

Netzwerk Friedenssteuer

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Goal: Our goal is the adoption of a civilian tax law by the German Parliament. For this we need awareness raising, activists and lobbying.

Civilian Tax Law: We have developed a concept for a civilian tax law according to which all indirect taxes are exclusively allocated to civilian budgets and taxpayers can choose to have their direct taxes earmarked exclusively to civilian purposes. We asked experts to draw up opinions on the constitutional and fiscal compatibility of this concept. Their conclusion: no constitutional problem, easy to implement, low initial and follow-up cost. This has given us strong backing for our discussions with MPs.

Political Situation: The coalition government of Social Democrats and the Green Party was replaced by a grand coalition of Social Democrats and Conservatives after early parliamentary elections. Before the elections we had managed to set up a small working group of 10 MPs from the ruling Social Democrats and Green Party who supported our concept. Only 6 of them remained in Parliament after the elections. The political climate has become more adverse. We are almost starting from scratch.

Activities: From 2002 to 2005 we collected more than 12,000 signatures in support of a civilian tax law, which we solemnly presented to the President of the German Parliament in June 2005. He thanked us for our democratic commitment and submitted the signatures to Parliament's Committee for Petitions. An interim opinion by this body was clearly negative. In our reply we took up their concerns and objections. We'll see whether this will have an effect and how the Committee will vote. Irrespective of the outcome, we will start a new round of discussions and lobbying in November. Currently there are about 30 network activists ready to engage in these activities.

In the past years, four network members have instituted proceedings at fiscal courts. As before, all decisions have been negative. We intend to carefully study the grounds of refusal so that we can argue our case more forcefully in future.

We have organised workshops, lectures, letters, publications, regional events and two national conferences to raise awareness and to find new activists. We also intend to put forward a human right that is to include both the right to conscientious objection to military service as well as the right to war tax resistance. This proposition will then be presented to the interested public and relevant bodies. Twice a year, we publish a circular with relevant arguments and texts. In addition we can brief about a quarter of our activists by e-mail on any important point of information.

Organisation: Netzwerk Friedenssteuer (Peace Tax Network) currently includes about 200 individuals. It has a non-profit organisation (legal entity) with three board members, which is in charge of the Network's coordination, representation and financial matters. The Network comprises five geographical regions, two urban groups (Berlin and Munich) and specific issue related working groups focussing on "Legislation", "PR", and "Taxes into Ploughshares" (compare "Swords into Ploughshares"). This last group is active in churches in an attempt to show that military tax "is not Caesar's".

Finance: Our financial situation is more or less stable. Our annual budgets amount to about 15,000 €. So far we have not been able to tap external funding other than for international conferences, but we hope to improve on that.