives in Greece. 25 years ago I went to Patmos for a vacation. And I stayed there for some



First official planting with the monks of St. John monastery (picture jz)

time. I spend every summer in Patmos. First we went there for family vacations. Later, when I stopped going to the beach, I was surprised to discover this island: a very beautiful island, which however has completely given up its agriculture. Why? Simply because tourism has completely changed the island. But it is easy to see that the entire island was cultivated until 50 years ago. Every small space was cultivated; there are small walls everywhere albeit without any plants today. So it was clear for me that I would start a project in order to restart agriculture there. That was 15 years ago.

It took me a lot of time to find a piece of land because nobody wanted to lease anything to me. The people there are renting out rooms. That is what they do. They are renting out rooms from March, April through October. Then they stay at home, watch TV, drink ... There are no typical

activities anymore; there is no cultivation of vegetables and fruits, nothing. There are two families who have a few tomato plants, some eggplants. That is all. But you can buy tomatoes from Holland and lemons from Argentine. Fifty years ago, Patmos was a self-sufficient island; it has all been given up. Many people have emigrated to Australia or the US. Now it is an island of 3,000 inhabitants.

Now – slowly, step by step, the *Patoinos Project* was started. At first, nobody wanted to lease land to me. This is difficult in Greece. The people keep their land, like everywhere. There are no big landowners. From time to time they sell a piece of land if they need money to pay for their children's education or for a wedding. They are not used to leasing; they are even afraid of it. Often they agree first but

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# Greece – Patoinos project as a way out of the crisis

## Reflecting on original strengths, reviving the development of local agricultural and developing a compatible agrotourism

by Joseph Zisyadis

hgh. Anyone who traveled to Greece in the seventies was impressed by the hospitality and the richness of local agricultural products and crafts, providing livelihood, if often only modest, for the population. Thus, on Patmos, the northernmost island of the Dodecanese in the Aegean Sea, innumerable varieties of wine were cultivated on terraces, the wines being very popular in Egypt. By turning to mass tourism, agriculture and viticulture were virtually abandoned. With the project Patoinos, Josef Zisyadis, Greek and Swiss citizen, theologian and former National Councillor, starts out from these original strengths of the island of Patmos. Together with four winegrowers from the Vaud he has leased the "Domaine de l'Apocalypse" from the local monastery. There 2,000 vines are planted and a wine-grower's school is established. Due to an olive press from Tuscany the olive trees



Newly planted vines next to the future Patoinos House. (picture jz)

on Patmos can be utilized again. In addition, local seeds are carefully collected in

a seed bank in order to make them gratuitous. continued on page 14

**"Give young people the chance ..."**  
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only to think later: well, and in ten years we will not be able to get rid of him. Eventually I asked in the monastery of St. John in Patmos. It also took them a lot of time – ten years! – to decide. But now they are happy with their decision.

*Have the works for the Patoinos Project already started?*

Last year we planted half the vines. You know, it is a small project only. You do not need much wine for the island. And, by the way, it is not only about wine; there is also olive oil. And there will also be tomatoes and figs. In short, it is a comprehensive agro-ecological project which will turn Patmos into an island with a productive agriculture again. Young people will have the chance to learn to cultivate the soil again.

*So it is really an alternative model to globalization.*

In one month I will go there to install an old press which we will use to produce olive oil. There are some 1,500 olive trees on the island. The olives have not been harvested for many years because there is no machinery to produce oil from them. So we will start it again. We will invite the people to produce their own oil. The press will be there. I have found four sponsors: 20,000 euro to buy this press – that is not expensive.

*And to bottle the oil?*

We will do this locally, too. We have a good cooperation with a local ecological group that has already collected 800 different seed types: tomatoes, egg plants, cucumber etc. So we will provide a free seed bank. One year you can get the seeds; the next year you return them. So they will continue to live. Now all seeds are imported from Holland. These are all seeds whose cultivar is not defined; all of them are hybrids. The ones we have found on the islands around Patmos are old cultivars which have been conserved. This is also an interesting part of the project.

*This is helping food sovereignty; this is a way to prevent the dependence from the big companies and the multinationals.*

Yes, exactly. One further aspect is the school for viticulture. We hear a lot about organic viticulture, it is one special method of viticulture. So I want to try to make Patmos the first organic island of Greece. I do not think it will be so difficult because there is only us and the two families who grow vegetables. If I succeed in convincing them we will be the first organic island in entire Greece. This is important for our image. Of course it also means work and it will take some time. In the vineyard we have started to work with stinging nettle. The people found this funny. But now they are also starting it. It will come – very slowly. The project has created a lot of enthusiasm all over Greece. Just because it is an interesting project for a different future. And I have

started without money; I am not wealthy. So far we have sold 150 vines. We are organizing support events. In short: it is our objective to sell 2,000 vines. With 2,000 vines we can open our winery and the whole thing will support itself.

