

# Current Concerns

The international journal for independent thought, ethical standards, moral responsibility,  
and for the promotion and respect of public international law, human rights and humanitarian law

English Edition of Zeit-Fragen

## “Peace and human rights constitutes the raison d’être of the United Nations Organization and the most noble goal of humanity”

Statement by Prof Dr Alfred de Zayas, Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order at  
the 4<sup>th</sup> Social Forum – Panel Democratic Governance in Geneva, 1 October 2012



Prof Dr Alfred  
de Zayas (picture thk)

It gives me great pleasure to address you today on an issue that concerns all of us. Please allow me to join previous speakers and extend my gratitude to the organizers of the *Social Forum* for this invitation. Taking advantage of the upcoming

presentation of my thematic report to the General Assembly on 30 October, I could not let pass the opportunity to take part in this forum, to listen to speakers and other participants, to interact with you, to learn from you.

In September 2011, the Human Rights Council created the mandate of the Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order. Originally inspired by article 28 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which proclaimed that “everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which (all) rights and freedoms... can be fully realized”, the timeliness of this resolution was clearly evidenced by the spread of massive protests globally, since December 2010, demanding a better world, a more just and equitable international order. As we gather here today, we must pay tribute to these demands. Bearing in mind that the Preamble of the *Charter of the United Nations* begins with the words “We the people” and not “we the leaders” or “we the oligarchs”, it is high time to demand our rights and to insist that governments pay more attention to the voice of peoples throughout the world.

More than 60 years since the adoption of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, significant obstacles to the realization of a democratic and equitable international order prevail. We must devise

a new approach in which the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms is conceived in the context of a globalized world. This requires a change of thinking, away from predator paradigms. As we all know, the current international order has not reached a level of development that deserves being called either democratic or equitable, notwithstanding a panoply of very good treaties, and the establishment of monitoring bodies, committees, commissions, working groups and special procedures. Part of the problem is that international law is being applied à la carte, not only by Governments, but also by certain academics, think-tanks, economic and political cartels, and even by some civil society pressure groups. Indeed as long as international law is not applied uniformly, objectively and consistently, the gap between promise and reality will remain enormous.

As I understand my function, I should identify obstacles and good practices. But before that I intend to review the various notions of democracy, with a particular emphasis on its international dimensions and implications. For me democracy entails genuine participation in decision-making, the rule of law, freedom of opinion, expression, assembly and association. The principle of the sovereign equality of UN Member States alongside with the necessity for an international order that allows meaningful participation in global decision-making by all States and peoples is paramount. Participation is indeed the key to democracy – participation in decisions concerning the maintenance of peace, the promotion of universal health programmes, the protection of the environment, of the common heritage of mankind, trade relations, the financial markets, etc. An international order in which only a few powerful players take all the decisions, often disregarding the consequences for the less powerful nations and most segments of the population, is hardly democratic. We must therefore build on the principles of self-determination, sov-

ereignty, and respect for national identities and universal human dignity. I endorse *Galtung’s* idea of promoting development with identity, and of moving away from the top-dog/under-dog syndrome. This will require reforms in many areas, including the United Nations and its unrepresentative Security Council.

We must also be aware that an international democratic order cannot be achieved without respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, both at the domestic and international levels. A democratic and equitable international order is hardly conceivable without a commitment by States to the principles of democratic participation, social justice, a narrowing of the gap between rich and poor in all countries, a strengthening of the rule of law, an independent judiciary and full respect for fundamental freedoms. Thus I intend to address the links between an international democratic order and domestic democracy. The same holds true with regard to the concept of democratic governance.

Democratic governance not only requires respect for free and competitive elections, but also the existence of a government that will genuinely serve the public interest by being transparent and accountable to its citizens and by respecting the rule of law.

Such prerequisites imply that States take the lead in reforming institutions so that they become more responsive to the demands and needs of their citizens. Obviously, electoral systems must be free and fair, and public administrations must be close to the population, so that ordinary persons, and most specifically, those with the greatest need, can find a way to air their concerns and to solve their most pressing needs. This process not only entails institutional and policy reform, but more broadly, attention to how these reforms are elaborated and implemented in order to serve the whole population, without any kind of discrimination.

**"Peace and human rights ..."**

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In this context, there is a need to promote justice and restore trust in the judiciary. Better access to justice, genuine remedies and effective enforcement of judgments must be ensured. Public service must be transparent, and a system of review and accountability must be in place, so that the authorities are held responsible for the decisions they take on behalf of their citizens. In this respect, civil society and grassroots movements have a key role to play to ensure that Governments follow the road map of universally recognized human rights.

Governments must combat corruption in all its manifestations. Corruption engenders grave human rights abuses, including restrictions to freedom of opinion and expression, structural violence, discrimination, smuggling and trafficking. It undermines the rule of law and the credibility of government and governmental institutions.

Certain conditions appear necessary to ensure democratic governance at both the national and international levels. As mentioned earlier, there must be a correlation between the needs and the wishes of the population and the governmental policies that affect them, including domestic and foreign policy; indeed sometimes governments take illegal decisions concerning the use of force, which would certainly be rejected by very large majorities of the population if they were ever consult-

ed by referendum. In other words the foreign actions of States are only legitimate if they represent the actual wishes of the people. Thus the meaningful participation of independent civil society organizations in the shaping of foreign policy and in international decision-making bodies must be enhanced, and the tool of opinion polling should be used more effectively so as to learn what people are really thinking and not what pundits pretend that the people want. And when government officials fail to honour the trust conferred upon them by their electorates, they should be removed from office. In this respect the instruments of recall and impeachment may have to be used with greater frequency

If we regard the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the World Constitution, we realize that peace lies at the very heart of our legal framework. Peace and human rights constitute the *raison d'être* of the United Nations Organization and the most noble goal of humanity. Peace in the holistic sense encompasses not only the absence of war but also the absence of structural violence, cultural hegemonism, neo-colonialism, exploitation, and discrimination. In this respect, I deeply believe that education is necessary to unlearn privilege, unlearn exclusion, unlearn discrimination, unlearn prejudice, and unlearn war.

Similarly, it is also crucial to tackle the issue of the depletion of natural resources, which is likely to fuel further human rights abuses. The ability for people to live

in a safe, clean and sustainable environment is at stake for our generation and for future generations. In this respect, there is a need to ensure that the will of the peoples is not supplanted by economic and geopolitical interests. Globalization has raised many hopes in terms of communication and trade as much as in terms of diversity exchange between humans, but has also favoured the interests of some governments and transnational corporations at the expense of human rights.

The world is in the grip of a serious financial crisis that has caused unemployment and depression in many countries. "Austerity" measures in the social domain are certainly not the solution. Last week alone, tens of thousands of demonstrators continued to gather in several European cities to protest against the manifestly unjust "austerity" measures. The very concept of "austerity" is intellectually dishonest, because it is ultimately a matter of prioritizing. No one disputes the reality of the budget deficits, but there can be "austerity" with regard to other governmental expenditures. Indeed, there seems to be plenty of money to bail out rogue banks and casino financial markets, plenty of money for the military-industrial complex, plenty of money to wage war, but allegedly not enough to ensure pensions, health care and education. Austerity has become a word for human rights retrogression, a deliberate attempt by the super-rich to further exploit the less fortunate. States must be

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thk. In September 2011, with Resolution 18/6 the UN Human Rights Council adopted the mandate "to promote a democratic and equitable international order" and in March 2012 the U.S. expert on international law and human rights, Professor *Alfred de Zayas* was appointed to be the Independent Expert of that mandate. Already in September 2012 he submitted his first report to the UN Human Rights Council and encouraged the States to increase their efforts to implement democratic principles and to promote an equal and equitable interaction between the nation states themselves. In particular, he pointed to the observance of the democratic principles set out in the UN Charter and mentioned that today the law is often used "a la carte", which is especially indicated by so-called double standards. De Zayas himself understands his seat as a conciliatory one, that should enable the States to exert more democracy and equal cooperation.

The resolution 18/L.18 HRC, submitted to the Human Rights Council by 30 states on the basis of Alfred de Zayas' report, engages him to present a further report on the efforts of the states concerning the establishment and development of

democratic structures in the sense of an equivalent and target-aimed participation until next autumn. The resolution contains basic democratic demands that are to be implemented by the UN member states. In the final vote of the UN Human Rights Council this resolution was adopted by 31 to 12 votes, with 4 abstentions. A positive aspect is the vote of large states such as China and Russia, who had voted for the adoption of this resolution. It is extremely sobering, that there has been a vote against the resolution by the Europeans and the United States – which, as *Kishore Mahbubani*, a diplomat from Singapore criticizes, desire to be the guardians of human rights and which, with Western arrogance, like to indoctrinate in their statements the rest of the world regarding the observance of human rights. Austria made a specious declaration on behalf of the EU, why they reject the resolution, without presenting a single substantial argument. The behavior of the EU in this fundamental question is methodical, turning the award of the Nobel Peace Prize even more into a farce. Nevertheless, there remains the question to be answered, what the concern of the Western states really is in defending their

view of human rights. In Libya a war was waged with over 20 000 air strikes, in disregard of the resolution adopted by the UN Security Council. A look to this country demonstrates what military commitment to human rights concretely means: thousands of dead civilians.

The Western world would have been only too glad to apply the same methodology in Syria, in order to provoke a "regime change". as in the case of Libya. However the NATO military alliance failed due to the determination of Russia and China.

The fact that these two countries voted for the resolution in the Human Rights Council and the wartime alliance against the expansion of democratic mechanisms, demonstrates how far the West has removed from its true principles. But this fact also shows the importance of the Independent Expert's work "to promote a democratic and equitable international order" and what could be the solution to many of our national and international conflicts: the expansion and development of real democracy, not least a democracy with real citizens' participation, as it has been successfully practiced in Switzerland for decades.

