

Issue 8 — Autumn 2025

# WIR

The magazine  
of the ANWR GROUP

## Be Selfish!

From Me to We to More.

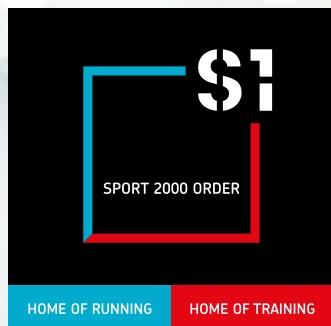
**ME**  
**WE**



# SPORT 2000 ORDERMESSEN 2026

ORIENTIERUNG FÜR DIE BRANCHE – AUTHENTISCH UND PERSÖNLICH.  
FÜR ECHTE EXPERTEN.

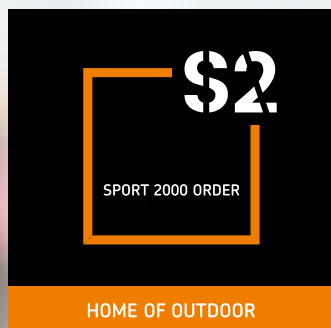
Klare Strukturen und neue Messenamen sorgen für Überblick,  
gezielten Austausch und ein starkes Messeerlebnis.



FS/SS 2027 | 17. – 19. Mai 2026



HW/AW 2027 | 22. – 24. Nov 2026



HW/AW 2026 | 18. – 20. Jan 2026



FS/SS 2027 | 14. – 16. Jun 2026



HW/AW 2026 | 22. – 23. Feb 2026

Sei dabei, wenn sich die Sport-Community trifft:  
auf den **SPORT 2000 Ordermessen 2026**

# The Right Dose of Me: How Self-Interest Strengthens Cooperation



Self-interest tends to have a negative connotation in modern society. This is a pity. When exercised in moderation, it can be highly beneficial to society, a cooperative or an association. This issue is therefore dedicated to this often-misunderstood trait, taking a closer look at why a healthy dose of egoism can be a good thing, and exploring how to determine the right amount.

To explore this idea, we look at Austria, the United States and, of course, the German retail landscape. We highlight how effective lobbying helps make one's voice heard in politics. We show that genuine cooperation can be worthwhile, even when driven by self-interest. We meet five retailers whose seemingly ego-driven motives have propelled an entire group forward. And we tell the story of a company that became world-famous for its commitment to charity.

We also speak to Stephan Hagenbusch, Patagonia's Marketplace Director, about the company's remarkable approach. Together with an expert, we finally tackle the question of how much participative leadership a business really needs, and how this can be put into practice. As always, this issue provides useful insights and practical advice, this time focusing on the use of artificial intelligence.

Wishing you an enjoyable read

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Ullrich Lüke'. The signature is stylized and fluid.

Ullrich Lüke

## 8 How a community can benefit from self-interest. The cover story.



**Why pursuing one's own interests forms the foundation of a successful community.**

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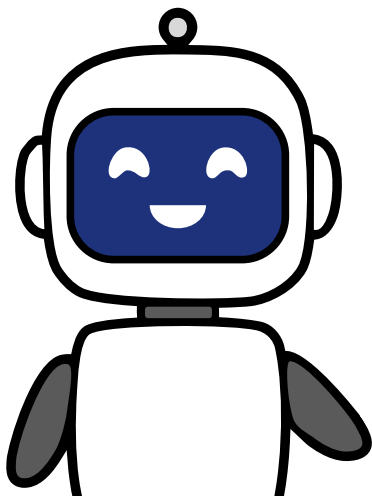
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# Murten: Welcome to the Swiss Lake Paradise!

Text: Jan Schulte

Heinz Egger of Mondo Sport is something of an exception in north-western Switzerland. Despite only opening four days a week, he runs a remarkably successful retail business. But can his business model be replicated?

Anyone running a shop in the picturesque town of Murten, with its eponymous lake just a few hundred metres away, must occasionally pause to take it all in. This Swiss town, which is home to around 9,500 people, was voted the most liveable place in the country a few years ago. So it seems fitting that Mondo Sport operates a four-day working week. The store, which is owned by Heinz Egger, remains closed on Mondays, Thursdays and Sundays. It opens only from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturdays, and stays open until 6.30 p.m. on the remaining days, with a daily lunch break from 12 to 1.30 p.m. The roughly 30 employees still receive their full pay. But is that not too much free time and too little work?