*Mr Zisyadis, thank you very much for the interview.*

### This vine is waiting for you ...

You can support the *Patoinos Project*: Sponsor one or more vines at the vineyard for 250 Swiss Francs or 200 euro. In return you will get between 2016 and 2025 a few bottles of delicious wine every year.  
E-mail: [info@patoinos.ch](mailto:info@patoinos.ch)



**"Greece – Patainos project ..."**

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*tously available to the inhabitants of Patmos and of other islands. Embedded in this context, a compatible agrotourism is planned. A fruitful Greek-Swiss development cooperation has successfully started with the project Patoinos.*

The project for the development and recreating of wine-growing on Patmos is realized in accordance with the renewal of Greek viticulture. Greece, possessing hundreds of varieties of wine unknown in Western Europe, started to modernize its wine production 20 years ago. In this context, small manors developed, run by winegrowers and producers who attach great importance to preserving national viticulture. This development towards a better quality follows that of other southern European countries. But the Greek viticulture is likely to be noticeable in the next few years other than through standardized wines from the major international wineries. Respect for and preservation of legendary wines will be its main asset for the future.

### 20 "stremes" of biodynamic wine-growing

The central part of our project is to re-establish a vineyard. This is what we are planning on an area of 2 ha or 20 "stremes" (traditional Greek square measure). We will lease land from various owners. The vineyard will be composed of  $\frac{2}{3}$  white and  $\frac{1}{3}$  red grapes.

They will all be domestic grape varieties, with a greater proportion of white Assyrtiko grapes. What we want is to care for the old traditions of the island, and to endeavor to create wines with a regional character by using various ancient types of grapes.

The viticulture that we are going to develop will be of organic quality, and therefore very environmentally friendly.

Only a slight mechanization will be used, as we know it from European hillside growing areas. This will also facilitate the employment of local workers with their mules and allow implementing a viticulture concept adapted to the island as well as possible.

The yield of this land area should allow an annual production of about 10,000 bottles according to European standards (75 cl), i.e. 7,000 bottles of white wine and

3,000 bottles of red wine. The focus is on the development of a modern winery, allowing to produce products of high quality.

The winery will comprise spaces for the grape harvest, storage sites, equipment rooms, offices, a tasting room, a reception area for visitors and customers, a museum for popular traditions and an olive press. The architecture will be based on the centuries-old traditions of the island, so that the whole thing will perfectly blend in with the surrounding landscape.

### The agro-ecological project Patoinos in Petra

The selected area is in the south of the island in Petra, a valley that is green almost all year round and that is on the edge of a rather open bay, which continues via the rock formation of Kalikatsou. This well reasoned decision will make it possible to give the wine a positive brand image. The winery, where visitors are received, will also be an important place for exchange. The whole property of this agro-ecological project measures about 3 ha. It is leased by the monastery "Saint-Jean-le-Théologien" and simultaneously supported by the head *Igoumène Antipas*.

### Quality wines, primarily for local consumption

The oenological part will rely on the good knowledge of wine production and not on an excess of technology. It is based on the simplicity and quality of the fermenting room. It is intended to condition the basement; in addition, we intend to develop and utilize renewable energy (solar and wind energy). The basement should also be designed so large that, later, it could also accept grapes from other wine regions on the island or from neighboring islands, so as to be able to increase the quantity of wine. This cellar will also have reception rooms for local customers and for tourist group visits.

### Simple work structures

The staff will consist of a director, an oenologist – who will also take care of the work in the vineyard – and a viticulture worker. Depending on the season, additional labor will be essential.

### International cooperation

In this project, cooperation with a Swiss wine school is planned. This would give

foreign students the opportunity to deal with specifics of an insular culture of wine and to benefit from certain "know-how" when back on Patmos. Contacts have already been taken with the Wine School Changins (Vaud) in Switzerland, which has agreed to open its doors for young Greeks for training and educational purposes.

Furthermore, a group of winemakers from the canton of Vaud (Switzerland) will ensure the winemaking and viticulture technical supervision of the project.

### A comprehensive agro-ecological project

Last part of this local project: We think that offering a wine cellar tour to tourists will constitute a further element of the spell of Patmos. In addition, there will be a possibility to organize wine festivals and hence initiate cultural activities where ancient traditions can be revived. The disappearance of agriculture on these islands was an important reason for the impoverishment of the population, the destruction of their roots and traditions, and for the slow desertion of these lands.

It is also intended to furnish a small cellar for wine tasting in order to advertise for the wines of the winery as well as the variety of Greek wines from North and South. This tasting will be accompanied by local products (cheese, bread, vegetables), which, after years of slumber, will be brought back to life.