## And Europe is not ashamed ...

While the public health network collapses, Greek citizens make their own

by Liz Alderman

zf. With all means Angela Merkel forced the ESM, since additional «rescue» funds must be allocated for Greece and other countries so that the banks and the golden goose Goldman Sachs can be stuffed once more. It is well-known that income and earnings from Goldman Sachs have again surpassed the “analyst expectations”. In addition, the EU, first and foremost Germany and France, are exerting pressure when it comes to armament orders in their countries. So the “Spiegel” titled on 20.05.2012: “Greece is arming and arming and arming” and mentioned conventional submarines of the class 214 that can go on extended dives with their fuel-cell drive, and “Leopard 2” battle tanks with powerful 120-mm smooth-bore cannon of the Munich armory Krauss-Maffei Wegmann (KMW). Furthermore there are NATO transport helicopters (by EADS) mentioned. The purchase of 60 fighter aircraft of the type “Euro Fighter” (also EADS) alone – that the German politicians urged again and again – will cost around 4 billion. With its 11 million inhabitants, Greece is considered a big arms importer, which also prompted the Turkish government to respect tivo orders. So according to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Sipri thirteen percent of all exported German arms

go to Greece and 15 percent to Turkey.

Simultaneously the Greek Government is pressed to implement an inhuman austerity program, which one-sidedly affects the social area and causes hardest sacrifice. Whereas in 2012 additional 2 billion were supposed to be saved in the social sector, the defense budget was increased by 200 million (see “Die Zeit” from 5.1.2012). And Europe is not ashamed ...

Clandestine clinics treats severely ill after austerity plans end universal care.

As the head of Greece’s largest oncology department, Dr Kostas Syrigos thought he had seen everything. But nothing prepared him for Elena, an unemployed woman who had received a diagnosis of breast cancer a year before she visited him.

By that time, her cancer had grown to the size of an orange and broken through the skin, leaving a wound that she was draining with paper napkins.

“When we saw her we were speechless,” said Dr Syrigos, the chief of oncology at Sotiria General Hospital, in central Athens. “Everyone was crying. Things like that are described in textbooks, but you never see them because, until now, anybody who got sick in this country could always get help.” Life in Greece has

been turned on its head since the debt crisis took hold. But in few places has the change been more striking than in health care. Until recently, Greece had a typical European health system, with employers and individuals contributing to a fund that, with government assistance, financed universal care. People who lost their jobs still received unlimited benefits.

That changed in July 2011, when Greece signed a loan agreement with international lenders to ward off financial collapse. Even as Greek leaders announced on Wednesday that they had agreed with their creditors on a strict new austerity package, the pains of past deals are still being felt. Since that 2011 agreement, Greeks who lost their jobs receive benefits for a maximum of a year. After that, if they are unable to pay, they are on their own, paying all costs out of pocket.

In a country with 25 percent unemployment, the numbers of uninsured have risen steadily, though there are no official numbers. But an estimated half of Greece’s 1.2 million long-term unemployed are without health insurance, a number that is expected to rise sharply as they fail to find work in a moribund economy, said Savas Robolis, the director of the Labor Institute

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reminded of their binding obligations under international law, including the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*.

Too many Governments today are drastically cutting essential social spending without having the decency to allow those affected to challenge such measures, which are being imposed, often by unelected leaders, disregarding alternative solutions to the financial crisis. The “indignados” movement has articulated perfectly viable alternatives to cutting social spending – albeit to no avail.

While some progress has been made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals we are a long way from ensuring an equitable international order. We welcome the fact that more children than ever have access to primary school; child deaths have dropped; access to safe drinking water has expanded. Of course much remains to be done if we are to comply with Article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and with the 1993

Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and its call for international solidarity.

I repeat: The right of all people to participate in the conduct of public affairs is the essence of democratic governance. In this context, States bear the responsibility to ensure the participation of people and civil society in the conduct of public international affairs. This is particularly relevant as the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, of peaceful assembly, and of association have seen their space progressively reduced in recent years. A caveat is also necessary at this point. Participation also means protection from impediments such as manipulation, indoctrination, and incitement. Protection is also needed from the dictatorship of “political correctness”, which leads to self-censorship and thus undermines democracy. Prior to freedom of expression we recognize freedom of opinion, which requires access to truthful, reliable information, access to a plurality of views, so that one can develop one’s own opinion. What is at stake is not the right to echo whatever slanted information we heard last night in the news. That is not freedom of expres-

sion that is only freedom to echo, freedom to go along with the Zeitgeist. What is at stake is the right to information, to think and reflect and to act on one’s convictions. These are indispensable conditions for any democracy.

Madame Chairperson,

I strongly believe it is our role as citizens to build effective and responsive States that are accountable and compliant with their human rights obligations at all levels.

In this context, I would like to reiterate the call that I made when presenting my first thematic report to the Human Rights Council on 12 September last. A democratic governance at both the international and national levels means the uniform application of international law, including human rights law, as the basis for State’s conduct, and the acknowledgment that the UN Charter is our World Constitution, that States are bound by the Charter and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and are committed to orient their policies and practices according to its purposes and principles.

I thank you for your attention. •

Source: [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org)

**"And Europe is not ashamed ..."**

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of the General Confederation of Greek Workers.

The changes are forcing increasing numbers of people to seek help outside the traditional health care system. Elena, who did not want her last name used to protect her privacy, was referred to Dr Syrigos by doctors in an underground movement that has sprung up here to care for the uninsured.

"In Greece right now, to be unemployed means death," said Dr Syrigos, an imposing man with a stern demeanor that grew soft when discussing the plight of cancer patients.

The development is new for Greeks – and perhaps for Europe, too.

"We are moving to the same situation that the United States has been in, where when you lose your job and you are uninsured, you aren't covered," Dr Syrigos said.

The change is particularly striking in cancer care, with its lengthy and expensive treatments.

When the uninsured are diagnosed with cancer, "the system simply ignores them," Dr Syrigos said. "They can't access chemotherapy, surgery or even simple drugs," he said.

The health care system itself is increasingly dysfunctional, and may worsen if the government cuts an additional euro 950 million, or about USD 1,23 billion, in health spending, which it has proposed as part of a new austerity plan aimed to lock down more financing.

With the state coffers drained, supplies have gotten so low that some patients have been forced to bring items like stents and syringes for their own treatments. Hospitals and pharmacies now demand cash payment for drugs, which for cancer patients can amount to tens of thousands of dollars, most of them do not have. With the system breaking down, Dr Syrigos and several colleagues have

decided to take matters into their own hands.

Earlier this year, they set up a surreptitious network to help uninsured cancer patients and other ill people, which operates off the official grid using only spare medicines donated by pharmacies, some pharmaceutical firms and even the families of cancer patients who died. In Greece, if a doctor is found helping an uninsured person using hospital medicines, he must reimburse the cost from his own pocket.

At the Metropolitan Social Clinic, a makeshift medical center near an abandoned US Air Force base outside Athens, Dr *Giorgos Vichas* pointed one recent afternoon to plastic bags crammed with donated medicines lining the dingy floors outside his office.

"We're a Robin Hood network," said Dr Vichas, a cardiologist who founded the underground movement in January.

"But this operation has an expiration date," he said. "People at some point will no longer be able to donate because of the crisis. That's why we're pressuring the state to take responsibility again."

In a supply room, a blue filing cabinet was filled with cancer drugs. But they were not enough to take care of the rising number of cancer patients knocking on his door. Many of the medicines are forwarded to Dr Syrigos, who set up an off-hours infirmary in the hospital a few months ago to treat uninsured cancer patients Dr Vichas and other doctors in the network send his way.

Dr Syrigos' staff members consistently volunteers to work after their official shifts; the number of patients has risen to 35 from five.

"Sometimes I come home tired, exhausted, seeing double," said *Korina Liberopoulou*, a pathologist on site one afternoon with five doctors and nurses. "But as long as there are materials to work with, this practice will go on."

At the medical center, Dr Vichas said he never imagined being so overwhelmed with people in need.

As he spoke, Elena appeared, wearing a pleated gray head wrap and a loose plum blouse. She was coming for drugs to help her cope with the aftermath of chemotherapy she had recently received from Dr Syrigos.

Elena said she was without insurance after quitting her teaching job to care for her cancer-stricken parents and a sick uncle. By the time they died, the financial crisis had hit Greece and, at 58, it was impossible for her to find work.

She said she panicked when she was diagnosed with the same breast cancer that killed her mother: The treatments would cost at least \$ 40,000, she was told, and her family's funds were depleted.

Her cancer spread, and she could not gain access to treatment until a few months ago, when she sought out Dr Vichas' clinic after hearing about it through word-of-mouth.

"If I couldn't come here, I would do nothing," she said. "In Greece today, you have to make a contract with yourself that you will not get very sick."

She said she was dismayed that the Greek state, as part of the bailout, had pulled back on a pillar of protection for society. But the fact that doctors and average Greeks were organizing to pitch in where the state failed gave her hope in her bleakest hours.

"Here, there is somebody who cares," Elena said.

For Dr Vichas, the most powerful therapy may not be the medicines but the optimism that this group brings to those who have almost given up.

"What we've gained from the crisis is to come closer together," he said.

"This is resistance," he added, sweeping his eyes over the volunteers and patients around the clinic. "It is a nation, a people allowed to stand on their own two feet again with the help they give each other." •

Source: © *The International Herald Tribune*, 25 October 2012

# Direct democracy as a corrective to the power cravings of a few

## Epizootic Diseases Act – Prevention Act – Epidemics Act – parts of a “hidden agenda”?

sl. The three bills have one thing in common, they all have a state-political dimension, which is often concealed by the mainstream media: they weaken the cantons' sovereignty and grant inadmissible central power to the federal authorities, which is contrary to Switzerland's federalist and direct-democratic form of government in all respects. The Swiss federal government may intervene only if this is specified in the Constitution. Communes, municipalities and cantons manage pending issues themselves according to the principle of subsidiarity and call the federal government for help, only in case the solution to a problem is beyond their capabilities. Since all three bills authorize the federal government to apply a top-down strategy, they have to be clearly rejected.

Fortunately, we as citizens in a direct democracy have the possibility to launch the referendum against such attacks on our freedom and to give the last word to the people. This has been done by alert and responsible citizens in the case of the Epizootic Diseases Act and in the case of the radically new revision of the Epidemics Act for humans. The referendum against the Epizootic Diseases Act was successful, so people will vote on this issue on 25 November. This fact obviously provoked parliamentarians to study the Prevention Act for humans a little more closely, and definitively rejected it in the autumn session. It is all the more amazing that they have not given the same attention to the totally revised Epidemics Act for humans, otherwise they would have realized that this act goes beyond the other two regarding the concentration of power with the federal authorities. Again all citizens are asked to help ensure that people have the final say in this matter. The referendum has been launched, the collection of signatures is in full swing (referendum period 17 January 2013).

