

To the  
German Press Council  
Fritschestraße 27/28  
10585 Berlin

Heidelberg, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2013

Dear Sirs,

On 7<sup>th</sup> February 1992, the Europe of today was created at conferences without any consultation of citizens, who should have been allowed to give their input in the form of a vote or by some other means. Hardly any newspaper, TV station or radio broadcaster reported on these events.

The united Europe, that pays in a coin that is supposed to compensate for all economic differences, just because there is a single currency, overlooked the fact that a united Europe already existed by reason of the Schengen Agreement. The differences in the currencies meant that there were profits to be made, both national and economic. But for reasons which have still been kept from the people of Europe to the present day, the community currency of the Euro was created out of thin air. This was announced by the press, which extolled the Euro, and encouraged the European world to believe:

- The cost of living would fall.
- The economies would grow.
- Jobs would be safe.

The European world believed this, and paid into the single currency as if it alone were the unifying element that would bring joy and prosperity. Nobody wanted to believe in co-determination and the real background of the merger, and there were few who questioned or reported on it. Unfortunately the situations largely the same today, although the crisis has grown to such an extent that it can only end in one thing: The crash of the Euro or the final debasement of the currency by a currency reform, which in one fell swoop destroys all savings, all pensions and education insurance (for example). The mistaken decisions of the politicians, which they like to label as the "Euro rescue", and which are peddled as such by the press, are ultimately nothing more than mistaken decisions.

It is always difficult to determine the value of a news item. Experience and sense conflict with their own advantage and professional advancement. The appeal of becoming famous as a result of a news item may be of equal interest for reporters and editors alike, and it is always remains a matter of the understanding of ethical principles of a professional group to decide between these poles which topic becomes a topic and which topic is elevated to the corresponding news report, and when. This completely fails in the purpose of providing comprehensive information, revealing mistakes or serving truthfulness, even if this itself causes mistakes which must be admitted, and serving human dignity that all those have whose Integrity in office must be questioned and reported; because this and this alone is the task of those responsible for such information.

Reporters decide on behalf of their readers; unfortunately too few editors ask themselves about the effect of such new. They decide against a topic because they are afraid of getting into trouble, fear losing their job or losing the approbation of their colleagues – the other version is: They decide in favour of a topic in order to make a name for themselves. It is the right of the journalist to make use of the freedom of expression, of contradiction and criticism conferred by the Constitution. Journalists are there in order to protect the basic rights, and to uncover wrong-doing.

This protection of democracy is a right, but also an obligation – towards the reader and towards democracy. The freedom of the press is not conferred by parties, politicians, lobbyists, trade associations, offices, authorities or any other body; the freedom of the press corresponds to the mandate of the journalist to defend the Constitution and the task of journalists is: To fulfil the task assigned by the citizen of gathering information, evaluating it and making it available, not for the purposes of one of the named institutions, or any other, but solely as representatives of the citizen. Journalists, like politicians too, are the trustees of the basic rights and laws. And for this reason, journalists are subject only to the justification of the Federal Constitutional Court. It is not subject to discussion whether a news item is printable or not printable: democracy spans a wide arc, under which every opinion may find appropriate believers, and amongst which every reader may find what concerns him. Even the attempt to restrict this spectrum is unconstitutional.

In addition to the obligation to provide information, journalists also have a duty of criticism. This criticism is an essential indicator and yardstick in the discussion of how democratic a democracy really is.

Criticism should therefore not be prohibited. This includes the influencing of journalists before their articles appear in the media, as well as the misappropriation of information, simply because there is too little prospect of it being printed. And at this point we have arrived at the senior editors: The editors-in-chief, the ones who decide what is published. Their tasks should be the same as those of the writers and the evaluating editors; their intentions however depend all too often on economic,

political or other interests. They run the great danger of neglecting these tasks in favour of political influence to bolster their own importance; exerting influence, helping a party to the top, or creating regard and appreciation for a government in the eyes of the people does not form part of the mandate of the senior editor, who is really nothing more than a journalist.

In this sense, it must therefore be seen almost as the failure of an entire profession, when the reporting on the topic of the Euro rescue is not considered to be a worthwhile topic. Apart from a few thrusts, at least in part to report how the Merkel government, and the governments of every Euro country have failed, and proved themselves to be helpless helpers, this will hopefully go down in history as a unique example of mass failure. All the journalists involved will have to put up with the accusation that they did not report much earlier and in greater detail on the hopelessness of the attempt to rescue the Euro, but rather waited until no such rescue was possible any longer. They, like politics, thereby acted in contravention of the mandate of a popular representative, and pursued a false policy, instead of getting down to their real work of informing the people what politics was doing, was not doing or should be doing.

The influencing of the press by politics has been excluded time and time again, yet with regard to the reporting in times of the crisis, such influence must have taken place, not even to speak of reporting prohibitions.