### The four-day week has been a success!

Thirty-eight years ago, Egger founded the business with his wife. At the time, he was only nineteen. His dream of a career in handball never materialised, so he started selling sports equipment instead, reinventing himself along the way. The range grew steadily to include fashion items, bicycles and ski equipment. Today, the store even includes a bicycle and ski workshop. 'It is important to move with the times,' says Egger. In that context, the four-day week no longer seems so radical. There were, of course, doubts about his plan. Too little working time and too much leisure? 'That's what people might think,' says Egger, 'but the results speak for themselves. Since introducing the four-day week, we have been able to hire new staff and increase our turnover.' Even the initial sceptics, including Yannis, Egger's son who is responsible for purchasing and personnel at Mondo Sport, have since been convinced.

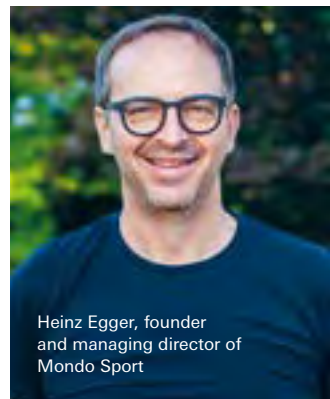
Heinz Egger has therefore succeeded in implementing his idea. 'I would rather open four days a week and do our very best in terms of sales,' he says.



At Mondo Sport, customers can find sportswear and fashionable clothing.

When a customer walks in on a Tuesday morning, they should receive the same high level of service as they would on a Friday evening. Egger is convinced that if employees were overworked and constantly under pressure, that would not be possible. And he knows what he is talking

about. He still works on the shop floor, selling sports and fashion items. According to Egger, customers appreciate this. Most of the visitors to his 2,000-square-metre store are regulars, with only a few tourists. The ski department is particularly popular, despite the fact that Murten lies just 400 metres above sea level. The bicycle section, or 'velo department' as it is called in Switzerland, was introduced in 2016 and is also performing well. Egger has so far had a good instinct for spotting trends. It will be interesting to see what the next big thing will be for Mondo Sport in beautiful Murten.



Heinz Egger, founder and managing director of Mondo Sport

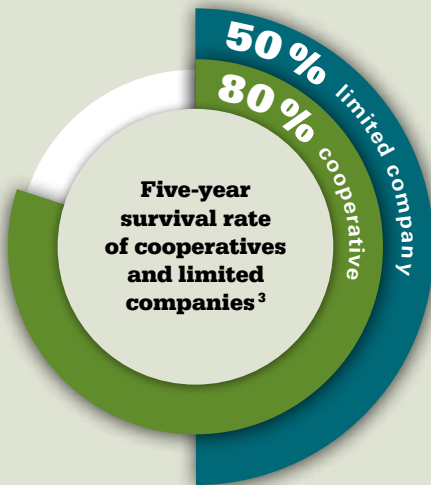
# No We Without Me

Are we all egoists?



## 22 million

members belong to cooperatives in Germany.<sup>1</sup>



of donation decisions are driven by a personal sense of doing good.<sup>4</sup>

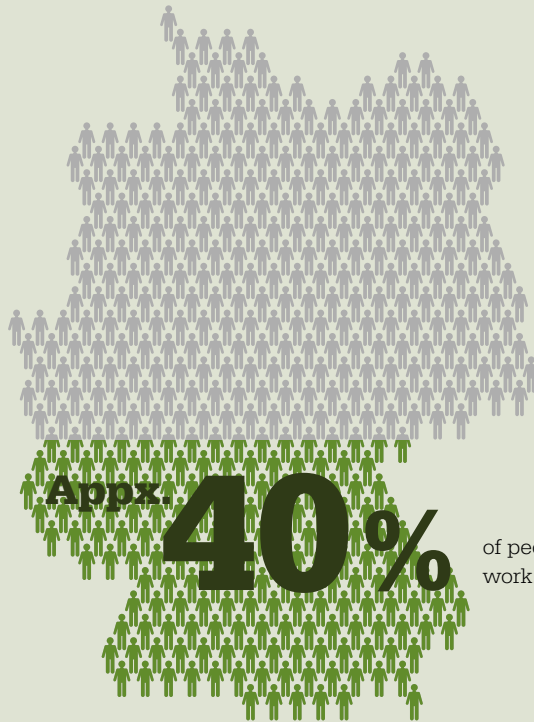
## 80 percent

of employees support community projects when they see personal benefits, too.<sup>2</sup>