The fact that now, ahead of the vote on 25 November, Federal Councillor *Johann Schneider-Ammann*, dismisses the opponents of the Epizootic Diseases Act as a “variegated group of organic farmers, quacks and anti-vaccination movement” and ascends a threatening scenario, merely shows his state of mind. However, he reckoned without the host. Citizens haven't at all forgotten the “Swine-flue-greatest-possible-accident”.

Everyone knows by now, that at the time the WHO, advised by representatives of the pharmaceutical industry, arbitrarily declared the highest level of pandemic and the mainstream media had contributed their part to the fear mongering. In retrospect, emerging from the panic fog, everybody had to realize that the coffers of the state got emptied and those of pharmaceutical industry got filled and millions of doses of vaccine and drugs had to be disposed of because they were not needed. If now the new Epizootic Diseases Act in its Article 53b authorizes the federal authorities to act on their own authority, without having to consult the parliament and the people, as well as to conclude international treaties that force us to take on foreign law without being able to reject it, and if there isn't any legal regulation establishing objective criteria for the definition of a pandemic or for scientific evidence and independent risk analysis – in that case the highest level of caution should definitely be exercised.

Even in the case of the totally revised Epidemics Act (“Federal Act on the Control of Communicable Diseases of Man”), everyone is well-advised to read the law in its wording ([www.admin.ch](http://www.admin.ch)). Believe it or not: the Federal Office of Public Health (Bundesamt für Gesundheit, BAG), is granted not only legislative but also executive and judicial power. The cantons, which are sovereign in the field of health and education would be degraded to henchmen of the BAG and need to conduct top-down “prevention campaigns” of the type “report to the doctor if your trunk has a cold”, they would have to stalk children with “sex-coffers” and to feed the central information system with intimate data (identity, routeings, domiciles, contacts with people, animals and objects, results of medical examinations etc.) concerning people who are “sick, suspected to be sick, infected or suspected to be infected”. But that's not enough: these data are not only stored in the BAG, but according to Art. 62 of the law even handed on to foreign authorities. Aldous Huxley's “Brave New World” sends regards!

The article of *Marianne Wütherich* published in Current Concerns No. 45 “No to the revised Epidemics Act” provides us

with many more examples from the text of the Act. The existing Law on Epidemics and the careful cooperation of municipalities, cantons and the federal government in exchange with the countries of the world allow - in the case of a real pandemic – to take appropriate protective measures.

The described state political processes show the great importance of direct democratic instruments such as the referendum to rein the power cravings of some strategists tailed abroad. We have a lot to lose, if we do not clearly reject any attempt to weaken Switzerland's direct democratic federal system. We need to see through propaganda and fear-mongering and to deal with a clear mind and sense of our citizenship with the above documents and then act wisely and fully informed. •

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# Compulsory vaccination against bluetongue disease – a warning example

*Interview with Matthias von Euw, organic farmer in Hittingen TG, Switzerland*

*Current Concerns: Mister von Euw, you have studied bluetongue disease in great detail, why did you do that?*

*Matthias von Euw:* It all started with the official announcement of the Swiss Federal Veterinary Office (FVO) regarding bluetongue disease via the agricultural media. At first I thought if the situation is that bad then we'd really better do something now. A long newspaper article mentioned Belgium with a very, very high number of bluetongue infections. I wanted to get more information and contacted the Belgian farmers' association. In particular I was curious about the actual quantity of livestock in Belgium. Since answers were unsatisfactory, I turned to the Belgian ministry of agriculture. When I started to ask questions about bluetongue disease I got no clear answers. But they told me the overall number of livestock in Belgium. I then compared these numbers with the alleged number of bluetongue infections in Belgium as they were circulated in Swiss newspapers – there weren't even so many animals in Belgium! They had 25% more bluetongue infections than they actually have animals! This provoked the question if the numbers were inflated by our newspapers or were they given false information by the FVO? From that point in time I took the matter seriously.

*What did you do?*

The federation and the FVO had planned their compulsory bluetongue vaccination campaign for 1 June 2008. However, media reports and information material of the FVO were contradictory, professionally unsatisfactory or plainly wrong from the preparation phase onwards. This prompted me to write to the cantonal veterinary agency as early as April 2008: "As I learnt from the media all cattle, sheep and goats in Switzerland have to be vaccinated against bluetongue disease. Now as a livestock farmer I am obliged to deliver best quality meat and milk and to make sure all products can be traced back transparently. Therefore I have a couple of questions. 1. Has the quality of the vaccine been proven? If yes, how and by whom? 2. Has the production chain for the vaccine been verified? If yes, by whom and for how long? 3. By whom and for how long has the vaccine been tested? 4. Who is liable for possible side effects and their sequelae? 5. Who guarantees the efficacy of the vaccine? 6. Is it correct that the Federation and the canton cover the costs and the farmer has to contribute only 4 Francs? 7. Who pays for ad-

ministration, injection material, the injection itself, travel expenses of the vet etc.?"

Up to now these questions have never been answered with professional responses, neither by the canton of Thurgau nor by the FVO and only question 6 was verified.

*How would you assess the vaccines used for the compulsory vaccination campaign?*

We are talking about the following vaccines: *BTVPURAI Sap 8 (MERIAL)*, *Bovilis BTV (Intervet)* as well as *Zulvac 8 cattle* and *Zulvac 8 ovine (Fort Dodge Animal Health)*. These were filed for approval at the *Institute for Virology and Immunoprophylaxis (IVI)*. According to the IVI, these vaccines contain aluminium hydroxide and Saponin as adjuvant. Regarding the approval procedures for these vaccines the IVI made the following statements:

"No proper documentation is available for either of these products which would allow for regularly approval. [...] The *European Medicines Agency (EMA)* has issued modified criteria for the administration of BTV vaccines in cases of emergency. However, even those are not met by the submitted vaccines at present. Despite that, some EU member states have allowed for the vaccines to be administered in a coordinated state vaccination program, which was explained with the situation of urgency. Article 9 paragraph 4 of the Swiss Federal Law on Therapeutic Products (LPT) regulates for a limited period, the distribution or supply of unauthorized medicinal products to treat life-threatening diseases if a significant therapeutic benefit is to be expected from the administration of these medicines. Such a situation seems to apply now regarding bluetongue disease of cattle and sheep. We recommend for Switzerland an approach similar to other European countries. That means, the FVO allows the administration of the unauthorized products for the planned vaccination campaigns of the year 2008." (from a letter of the IVI to the FVO of 20 May 2008, Liebefeld Bern)

*This means that vaccines were used which under normal circumstances would never have been regularly authorized?*

Following the IVI recommendation, the FVO issued a temporary approval of the vaccines. Safety profiles were insufficient, though. In the original application documents the drug manufacturers state that a possible influence on male reproduction

had not been investigated. Neither had the safety in pregnant and lactating animals been established. This is what the drug manufacturer *Merial (BTVPURAI-SAP8)* explicitly writes under the header "Contra-indications, warnings" etc.: "The safety of the vaccine in pregnant or lactating animals has not yet been established." The package leaflet of the distributor *Biokema SA* omits this warning. The manufacturer *Intervet International (Bovilis BTV8)* writes under "12. Special warnings: [...] The vaccine can be used during pregnancy and lactation. The safety and efficacy of the vaccine has not been established in breeding males." Again the package leaflet of the *Veterinaria AG*, which distributes this vaccine in Switzerland, does not mention this.

Authorizing these vaccines is hazardous. The FVO should never have done this.

*Even if there was a threat of an epidemic?*

Per definition bluetongue disease is no epidemic. It is a disease. Bluetongue disease is transmitted by mosquitoes. Therefore an animal infected with bluetongue disease is not contagious for other animals. This is also confirmed by the vaccine manufacturer *Merial*.

*Hence it would make more sense to vaccinate or kill the mosquitoes rather than cattle, sheep and goats?*

Yes, in fact it would. If a mosquito stings an animal infected with bluetongue disease or BTV right now, then the same mosquito would have to sting another animal within 12 hours. That is a *sine qua non* since the infectious agent remains contagious for only 12 hours. However, mosquitoes go for another blood meal only after 48 hours. All of this will only work under tight conditions. The virus stays viable for just 4 hours if within a host animal. What does that mean, really? Mosquitoes have quite a different body temperature as compared to mammals. Within the mosquito, the virus survives even shorter time-spans.

*Wasn't there a danger that quite a lot of livestock would have died of bluetongue disease without vaccinations?*

No. A German study about bluetongue disease shows that only 1.96% of cattle will develop symptoms. Out of 1000 diseased animals just two died. Mass vacci-

**"Compulsory vaccination against..."**

continued from page 6

nations as preventive measures are therefore inappropriate.

This is also confirmed by investigations of the German *Federal Research Center for Virus Diseases* in Tübingen. They had investigated the consequences of making vaccination against foot and mouth disease obligatory in Germany in 1966. The investigation had the following result: "Time correlations between vaccination dates and outbreaks during the obligatory vaccination campaigns suggest these very vaccinations to be the main cause for new outbreaks. Virus escaping from vaccine producing facilities appeared to be the second most common cause. Genotype analyses confirm these insights. Assuming normal conditions without vaccinations in the EU countries, lower costs would be caused by bluetongue disease as compared to the current vaccination costs, as cost-benefit-analyses have shown. The European commission therefore prohibited vaccinations as of January 1, 1992." Quarantine and slaughter of diseased animals have always proven very effective in preventing an epidemic.

*Has bluetongue disease been known for long?*

The bluetongue virus is quite a well-known little creature. It happens to be mentioned as a B-weapon on a list of chemical and biological weapons.

Allegedly, bluetongue disease arrived in Europe, where the first cases were recorded in 2006, from South Africa. As early as 2003 the European commission urged their member states to establish crisis plans to fight bluetongue disease.

There are two documents that startled me. One is a parliamentary inquiry to the German state parliament (Landtag) of Rhineland-Palatinate of 18 March 2008 and the other a document issued by the FVO.

The inquiry in the Landtag is quite plain: "We ask the county government: 1. What does the government know about the tendering for an anti-bluetongue vaccine? 2. Does the government expect that the timeframe for the planned vaccination campaign can be met? 3. What is the connection between the planned field trial and the tendering for a vaccine?" (Brief inquiry of MPs Monika Fink, David Langner, Norbert Stretz, Torsten Wehner SPD and answer of the ministry of environment).