The Alliance for Democracy assumes that regulations were laid down for the press, defining to what extent they were allowed to report on the crisis, and in particular that exhaustive information on the following matters should be suppressed:

- the actual national debt, which must amount to about € 15,000 billion Euro (implicit and explicit) (there has been no assessment by the IMF since 2007);
- the bankruptcy of the German national budget, like the budgets of some Federal States – all of which is unconstitutional;
- the classifications of the rating agencies, which are unrealistic (those relating to the creditworthiness of Germany and the Federal States);
- the alleged security of savings, which was also guaranteed by Angela Merkel, but who was unable to guarantee what it should mean for small investors and savers to leave their money in German banks;
- the forthcoming bank union, which is nothing more than the scrapping of unstable banks, whose losses have to be covered by the citizens of the respective country;

- the number of unemployed (officially 3 million); but which is actually between under 10 million and almost 30 million – there is no accurate information as to the real level;
- [Germany has not yet had to pay much in order to overcome the crisis, which is untrue;](#)
- there will be no tax increases, which is impossible;
- the pension gap which can be seen in both private and state pensions, and which remains to be made good (Press Club, 17.11.13) is a consequence of the crisis, which is readily forgotten; the surpluses in health insurance, as in pension funds, are in reality not surpluses – this too is not reported.

The reporting takes the form of an announcement, which without reference to the background and effects leaves it up to the reader/listener/viewer how he should assess the import of this announcement. The press thereby saves itself the necessary investigative work between politics and the reader/listener/viewer. Many of these announcements also fail to establish any connection or relationship, such as that between low interest rates and poor returns for investors and savers, or falling pension returns, since the currency is becoming weaker and weaker. The “Press Club” (17.11.13) risked a thrust here, although while still failing to link the miserly pension yield to the misguided Euro policy which has been pursued for the last 10 years. And what is more: The discussion came to the conclusion that the citizen must top up the provision already made. It was not politics which made mistakes, but the citizen, who in any event has to come up with the money for the alleged rescue, money which he no longer even earns. And nobody bothers to tell him this!

The next camouflage strategy of the newspapers is the placement. Critical or informative texts, such as about the bank union and how the ECB envisages this, and claims that it is essential, are published in the business section, which is generally not read by the normal reader. The “Financial Times” (24.10.13) on the other hand reported on page 1 that “Europe was not working” and also that “some banks will fail, and what this will mean.” German newspapers reported on page 1 about the weather (FAS, 17.11.13) or about the coalition negotiations, which have been dragging on for 60 days, while important decisions, such as those on deciding about the NSA affair, are ignored. The editors appear to shy away from statements; not only are important matters thereby hushed up and replaced by something apparently new and interesting, but the contexts and relationships behind the actual events are not revealed in the sense of an opposition.

Probably the most courageous form of reporting today, which runs through all the media, is that of the guest writers or speakers, who in the best case provide information about a publication or event, and thereby come to the real conclusions. Such as in the “Bild” (23<sup>rd</sup> May 2011, page 2), in which

Michael Diekmann, Head of the Allianz Group, forecasts that the Germans are heading for changes because politics is not acting decisively enough; the FAZ reported on 9.10.2012, No. 235, p. 9 on financial gaps in the inter-European payment transactions, which Ifo-München Chief Hans Werner Sinn goes into in his book “Die Target-Falle” (“The Target Trap”). The FAZ uses Sinn’s book to report on the unstable Euro policy and asks why Sinn should make all the critical statements. The newspaper reported; statements were made – why was it not possible for FAZ editors to state their views? The same applies in the case of an interview with Thomas Mayer, Chief Consultant of the Deutsche Bank, which printed “Junge Freiheit” (“Young Freedom”) (No. 43, of 18.10.13, p. 3). The content of the book was hardly mentioned (the Euro certainly, but under other conditions than previously, which Mayer described extensively). They instead used the opportunity to reprint answers which can also be seen as a slap in the face for the Merkel government. The talk there is of a “Euro shadow state”, which could have been foreseen even before the introduction of the Euro. The criticism of the Euro, and also the Euro rescue policy, is therefore concealed behind a scarecrow, who stands out either for his particular independence, or adorns an office which allows him to pass judgement.

These examples (and there are also many more which can be viewed at [www.menschenfuedemo.kratie.de](http://www.menschenfuedemo.kratie.de)) show how much the press too is bound by the instructions of politics. An independent press in the sense of the mandate of the citizen would look quite different. German democracy has to live with these restrictions, which also include the appointment to the top positions of those amenable to the party, the assignment and appointment of the corresponding responsibilities, but also publication prohibitions which affect editors-in-chief by cancellation or curtailment of contributions to the point of threats against journalists or the refusal of data, interviews and information. It is obvious that this procedure is completely undemocratic. It also contravenes the supreme directive of the Press Code, which prescribes “the true information of the public as the supreme imperative”. Such machinations damage democracy, but above all credibility, which equally contravenes Point 6 of the Press Code.

The Press Council has the task of identifying and rectifying defects in the press; combating developments which might endanger the free information and opinion of the citizen, and working for unhindered access to sources of news.

In this letter, the Alliance for Democracy expressly and in every form voices its objection to the reporting during the alleged Euro rescue. We call on the Press Council to finally become active in all its tasks and responsibilities, and to bring about changes for the benefit of the information of the citizen and transparency, and to reject by all means any influence by the state or any other body.

We call for a public rebuke and disapproval, with obligation of reprinting in all German newspapers and magazines.

with kind regards

The Alliance for Democracy

represented by the lawyers Simon G. Jakob and colleagues

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