

Competence Initiative

For the Protection of Mankind, the Environment and Democracy

Health is not a Commodity!

It seems to have become a regular occurrence that licences to use spectrum frequencies for communication applications, the risks of which have not yet been researched, are auctioned off by the government. The previous German Red-Green federal government (Social Democrats and Green Party) filled its coffers with the billions obtained through the auctioning of the UMTS (3G. A. K.) licenses. In December 2006, the WIMAX frequencies were auctioned under the current Great Coalition government (formed by the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats). For 2008, a second UMTS auction has been announced.

According to the scientific knowledge from research conducted independently of industry, these auctions are a sell-out of public health. Numerous physicians and scientists protested against the introduction of the WIMAX technology at the time of the auction. Three months later, they received a reply from the Federal Ministry for the Environment, which quotes the weakest of all arguments put forward in the mobile policy debate: There was no evidence of damage at intensities below the existing guidelines. (DR. A. BÖTTGER in letters to PROF. R. FRENTZEL-BEYME, PROF. K. RICHTER and DR. ST. SPAARMANN, March 2007). In the light of the wealth of indications and evidence for damage from seven decades of international high frequency research, it has to be asked just how much chronic illness, genotoxicity and environmental damage needs to be documented in order to unsettle the selective perception of today's governments.

From the WHO down to the consumer and environmental protection at regional level, there is a overwhelming amount of evidence and indications showing the extent to which the profit interests of large corporations hinder the development of effective protection measures. In the case of mobile communications technologies for example, the high proportion of industry financed research has a corresponding influence on the risk assessment of the products. The industry has even secured a right to participate in the funding allocation for research which is financed entirely by the state (according to PROF. R. FRENTZEL-BEYME in public statements). Independent researchers like PROF. P. SEMM, PROF. F. ADLKOFER, PROF. G. HYLAND, DR. L. VON KLITZING und DR. G. CARLO lose their research funds, when they point to severe health damage. The state is implicated in the business of the industry, when its legal obligation would be to create transparency and control its dealings.

The legal obligation to apply the precautionary principle is ignored and the question how the welfare state will cope with the resulting cost is a taboo. The ubiquitous violations of ethical and democratic political principles have motivated the creation of the "Competence Initiative" as outlined below. An interdisciplinary association of physicians, scientists and technicians, the "Competence Initiative" will work towards ensuring that the results of independent research and the citizens' right to protection are once more acknowledged and accepted by the authorities.

Mobile Telecommunication

An Example for the Irresponsible Treatment of Man and Nature

The almost uncontrollable proliferation of wireless communication applications has dotted residential areas with tens of thousands of new antennae. For more and more people, the so called communication age is characterised by compulsive consumption devoid of true communication and culture as well as an irresponsible handling of truth, mankind and the environment.

1. The growth of the technology is supported by research designed to suit economical and political ends, which is mainly financed by the industry. Governments contribute to doing away with the full truth by handing over the responsibility for the protection of their citizens to trivialising expert groups and consultants.
2. W-LAN (Wi-Fi) in schools and hospitals, the favouring of cordless phones of DECT standard over cordless phones of CT1 standard with lower radiation emissions, public advertising for 'exemplary' uses of mobile technology (such as citywide Wi-Fi networks. A. K.), epidemiological field trials on humans – all this betrays a deficient understanding of the problem and the prioritization of technology and commerce above consumer protection.
3. To suit commercial interests, politicians and industry are promoting exposure guidelines which are set several million times above recommended precautionary values and which endanger and damage humans. Citizens are forced to live in close proximity to transmitters, at distances judged irresponsible by independent scientists.
4. Bodily harm, displacement and expropriation are now typical consequences suffered by the victims – and all this in peacetime and in the name of a presumably democratic constitutional state.
5. There are a growing number of electrosensitive people, who have a right to live in health and dignity, as stipulated by the laws protecting minorities and by a conference held in Stockholm in 2006. Instead, this minority is ignored and flatly accused of being hypochondriacs.
6. The economic gains of some are offset by the cost to others: Severe health damage, loss of quality of life and loss of property value. Extrapolated for a country like Germany, the cost exceeds the gain in terms of industry profits and tax income many times over.
7. In its current form, mobile policy violates the fundamental standards of the European Convention of Human Rights and of the democratic Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany. (See also the publication of the Austrian Institute for Human Rights: Mobilfunk, Mensch und Recht. hg. von W. KARL und E. C. SCHÖPFER, 2006.) <Mobile Telecommunications, Man and The Law, published by W. KARL und E. C. SCHÖPFER, 2006.>
8. The results from available independent research on humans, animals and plants already show that the electromagnetic overload of our environment constitutes one of the most consequential interferences with the balance of nature and the organisation of Creation so far.