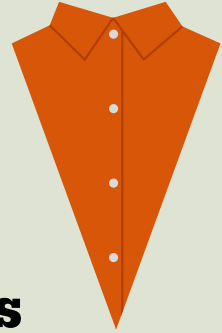
#### Sources:

<sup>1</sup> Deutscher Genossenschafts- und Raiffeisenverband (DGRV), 2024. <sup>2</sup> Deloitte (2019). <sup>3</sup> CIRIEC-Studie. <sup>4</sup> Andreoni (1990). <sup>5</sup> Lakhani & Wolf (2005). <sup>6</sup> Eigene Recherche. <sup>7</sup> <https://www.offiziellecharts.de>. <sup>8</sup> Nowak (2006). <sup>9</sup> Bundesministerium des Innern, Freiwilligensurvey 2019.





# 20 weeks



Falco's song 'Egoist' remained in Germany's Top 100 charts.<sup>7</sup>

of people aged 14 and over are involved in voluntary work. This equates to **28.8 million** people.<sup>9</sup>

**Number of cooperative banks that had to be rescued following the financial crisis of 2008:<sup>6</sup>**

# 0



individual benefit is needed within projects for a cooperation to remain stable.<sup>8</sup>

Percentage of contributions to open-source projects that are driven by self-interested motives, such as building a reputation:<sup>5</sup>

# 70 %





# Why egoism strengthens a community

**Text:** Nils Heck

**Illustrations:** Chrissie Salz

The egoist has a bad reputation. Yet a positive form of self-interest can actually strengthen a community. From Me to We to More.

I can still vividly remember the words of my old handball coach. We were seven or eight years old at the time, and we were losing at half-time. Then our coach said two things I've never forgotten: 'Be selfish! Pass the ball!' What didn't make much sense to adults sounded like higher mathematics to us juniors. We looked at him in confusion. What did he mean? Seeing our puzzled faces, he explained: 'If you want to score, you have to pass the ball. Only then can you move freely again, get the ball back, and score.' His meaning was clear. We could only win as a team if we all played selfishly.

What our coach described on a small scale also applies to the wider society. Self-interest is often considered a social vice, being seen as the opposite of solidarity and community spirit. At school, it is the egoists who are avoided. Parents tell their children to think of others as well as themselves and their family. The story goes that egoists are the villains, those who want to help only themselves, whatever the cost.

## **You challenge each other and improve together.**

### **Egoists are team players**

However, this common perception is too simplistic. In fact, under certain conditions, pursuing one's own interests can benefit the community. In fact, it often forms the very foundation on which a community's success depends. This can be seen in team sports such as handball or basketball, where a well-timed pass between two players is far more effective than one person trying to dribble their way through alone.

The same is true for so-called individual sports, such as tennis and boxing. Every athlete naturally strives to be the best in their discipline. However, no one would ever reach that level if

**The self-interest of the individual is the foundation on which a community can not only survive but grow stronger, and this is something that should be encouraged.**

others were not also pushing themselves. True individual strength only emerges through interaction with others, whether as opponents or training partners. You challenge each other and improve together. The Christian proverb 'iron sharpens iron' encapsulates this idea perfectly. What could benefit a community more than a group of people striving to become the best they can be?

This is particularly important in times of crisis. For a community to be able to support its members, it must be strong and cohesive. Otherwise, the hardship of one becomes the hardship of all. Air travel provides a fitting example of this: in the event of a loss of cabin pressure, passengers are instructed to secure their own oxygen masks before assisting others. The same logic applies to the economy. The self-interest of the individual is the foundation on which a community can not only survive but grow stronger, and this is something that should be encouraged.

