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## **Media Information**

ethecon Foundation Ethics & Economics

# **15 Years of unadulterated Criticism of Capitalism**

On 16th January 2004, ethecon Foundation Ethics & Economics was launched. One of very few alternative foundations amongst 20,000 or so foundations that are associated with business conglomerates, the state, families, churches, political parties and the like. A foundation that is not fed from a large fortune, but from many small endowment contributions that are combined into efficient foundation assets. Its motto: for a world without exploitation and oppression.

15 years ago, the journalist and organist Gudrun Rehmann (born in 1939) and the economist Axel Köhler-Schnura (born in 1949) founded the ethecon foundation. At that point in time, both of them had already been active for decades in movements that criticised globalisation, big business and capitalism: she had been part of the peace movement and other civil society movements, and he had been involved in building and organising of the European Social Forums and other alter-globalisation campaigns. Both of them felt that it was high time to counter the phalanx of more than 20,000 foundations that were associated with business conglomerates, the state, families, churches, political parties and the like by forming an alternative foundation that was critical of big business and capitalism.

Ms Rehmann says: 'We want to show that we take responsibility. After all, it is our generation that is ruining the planet through a reckless and exploitative state of society like no generation has done before.'

Mr Köhler-Schnura adds: 'The generations that come after us will still have to fight against environmental destruction, war and exploitation. We, the older generation, want to encourage and support them through a strong foundation.'

Neither of them are blessed with wealth they could have endowed the foundation with. Therefore, their friends declared them insane. 'How is that supposed to be possible? It'll never work!'

Today, 15 years later, they have been proved wrong. A visit to the web site ([www.ethecon.org](http://www.ethecon.org)) shows that ethecon – founded with 80,000 euros – now owns a foundation capital of two million euros, is being financed by several hundred endowment contributors and support members from five countries, annually presents the two globally known International ethecon Awards and has taken on the major shareholders and senior managers of dozens of big corporations from Japan to Switzerland. Even Warren Buffett, one of the richest men in the world and the powerful (co-)owner of hundreds of business conglomerates, was confronted by ethecon activists on his own turf. During the general meeting of his corporation BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY in the US, in front of an audience of 24,000 people and broadcast on all the (large) screens of a sports arena, he – along with

approximately 300 other ultra-rich people from Bill Gates to Larry Fink – was shamed with the [International ethecon Black Planet Award](#) for exploitation and environmental crime on a global scale. His response: meaningless stammering and the use of the security forces.

Its important criticism of society and capitalism has repeatedly made the foundation the target of nazi attacks, hacker attacks and break-ins. However, the voluntary ethecon activists refused to be intimidated and maintained their optimism and moral courage throughout their 15 years of criticising big business. ‘Nowadays, more and more people realise that our profit-driven economic system is heading towards a global crisis’, says director Niklas Hoves. ‘We count on people’s solidarity against corporate power. On the occasion of our anniversary, we would like to thank people for their trust in us.’ At the same time, for its birthday the foundation would love a lot of presents in the form of voluntary support, donations, endowment contributions and support memberships. As ethecon grows, so does the resistance against corporate despotism that could become a vital matter for humanity in the next 15 years.

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### Further Information

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Unlike the numerous foundations associated with business conglomerates, families, churches, political parties and the state, [ethecon - Foundation Ethics and Economics](#) is one of the few grassroots foundations and follows the motto ‘For a world without exploitation and oppression!’ The foundation is still young and is looking for further endowment contributions, donations and supporting members.

Since 2006, ethecon has awarded two international prizes per year, one positive and one negative: the [International ethecon Blue Planet Award](#) for outstanding commitment to the protection and rescue of the ‘Blue Planet’ and the [International ethecon Black Planet Award](#) for shocking contributions to the ruin and destruction of the Earth. The Blue Planet was awarded, for example, to [Vandana Shiva, India](#), [Uri Avnery, Israel](#) and [Jean Ziegler, Switzerland](#). The Black Planet Award shamed, amongst others, managers and major shareholders of [BP, United Kingdom](#), [TEPCO, Japan](#), [DEUTSCHE BANK, Germany](#) and most recently [VOLKSWAGEN, Germany](#).

#### Donations through

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International bank account

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