



International ethecon Dead Planet Award 2024

Justification

deutsche **english** französische portugiesische spanische Version

Berlin, International Day of Peace, 21. September 2024¹

“The „BILD“ newspaper is an organ of infamy. It is wrong to read it.
Anyone who contributes to this newspaper is socially unacceptable.
It would be wrong to be friendly or even polite to one of its editors.
You have to be as unfriendly to them as the law barely allows.
They are bad people who do bad things ”

(Max Goldt/Writer und musician)

Part 1

Honouring Mathias Döpfner (Chairman of the Executive Board and major shareholder), Ralph Büchi (Chairman of the Supervisory Board) and Friede Springer (Co-Chairwoman of the Supervisory Board and major shareholder) with the international ethecon Dead Planet Award 2024.

The Board of Trustees and Executive Board of ethecon Stiftung Ethik & Ökonomie vilify Mathias Döpfner (Chairman of the Executive Board and major shareholder), Ralph Büchi (Chairman of the Supervisory Board) and Friede Springer (representative of the founding family, Co-Chairwoman of the Supervisory Board and major shareholder) with the International ethecon Dead Planet Award 2024. These individuals have trampled on fundamental ethical and moral principles in the field of ethics and economics in an outstanding manner and have thus contributed to ruining the Blue Planet and putting it in danger. They promote oppression, exploitation, racism, human rights violations and social misery in an alarming manner.

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer are ruthless, cunning, characterised by base motives and solely concerned with personal gain. For their interests in power and profit, they unhesitatingly accept the loss of human life and the destruction of the earth as a dead, uninhabitable planet. They show what is commonly called unscrupulousness and selfishness.

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer stand against the interests of humanity in a world increasingly focussed on profit as the sole criterion for all decisions and development. Often favoured, integrated into ruling networks and supported by large amounts of capital. Always well secured and protected, autocratic and increasingly not subject to

¹ The ethecon foundation deliberately chooses 21 September to announce the winners of the two annual international ethecon Awards: 21 September is the international Day of Peace.



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any laws or jurisdiction. They are among those to whom humanity owes war, exploitation, social hardship and environmental destruction.

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer are criticised and personally denounced with the International Dead Planet Award 2024. On behalf of all those who jeopardise the "Blue Planet" or conjure up its demise into a dead, uninhabitable planet. May their vilification be a warning to them and their actions a cautionary example to us all!

Accordingly, the International ethecon Dead Planet Award 2024 also sees itself as a mobilisation for the commitment to peace, justice and environmental protection and for resistance against warmongering, exploitation and environmental destruction. It is intended to sensitise the public, name those responsible, uncover the connections and support resistance.

The honouring of Mathias Döpfner (Chairman of the Executive Board and major shareholder), Ralph Büchi (Chairman of the Supervisory Board) and Friede Springer (Co-Chairwoman of the Supervisory Board and major shareholder) with the International ethecon Dead Planet Award 2024 is in line with the objectives of the ethecon Foundation Ethics & Economics and complements the honouring of peace and human rights activist Julian Assange with the International ethecon Blue Planet Award 2024.



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Part 2

Justification

The Board of Trustees and Executive Board of ethecon Stiftung Ethik & Ökonomie are basing their decision to honour Mathias Döpfner (Chairman of the Executive Board and major shareholder), Ralph Büchi (Chairman of the Supervisory Board) and Friede Springer (Co-Chairwoman of the Supervisory Board and major shareholder) of the publishing company AXEL SPRINGER SE (Germany) with the International ethecon Dead Planet Award 2024 on news reports, on the facts, some of which have been known to the public for years, on the information compiled by journalists around the world, on publicly available documents, on investigations by government agencies and social movement activists in various countries and, last but not least, on the materials published by AXEL SPRINGER SE Media itself. In principle, it can be assumed that the justification for the decision would have been even more consistent and comprehensive if all the information, including that kept under wraps or covered up and possibly even destroyed internally and elsewhere, had been available in full.