### **Adam Smith and the 'invisible hand'**

In retail, where countless actors interact every day, the complex relationship between self-interest and the common good can be observed particularly well. When a shoe retailer in Düsseldorf opens their shop in the morning, they do so primarily out of self-interest. He wants to earn a living, support his family, and perhaps build some prosperity. Yet this seemingly selfish act has far greater social value than might appear at first glance. By creating jobs, offering customers high-quality shoes, paying taxes and contributing to the local economy, the retailer creates far greater social value.

This insight is nothing new. As early as the 18th century, the economist Adam Smith described how the pursuit of individual gain in free markets could serve the common good through an 'invisible hand'. Smith explained that the individual actor does not consciously aim to promote the well-being of society. Yet, through their own ambitions, they foster competition and innovation, and indirectly promote economic growth.

Of course, this eighteenth-century theory cannot be applied directly to modern life. However, the underlying principle still holds true today: self-interest leads to prosperity for many while creating personal benefit in return. Consider, for instance, a leather goods retailer. When they expand their online presence, invest in digital infrastructure, or develop new services, their initial goal is simply to improve their own business.



**A society can  
only support  
individuals  
when it is  
strong itself.**





Yet these innovations, born of self-interest, set new standards and challenge competitors to evolve, gradually raising the level of the entire industry. Self-interest drives progress.

Communities are strengthened by self-interest

Positive egoism can manifest itself in various ways. The simplest form can be seen in 'coopetition' efforts. This portmanteau of 'competition' and 'cooperation' refers to situations in which competitors temporarily join forces to improve their position in a market.

**Progress  
is driven  
by self-  
interest.**



They recognise that, for selfish reasons, it is better to join forces with their competitors than to battle them. Such deals usually only last for a limited time, but they demonstrate that selfish motives can result in a positive outcome for all involved, provided that selfishness is not rigidly defined as 'elbowing your way to the top'.

## Initially, the motives of retailers and partners are driven by self-interest.

In the twenty-first century, positive self-interest is expressed far more sustainably through co-operatives and associations. Let's be honest: hardly anyone wakes up one morning thinking they want to support retailers across Europe and join a cooperative like the ANWR GROUP. Retailers' and partners' motivations are, first and foremost, rooted in self-interest. More precisely, each retailer pursues their own economic goals. Yet, within a structure that channels and amplifies these individual ambitions, they are able to strengthen themselves and the wider community. The real art lies in directing self-interest towards long-term objectives rather than squeezing every last bit of profit out of customers, employees, or suppliers. Every individual must act like a *homo oeconomicus*, thinking rationally about what will bring them the greatest long-term benefit.

Consider the sporting goods retailer in a medium-sized town. He joins a cooperative to benefit from better purchasing terms, professional marketing support, and proven business concepts. His primary motive is to increase his own success. However, the effects extend far beyond that: His customers benefit from a stronger product range

at fair prices, his employees enjoy job security, and the local community benefits from an attractive retail offering.

**Motive: self-interest. Outcome: community.**

Taking the idea of positive self-interest to its logical conclusion makes it clear why most retailers choose to join a cooperative. By becoming a member, a retailer gains access to better terms, professional expertise, and a network of like-minded partners. Their 'selfish' motive to improve their own business automatically benefits the collective. The more members a cooperative has, the stronger its negotiating power becomes and the better the conditions for everyone involved. This system works to everyone's advantage when each member recognises that it is in their best interests to strengthen the community.

This mechanism comes naturally to the ANWR community. Retailers share best practices, market insights and innovations with one another. They do this not out of pure altruism, but because they understand that a strong community benefits everyone. This enlightened form of self-interest drives everyone forward. Returning to the handball analogy, only those who appear selfless enough to pass the ball can move freely, regain possession and score. For the team.

### Free riders and lone wolves

But doesn't ruthless behaviour or the use of shortcuts sometimes lead to faster personal gain? This is precisely the key point. Positive self-interest does not entail harming others or growing at their expense. In the long term, this approach would be both unethical and self-defeating. While such tactics may deliver short-term benefits, entrepreneurs fare far better by cultivating partnerships, operating sustainably, and building a loyal customer base step by step.

