

6.5.7 International political actors

Another group of political actors that should not be underestimated is that of **international political actors**, i.e. political actors that cannot be attributed to one of the two countries and also not uniformly to one of the five general groups according to Eichhorn. By international political actors, the author means political actors of countries other than Germany and Liechtenstein as well as European and international organizations and the active audience and interest groups in countries other than Liechtenstein and Germany.

With more or less direct statements, they represent the interests of their countries or organizations or, in some cases, paint an objective picture of the situation or of the problem actually underlying the whole excitement: "This makes clear how large the problem of international tax flight is in the era of globalization. This is a central issue in our increasingly interlinked world." (Angel Gurría, *OECD Secretary-General*, FTD, 28.2.2008, 11). OECD tax expert Grace Perez has a differentiated view: "Bank secrecy can certainly be legitimate. But no country should be able to create an advantage for itself in international tax competition on the basis of secrecy." (FTD, 28.2.2008, 11). The Director of the OECD Centre for Tax Policy and Administration, Geoffrey Owens, also sees an international dimension to the problem: "The Liechtenstein case shows that much work remains to be done. Tax havens are often only a mouse click away nowadays." (FAZ, 20.2.2008, 1). He also meant financial centers such as *Singapore*, which however adamantly defended itself: "Our country is not a tax haven, but rather a low-tax country. [...] What happened in Liechtenstein could not happen here." (George Young-Boon Yeo, Foreign Minister of Singapore, *Handelsblatt*, 29.2.2008, 6).

Other international political actors included members of the Governments of Luxembourg and Austria, two of a total of three EU member States (the third is Belgium) that are always exposed to criticism by their EU colleagues because they also maintain bank client confidentiality and do not grant mutual legal or administrative assistance in cases of pure tax evasion. They likewise demarcated their interests within the larger problem of "global tax flight" and "bank client confidentiality" in the mass media and thus came to the aid of one or the other side (probably not on purpose, but rather as a side effect, so to speak): "Not Liechtenstein is the tax offender, but rather the tax offenders have German citizenship." (Jean-Claude Juncker, Prime Minister and Finance Minister of Luxembourg, *dpa-AFX*, 19.2.2008) and "I see the need to ensure with the help of third countries that no tax flight is possible in Europe." (*idem*, *Dow Jones*, 19.2.2008). "Third countries" probably refers to Switzerland and Liechtenstein.

The finance expert of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), Michael Ikrath, provides defense and support in this regard: "We will defend Austrian bank secrecy with all means." (FTD, 22.2.2008, 12). And the Danish Finance Minister, Kristian Jensen, indirectly supports Liechtenstein by assuring: "We do not plan to use stolen data. [...] It is a moral problem to pay a criminal for information he has stolen." (*Die Welt*, 27.2.2008, 1)

→ **Conclusion:** International political actors also play an important role in a supposedly purely bilateral dispute and can influence public opinion.

In summary, one can say that the identification of actors, especially in view of their appearance in the examined media, make focused target-group-oriented communication and