From the wealth of facts researched in the nomination process for the International ethecon Dead Planet Award 2024 to Mathias Döpfner (Chairman of the Executive Board and major shareholder), Ralph Büchi (Chairman of the Supervisory Board) and Friede Springer (Co-Chairwoman of the Supervisory Board and major shareholder) from the publishing company AXEL SPRINGER SE (Germany), here are a few examples:

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer ensure that the publications of the AXEL SPRINGER SE media group can be found on every newsstand and on every channel. BILD targets the working class, the tabloids, the "common man". Die Welt serves the more "intellectual" and supposedly more serious spectrum, while there are also a multitude of lifestyle magazines that cater to the most diverse groups in society. From BILD der Frau and Computer BILD to Auto BILD, Business Insider and Rolling Stone.

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer are active in over 40 countries with the AXEL SPRINGER SE Group, subsidiaries and joint ventures. A huge network of international importance. The US magazine "Politico" in particular is a permanent fixture.

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer fulfil an important function for capital with their publishing house and media. Thanks to their international network of companies, their connections to governments, their training centre, etc., they also have access to an excellent network, which is gratefully accepted by their allies. Also by politicians. It is an unwritten law that you have to do well with the AXEL SPRINGER Group to make it to the top. It is therefore no coincidence that the head office is only a few minutes away from the government district in Berlin and that top politicians regularly come and go there.



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Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer control people's minds with or through their media. They have been fighting on the front line as part of so-called "cognitive warfare" for many decades. They convey the political plans and intentions of the central capital groups to wide sections of the population and politicians. True to the motto coined by them: "Form [in German a wordplay on Bild] your own opinion!".

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer are ideological and propagandistic drivers of society's move to the right. They promote hatred and agitation and serve as cue cards for right-wing parties such as the AfD. They undermine democracy and contribute to the destruction of democratic and social rights.

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer are responsible for the fact that one of the largest media corporations in the world, AXEL SPRINGER SE, is waging a war of the ultra-rich and their corporations for the minds of the people, the broad masses of wage earners, but also the poor and marginalised. The aim is to keep them quiet, to break their dissatisfaction and resistance, to condition them as consumers and as labour ants and well-behaved subjects.

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer are using their media to promote the division of society into ever smaller, mutually antagonistic communities and a climate of hatred against minorities that prepares the ground for reaction and repression.

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer ensure that the ideologies and plans of those in power are communicated to the public in the profit interests of the major capital groups.

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer are responsible for the sensationalist tabloid BILD, Germany's highest-circulation daily newspaper. They use it to systematically incite hatred against refugees and people of colour. The blatant, immediately recognisable racism of the 1990s has given way to a more socially acceptable, subtle form of discrimination. It allows those responsible to present their product as ambassadors of a patriotically coloured welcoming culture and at the same time create a pogrom atmosphere that discharges itself in daily right-wing violence.

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer epitomise the fundamentally inhumane and unethical attitude of AXEL SPRINGER SE. With BILD and the Group's other media, they systematically stir up fear of foreigners, divide society, promote hate speech, destroy the reputation of innocent people, torpedo democratic institutions and have thus paved the way for the election of the AfD to the Bundestag. BILD undermines the fundamental values of our democratic society and tramples on the freedom of the press enshrined in the German constitution. Of all the media in Germany, BILD has been reprimanded most frequently by the Press Council for years.

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer are behind Bild Zeitung's systematic agitation against progressive forces. Since its foundation, the BILD newspaper has been steeped in anti-communism and other conservative, anti-



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democratic and reactionary ideologies. In this way, it encourages right-wing developments and stirs up hatred against the supporters of anti-capitalist politics. Internationally, it was shocking to see how the agitation of SPRINGER Verlag caused the death of left-wing student leader Rudi Dutschke from police bullets in the 1960s.

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer name "solidarity with the libertarian values of the United States of America" as one of their core objectives. They have firmly anchored this in the articles of association of the AXEL SPRINGER SE Group. Accordingly, reporting takes place that is neither critical nor objective. Academics and independent observers have noted a "subservience to American geopolitical interests". Since 11 September 2001, the USA has waged its "war on terror" in over 70 countries, a global killing programme that has endangered humanity and the blue planet to the highest degree and continues to do so to this day. Anyone who remains silent about these crimes is complicit.

Mathias Döpfner is a member of the transatlantic backroom group "Atlantic Bridge" and a member of the Global Board of Advisors of the influential, reactionary think tank "Council on Foreign Relations". The fact that AXEL SPRINGER SE appointed Alexander Karp to the Supervisory Board in 2018 also fits in with this connection. Head of "Palantir", a company financed by the CIA, which he runs together with Trump financier and hedge fund manager Peter Thiel. The closeness to secret services around the world continues to this day.