A retailer that runs a profitable business, invests in its employees and treats its partners fairly creates a sustainable model from which everyone involved benefits. The same principle applies to a thriving town centre. Even from a self-interested point of view, it makes little sense to push others aside if you're left standing alone in the end.



# **Think of yourselves. For that very reason, support the community around you. Remember that you are part of something bigger.**

Here, too, one could say: Think of yourselves. For that very reason, support the community around you. Remember that you are part of something bigger. Taking this line of thought further, self-interest could help solve one of the major problems faced by cooperative communities: free riding. It is something that everyone is familiar with and dislikes. Consider data sharing, for example. For many companies and retailers, it would make perfect sense to share their data within the cooperative. However, the process is time-consuming and unfamiliar, and worst of all, it offers no immediate personal benefit to those who start first. In theory, the benefit is far greater once others have shared their data and you can join in. The problem is that nobody wants to take the first step; everyone waits for the opportunity to be a free rider. However, if all participants were to think in genuinely self-interested terms, they would realise that sharing data would give them a significant long-term advantage. They would therefore do it.

If everyone thought this way, the benefits would quickly multiply for each individual and many others, as well as for the community as a whole. In this case, too, it would be fair to say: be an egoist. Pass the ball — or rather, share the data.

## **The customer is the winner**

What applies among peers also applies to customers. They benefit most when retailers consistently act in their best interests. To succeed in the long term, a shoe store must offer excellent ser-

vice, stock high-quality products, and maintain fair prices. The retailer does this not out of selflessness, but because their business depends on it. This market-driven form of self-interest fosters healthy competition to provide the best possible customer experience. Retailers who exploit their stakeholders in the short term will disappear from the market. Those who recognise that long-term success hinges on effective collaboration are the ones who will endure.

Sustainability also emphasises the productive side of self-interest. Today, a leather goods retailer focuses on sustainable production not only out of ecological conviction, but also because they have realised that environmentally conscious customers are willing to pay more for sustainable products. The higher margins and greater customer satisfaction that result from this focus lead to a socially desirable outcome: reduced environmental impact. The future of retail belongs to those who understand and embody positive self-interest. In an increasingly connected world, one thing becomes clear.

Sustainable success does not come from ruthlessly pursuing one's own interests, nor does it come from complete self-sacrifice. The key is to pursue personal goals in a way that strengthens the community and oneself indirectly. At a time when individualism is often criticised, it is important to remember that a strong community needs strong individuals. Strong individuals do not emerge through self-denial, but through the intelligent and responsible pursuit of their own interests.

# **Productive self-interest is not a threat to society; it is its lifeblood.**

The key is to find the right balance and direction. Successful cooperatives and associations achieve this particularly well, combining self-interest and the common good to create something greater than the sum of its parts. Before I forget, I should mention that our handball team pulled itself together after the coach's speech, started passing the ball, and won the match. How selfish of us!

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**A strong  
community  
needs strong  
individuals.**



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# Participative leadership in everyday life. Directive leadership in emergencies.

**Interview:** Lars-Thorben Niggehoff

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As a consultant and coach, Markus Haslinger explores the leadership styles that make organisations successful, and the qualities that leaders need to thrive in demanding environments. Here are his insights.



**i**

Markus Haslinger is a board member at consultancy firm Hutner. He has worked there as a consultant and trainer since 2002. He studied textile business management and completed training as a retail salesperson and business assistant.

***Mr Haslinger, what qualities make a good leader?***

The ability to make decisions is undoubtedly the most important quality. It is only through making the right decisions that goals become achievable. Decision-making is a task that leaders cannot outsource. Empathy is also essential. This starts with actively listening to employees and colleagues. How are they doing? What ideas do they have? This is not about standardised annual reviews, but about providing regular, honest and open feedback. Empathy should also extend to customers and the organisation itself. Anyone who wants to lead with purpose must understand and balance the needs of the company, its employees, and its customers.



***So leaders should be empathetic and decisive. Anything else?***

Adaptability is more important today than ever before. The circumstances in which we operate are constantly changing due to social, political and technological developments. It is crucial to keep track of these shifts and adjust strategies and goals accordingly. Goals are a key part of good leadership. They must be clear to everyone, and each person must understand their role in achieving them. I believe that many of the challenges leaders face today stem from a lack of clarity in this area.

