

## **Grünenthal's man from the Family Affairs Ministry**

Contergan Victims Representative: "Every second in office is an imposition"

Cologne (06/29/2019) – **Germany's Confederation of Contergan (Thalidomide) and Grünenthal Victims (BCG) accuses the Federal Family Affairs Ministry (BMFSFJ), which supervises the Contergan Foundation, of a collusion issue with Grünenthal. For many years, Dieter Hackler, a former senior Ministry official whom the Foundation's Council elected as Board Chairman on 5 December 2018, assisted Grünenthal's own Foundation for thalidomide victims.**

In 2018, the Cologne Higher Regional Court found ongoing links between Grünenthal and the Contergan Foundation over 30 years. Now it emerges that, after retiring from the Ministry in 2014, Hackler was invited by Grünenthal's shareholder and ex-CEO Michael Wirtz to join the Grünenthal Foundation's Council.

The victims' representatives on the Contergan Foundation's Council knew nothing of this when Hackler was appointed. Council Chairman Christoph Linzbach (BMFSFJ) concealed it. For the victims it is scandalous that the Ministry appointed a person chosen by Wirtz to head the Contergan Foundation. "Why doesn't the Ministry simply appoint Michael Wirtz?" said victims' representative and Council member Andreas Meyer. "Every second of this man in office is an imposition."

From 2008 to 2014, Hackler chaired the Contergan Foundation's Council, its decision-making and controlling body. Simultaneously, from 2006 to 2014, he headed the Ministry's department for "Elderly People". From 1991 to 2006, he headed the Federal Office for Family Affairs and Civil Society Functions, subordinate to the Ministry.

Leading up to the Contergan Foundation's Council meeting in Berlin on 5 June, the BCG fears that a decision will be imposed against the minority of victims' representatives that will permit the Foundation to accept Grünenthal funds for procedures directly connected with the company. "The Federal Family Affairs Ministry will now degrade Contergan victims to recipients of Grünenthal's charity," commented Meyer.

In 2013, in a statement on the compensation process, Grünenthal referred victims from Spain to the Grünenthal Foundation and the German Contergan Foundation, says Meyer. "Grünenthal is thus transformed from offender to benefactor!" It is cheaper to pay for electric toothbrushes and hearing aids through the Grünenthal Foundation than to settle the millions in threatened damages claims.

**109th Council Meeting, Contergan Foundation:** 5 June 2019, 11 a.m.

dbb forum berlin, Friedrichstraße 169, 10117 Berlin

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Andreas Meyer will attend the meeting.

[http://www.gruenenthal-opfer.de/PM\\_Gruenenthal\\_Mann\\_ad\\_BMFSFJ\\_29\\_05\\_2019](http://www.gruenenthal-opfer.de/PM_Gruenenthal_Mann_ad_BMFSFJ_29_05_2019)

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