There is also an olive oil press to be set up again. Only this will allow the island's population to resume the harvesting of olives and the production of local oil for individual needs or the needs of restaurants, which will also enhance the lands around Petra, with its many olive trees.

At the same time a museum about the popular traditions associated with the vineyard will give visitors the chance to get to know the past reality on the basis of rediscovered tools and contemporary photographs.

The cellars will be used as a meeting place by various environmental and agricultural associations and by the population. A seed bank will also be established for the preservation and recultivation of varieties of original fruit and vegetables. •

(Translation *Current Concerns*)

## Austria

# The conscription model is modern and forward-oriented

*Dr Eduard Paulus, President of the Austrian Officers' Association \**



*Dr Eduard Paulus, President of the Austrian Officers' Association (picture ma)*

The Austrian Army has thousands of professionals. The only thing that is not professional is the current political leadership of this army. Federal Minister of Defence *Norbert Darabos* hoped until recently to go down in history as a "180°-turn-coat minister". He turned away from the conscription he described as "carved in stone" and confessed his advocacy of a professional army. Now he wants to continue as Minister of Defence, even if the vote of the referendum on 20 January 2013 comes out in favour of conscription. This would finally make him a "360°-turn minister". Such a dangerous manoeuvre that would break even an owl's neck is obviously no problem to an Austrian minister.

## Conscription system with militia

Now to the facts of the forthcoming referendum. The *Austrian Officer's Society* has long called for a reform of the Austrian army on the basis of constitutional principles – the "universal conscription with militia system" for all male citizens with the option to render a substitute civic service. The central core of a reform, alongside sufficient funding, is primarily the re-introduction of full-field exercises for some of the conscripts even after completion of military service. The models for successful armies with general conscription

in Central Europe are Norway, Finland and Switzerland. In the Federal Republic of Germany and in Sweden following the abolition of conscription, the situation has unfortunately become very critical. Democratically-minded EU citizens should consider it a problem if in the near future only Russia, India, China and Turkey are the countries with compulsory military service.

## NATO membership is not an option for the population

The *Austrian Officers' Society* sees political, constitutional, military-policy and moral arguments for the maintenance of compulsory military service in Austria. Our Federal Constitution still provides for conscription according to the principles of a militia system as part of a comprehensive national defence. A constitutional majority to revise this legislation is not in sight. In addition, there is the Federal Constitutional Act of 1955 on the permanent neutrality of Austria. This law is not only constitutional law, but, having been notified to almost every country in the world, has long been an international treaty under international law. A change in this constitutional and international legal situation is not in sight. This requires, however, compliance with the international legal obligations of a neutral country, namely the non-aligned status and adequate defence efforts of our own. The alternative of joining NATO after abandoning neutrality, is an option that is rejected by the great majority of the Austrian population.

The constitutional core tasks of national defence, in addition to maintaining the territorial sovereignty, continue to include the equally important assistance in domestic tasks, namely border security, the protection of critical infrastructure ("property protection") and a very central function in disaster relief. All these operational tasks that exist not only *de jure* but also *de facto* require, when implemented, very high levels of manpower that will be never reached in Austria with a professional army. It may be recalled that in 2011 the Swiss Army in training needed nearly 7,000 troops alone to secure Zurich-Kloten airport.

## Minister's financing plan unrealistic

Now for the military-policy arguments in favour of retaining conscription: Serious and in my view very conservative calculations by the General Staff revealed

two years ago that a professional army in Austria requires a minimum annual budget of 2.6 billion euro. In this context it is interesting that even the Chairman of the Federal Army Reform Committee, ret. Mayor Dr *Helmut Zilk*, had demanded 1 percent of gross domestic product for the military budget. That would at that time have been around 2.8 billion euro. In the office of Federal Minister Darabos it was insisted that the numbers be reduced to the then funding level of 2.2 billion euro. However at present, following the savings welcomed by Minister Darabos, there is an annual budget of just over 1.8 billion euro, including more than 1.2 billion euro in personnel costs. A professional army with this budget is small enough to fit into a maximum of three sectors of a football stadium and can only be used for smaller deployments abroad.

## Professional army for politically motivated "robust" foreign missions

In the current pilot test of the Minister 115 militiamen in two pioneer battalions still serving under universal conscription are suddenly to be given an additional 5,000 euro bonus per year if they train every year instead of every two years. This is grotesque. Everyone takes leave for this additional money if necessary and completes his training obligations ahead of schedule. This pilot trial cannot say anything about whether, in a future without conscription, 9,500 new regular soldiers with sufficient qualifications would respond. These regular soldiers will definitely be much more expensive than conscripts with their allowance of 350 euro per month. Another important aspect is that in a professional army, all soldiers will be required at any time to go on dangerous missions abroad. The career plans of these young men, released into civilian life after six years and an unforeseeable number of combat missions abroad, remain unclear. For this reason, the educational level of the regular soldier is decreasing drastically in all professional armies. The political aim of saving 8.5 billion euro per year in the German Army and of selecting thousands from 45,000 prospective soldiers has failed miserably. Currently in Germany up to 3 billion euro are being additionally spent on advertising for volunteers.