***A company's primary objective is typically to generate profit and revenue.***

It's a bit more complex than that. While some companies may prioritise profit over everything else, most do not. They also have ecological and social objectives, as well as the desire to achieve high levels of employee and customer satisfaction and to be innovative and develop new products. It is essential to decide which of these goals to prioritise and to what extent, and this should provide the framework for all managerial decisions. However, many companies today either lack clear goals or have none at all, which makes effective leadership extremely difficult.

***What would be an example of such a clear goal?***

The first step is to identify which metrics truly reflect a company's success. In the retail sector, for example, the question is whether the number of items sold per customer or the revenue per customer is more relevant to our goals. Many companies have used the same performance indicators for years without questioning whether they are still meaningful measures of success today.

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**In my opinion, people can learn and unlearn all the leadership skills they need.”**

***Even when goals are clear, not everyone is naturally decisive or empathetic. Are some people simply born leaders, while others are not suited to the role?***

In my opinion, people can learn and unlearn all the leadership skills they need. The same applies to empathy. Those who are curious, engage in dialogue with others, and strive to understand different perspectives will develop a greater sense of empathy. This, in turn, opens up new ways of thinking and paves the way for fresh ideas.

***So, how does one learn to make decisions?***

Of course, it is possible to improve your decision-making skills. Interestingly, many employees have no problem making bold decisions in their

personal lives, yet find it much harder to do so at work. This is often because they lack a clear understanding of their goals and the criteria on which their decisions should be based.

***What you are describing sounds like a participative leadership style, which actively involves employees. Do you think this approach is better than traditional directive leadership?***

Both leadership styles have their place. The key is knowing which one to use when. Directive leadership is most effective when quick decisions are required and lengthy consultation processes would be obstructive or risky. Participative leadership, on the other hand, involves employees in problem-solving, goal-setting and implementation in a structured way.



“

**Maintaining constant dialogue is important, as is discussing what is and isn't working.”**

***Can directive leadership be useful in other situations, as well as in exceptional ones?***

A classic example would be quality standards. It should be management's responsibility to define this framework and ensure clarity around it. However, improvements and optimisations based on these standards can be achieved more effectively through a participatory approach.

***How can the retail sector, in particular, achieve this balance?***

In order to answer that, we first need to establish the starting point. In retail, directive leadership has a long tradition. This is partly because it is difficult to incorporate participative processes into everyday business activities. Consider team meetings, for instance, where people exchange perspectives and ideas. While they are important, they can be difficult to organise in the fast-paced world of sales.

***So is it harder for retailers?***

In some ways, yes; in others, no. Of course, there is pressure to change and many challenges to face, but retail has always been a fast-paced industry. You can immediately see whether something works or not, and retail is much closer to the customer than most other sectors. We simply need to trust the team and its potential.

***How can a retailer create more participation?***

By setting clear goals, allowing employees to take ownership and encouraging them to take personal responsibility. Many decisions can ultimately be left to the team. For example, why should the value

of returns accepted be dictated from above? Staff scheduling could also be handled by the employees themselves. However, certain matters relating to the overall business strategy, such as product range, pricing strategies and the selection of brands to be sold, should remain the responsibility of management.

***Many retailers who currently handle everything themselves might read this and worry that their business would collapse. How would you ease their concerns?***

I can assure them that this kind of leadership has many advantages. Processes on the shop floor become simpler when the team can make its own decisions instead of having to ask for approval every time. Customers notice the difference, and this is what enables truly personalised service. Employees who can actively contribute also find more joy in their work. Young people in particular are not interested in rigid structures; they want to experiment and take responsibility. Anyone who goes shopping knows how much of a difference it makes to be greeted by a cheerful salesperson.