And as for the FVO:

"The Animal Epidemics Act requires entomological surveillance to establish time periods free of vector insects. Currently the parasitological institute of the University of Zürich is engaged in a re-

search project to gain more insight into vector biology. The research project is co-sponsored by the FVO. The bluetongue vaccination in Switzerland will be analyzed as part of the two-year dissertation project Scientific Sub-study about the Vaccination Campaign in Switzerland 2008/2009. The aim of this sub-study is to investigate efficacy and safety of the three used bluetongue vaccines in cattle, sheep and goats and to collect and record data about vaccination side effects and adverse effects and to estimate the achieved degree of vaccination coverage in Switzerland. The results of this sub-study will serve for optimization of the planned bluetongue vaccination campaign 2009/2010 and will inform general planning and performing of future vaccination campaigns against animal epidemics in Switzerland."

Considering all these aspects it is really no surprise that several people have started to ask questions such as: What is really behind this bluetongue disease? Are there some sort of Europe-wide field trials going on which include Switzerland?

*Which consequences do you draw personally from your research?*

Up to now I have not had my livestock vaccinated.

*Mister von Euw, we thank you for this revealing interview.*

### Is WHO to decide what we will have on our plates?

*Current Concerns: Mr von Euw, how do you explain to a city dweller or an inhabitant of an agglomeration why he should vote against the Epizootic Diseases Act? Matthias von Euw: I would tell him the following: Look, basically you have to decide by yourself what you want to eat. Agriculture produces what you have on your plate. And there is no other country all over the world where the citizen can interfere that much with the farmer's food production. If it is discussed fair and square this is a remarkably good culture that we have maintained in Switzerland and still do. We citizens have a say by voting and can thrash things out. The tax payer pays something for a good nutrition because the farmer has additional expenses if he wants to bring onto the plates what the citizens like.*

*In future, with the revised Epizootic Diseases Act the tax payer is levered out. Now the Federal Office can come, respectively the WHO, and say: "It's an epidemic, all have to be vaccinated!" Residuals of vaccines will then be on our plates, even if they are labelled "Bio", won't they?*

*Is the Epizootic Diseases Act in accordance with our food legislation?*

No. The food legislation obliges us farmers to produce products which do not endanger the people's health. Residuals of vaccines threaten our health. It is not tolerable that the farmer now is forced with a change in legislation to violate the food law.

If the citizen adopts this Act he will have no idea what he will have on his plate. During a control of epidemics the authorities are not obliged to hand over the instruction leaflets of the vaccines. In that case emergency law is applied. Moreover the legal basis for an emergency concerning epizootic diseases is already given with the old law. This can be worked with. We don't need a new law.

*Are there further serious changes with the new law?*

Yes. With the change of legislation the Federal Council has two new institutions: a vaccine data base and a vaccine bank where it will store the vaccines. The Federal Council buys these commodities and has to make sure to "dump" them.

If the WHO recommends a compulsory vaccination people are forced to buy the stuff. At the moment this is still emergency law. With the new law this will be different. Then an emergency law is no longer necessary.

*The Federal Council as intermediary of the pharmaceutical industry?*

Yes, exactly. That's not right, that's a mess. It would force the citizen to buy the stuff. It probably says we take over the responsibility with the apposition: but I'm not responsible. This was the case with the compulsory vaccination concerning the bluetongue disease. With a regulation the Federal Council ensured that it could not be held liable for vaccine damages.

The experiences with the compulsory vaccination during the bluetongue disease 2008 and 2009 gives you a foretaste of what we can expect if we adopt this law.

If you want to decide by yourself what you have on your plate, vote No on 25 November!

# IG Freiheit (IG Freedom) – protect privacy against government intervention

Interview with Gregor A. Rutz, Cantonal Councillor of the Swiss People's Party, SVP, Canton of Zurich, board member IG Freiheit (Interest group freedom)



Gregor A. Rutz  
(picture ma)

*Current Concerns: What were the reasons for founding the interest group? Was there a special cause?*

*Gregor A. Rutz:* In 2005 the Swiss railway SBB introduced a general smoking ban. All trains had to be smoke-free. At that time I gave an interview to the magazine *Facts*. I resented the new ban, because I felt it was intolerant: a non-smoker didn't have to sit in a smoking compartment – the major part of the train had always been smoke-free. There were many reactions to this interview. Many people found that there were many other examples of unnecessary restrictions – and that there was a need to become active. So we teamed up in the summer of 2006: business people and political leaders from the ranks of CVP, FDP and SVP. We took up the cause of fighting the many little laws and prohibitions that make the lives of citizens, but also of the industry, more and more difficult. We deliberately chose this focus because we felt that the parties should have to take care of the main dossiers, such as social policy, defense policy and foreign policy. But the little things that hurt a tradesperson, an employer or the individual citizen are often forgotten. That was the basis for the IG freedom.

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## IG Freedom

The interest group *IG Freedom* was founded in September 2006 by a team of entrepreneurs and politicians. It is a cross-party association of personalities who fight for the freedom rights of citizens and against imposition of superfluous governmental regulations.

### Statutes

I. Name, seat and purpose of the association

### Article 1

Under the name "IG Freedom" there is an association in terms of article 60ff of the Swiss Civil Code (ZGB) for indefinite duration with headquarters in Zurich. The association for the promotion of freedom aims at strengthening the idea of freedom in Switzerland and its implementation into legislation and application.

Source: [www.freiheit-liberte.ch](http://www.freiheit-liberte.ch)

## In 2008 the "Rusty Paragraph" went to Thomas Zeltner

### No applause for the BAG's paternalistic campaigns worth millions

This year's "Rusty Paragraph" awarded by the *IG Freedom* goes to *Thomas Zeltner*, director of the *Federal Office of Public Health* (BAG). The executive board of the cross-party interest group has appointed the federal health apostle as the prize winner for his patronising prevention campaigns worth millions. Every year, the *IG Freedom* awards the "Rusty Paragraph". With this prize people are moved to the limelight who particularly loudly call for nonsensical regulations and bans. In plain English: He, who torpedoes personal freedom is a candidate or nominee for the "Rusty Paragraph".

Since its inception the cross-party organization *IG Freedom* has often been annoyed with the *Federal Office for Health*. This office's prevention machin-

ery fed with many tax millions can hardly be stopped. The executive board of the *IG Freedom* is of the opinion that BAG's director *Thomas Zeltner* has definitely overstepped the mark. Therefore, he deserves to be chosen as this year's prize winner of the "Rusty Paragraph".

*Zeltner* strives at forbidding everything possible in the name of the state that might be somewhat unhealthy. It seems that the active head official in the department *Couchepin* has long since forgotten the fact that people resident in Switzerland are primarily responsible for their own health. Within a short time BAG has launched a "National Programme Alcohol", a "National Programme Diet and Physical Exercise" as well as a "National Programme Tobacco".

Media release of *IG Freedom* of 5.22.2008

At the same time we decided: in order to demonstrate how many unnecessary laws and absurd proposals are being launched, the most stupid law had to receive an award every year. For this we awarded the prize, "der Rostige Paragraph" (the rusty paragraph).

*Who has received the "Rostige Paragraph" yet?*

*Thomas Zeltner*, the former director of the *Federal Office of Public Health*, received the award in 2008. Because of increased prevention activities of the federal government, which we found greatly exaggerated as early as then.

*You targeted the law on prevention right from the beginning?*

Yes, even before it was actually discussed, we accentuated that the state was doing too much in this area.

*The statutes of IG Freedom name its purpose, which is that you want to strengthen the idea of freedom in Switzerland, the civil rights and liberties of citizens. How do you do that exactly? You have mentioned some negative examples. How do you achieve a positive effect in that direction?*

Civil liberties are a guarantee for the citizen that the state does not intervene in a particular area. This is the original idea of civil rights and liberties: Every citizen should have a privacy that is protected – a sphere in which the state cannot interfere with.

Each new law wants to regulate another particular area. Therefore we are dealing

with an intervention of the state in a particular field. Therefore, for the defense of freedom it is often important to see to it that such a law is not passed. We have to say no.

It is a bad habit that currently laws are being made on the basis of individual cases. That is convenient for politicians, for them it is a way to show that they have been active: something happened and I did something about it. So now we have a law... In most cases, this does of course not solve the problem but new problems emerge. It is therefore important that we keep our eyes open: Where ever unnecessary laws are being created – we can try to preferably block this, precisely in order to protect freedom. That is the positive effect.

*This means you also advocate observing the principle of subsidiarity?*

Absolutely. It is of course a part of freedom that as much as possible may be decided at the commune level and in the canton instead of at the federal level. Another aspect of freedom is that not everything must be regulated by the state, but private solutions can be sought, if possible.

*How do business circles respond to your initiative? Do you have many new members?*

Yes, there are many. We have many tradespersons and entrepreneurs who join and support *IG freedom* also with monetary contributions.

continued on page 9

### “IG Freiheit (IG Freedom) ...”

continued from page 8

*How many members do you have approximately?*

Meanwhile, there are about 2000 members, and membership is daily growing.

*Especially from the smaller business?*

That varies. *Peter Spühler*, the president of IG Freedom, leads a large company, but there are also smaller ones.

*In your press release of 27 September you wrote that you wanted to examine the activities of the BAG (“Bundesamt für Gesundheit” – Federal Office of Public Health) more closely. Do you already have an idea how you want to accomplish that?*

It is typical that the activities of the prevention office have been around for years. We have always found that these measures interfere too much with the freedom of the people. The state almost wants to prescribe what to eat, what to drink, smoke or not, what the minimum age for tanning beds is – everything is to be regulated. And all of this has no basis in law. That it spends so much money is in itself a scandal. It involves billions. The activism of the BAG interferes massively in the liberty of the citizen to arrange his life as he pleases. Next came the prevention law issue: They said that they wanted to put all of these activities on a statutory footing, so that the thing would be properly organised. We found that this was the wrong way: We should stop such activities if they have no legal basis.

Well the Prevention Act has been rejected, meaning that there is still no legal basis. And now the relevant authorities claim they need more money; for without a law it would be all the more important that they could do their job, they said. In my opinion these are conditions that suit a banana republic!

Therefore, we must keep an eye on the Federal Office of Public Health. First, the BAG does things that it should not do: The administration cannot simply act because it thinks it is a good idea, but it must do what it is commissioned to do, by a specific order of the legislature or the executive.