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**"The conscription model ..."**

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At the same time, in Germany there are now only 33,000 volunteers in federal community service instead of the previous 99,000 civil servants. In Bavaria, with a traditionally good labor market and good opportunities in civil employment, the recruitment problems for the "Bundeswehr" are particularly severe. In Sweden, 100 military doctors sue the army, because they do not accept that they should serve, when all the others are not even called for basic military service. In Austria as well, it is completely unreasonable that after the introduction of a professional army, the former professional and militia soldiers should suddenly have obligations to serve in foreign countries. It is completely unthinkable that former militia soldiers, who have volunteered during the compulsory military service, remain subject to continued exercise and service.

**Professional armies  
with poorly educated young people**

Federal Minister Darabos repeatedly mentioned Western world professional armies as a shining example. But they have regular soldiers signed up for a fixed period of time which are to a very large extent young men with poor-to-no education. In addition, many of them have a criminal record. This is not only an unfair exploitation of disadvantaged young men, but it is also a moral indictment and a latent threat to democracy. The recent study of the German Armed Forces Association shows that 75% of its executives in the armed forces do no longer trust the political leadership – and if they could make the choice today, they would no longer enter the army. Many already advise their children not to enter army service. Official euphemisms cannot hide these developments.

The armies in Belgium, Hungary and Slovenia have become virtually invisible. Due to a lack of sufficient man

force, Hungary could no longer mobilize an Army contingent during the last sludge disaster.

**Back to mercenaries – back to the  
time before the Enlightenment?**

The core tasks of the armed forces are still at home and require high man forces which cannot be attained without conscription. The previously well-respected services of Austrian soldiers abroad have been provided in many instances by more than 50% militia. Currently, the average education level of Austrian soldiers is much higher in comparison to many other armies. In Austria academics of all disciplines, craftsmen, journeymen and masters of all disciplines together with commercial professionals contribute their know-how and skills as a positive asset to the army. This social stratification immediately changes in a professional army. The benefits of social learning during the compulsory military service, the chance to meet with all different occupational groups and to establish a network for lifetime is lost. That the military service is currently organized with a lot of badly timed service calls for many, is not a fault of the conscripts, but a fault of a policy that is only interested in superficial showmanship.

Moral arguments are out of fashion, the more necessary it is, however, to let morale not completely off the table: For centuries since the late Middle Ages, through the 30 Years' War to the French Revolution mercenaries were used in these wars. The German National Assembly in St. Paul's Church in Frankfurt am Main has voted in 1848 against a professional army of the princes and in favor of conscription. This was done undoubtedly for reasons of morality and justice.

**"Volunteer army has damaged  
the rule of law in the USA"**

Bob Herbert wrote in the "New York Times" about two years ago that the United States would neither stand in Iraq nor in Afghanistan, if they would still have

conscription, and he added that the principle of the volunteer army has badly damaged the rule of law. Also, Barack Obama's first Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, has expressed himself quite critically on the development of recruitment of soldiers in the US Regular Army. Former Chancellors Helmut Schmidt and Helmut Kohl have also highlighted the problems of professional armies for democracy. Waging war becomes easier for politicians if they do not have to consider the population's will, especially if they do not need to recruit volunteers.

**Decision for Austria –  
decision for military service!**

In a small country like Austria, only conscription ensures that all domestic tasks are met. This is especially true in the area of security assistance services such as border security, object protection, protection of critical infrastructure, security measures to address loss of electricity, gas and water, etc. The most cost effective solution to these problems is to train soldiers briefly and to reconvene them in case of incidents, instead of keeping expensive professional soldiers constantly under service, although critical incidents are very infrequent. With the introduction of a professional army, about 14,000 – for the most part highly motivated young civil servants – would be lost. Social solidarity would be severely damaged. A professional army is expensive and politically problematic, it mainly serves the interests of those elites who prefer robust deployments to solve political problems abroad. We all should be aware of the extent to which the more or less lost wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have harmed the West – especially internationally and morally. Therefore, let's decide on 20 January 2013 for a reformed army with mandatory military service. •

Source: "Der Offizier" (The officer), No. 3/2012. Zeitschrift der Österreichischen Offiziersgesellschaft (Journal of the Austrian Officers' Association). [www.oeg.at/ow10/der-offizier/](http://www.oeg.at/ow10/der-offizier/)

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