“

**A healthy attitude towards mistakes is an essential part of participative leadership.”**

***But what if something goes wrong during the shift towards greater participation?***

Then so be it. A healthy attitude towards mistakes is an essential part of participative leadership. If you allow people to make decisions but then criticise them when things go wrong, they will stop taking the initiative and the collaborative approach will fail. Naturally, such changes take time. After all, we are talking about a cultural transformation, and corporate culture is as slow to change as honey. This is why it is important to maintain an ongoing dialogue and discuss what is and isn't working. It is better to make adjustments than to abandon the change altogether.



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**Zeitraum 09.02. – 09.04.2026**

# **Zeit ist mehr wert als Geld.**

*Man kann mehr Geld bekommen, aber man kann nicht mehr Zeit bekommen. Oder irgendwie doch?*

### **Die DZB BANK Saisonlinie\* für Händler der ANWR Unternehmensgruppe:**

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\* Die Saisonlinie ist ein Finanzierungsprodukt, mit welchem Sie saisonal bedingte Liquiditätsspitzen jederzeit überbrücken können.





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# Football, beer and retail: where the cooperative idea is thriving

**Text:** Lars-Thorben Niggehoff

The number of cooperatives in Germany has been increasing steadily for several years. Outdoor retailers, local pubs, and football clubs are among those rediscovering the model. Here are three examples.





1

**Basislager  
Karlsruhe: When  
regular customers  
come to the rescue**



Nearly forty years of tradition were at stake when one of the owners of Basislager Karlsruhe decided to step back. The outdoor store is a well-established presence in the city of Baden, with around 30,000 registered customers, plus many more who are not on record. Would they all soon have to shop elsewhere? Stefan Krickeberg, one of the owners, came up with the idea of founding a cooperative to preserve this unique store and its roughly forty jobs.

Inspiration came from an organic supermarket in Karlsruhe that had recently taken a similar approach during its succession process. The new owners asked their customers whether they would consider becoming cooperative members. They





The Basislager team received the August Blanke Award in recognition of their successful establishment of the cooperative.



Almost forty jobs were preserved at Basislager due to the transformation.

could, indeed. Within just a few months, more than a thousand loyal fans came together to become part of the project. ‚Our philosophy of treating customers as guests in our home has paid off,‘ says co-managing director Oliver Scheib. This approach requires more staff than many other outdoor retailers employ, but it has certainly been worthwhile. Customers loved Basislager so much that they were willing to invest in it.

The transition to a cooperative structure was, of course, not easy. ‚The idea was unusual. Courts, lawyers and tax advisers didn't quite know how to handle it at first,‘ recalls co-founder Tobias Denda. Consequently, the change in legal form was delayed by around two years, despite the necessary funds already being in place. The managing directors agree that the wait was

“

**The idea was unconventional and, at first, nobody knew quite how to deal with it.”**

worth it. Basislager was preserved and its loyal customers became even more faithful. Day-to-day operations are managed by a team of four, led by Tobias Denda and Stefan Scheib. They report to the cooperative assembly once a year. ‚This way of working suits us perfectly,‘ says Tobias Denda. ‚I am sure that other businesses could benefit from such an approach too.’



## 2

**Trink-Genossin:  
The pub as a  
school of demo-  
cratic instincts**

After a long night out, most people have probably had the same thought: wouldn't it be great to own a pub? You could choose the drinks, enjoy good company every evening and have friends drop by. You could be in a place where everyone knows your name, just like in the American cult series *Cheers*. Nowhere is this easier than in Cologne's trendy district of Neuhrenfeld. Since 2020, it has been home to Trink-Genossin, a pub that anyone can own a share of. Organised as a cooperative, Trink-Genossin now has 280 members. Members get to vote on many things, from the drinks menu to whether a brewery sponsorship fits the spirit of Trink-Genossin.

“

**It took quite a while for everything to come together, in terms of the necessary capital and the right location.”**

Kai Berthold and Jan Buckenmayer first came up with the idea in 2015. 'It took quite a while for everything to come together, in terms of the necessary capital and the right location,' recalls Berthold. In fact, their main focus at first was not on opening a pub, but on setting up a cooperative. 'We wanted to create a space where people could

experience democracy in an accessible way,' he explains. The project is also intended to counteract widespread disillusionment with democracy and the belief that democratic processes are ineffective.