Just look at the debate on the alcohol legislation: The ban on happy hours, something completely absurd! Prohibiting sales at petrol stations, so that after nine in the evening no alcohol can be sold. They claim that would solve the problem with young people. As if you could not buy before nine clock, if you wanted more alcohol. State regulated minimum prices that restaurants must charge for alcoholic beverages, and so on. Regulations that in addition to the cheapest alcoholic drink at least three

### Genetic engineering on the ice lolly?

“Bundesamt für Gesundheit” (Federal Office of Public Health) grants permission bypassing people and parliament

The Swiss Federal Office of Public Health (BAG) has granted the *Unilever Group* a permission for the protein ISP, which need not be declared (labeled) on the product. The ice structuring protein is used by Unilever for the production of ice cream, mainly for the types *Solero* and *Twister*, being popular in Switzerland, too. The protein is produced by means of genetically modified yeast. Since there is no more yeast in the protein and the protein is regarded as a processing aid substance, it must not be declared on the label of the product – as is the case with all processing aids. In the process of the ice cream production the protein helps ensure that the product freezes with fine ice crystals instead of somewhat coarser ones.

(Source: Press release by the Foundation for Consumer Protection 25.10.2012)

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mw. This is a warning example of the power, which a mere Federal Office is going to exercise unchecked if we do not move in time and clear the latch. With the rejection of the law on prevention the Council of States set a first stop in the autumn session. With the ongoing referendum on the Epidemics Act the Swiss population has got another impor-

tant opportunity to show the BAG, who has the say in our country.

On 27 November 2005, the sovereign has clearly expressed their position against genetic engineering of food: With 55.7% Yes to 44.3% No and with the votes of all the cantons the popular initiative “For Food from GM-free Agriculture” was approved by the Swiss. Thus the following principle was introduced in the Swiss Constitution (Article 197 paragraph 2): “The Swiss agriculture will remain free of genetic engineering for a period of five years starting with the adoption of this constitutional provision.” After the five years, the moratorium was extended by the National Council and the Council of States. Next year, this stated period is going to expire. On 26 September 2012 fortunately, the National Council approved a further extension of the GM-moratorium until the end of 2017 with a clear majority (112 votes Yes to 62 votes No, 4 abstentions). It is likely that the Council of States will also support the clear will of the people.

And in this situation the BAG – a mere administrative department – arrogates to take unconstitutional decisions against the will of the people and the cantons, the National Council and the Council of States? No way!

non-alcoholic drinks must be offered at lower prices – this would take us directly to the menu regulation.

These are things where you have to say that this is not a free democracy, it is pure state interventionism. And we want to stop that.

The Federal Office of Public Health is one of those government departments that does most of the things that it should not do.

*And it also has a lot of employees, right?*  
Yes, more and more – steadily growing.

*My last question: What does Switzerland as a workplace still require to be prepared for the future?*

I think Switzerland is doing better than other countries because we have a stable environment and a high level of legal certainty. When you’re working as a company in Switzerland, you know you have a legal system that applies, and that the administration works according to this law and decides objectively and reliably. We also have a high level of political stability: We will not have a different governing majority tomorrow. This distinguishes Switzerland from most other countries, which are less stable.

We have to maintain this, it is the secret recipe of Switzerland. We are currently in a phase in which the whole af-

fair starts to crumble slightly. Think about the bank client confidentiality: The Federal Council is making one concession after the other, and gradually it is no longer certain what actually applies. We must be careful here: A stable framework and legal certainty are crucial for the climate of investment. Every investor reflects where he can safely and sustainably invest money. He will not invest in case of uncertain conditions.

*Your organization is committed to ensuring that the Federal Council does not yield to suggestions from abroad?*

Legal certainty is an important factor, it must be defended. The other factor is that you cannot use more and more to laws interfere with liberty and ultimately jeopardize legal certainty. Because legal certainty also guarantees the freedom of a company to operate: entrepreneurial freedom or the personal freedom of citizens. If they do not exist, it is really very difficult to attract people to operate or invest in Switzerland. The stability is the Alpha and the Omega, and the danger is, on the one hand, yielding more and more to foreign policies, and also at the domestic level this flood of laws is confuses ever more matters.

*Mr Rutz, thank you for the interview.* •

# Baden-Wuerttemberg's state schools are facing dramatic loss in quality

## Private schools will sprout up

by Heike Schmoll

### Standard teachers and uniform curriculum

Not long ago Baden-Wuerttemberg's Minister President *Kretschmann* (Greens) described the future education of his country as a two-pillar model, consisting of the so-called "Gemeinschaftsschule" (mixed-ability schools including all students from years 5 to 10) and grammar schools (higher education including students from years 5 to 12). In the meantime, this announcement has become outdated by the realpolitik of the Ministry of Education. It is obviously not their aim to maintain the grammar school as a strong independent type of school, but to resolve the different types of schools, to weaken the grammar school and to make the Gemeinschaftsschule with an upper secondary level into the single school for all and to favor it.

### De facto grammar schools will be turned into "Gemeinschaftsschulen"

Existing grammar schools will however not be shut down, but de facto be turned into "Gemeinschaftsschulen". If they should really be prohibited from "downgrading" students and sending them to a school with a lower level of education, which probably corresponds better with the students' skills, the grammar schools will become "Gemeinschaftsschulen" just with a different doorplate. Paradoxically, Baden-Wuerttemberg wants to have openness within the school system only in one direction: from bottom up. So the grammar school principals were recently informed that in year nine they had to be as open as to allow any secondary student to change from the lowest into the highest type of school, i.e. into grammar school. The grammar schools need to drag along all students, whether they are skilled enough for grammar schools or not. The primary school's recommendation at the transition to secondary level is abolished; empirical studies show that this has opened the door to grammar school for a lot of children with disadvantaged backgrounds. Moreover, students won't have to repeat classes. The grammar school principals complain that the "G8" (grammar school including years 5 to 12) is considered to hinder rather than to promote openness in the school system. At the same time "G9", which far better supports the openness, will only be experimentally allowed for ten percent of the grammar schools in the country as a new type of school, when the parents' pressure is strong enough.

Who wants to flatten school types, makes uniform curricula for all and introduces a uniform training for teachers at all secondary schools. The future teacher training in Baden-Wuerttemberg has not yet been outlined clearly. After all, the country has so far cherished its teacher training colleges for good reasons; therefore it seems likely, that the primary teacher training will remain within the responsibility of teacher training colleges. Then, however, there will probably be just two types of teachers, one for the lower secondary level and one for the upper secondary level. Baden-Wuerttemberg thus follows the North-Rhine Westphalian example. Not even Berlin, where a commission for the reform of teacher training has recommended lifting the training for secondary teachers corresponding with the teacher training for "Gemeinschaftsschulen" in Baden-Wuerttemberg onto the level for grammar schools, is so fond of uniforming everything.

Adapted to the standard teacher the curriculum should apply equally for all types of schools, hence "Werkrealschule" (vocational secondary schools), "Realschule" (middle schools) and "Gymnasium" (grammar schools), and be developed independent from the type of school. Differences should only be mapped by so-called "specifications of academic standards", whereas it remains unclear whether they meet the educational standards of the Standing Conference of Education Ministers or the state's standards. It is envisaged to include the orientation level (years 5 and 6), the lower and intermediate school qualifications (GCSE). Only then the curricula for grades 11 and 12 of the grammar schools will be further developed. Years following the intermediate qualification, the year 10 in G8 [8 years of grammar school prior to university studies] or year 11 in G9 [9 years of grammar school prior to university] are missing completely.

### Ship without a compass

According to Baden-Wuerttemberg's School Act, the schools of the country have a clearly defined mission. They are intended to provide "students with appropriate talents and educational intentions a broad and in-depth general education, which leads to the ability to study at university". This target should define the entire curriculum; a grammar school education without this target is like a ship

without a compass. We also wonder why the Standing Conference of Education Ministers (KMK) adopted with much backslapping educational standards for the qualification of university admission, if they are completely irrelevant in the curriculum of a KMK member country.

### Teachers are systematically prevented from direct instruction

Who benefits from this school reform that finally even introduces the inclusion, the common education of disabled and non-disabled children? Does Baden-Wuerttemberg want to downgrade its school performances within ten years to the low level of the City-States? It is amazing that there has only been little resistance among parents so far. Although there is the "Arbeitskreis Schule und Bildung in Baden-Wuerttemberg" (Working Group on Schools and Education) and the "Aktionsbündnis gegen die Gemeinschaftsschulen" (Coalition Against "Gemeinschaftsschulen") with their own internet platforms. However, opposition has not nearly reached the extent it once had in Hamburg. "Are billions of tax money and on the children's backs used for something we will all have to pay dearly once?" asks the "Arbeitskreis Schule und Bildung" and criticizes "self-directed learning" in the "Gemeinschaftsschulen", which downgrades teachers to "learning facilitators". In the future they will systematically be prevented from providing an intelligent lesson directed by the teacher, which has proven to be the most effective form of teaching.

There is no empirical evidence for the continuous effectiveness of such teaching methods. Obviously, the aim is to level all differences; however, they will become greater, as the system allows less differentiation. Obviously Baden-Wuerttemberg seems to make every effort to weaken the most successful form of school, the grammar school, so that it will hover in the doldrums of the "Gemeinschaftsschule". The inevitable result will be that private international schools with bilingual sections are sprouting up and parents, aware of the importance of good education, make sure their children will be able to leave the Gemeinschaftsschule as soon as possible, regardless of the fact that they have to pay school fees. Is this supposed to be socially just? •

Source: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, from 25.10.2012, © All rights reserved Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung GmbH, Frankfurt. Provided by The Frankfurter Allgemeine Archiv.

(Translation: *Current Concerns*)

# “In Baden-Wuerttemberg criticism is growing of the Red-Green Government’s planned education reforms”

by Karl Müller

The article by *Heike Schmall*, which the “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” published on 25 October (cf. article on previous pages) is of fundamental significance for all of Germany and as well for other European countries with a formerly good public school system, as for example Switzerland and Austria.