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer stand for a connection to the US secret service. In an interview from 1982, two former CIA officers claim that Axel Springer received USD 7 million from the CIA in his early years to support American geopolitical interests with his publishing house, whereupon he began to focus his editorial activities on supporting US foreign policy. According to German scholar Gudrun Krup from the Stiftung Bundespräsident-Theodor-Heuss-Haus, these statements are credible because, according to his own biography, Axel Springer had no money when he founded the publishing house and it was therefore unlikely that he was able to achieve this rapid rise of the company without outside help.

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer are enriching themselves with illegal settlement policies in Israel. The group makes a large part of its profit from the advertising business, including the Israeli classifieds portal "Yad2", which advertises flats in the Palestinian autonomous area with a satirisation of the slogan "From the river to the sea" and thus not only supports illegal settlement construction, but also makes money from it. The portal also included flats that were confiscated by the Israeli military for "security purposes" and are now occupied by Jewish settlers. The international human rights organisation Human Rights Watch called on AXEL SPRINGER SE to cease its activities in the Palestinian territory - but so far the call has had no consequences.



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Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer seek proximity to defence companies. This can be seen in the example of Johannes Huth, member of the Supervisory Board of AXEL SPRINGER SE, who also sits on the Supervisory Board of HENSOLD - an armaments supplier.

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer put profit above all else and ruthlessly exploit their employees. This can be seen in the example of the postal service provider PIN. Springer had acquired a majority stake in this company in the belief that it could take market share from Deutsche Post with the starvation wages common under Hartz IV. However, the German government set a minimum wage for this sector, whereupon AXEL SPRINGER SE drove PIN into insolvency and put over 3,000 employees out on the street with no prospects.

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer have no qualms about breaking collective agreements for profit. In spring 2012, the employees of the Computer BILD Group in Berlin went on strike in a high-profile protest against a spin-off into a subsidiary without a collective bargaining agreement because the profits did not satisfy the management. Of the 86 employees affected, 57 refused to accept this and were ultimately dismissed.

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer enter into questionable partnerships with AI companies. To cut costs and increase the profits of major shareholders. After it became known that AXEL SPRINGER SE was entering into a partnership with OPEN-AI, the developers of Chat-GPT, the workforce was informed by email "Unfortunately, we will also have to part with colleagues who have tasks that will be replaced by AI and/or processes in the digital world or who do not find themselves in this new organisation with their current skills."

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer support the partnership with one of the biggest climate sinners. Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Co (KKR), one of the world's largest locusts, is now the largest shareholder and strategic partner. Alongside AXEL SPRINGER SE Invest, KKR engages in greenwashing on a grand scale. A report uncovered a large gap between the company's self-promoted environmental responsibility and its actual investments: KKR is one of the largest investors in the fossil fuel sector and intends to continue investing in the fossil fuel future despite the climate crisis.

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer cover up sexism in their company. The New York Times revealed serious sexism problems at the BILD newspaper and AXEL SPRINGER SE in 2021. In the case surrounding former BILD editor-in-chief Julian Reichelt, it came to light that abuse of power was prevalent and that female employees had to pay for their promotion with sex. After it became known, every effort was made to prevent reporting on this form of sexual assault. Mathias Döpfner even launched a "counter-investigation" against those affected and stood in front of his editor-in-chief.



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Conclusion

Board of Trustees and Management Board declare:

Mathias Döpfner (Chairman of the Executive Board and major shareholder), Ralph Büchi (Chairman of the Supervisory Board) and Friede Springer (Co-Chairwoman of the Supervisory Board and major shareholder) are primarily responsible for the decisions and actions of the AXEL SPRINGER SE media group (Germany).

Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer play a decisive role in managing the group and thus realise their interests for ever more profit. They are responsible for decades of hatred and agitation, warmongering and the ruin of peace. They are responsible for the dismantling of democracy and freedom of the press. In return, they exploit their employees, who also suffer from sexism, on a daily basis without any scruples. They collude with other unethical corporations and governments to push through their global agenda. Not only at the expense of human rights, but also at the expense of the environment. Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer pose a threat to human rights and to democracy, peace and humanity as a whole. They act for the benefit of personal power and private enrichment and trample morals and ethics underfoot. They accept the demise of the earth as a dead, uninhabitable planet.

ethecon sees the actions of Mathias Döpfner (Chairman of the Executive Board and major shareholder), Ralph Büchi (Chairman of the Supervisory Board) and Friede Springer (Co-Chairwoman of the Supervisory Board and major shareholder) and other managers and major shareholders of AXEL SPRINGER SE as a shocking contribution to the ruin and destruction of our Blue Planet. For this appalling disregard and violation of human ethics, ethecon Stiftung Ethik & Ökonomie honours the aforementioned AXEL SPRINGER SE executives with the International ethecon Dead Planet Award 2024. At the same time, ethecon, together with the national and international movements critical of corporations and globalisation, is actively campaigning for Mathias Döpfner, Ralph Büchi and Friede Springer and all other responsible managers and major shareholders to be held liable, held accountable and punished for their crimes against human ethics and for the social and financial damage caused by AXEL SPRINGER SE as representatives of the company and also personally.

The International ethecon Dead Planet Award 2024 to Mathias Döpfner (Chairman of the Executive Board and major shareholder), Ralph Büchi (Chairman of the Supervisory Board) and Friede Springer (Co-Chairwoman of the Supervisory Board and major shareholder) from the publishing company AXEL SPRINGER SE (Germany) will be presented together with the International ethecon Blue Planet Award 2024 to the peace and human rights activist Julian Assange at a public ceremony in Düsseldorf on 9 November 2024.



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Part 3 Background

The two internationalen ethecon Awards

Our blue planet is in serious danger. This can no longer be denied, even by politicians and scientists. Wars, social misery and environmental ruin are spreading. The collapse of ecological systems is imminent.

However, the cause is denied. The profit principle, which is inextricably linked to the prevailing global capitalist economic system, and the destruction of fundamental ethical principles by the economy that goes hand in hand with this disastrous economic law, are responsible for the developments that are dangerous for people and the environment. The economic law's inherent compulsion to maximise profit systematically and inevitably promotes injustice, exploitation and ecological ruin. All the more so as the profit principle is increasingly becoming the sole criterion for shaping society and the environment.

ethecon is committed to anchoring ethical principles in the economy and society, for a shift away from the profit system towards a system of solidarity. Saving the planet will only be possible by overthrowing the profit principle.

As early as 2004, the year in which ethecon was founded, the idea of a foundation prize to promote efforts to preserve and save fundamental ethical principles matured. There were and are many prizes that honour achievements in various areas of society, but far too few prizes that honour resistance to the abuse and ruin of ethics and morals resulting in environmental destruction, war and exploitation.

However, the discussion process that began about this prize quickly showed that it was not enough to honour deeds in the struggle for ethics and morals, but that it was equally important to denounce misdeeds against ethics and morals. The idea of two interlinked ethecon prizes was born: The ethecon Positive Award Blue Planet Award and the ethecon Negative Award Dead Planet Award. They form a unit, they are two sides of the same coin. Together they reflect the state of the ethical principles that characterise our world. At the same time, they illustrate the vision of ethics and morals that make a world without exploitation and oppression possible.

The two ethecon prizes outlaw exploitation, war and environmental destruction and follow the ideals of peace, environmental protection and justice. They call for resistance, change and commitment in the spirit of these ideals; they stand up for a future worth living for this, our world. While one prize, the International ethecon Blue Planet Award, honours the commitment to preserving or saving the Blue Planet and draws attention to the urgent possibilities for action and opportunities, the other, the International ethecon Dead Planet Award, denounces the desecration of our planet and the danger of a dead, uninhabitable planet and denounces indifference and ignorance. Together, the two International ethecon Awards show that there is hope. The power lies within us, within each and every one of us.



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In principle, the two awards only recognise individuals and not institutions. This is intended to counteract the increasing and deliberate anonymisation of decisions. Particularly in the case of negative developments, those responsible are all too happy to hide behind the facades of some kind of institution and point to alleged constraints to which the decisions are said to be due, as it were, on their own initiative. In both positive and negative cases, however, it always remains the same: it is always people who make the decisions and bear the responsibility.