Several Experts' Appeals such as the Freiburger Appeal (launched in 2002 with 36000 signatures to date), the Bamberger Appeal (2004), the Physicians Appeal Allgäu-Bodensee-Oberschwaben (2006) and the Benevento Resolution issued by the International Commission for Electromagnetic Safety (as an update of the 2002 Catania Resolution), to name but a few, emphatically protested against the shortfalls of the relevant environment and consumer protection legislation.

They demand more honesty with regard to the scientific truth, and the containment of industry influences on research, politics and the media. (Regarding media influences, see also, U. KRÜGER: Funkstille über Strahlungsschäden, in: MESSAGE 1/2007). They also ask for the implementation of existing legislation which has been formulated to protect the population – most importantly the precautionary principle as expressed in Article 2.2 of the German Basic Constitutional Law and Article 174 of the EU Treaty.

How poorly the precautionary principle has been applied in the past was documented by the Federal Environment Agency in its monograph 'Late lessons from early warnings - the precautionary principle 1898 – 2000' (available in English here:

http://reports.eea.europa.eu/environmental_issue_report_2001_22/en/ A. K.) "From the discovery of radioactive radiation to this day, the precautionary principle has not been applied despite explicit warnings." Those responsible for the proliferation of mobile technology are far removed from such political honesty.

The signatories are not categorically opposed to mobile technology, as long as technologies, which would be more compatible with human life, can be researched and developed. Technologies which would not offer a perceived technological progress at the cost of social setbacks. They demand an environmental policy which draws lessons from the current history of environmental failure.

II. Lessons from the present and past – for a world that has a future

Many environmental disasters are caused by humans. The three most regular underlying causes for this can be found firstly, in the influence of industry on research, secondly, the failure of independent governmental and academic control mechanisms and thirdly, a mindset that confuses the appreciation of true value with the delusion that something is valuable just because it is feasible.

Whilst the political establishment took half a century to acknowledge the known risks of smoking and is now in the process of reluctantly admitting its contribution to the hardly reversible global warming catastrophe, it is endorsing the galloping proliferation of electromagnetic fields, and it is hence responsible for the next form of environmental pollution with hardly less fatal consequences.

In agreement with many well known proponents of sustainable policies that show awareness of values and the future, the signatories draw the following lessons from the history of environmental disasters and scandals:

1. Environmental and consumer protection can only function in an intact democracy. The inviolability of the dignity of man according to Article 1 of the German Basic Constitutional Law and Article 1 of the EU Basic Rights Charter is not only the foundation of any democracy, but also the most important protection against capitalist derailments of the market economy. (According to HEINER GEISLER¹

WAS WÜRDEN JESUS HEUTE SAGEN? Die politische Botschaft des Evangeliums, 2003 „*What would Jesus say today? The political message of the Gospel.*”)

2. German federalism needs to be reformed in such a way that it is no longer prone to an erosion of responsibility and democracy – also in the field of consumer and environmental protection.

