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German Ethics Council: Federal Government must end its “waiting game” and finally appoint Council members

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Today, the Federal Government once again failed to take a decision on the appointment of members for the German Ethics Councils next term. The four remaining Council members are therefore calling on the Federal Government to appoint the new members in the near future so that the Council is fully operational again and can fulfil its legal mandate.

The term of office of 20 members of the German Ethics Council, including that of former Chair Alena Buyx, expired at the end of April. Since then, the four Council members currently in office, Elisabeth Gräß-Schmidt, Armin Grunwald, Mark Schweda and Judith Simon, have been waiting for the members of the new Ethics Council period to be appointed by the President of the Bundestag. According to the Ethics Council Act, half of the members are nominated by the German Bundestag and half by the Federal Government.

The German Bundestag decided on its candidates in June. The Federal Government, on the other hand, has not yet been able to reach a decision. As a result, no meetings of the Ethics Council have taken place since May. Merely the previously prepared annual conference on the topic of “Loneliness” and an online event about “AI and elections” could be held in June thanks to the commitment of the four current and several former members. “The popularity of these events shows the relevance of our topics”, says Council member Mark Schweda. “Our annual conference was fully booked weeks in advance.”

In view of the many pressing issues that require ethical consideration, the current members of the Council are deeply concerned. They fear that the appointment of the Council members by the Federal Government could be further delayed and that the Ethics Council will not be fully operational for some time.

“This situation has never occurred in the history of the Council”, emphasises Joachim Vetter, Head of the German Ethics Council Office. “The Bundestag and the Federal Government had always appointed the new Council members in good time, so that the first meeting of the new Council period could take place immediately in the month following the last meeting of the expired Council period.”

After a delay of five months, the current Council members are calling on the Federal Government to finally end the “waiting game” around the appointment of their candidates. “We want to resume our work and fulfil our legal mandate”, Schweda says.

Members

Prof. Dr. theol. Elisabeth Gräß-Schmidt
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