
March 2020 Newsletter

Dear Members,

Again, two months have passed since my last newsletter and some members have been asking for an update on the Flüh project and my court case. Thank you for your interest!

A public information event was held in Hofstetten-Flüh on 17 February, in which 150 people participated and asked critical questions. Unfortunately, some of those raising objections (eight objections were filed) were unable to attend but they are being kept informed of progress. We were particularly disappointed that no one from the Catholic church council took part in the discussion or was willing to speak with us at all. We will now submit a report to the Hofstetten-Flüh building authority by the end of February. After that, the authority will make its decision. We'll have to wait and see whether any objections will be pursued further once the building authority has made its, hopefully positive, decision. Until the decision on Flüh has been made, we'll continue to work in Liestal in a beautiful, bright, large apartment in which we are welcome. At this point I would like to thank our landlord and the town of Liestal for their tolerance!

Our communal living project in Biel-Benken now has 25 tenants over 60 living together as a community, providing mutual support. The goal is that everyone can continue to live there, even if they become severely disabled. With the help of peripatetic carers and nearby doctors, these people should also be able to die at home and not have to move into a nursing home. One of lifecircle's goals is that we move away from expensive nursing homes and enable dying people to stay at home. They should be allowed to die there exactly in the self-determined manner they wish, whether it is with palliative care, fasting or an assisted death, none of these three ways is better than the other, they are just three alternatives which need to be respected.

There is news too about my trial; six months after the oral verdict, the written judgement is now available and the twenty-day period for the definitive appeal has expired. On my instructions, my lawyer has appealed against the part of the allegations for violation of the Therapeutic Products Act, which led to the conviction with enormous financial consequences and a 15-month suspended prison sentence. This judgement is therefore still **not** final and the case will be brought before the Cantonal Court. We don't know how long we have to wait for this trial but it could easily be a year. At this point I want to thank all members for your incredibly motivating support. Unfortunately, the prosecution has also appealed the acquittal for murder, so this charge too will once again weigh heavily on me and continue at the Cantonal Court.

Another case is running in parallel against a Swiss physician, Dr Pierre Beck, who assisted a "healthy" 86-year-old to die voluntarily. This man wanted to die together with his wife, suffering from advanced cancer, with whom he had shared his life for over 60 years. As the prosecutor's office is of the opinion that the man was healthy, they brought a similar case against Dr Pierre Beck as was brought against me. He is charged with violation of the Therapeutic Products Act and breach of the duty of care. Dr Pierre Beck has also appealed his first-instance conviction, as have I, to the Cantonal Court and his appellate hearing will take place on Thursday 12 March in Geneva. I will be there to support him! Perhaps some of our members understand French well enough to support him there, too.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, I travelled to Karlsruhe on 26.2. to be present for the ruling of the German Federal Constitutional Court on paragraph 217 STGB (German criminal code). I had been allowed to bring a case against Germany regarding Paragraph 217, at the side of the highly competent lawyer Professor Robert Rossbruch, and medical practitioner Dr Uwe Arnold, two of the most active campaigners in Germany. It is incredible that through these courageous judges, Germany is now in a better position than Switzerland. Paragraph 217 was declared unconstitutional and not only annulled but replaced with provisions that surprise even me. Unfortunately, it can still take 1-2 years until sodium pentobarbital may be used in Germany and the Germans are allowed to die as peacefully as in Switzerland. Professor Rossbruch will do everything in his power to ensure the German Narcotics Act is adapted soon and that this drug becomes available in Germany for voluntary assisted death.

I especially want to thank the members in Germany most sincerely, more than 30 of whom supported the NZZ Berlin journalist Mrs Schneider by providing a statement. The article was published just before 26.2. and was very impressive. We will make the link accessible to all on the website.

I hope that everyone has saved the date of Thursday 4 June for the Annual General Meeting, as well as the evening of June 11, when we are planning a panel discussion with three top-class speakers in Basel. Unfortunately, both these events are in German only; we are unable to provide a translation/interpreting service.

Anyone who has not yet paid the membership fee of CHF50.- for 2020, may transfer the amount to the lifecircle association or send cash by registered mail but please remember to include your name! We keep receiving payments without knowing who they are from; the bookkeeper cannot send the new membership card because he cannot allocate the payment.

Thank you for your confidence and may I wish you a peaceful time.

Kind regards,

Erika Preisig,
General Practitioner and
President of the
lifecircle association

ps: please do not worry, we can go on working as before, no restrictions whatsoever!