The changes that are currently enforced in many places under the pretext of a child-friendly and sustainable school system are a tremendous sham. *In fact, by means of specifications and promises of false theories, but actually under the dictates of the financial markets and multi-billion dollar investors government schools’ performance will massively be leveled down and the doors will be opened for further privatization of schools.* The expected steps in the process are the following: first you pretend that you want nothing but the best for all children and young people and therefore the existing school system will have to undergo a radical change – next, however you will be “surprised” by the catastrophic consequences of the enforced changes and put the blame on others – to finally dismiss the government of its responsibility for a good school system – in spite of the fact that the German Basic Law codifies the state’s responsibility (Article 7 of the Basic Law).

## The plan was to create facts in concerted fast-tracked action

The fact that the German state of Baden-Wuerttemberg is at the “forefront of the movement” is particularly grotesque, as it had so far been a state with a successful school system in many ways. But the new Red-Green State Government (Green and Socialist Party) under its Minister President *Winfried Kretschmann* quite evidently profited from the state of shock after the CDU (the conservative Christian Democratic Party) and FDP (the Liberal Democratic Party) had lost the parliamentary elections in March 2011 to provide facts in a concerted and fast-tracked effort.

Concerted action means: the policies of Red-Green State Government is only one link in a chain of further plans and interests that has European and international dimensions – politically and materially. Much of what is to be implemented in Baden-Wuerttemberg and elsewhere is coming from the US and is being prepared by the OECD for Europe.

The political agenda is being implemented with tricks and finesse. This is what the green Minister President himself admitted

who, after some resistance to the policy of his venturing minister of education, suddenly spoke of a future two-track education system with “Gemeinschaftsschule” (mixed ability schools including all students from years 5 to 10) and “Gymnasium” (grammar school), trying to appease the still influential grammar schools in the country.

## Dissolution of any kind of reasonable school type and school leadership is imminent

Actually, all that is not primarily about the issue of a one, two- or three- track education system, therefore not a re-warmed comprehensive school debate. Instead, the dissolution of any kind of reasonable schooltype and school leadership is imminent. The radical heterogenization of the student body within schools and school levels (the State Government’s latest marketing slogan for their schools is – it could not be more platitudinous – “diversity makes smarter”), which serves the new “educational approach” with keywords like “individualization”, “self-directed learning”, abolition of year-based classes, the abolition of the teacher with his previous duties and his previous pedagogical responsibilities.

It is ignored that by now sufficient scientific studies on the relationship between lesson structuring and educational achievement are available. Probably the most comprehensive of these studies is the meta-study by *John Hattie* published in 2009 entitled “Visible Learning”. In a research report on this study we read the following about successful teaching: “Such teaching is described as ‘direct instruction’ and is superior to open learning environments such as explorative, problem-oriented, research-based, experimenting and constructivist learning.” Next it states that “The results show that active teaching guided by teachers is more effective than a lesson in which the teacher as learning facilitator and learning supporter only indirectly interferes in the activities.” And then it says the most important: “*Weaker students in particular can cope less with open learning contexts, because they lack the cognitive ‘maps’ for the self-organization of their learning processes, because they are too much on their own and are given too little orienting assistance and therefore would need closer ‘guidance’ with shorter instructive intervals.*”\*

## The Bertelsmann Foundation is involved

The political strategists, however, do not bother about such findings. Again it is ev-

ident to what extent the Green and Red state politicians are only links in a chain. Just remember the new study introduced by the *Bertelsmann Foundation* in late October dealing with supposedly too few students climbing up the ladder and too many losers in the German school system. The insightful conclusion of this study was “that schools are to align their instruction on the pedagogical principle of individual support and teachers are to acquire the skills for it in their training”. Unlike the mainstream media, the “Deutscher Lehrerverband” (German Association of Teachers), which is the umbrella organization of various teachers’ associations, commented on the new study of the Bertelsmann Group on 31 October that it was “highly tendentious and utterly worthless”. The study had been made by people who “decidedly represented the ideology of a unitary school with the *Gemeinschaftsschule*”. The fact that vocational schools in particular (schools in the dual system cooperating with KMU-businesses in which students train for a profession) would offer the best opportunities for advancement to many students was being concealed by Bertelsmann, “Deutscher Lehrerverband” stated.

The article by Heike Schmall addresses the now revealed plans of the green-Red-State Government for a unitary teacher for secondary schools (5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade in all schools), and for a single curriculum for all public schools according to the “pedagogical” pattern of the “Gemeinschafts-schule”.

## Association of critical headmasters

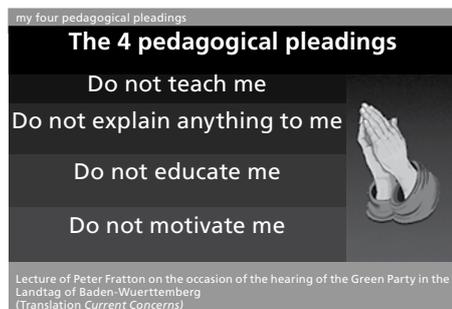
Again, the State Government proceeded in a concerted action. The media reaction in Baden-Wuerttemberg to a very critical press release by the association of grammar school headmasters in the country of 19 October was revealing. Almost no medium of the state reported the sharp criticism of this important association. Otherwise, the public would have noticed, that the “headmasters of grammar schools in Baden-Wuerttemberg considered the newly presented reform of the curricula a failure” and that “the newly started reform together with the other upcoming changes of the school system presented a massive risk to the continued existence and the future of our schools.” The schools’ headmasters added, “[the Ministry of Culture] does not even try to conceal that a partial dissolution of the existing types of schools

## Fratton's school: 40 percent of "self-regulated" students fail the "Abitur" (high-school graduation exam)

*On the occasion of the latest graduation exam the House of Learning in Romanshorn documented again the educational nonsense of the "Gemeinschaftsschule" ideology of its founder Peter Fratton.*

gk. In his lectures praising his "Gemeinschaftsschule" concept the Swiss school entrepreneur Peter Fratton propagates his four educational "Urbitten" (primordial pleas) at a transnational level:

However, the learning processes of the educational concept of the "Gemeinschaftsschule" focusing on so-called "self-centered learning" has nowhere been successfully implemented, yet. Former students' experiences at the private school of the "Gemeinschaftsschule"-promoter Peter Fratton speak volumes. The *Schweizer Beobachter* No. 8/2007 already reported on the



*Original quotation from Fratton's power-point presentation*

miserable success of this expensive private school, where the students have to pay from 3,900 to 4,100 francs per term, "The 24 graduates of the college of tourism *Academia Euregio Bodensee* (AEB) Romanshorn ended up in a fiasco at last year's Thurgau apprenticeship examination in business management training: half of them failed. *Reto Ammann*, co-head of the AEB, speaks of a shock. It was a miserable rate: In the canton, 95 percent of examinees graduate on average with their diploma as management assistants. The multi-branched private school group, established by ex-teacher Peter Fratton, had previously enjoyed a good reputation. However, there had been warning signs. When the school had advertised drawing on the federal certificate of proficiency for tourism the Cantonal Office for Professional Education intervened several times."

Despite this promulgated educational disaster and despite the annual school fees of 21,700 Swiss francs plus 1,000 Swiss francs for school supplies, additional fees for the application and separate fees for excursions, school camps, vocal and instrument lessons and test preparation, parents and authorities are taken in once and again by the propaganda of the "learning houses" and "Gemeinschaftsschulen". Now a report in the "Thurgauer Zeitung" (Switzerland) demonstrates again the unsuitability of the Gemeinschaftsschule with its individualizing "discover-learning" methods.

*Herbert Lippenberger*, school principal at the *SBW Euregio-Gymnasium-Romanshorn* – originally founded by Peter Fratton – covers up the failure of more than 40% of high school graduates in the last graduation examination in line with Fratton's "educational primordial pleas": "The graduation was also a maturation process, and just the male candidates had partly allowed themselves to take little more time under the protection of the strong boys-group, said Lippenberger. This had been the reason, he said that a part of the class had not passed the exams. Four of them were going to repeat the exams; one of them would not. Lippenberger emphasized that the group feeling and the closeness of the study group had been particularly strong. The youths had maintained a close friendship and had enjoyed life together, be it on class trips, or during breaks in the sun in front of the "learning house". That was a form of happiness that should not be underestimated, even if it meant that sometimes the view of reality was falling short, Lippenberger said." ("Thurgauer Zeitung" of 22.09.2012)

The question is not only how strongly these students and their families were cheated of valuable school time and substantial school fees, but also whether a democratic commonwealth and a down-to-earth economy may count on such students for the good life for all. •

"In Baden-Wuerttemberg criticism..."  
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is intended by the implementation of the new education plan."

The political opposition in the state parliament of Baden-Wuerttemberg criticized the plans for a new curriculum for all public schools: "A recommendation by the primary school at the transition to secondary level does no longer exist; one single common educational plan for all schools, and downgrading a student to another type of school shall no longer be allowed, i.e. grammar schools are turned into community schools, no matter what sign is on the door." An "attack on Grammar Schools" was planned. We should better say: "an attack on all state schools".

### Parents are addressed with manipulative techniques

By means of manipulation (misuse of terms bearing a positive connotation) the Green and Red State Government tried to make their "Gemeinschaftsschule" project and the adaptation of the entire edu-

cation system to that "pattern" tempting for parents. Hence they constantly repeat that "Gemeinschaftsschulen" were "socially just", "democratic" and "powerful". Parents are promised that only in the "Gemeinschaftsschule" their child will entirely be promoted individually, with everything tailored to his or her own personality and performance. In advertising brochures and commercials of the Ministry of Education, as well as in numerous apologetic media reports, the "Gemeinschaftsschule" is being touted as an educational paradise on earth: absolutely appropriate for children and at the same time in the best interest of the future of Baden-Wuerttemberg. The parents of previous "Hauptschule" (basic secondary school) students are massively persuaded (so far there have been almost no "Realschulen" [intermediate schools] and grammar schools that want to become "Gemeinschaftsschulen"). They are confronted with a dreary picture of the future of "Hauptschulen", whereas at the same time "Gemeinschaftsschulen" are presented as a great opportunity for their kids. With the

abolition of the primary schools' recommendation at the transition to secondary school last year, the Ministry has even ensured that "Hauptschulen" now actually facing total draining.