The two international ethecon prizes were awarded for the first time in 2006. Since then, the awards have generally been presented annually. While the world's economic elites meet in Davos, Switzerland, each January for the Economic Forum, ethecon launches an international call for nominations for the two ethecon prizes. In a thorough selection process, the winners are chosen by the foundation by August of each year and publicly announced on the Day of Peace on 21 September.

Both prizes are awarded in November at a large public ceremony in Berlin. Only the winners of the positive awards will be invited to the ceremony; the winners of the negative awards will be informed about their award in an "open letter" published on the date of the ceremony. While the winners of the International ethecon Blue Planet Award will be presented with their trophies of honour in person at the award ceremony, the winners of the International Dead Planet Award will be presented with their trophies in person by the foundation in the months following the award ceremony as part of public campaigns.

As many civil society actors as possible from all over the world are involved in the award activities. Wisely not from the ruling circles and institutions, but from the resistant movements for peace, ecology and justice. In this way, the inseparable connection between the two prizes and these movements and the importance of the prizes for the commitment to these goals will be emphasised and made visible.

The trophies for the positive prizes are always designed by artists. While art and culture are also increasingly subject to the dictates of profit, ethecon's artistic design of the ethecon Blue Planet trophies opens up the possibility of positioning art in resistance to exploitation, environmental destruction and war or in the commitment to peace, ecology and justice.

When the two International ethecon Awards were born in 2005, the world-famous Otto Piene spontaneously agreed to create the annual prize trophies for the respective International ethecon Blue Planet Award as unique, valuable glass and wood sculptures.

After Piene - now 82 years old - produced the award trophy for the last time in 2009, Katharina Mayer, the great photo artist and Becher student (born in 1958), created the trophies from 2010 to 2018 and gave them a new, unique character of her own.

In 2019, ethecon took a completely new approach by designing a mural as part of the Blue Planet Award 2019 trophy. With the support of Düsseldorf artist Klaus Klinger and the street art collective "Farbfieber", we brought the winner of the



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International ethecon Award 2019, her life's work and the International ethecon Honorary Award into the public space in a special way with a mural design on Toulouser Allee in Düsseldorf. The trophy itself featured an art print of Otto Piene's "Blue Planet" and a photograph of the mural signed by Klaus Klinger. The trophies for the Blue Planet Awards 2020 and 2021 were designed in glass by glass artist Günter Pohl, like Otto Piene before him. Pohl's works materialised the fragility of our planet, the imminent dangers of ruin and the possibilities for action to save it in equal measure.

The 2024 trophy was designed by the artist Mechthild Hartung. The hooked arms depicted on the trophy symbolise solidarity and collective action, which is more important today than ever in the fight to preserve our blue planet.

The prize trophy for the International ethecon Dead Planet Award is completely different. It is an industrially produced globe made of plastic under exploitative and environmentally unfriendly conditions and subsequently alienated. The alienation of this object is deliberately not carried out by an artist who creates the annual positive prize, but by a young person chosen to do so. This prevents the mischievous trophy of the International ethecon Dead Planet Award from becoming a work of art of quality. It ensures that no new prize is created in our world, which is orientated towards usability. Especially for someone who - in the truest sense of the word - does not deserve this honour. At the same time, as a representative of his generation, the young person symbolises the endangered future of the Blue Planet and all those who are threatened with a dead, uninhabitable planet. It is the youth whose future is being destroyed by the ecological, social and warlike ruin of the world.

It is significant that the people criticised with the International ethecon Dead Planet Award generally disregard the prize trophy awarded to them. To this day, not one of those criticised has personally accepted the abusive award and publicly faced up to the criticism. At best, the award trophy has been presented to a delegate, such as an employee of a press office. In most cases, ethecon witnessed the destruction of the trophy by security staff.



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More Information

Marius Dornemann

Fon +49 - (0)211 - 22 95 09 21

Mobile +49 - (0)157 - 58 05 09 05

eMail info@ethecon.org

ethecon

Stiftung Ethik & Ökonomie

Schweidnitzer Str. 41

D-40231 Düsseldorf

Deutschland

Fon +49 - (0)211 - 22 95 09 21

Fax +49 - (0)211 - 26 11 220

eMail info@ethecon.org

Internet www.ethecon.org

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