

Attac – Network for democratic supervision of the financial markets

Rising corporate profits and dropping wages, stock exchanges going crazy, pension cuts, competitions in tax cuts, privatisation of public service providers and ecological disasters: most of the consequences of globalisation we face effect us in a negative way.

Attac is an international movement which campaigns for a democratic and socially just global economy. Only a small group wins whereas the great majority are losers. Investor 'freedom' comes at the expense of social justice, the environment, cultural autonomy and women. Increasingly fewer politicians fight the pressure that lies upon them to shape the rules of the game for the interests of a small minority. Attac makes these developments transparent and indicates alternatives. Because globalisation needs to be actively structured.

Founding Attac

In the autumn of 1997 a financial crisis in South-East Asia led to millions of people living in poverty. In its aftermath the editor in chief of "Le Monde diplomatique" published a call for the supervision of financial markets. By means of a small tax on international financial transactions, the Tobin Tax, financial markets can be stabilised and money can be raised for the worldwide fight against poverty. Shortly after that the "Association pour une Taxation des Transactions financiers pour l'Aide aux Citoyens" (Attac) was founded. Today the non-partisan Attac network is active in 50 countries on all continents.

How does Attac work?

One of Attac's main aims is to inform the public about economic and political connections and Attac does so by organising congresses, talks, discussions and an annual summer academy or by publishing books containing information about which is seldom discussed. Only a well-informed person is capable of forming a critical opinion and ready to act according to it. This is what we call 'economic literacy'. Everyone can understand and help structure globalisation.

In addition to this Attac manages to communicate its claims and issues to a broad audience by means of campaigns, press releases and newspaper commentaries.

Attac issues

Globalisation affects all areas of life. Attac campaigns for a more just, social and ecologically sustainable economic system on many levels. This includes:

- monitoring financial markets more closely
- fair trade instead of free trade
- a legal framework for transnational enterprises
- comprehensive debt relief for the poorest countries
- a fair tax/taxation system
- democratisation of public service providers instead of privatisation

The focus of Attac lies on the three central international institutions of the global economy: World Trade Organisation (WTO), World Bank and International Monetary Fund. They act according to the interests of transnational enterprises and financial investors. Also the European Union values economic liberties more highly than social and ecological rights. We can all feel the consequences: competition for international capital, high unemployment, stagnating incomes as well as the destruction of the welfare state and pensions. This is why Attac calls for comprehensive democratisation of these institutions and the enforcing of global social, ecological and cultural rights and minimum standards.

Attac demands

- **Stabilisation of financial markets:** 98.5% of the revenue generated on financial markets results from deals made with speculative intentions. Often these are short term transactions which make the financial markets more prone to crises. Capital flows have to be slowed down and the financial system has to be stabilised. There are some concrete instruments to achieve that: the Tobin tax, capital account restrictions, cooperation of reserve banks.
- **A fair tax system:** Tax havens and the competition for international capital cause dramatic drops in tax returns. Austria fuels this development even further by tax dumping. Assets, profits and capital incomes have to return to making a fair contribution to the funding of public services. Tax havens must be shut down and corporate taxation needs to be standardised.
- **Democratisation:** For now crucial decisions regarding the global economy are taken behind closed doors. The three international institutions of the global economy - World Trade Organisation (WTO), World Bank and International Monetary Fund - have to be democratised and integrated into UN organisations.
- **Fair trade instead of free trade:** The World Trade Organisation pushes for the liberalisation of trade, no matter what the consequences for the people are. The degree of each country's openness has to be based upon sustainable development, social security, gender equality and cultural diversity.
- **Regulations for enterprises:** Under the pretext of legal protection of 'intellectual property' international enterprises aim at monopolisation and play off states against each other in the competition for international capital. In their cross-border activities multinational enterprises have to comply with globally enforceable ecological, social, fiscal and working standards.
- **Terminating competition for international capital:** For the moment EU policies are heading in the wrong direction. Militarisation is enforced, social and ecological interests are subordinate to neoliberal economic policies. It is necessary to put an end to the global competition for international capital by means of high and harmonised ecological and social standards. In this the EU should have a ground-breaking role.
- **Stop privatisation of public service providers:** The consequences of privatisation of social security and public infrastructure are a rise in water prices by 50% and the collapse of the railway system in the UK; unaffordable costs for "at-risk groups" such as the elderly and the sick as a result of private health insurance. Public services such as health, education, water supply etc. must not be profit driven. We call for democratisation instead of privatisation of public services providers.
- **Pension security:** Pensions are not primarily expenses but people's incomes. Yet the EU, OECD and World Bank push for a transition of pension funding to the more and more unstable financial markets – accepting unpredictable risks. Public pension systems must not be privatised. Only the intergenerational contract can ensure fair and safe pensions.
- **Debt relief:** As of 1984 more money flows from the countries of the South into the ones of the North than vice versa. E.g. many countries spend more on paying interest than on public education, health or nutrition. Poor countries must be freed of debts and have to be protected from new over-indebtedness by international insolvency law and by integrating the population in the lending process.

Supporting Attac

Attac is not dependent upon any political party and funded by donations and membership fees.

Even the smallest donation counts. Membership also makes the number of individuals who support Attac's goals visible. Without you Attac does not have a voice!

Democracy does not happen by itself. It depends on many individuals becoming involved and to campaign for fair rules and laws. Attac's work is based on the involvement of numerous voluntary activists organised in regional and content-oriented groups. If you are interested or you want to contribute just join us for one of our meetings or a "Meet Attac" night.

For more information and dates contact the Attac office (+43 1 544 00 10) or check <http://www.attac.at>