### ... but resistance is growing

The manipulative attempts of the State Government will however fail as soon as the people are informed. In Baden-Wuerttemberg, parents and citizens' groups have now become active. Heike Schmoll has alluded to them. Rightly did the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" write on 23 October: "There is growing criticism of the educational reforms planned by the Red-Green Government in Baden-Wuerttemberg." •

\* All quotes from Ulrich Steffen, Dieter Höfer: "Was ist das Wichtigste beim Lernen? Die pädagogisch-konzeptionellen Grundlinien der hattie'schen Forschungsbilanz aus über 50,000 Studien" [What is the most important part of learning? The pedagogical-conceptual base-lines of Hattie's research balance from over 50,000 studies], 12.09.2011; in: *Schulverwaltung*, Edition *Hessen/Rheinland Pfalz*, 16 (2011), Vol 11, pp. 294–298

# Educating, forming and doing research for the Bonum commune

## On the exhibition

### “Natura sacra – the early thinker of the Enlightenment Johann Jakob Scheuchzer”

by Urs Knoblauch, culture publicist, Fruthwilen TG

Visitors to the exhibition in the Central Library in Zurich will realize what a profound education and science can contribute to the common weal. The exhibition provides a view on the number of great scholars the city of Zurich has been bringing forth for centuries. The exhibition, open until 2 March 2013, provides the visitors with an insight into the time of the early Enlightenment on the basis of valuable books, documents, natural history objects and engravings. The Zurich physician and universal scholar Johann Jakob Scheuchzer was an outstanding personality. Born in 1672 in Zurich, he graduated in medicine and after 1695 he worked as the town doctor, orphanage doctor, curator of the public library and the natural history collection. From 1710 onwards he also held a lectureship in mathematics at the two top colleges of Zurich. Shortly before his death in 1733 he was appointed Professor Physicus at the Carolinum.

40 years ago in 1972, at the occasion of the 300<sup>th</sup> birthday of Johann Jakob Scheuchzer, the “Zentralbibliothek Zürich” (ZBZ – Central Library of Zurich) arranged a well regarded exhibition. In the past two decades many new research works have developed, appreciating the great, internationally respected scholar as an early philosopher of the Enlightenment, “who broke fresh ground at the threshold of a new era and was committed to using empirical methods.” Johann Jakob Scheuchzer has rendered great service for the scientific research on Switzerland. Right at the beginning of the exhibition the visitor can marvel at a hydrological map showing the large water reservoirs of Switzerland. On his numerous natural history mountain walks the wonder of nature opened Scheuchzer’s eyes “in his exploring the truth”. Professor Susanna Bliggensdorfer, director of the Central Library of Zurich, questioned in her opening speech, whether such broad selection of studies would yet be possible within the “Bologna-System” today. The visitor is encouraged to think about the substantial cutback and reorganization in today’s educational landscape.

The excellent explanatory statements by Dr Urs B. Leu, the publisher of the interesting catalogue, are a valuable guide through the exhibition for every visitor. Excerpts are cited in the following.

#### A new time breaks ground – Descartes and Grotius

At the beginning of the tour, important trends in the history of science of the 17<sup>th</sup> century are depicted by beautiful books and documents. They reveal that despite resistance and clash with religious trends, the scientific research of nature, the emerging rational thinking and the development of democracy became increasingly important.

“The upheavals of the religious wars released forces not only in the religious, but also in the philosophical and political area, which crystallized to some extent in the two scholars René Descartes (1596–1650) and Hugo Grotius (1583–1645)” who laid the foundations for international law with his book “De jure belle ac pacis”.

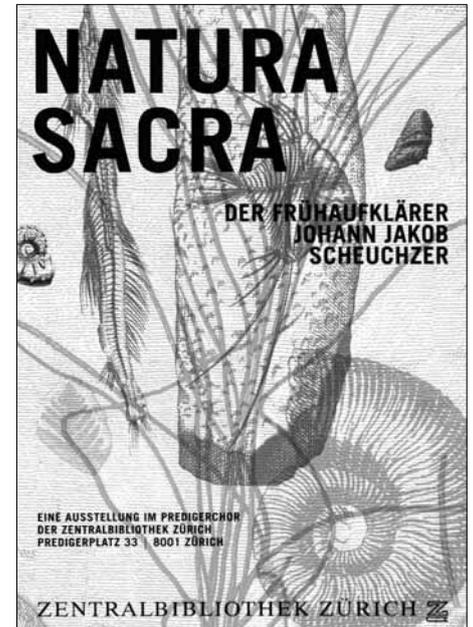
#### Flourishing of natural sciences

Natural sciences were flourishing, and a lively debate about the heliocentric view of the world and the various opinions also took place at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

“The traditionalists referred to the ancient worldview of Ptolemy, which placed the earth at the center of the universe, while in the revolutionary model of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) the sun was placed at the centre. Tycho Brahe (1546–1601) in turn tried to mediate between the two systems by retaining the geocentric model, but describing circles of the other planets around the sun. Just like his teacher Christoph Sturm from the Swiss village of Altdorf, Scheuchzer held the view of the heliocentric model of Copernicus, which earned him some enemies in Zurich. On the basis of the Zurich censors’ decree he had to put the Copernican worldview side by side with the two other models of Ptolemy and Tycho Brahe in the *Physica Sacra* although it had already been recognized in wide circles of science. Still in the second quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the heliocentric worldview finally prevailed also in Zurich, not least thanks to Scheuchzer.”

As a result of the partially massive hostility by the orthodox theologians, the liberal forces began to organize themselves in three lettered societies. Behind closed doors they were able to discuss the issues openly.

“The oldest society named *Collegium Insulanum* (1679–1681) was followed by the ‘*Collegium der Vertraulichen*’ (Coun-



The poster of the exhibition

cil of the Confidential, 1686–1696) and the ‘*Collegium der Wohlgesinnten*’ (Council of the Well-meaning, 1693–1709).” Scheuchzer became the actuary of the “*Collegium der Wohlgesinnten*” in 1697.

#### Scheuchzers contributions to the research on Switzerland and to natural science

Johann Jakob Scheuchzer continued his studies on numerous journeys abroad. With his nine major Swiss journeys in 1702–1711 the great natural scientist largely contributed to the research on Switzerland with its wealth of mountains and waters. Here he collected empirical material and conducted his famous barometric height measurements. From his predecessor, Johann Jakob Wagner (1641–1695), who also worked as a librarian and orphanage doctor, “he also inherited his interest in the natural history of Switzerland, which he turned his attention to as long as he lived. He endeavored to describe his homeland from the ethnographic, geographic, historic and scientific view which resulted in numerous publications. Special attention should be given to his letter of invitation printed in 1699 in German and Latin and sent to numerous men of letters, inviting them to explore *natural miracles that can be found in Switzerland*. By means of the including 186 questions he hoped to be able to col-

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**"Educating, forming ..."**

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lect information on various aspects of the Swiss Confederation."

It is interesting to see in the exhibition how specialist journals developed in the time of the early Enlightenment and contributed to the scientific debate and general education. "Starting in 1665 the first two scientific journals were published as the *Journal des Sçavans* printed in Paris and the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* in London. The magazine production enormously increased in the following decades in different countries, because this regularly and frequently published information on new discoveries was not only important for the lettered people but also accelerated research. Those who did not keep abreast of the times fell behind. Scheuchzer also realized the significance of the new medium and published 160 of his 256 publications in different periodicals."

From 1694 onwards, various magazines were published in the Confederation. The *Nova literaria helvetica*, published in Latin from 1702 to 1715, and the description of Nature stories of Switzerland, weekly released from 1705 to 1707, had been founded by Scheuchzer.

Scientific literacy, mathematics, and physics became increasingly important. The reformer *Zwingli* had demanded them as early as in 1525. When from 1710 onwards Scheuchzer had the opportunity to teach a few lessons of mathematics at the two to Zurich schools *Collegium publicum* and at the *Collegium humanitas*, scientific mathematical education was improved in the town at the river *Limmat*. His disciple *Johannes Gessner* (1709–1790) held physics lessons on a private basis because of the lack of public schools. Scheuchzer's mathematics and physics textbook *Physica* had four editions in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Although Scheuchzer referred to *Newton's* point of view, he always saw the Creator behind the wonders of nature.

**Scheuchzer as natural history collector, librarian and correspondent**

Fossils, minerals and plants provide important knowledge on natural history.

The "flood theory" was debated fiercely. Scheuchzer was convinced that the spring flood was crucial for reconstructing events in natural history. He tried to prove this theory with numerous special fossil discoveries, with a "barley ear", a hazelnut and two Dragonfly larvae. Later research specified his assumptions.

In the exhibition Scheuchzer's herbaria exhibits are beautiful. He focused on the classification of the French *Joseph Pitton de Tournefort* (1656–1708) who divided the plants according to their corollas and fruits. "Scheuchzer's particular interests were the Swiss and especially the alpine plants, something which was frequently expressed in portraying him with the Alpine Thistle *Eryngium alpinum*."

Collectibles from nature were also exchanged through scientific correspondence. On request of his English friend *Hans Sloane* (1660–1753) Scheuchzer published an originally printed directory of his collection with 1513 fossils and 1995 minerals in 1716.

Scheuchzer served as trustee of the citizen's library and housed an extensive private library with about 5,000 works. He also maintained written contact with important personalities. Among them were *Johann Bernoulli* (1667–1748) in Basel and *Gottfried W. Leibniz* (1646–1716), who followed Scheuchzer's publication activity and in particular his empirical research on altimetry with great interest.

"England and London in particular played an important role as the seat of the famous *Royal Society* and other research institutions in the scientific landscape of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century." The physician *John Woodward* (1665–1728), who himself was a member of the *Royal Society*, wrote and sent "instructions" (inquiry letters), to multiply the knowledge in natural science and life skills.

In addition to the Basel letters, the Graubünden letters are probably among the most important parts of Scheuchzer's correspondence. He was in contact with thirty penfriends, among them the priest *Johannes Leonhardi* (1651–1725), the nobleman *Rudolf of Rosenroll* (1671–1730) and *Rudolf von Salis-Soglio* (1652–1735). "Following the publication of his letter of invitation to

explore natural wonders, numerous contacts with members of the political and ecclesiastical elites of the Alpine region arose. Scheuchzer not only exchanged scientific and scholarly messages, but also information on political and religious matters." Letters, magazines, and books became important elements of the early Enlightenment. Yet the strengthening of mathematical and science-oriented teaching as training of logical, rational and reasonable thinking was crucial. At the opening of the exhibition Dr *Simona Boscani Leoni* made clear how carefully research on this "scholar's correspondence" with thousands of letters is done.