(See HANS HERBERT VON ARNIM² Vom schönen Schein der Demokratie. Politik ohne Verantwortung – am Volk vorbei, erw. Tb.-Ausgabe 2002: *The shiny facade of democracy. Politics without responsibility – bypassing the people*)

3. In a democratic constitutional state with a division of power, it falls under the realm of the judiciary to ensure the protection of man and the environment – and not to protect dubious guidelines and their sponsors.
4. Environmental policy must form an integral part of a comprehensive peace policy that does not see nature as an object for exploitation and domination. “Mutual Responsibility” and “Respect for Creation” are its main basic principles. (See FRANZ ALT³ Der ökologische Jesus. Vertrauen in die Schöpfung *The Ecological Jesus. Trust in Creation*, and KLAUS TÖPFER⁴ in the preface of the book, 2nd edition, 2003)
5. Environmental policy is also the best economic policy when it protects the future from the damaging consequences of economic short term interest.
6. Technology and politics need an ethical foundation. According to Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker⁵, altruism is at the centre of any ethical technology. Altruism and respect for the Creation are also indispensable conditions for any ethical politics. The current practice of assessing the consequences of a dangerous technology only once the damage is already done does not fulfil these postulates. It needs to be replaced by a new science of assessing the consequences of a technology, which could be called “technopathogenesis”, and which would be dedicated to examining technical developments or processes from their first inception to the final product with regard to potential danger they could pose for the environment. This would guarantee risk minimisation and reliable standards of protection.

Anyone who demands open-mindedness towards technological innovation should accept that this has to go hand in hand with a corresponding degree of open-mindedness towards mental innovation in each individual and the nation as a whole. Today, the predictions of the first Club of Rome report in 1972, ‘Limits to Growth’ ring truer than ever: “Mankind finds itself not only faced with the question whether it will survive as a biological species, but rather whether it will be able to survive without regressing into a kind of existence which would not be worth living.”

III. Orientations and aims of the ‘Competence Initiative’

The signatories are convinced that only a profound social process of transformation of consciousness, which will be significantly shaped by the contributions of independent experts and critical citizens, can lead to a sustainable and future-proof consumer and environmental protection. They aim to support this process by founding the interdisciplinary ‘Competence Initiative’. Its points of reference and activities aim to address mainly the concrete issue of electromagnetic pollution (as detailed under Item I) but also, more generally, the necessary reform of our environmental attitudes (as referred to under Item II) and are laid down as follows:

1. Intra- and interdisciplinary networking of people, associations and institutions with related interests.
2. The revival of a professional ethos which considers the commitment to the welfare of mankind as the most natural purpose of any theoretical and applied science.
3. Mutual exchange of information, joint media and public relations to create awareness; promotion of intra- and interdisciplinary projects in the field of consumer and environmental protection.
4. Democratic resistance against all observed forms of undermining, entryism and corruption which erode consumer and environmental protection. (How far these can reach has been recently exposed by Thilo Grüning and Nicolas Schönfeld on the example of the tobacco industry in Dt. Ärzteblatt 12/04, 2007) <Also in the English speaking world by Martin Walker in his book The Brave New World Of Zero Risk, available online at www.zero-risk.org.> A. K.)
5. The protection of independent scientists, physicians and journalists who are being defamed or lose their research funding, publication opportunities, positions, etc, because they know too much about the subject and its damaging effects. (See also www.whistleblowernetzwerk.de)
6. Legal assessment of the standard of current mobile policy from the point of view of criminal, constitutional and human rights legislation. The demand to introduce adequate regulations with regard to the liability of all those responsible.

The commitment to a democratic constitutional state, in which truth, justice and responsibility form part of the political culture and contribute to preserving our environment from aggressive interference at the expense of future generations.

IV. Founding members and invitation to join

All interested parties wishing to support the Initiative with their own expertise are invited to contact the founding signatories, who will act as points of contact. The national networking of the Initiative will form the basis of its regional development which will be organised within each federal state.

You can support the Initiative in three ways: By contributing your own expertise, by being interested in our results and attending events and by making donations, since any projects, conferences, publications etc, which might be produced by the Initiative, will have to be self financed.

The internet site www.kompetenzinitiative.de publishes the founding charter of the Initiative and will be continuously updated to report results and any other news. We are grateful for any donations to our bank account:

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¹<http://www.heiner-geissler.de/> Heiner Geißler (born 1930) is a German politician with the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) Party

² <http://www.hfv-speyer.de/VONARNIM/InformationinEnglish.htm>

³<http://www.sonnenseite.com/index.php?pageID=83>

⁴http://www.un.org/News/ossg/sg/stories/toepfer_bio.asp

⁵<http://news.independent.co.uk/people/obituaries/article2573284.ece>