**The Enlightenment prevails – education for the bonum commune**

After Scheuchzer's death a profound change of world view took place in Zurich towards the mid-century. Acceptance of heliocentrism and thus a new cosmology was followed by the break with flood geology, which had attempted to explain all sedimentary rocks and fossils as a result of a global flood. Among others, Scheuchzer's disciple *Johannes Gessner* studied in Paris and came into contact with the French Enlightenment. He made known important works, as for example by *Benoît de Maillet* (1656–1738), *Georges-Louis Marie Leclerc* and *Comte de Buffon* (1707–1788), who had developed evolution models.

We have to take care of this humanistic tradition: education, research, our schools and the excellent dual education system. Education must not be misused. The ethically high educational levels shown here should remain open to our youth to enable them – based on solid instruction – to make their way as qualified mathematicians, scientists and engineers and contribute to society and the common good. •

Admission to the exhibition is free. The exhibition is open until 2 March 2013 from Mon–Fri 1–5 pm, Sat 1–4 pm (closed over the holidays). Please inquire about (public) guided tours and lectures at [www.zbbu.uzh.ch](http://www.zbbu.uzh.ch) or Tel. +41 44 268 31.

The support of the "Institute for cultural research (ikg) Graubünden" enabled the exhibition.

# The alternative to the “Homo oeconomicus”

## On the occasion of the International Year of Cooperatives

by Eva-Maria Föllmer-Müller

On 18 December 2009, the General Assembly of the UN decided to declare 2012 the *International Year of Cooperatives* (Resolution: A/RES/64/136, cf. box). The decision is meant to underline the global economic and social role of cooperatives: cooperatives reduce poverty, create jobs and promote social integration. With that the UN are also trying to achieve the goal that governments create structures fostering formation and growth of new cooperatives.

According to the UN, there are about one billion members of cooperatives globally, in over 100 countries providing more than 100 million jobs. According to UN estimates, cooperatives provide a food basis for half the global population (cf. box). So credit cooperatives, rural and commercial cooperatives contribute to the stabilization of regional economic cycles and promote local employment.

The core messages include:

- Cooperative enterprises are user-owned, serve the members and are led by members.
- Cooperatives strengthen people.
- Cooperatives improve the conditions of life and strengthen economy.

- Cooperatives enable a sustainable development.
- Cooperatives contribute to rural development.
- Cooperatives balance both social and the economic demands.
- Cooperatives foster democratic principles.
- Cooperatives are a sustainable enterprise model for the young generation.

This year's World Food Day on 16 October was also dedicated to the theme “Agricultural Cooperatives – Key to Feeding the World”. In *Current Concerns* No. 45 we printed the statement by José Graziano da Silva, FAO Director-General.

On this day, many more statements have emphasized the unique importance of cooperatives in the global fight against poverty and hunger. However, it has also been warned that this importance has not yet been recognized generally and that a closer cooperation between governments and the cooperative movement would be beneficial.

Although today, there are 132 million less people starving than 20 years ago, there are still 870 million undernourished people.

As the FAO Director-General stated, this is a shame for the so-called developed countries in face of the fact that there would be sufficient food to feed the whole world.

Pope *Benedict XVI.* has expressed this in his message on the occasion of the *World Food Day 2012*: Cooperatives can curb speculative tendencies which are already taking hold of basic foodstuffs.

It would suffice to renounce political measures which have “the only goal to protect the markets’ profit as well as the non-food use of agricultural products, the introduction of new production techniques without the necessary measures of caution.” And then we would have to stop speculative tendencies which “are already affecting basic foodstuffs” as well as the “massive buying-up of arable land” which forces the farmers – who do not seem to have any rights – to leave their land. The Pope is very decidedly condemning everything standing in the way of the right for food for the whole human family. Likewise he is determinedly defending the “new form of economy which is serving people and hence is able to foster forms of

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### Resolution adopted by the General Assembly at the 65<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting, 18 December 2009, A/RES/64/136 [Extracts]:

“The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 47/90 of 16 December 1992, 49/155 of 23 December 1994, 51/58 of 12 December 1996, 54/123 of 17 December 1999, 56/114 of 19 December 2001, 58/131 of 22 December 2003, 60/132 of 16 December 2005 and 62/128 of 18 December 2007 concerning cooperatives in social development,

Recognizing that cooperatives, in their various forms, promote the fullest possible participation in the economic and social development of all people, including women, youth, older persons, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples, are becoming a major factor of economic and social development and contribute to the eradication of poverty, [...]

Noting with appreciation the potential role of cooperative development in the improvement of the social and economic conditions of the indigenous peoples and rural communities, [...]

1. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General;
2. Proclaims the year 2012 the International Year of Cooperatives;
3. Encourages all Member States, as well as the United Nations and all other relevant stakeholders, to take advan-

tage of the International Year of Cooperatives as a way of promoting cooperatives and raising awareness of their contribution to social and economic development;

4. Draws the attention of Member States to the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General for further action to promote the growth of cooperatives as business and social enterprises that can contribute to sustainable development, eradication of poverty, and livelihoods in various economic sectors in urban and rural areas and provide support for the creation of cooperatives in new and emerging areas;
5. Encourages Governments to keep under review, as appropriate, the legal and administrative provisions governing the activities of cooperatives in order to enhance the growth and sustainability of cooperatives in a rapidly changing socio-economic environment by, inter alia, providing a level playing field for cooperatives vis-à-vis other business and social enterprises, including appropriate tax incentives and access to financial services and markets;

6. Urges Governments, relevant international organizations and the specialized agencies, in collaboration with national and international cooperative organizations, to give due consideration to the role and contribution of cooperatives [...] by, inter alia:

- (a) Utilizing and developing fully the potential and contribution of cooperatives for the attainment of social development goals, in particular the eradication of poverty, the generation of full and productive employment and the enhancement of social integration;
- (b) Encouraging and facilitating the establishment and development of cooperatives, including taking measures aimed at enabling people living in poverty or belonging to vulnerable groups, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons and indigenous peoples, to fully participate, on a voluntary basis, in cooperatives and to address their social service needs; [...]

Source: [www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/r64.shtml](http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/resguide/r64.shtml)

# “We have the means to eliminate hunger and malnutrition”

## Extract of the message by José Graziano da Silva, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization, FAO on the World Food Day 2012

Over the three decades of decline in national investments in agriculture and official development assistance, millions of small producers have struggled to respond and to cope with variability and crises in climate, markets, and prices. Since the food crisis of 2007–08 many countries have renewed their commitment to eradicating hunger in the world and improving livelihoods. But in some cases, concrete political, programme and financial support are lagging behind verbal commitments.

The opportunity that the food price spikes of 2007-2008 might have provided as a pathway out of poverty for small producers was not realized.

Every day, small producers around the world continue to face constraints that keep them from reaping the benefits of their labour and contributing to food security not only for themselves but for all through active participation in markets. However, poor infrastructure and limited access to services and information, productive assets and markets, as well as poor representation in decision making processes, mean that this potential is not realized.

Evidence shows that those strong cooperatives and producer organizations are able to overcome these constraints and to mitigate the negative effects of food and other crises.

Strong producer organizations have helped to fill a void. They have been able to overcome market and policy constraints by providing their members' access to a range of assets and services. For instance, they can reduce costs to farmers by allowing them to purchase in groups and benefit from better retail prices of agricultural inputs. They also make it possible for members to voice their concerns and interests – and to play a role in decision and policy making processes. There are numerous examples of strong and inclusive organizations that foster collective action among people who depend on farming, fishing,

forestry, livestock and related employment for their livelihoods.

These organizations operate at the community, national or international level, working to combine the economic and social goals of their members.

It has been said repeatedly that we have the means to eliminate hunger and malnutrition. What is needed is the establishment of an enabling environment that allows small producers to take full advantage of available opportunities. Strong cooperatives and producer organizations are an essential part of that enabling environment.

Source: [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

### Cooperatives worldwide – some numbers

Cooperatives across all sectors provide over 100 million jobs around the world, 20 percent more than multinational enterprises. These include coop members, plus workers in businesses that provide goods and services to co-ops.

An estimated 1 billion people worldwide are members of cooperatives.

In 2008, the top 300 cooperatives were responsible for an aggregate turnover of US\$1.1 trillion. This is the size of the world's tenth largest economy, Canada, and nearly the size of the economy of Spain.

In Kenya, cooperatives have the following market shares: 70 percent of coffee, 76 percent of dairy, 90 percent of pyrethrum and 95 percent of cotton.

In Brazil, cooperatives are responsible for 40 percent of the agricultural GDP and 6 percent of total agribusiness exports.

In Kenya, 924,000 farmers earn income from membership in agricultural cooperatives, in Ethiopia about 900,000, and in Egypt about 4 million.

Source: FAO, *What is a cooperative, 2012*

### “The alternative to the “Homo ...”

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sharing without money compensation” as the ones practiced in the agricultural cooperatives.

“The cooperative in its deepest meaning is pointing towards the desire of people to combine their forces with others in order to achieve new social, economic, cultural or religious goals.” It is a dynamic and diverse reality which is “called to not just respond to immediate and material needs but also to contribute to the perspective of each and every community.” The Pope adds, “The church also considers the work in cooperatives as forms of liv-

ing in an experience of unity and solidarity which is able to overcome differences and even social conflicts between persons and groups.” For this purpose it is indispensable that the state authorities provide “the necessary legal and financial means so that cooperatives in the rural areas can be efficient tools for agricultural production, for improving food security, for social change and for an extensive improvement of conditions of life.”

It must be highly appreciated that the United Nations have attended to the matter of cooperatives, hence underlining the global importance of cooperatives. Developed as early as centuries ago from the cooperation of human beings, the

regulatory effect of this economic model is pointing to the future: beyond collectivism and laissez-faire it corresponds to the principle of subsidiarity and the social nature of man. *Current Concerns* has published several fundamental articles on this issue (e.g. No. 29 of 18 July 2011, No. 13/14 of 4 April 2012 or No. 33 of 20 August 2012). People are fed up with being reduced to an egoist “Homo oeconomicus”, only led by his or her interests. The cooperative principle of self-help, self-administration and self-responsibility is incompatible with any form of exercise of power. Instead this form of cooperating in dignity and equality shows the way to more humaneness.