Of course, not all 280 members joined for the same reasons. 'Some just think it's cool to have their own pub,' says Berthold. But that is precisely the charm of a cooperative. Everyone can contribute in whatever way they wish: as a simple shareholder; as a regular attendee of the monthly members' meetings; or as an active participant in running the place. From the outset, Trink-Genossin had a core group of regulars. It was this community spirit that kept the pub alive during the pandemic, which hit just a week after its soft opening. The members' commitment helped the project survive the first two years under lockdown conditions, and continues to help fill the pub week after week. Many members naturally bring friends along, as everyone loves to show off 'their' pub. Members also receive a generous 20 percent discount, giving them one more reason to come back often.



Despite legal hurdles, the initiators want to expand the bar concept further.







Dank der Genossenschaftsstruktur ist die Trink-Genossin auch in schwierigen Zeiten voll.



\*No one has any intention of building a bar.  
Walter U.

“

**Some just  
think it's  
cool to have  
their own  
pub.”**



The first-division club's stadium is soon to be fan-owned.

# 3

## **Football Cooperative Sankt Pauli: we're buying a football club**

Trink-Genossin also faced challenges because many authorities did not know how to handle a cooperative acting as a pub operator. One practical example of this was the issue of the liquor licence, which had to be registered to an individual. Initially, the Trink-Genossin members wanted to rotate the licence among themselves on a regular basis. 'That would have involved considerable effort and expense each time, including notary fees,' explains Berthold. Now, the licence changes hands only every two years.

## **The motivation was to create a blueprint that others could use.**

Berthold and his fellow members hope that their model will inspire others. One of their motivations was to create a blueprint that others could use to open their own cooperative pubs. 'Perhaps one day we'll turn that into our own consultancy,' says Berthold.

It always feels a little surreal when FC St. Pauli finds itself back in Germany's top league once again. Unlike most other clubs in the hyper-capitalised world of professional football, the Hamburg-based club simply operates by its own rules. The Millerntor Stadium still embodies the spirit of the 1960s, forming a stark contrast to modern multifunctional arenas. Its fan culture is openly political and distinctly left-leaning. Rather than relying on outside investors to take the club to the next level, last year FC St. Pauli turned to its own loyal supporters through a cooperative initiative.

The Football Cooperative St. Pauli is not buying into the club itself. Instead, it is focusing on the Millerntor Stadium. The fan cooperative aims to acquire a majority stake in the stadium opera-





ting company, using its members' capital to pay off construction loans. To achieve this, the cooperative has set itself the ambitious target of raising around 30 million euros in equity.

## **The cooperative's members come from 44 countries. Among them, is a certain Uli Hoeneß, honorary president of FC Bayern Munich.**

This goal was reached surprisingly quickly. Subscriptions for cooperative shares opened in November 2024, and the target amount had been met by the end of March 2025, the cooperative's members come from 44 countries. Among them, is a certain Uli Hoeneß, honorary president of FC Bayern Munich. They will now use the funds raised to buy into the Millerntor Stadium.

Guest article by Frank Schuffelen

# **A very modern idea**

Cooperatives are outdated? Quite the opposite. They are more vibrant than ever.



The world is changing rapidly, with shifts in markets, technologies and customer needs.

And yet, some principles withstand

the test of time. For me, the cooperative model is one of these enduring principles: achieving more together than one could alone. The strength and importance of this model is particularly evident today. We talk about sustainability, the future viability of physical retail and new business and societal responsibilities. Cooperatives can make a valuable contribution to all of these issues. Why? Because they focus not only on maximising profits, but also on the well-being of their members and the community.

Cooperatives have always been willing to change or even reinvent themselves, and this has made them particularly successful in achieving their high-level goals (such as Basislager Karlsruhe, the winner of our August Blanke Prize). They have found the answer to their succession question in the cooperative model, together with their customers and supporters. I hope that this special legal form will become even more widely recognised as a model that combines economic strength and social responsibility.

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# The power of the group

**Text:** Nils Heck

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The 'Leading Austrian Partners' initiative unites specialised SPORT 2000 retailers in Austria, creating a robust network that generates tangible value for all stakeholders. After the first joint meeting, it was clear that the concept worked.



All of the Leading Austrian Partners are specialised in the tourism sector.

Five retailers met in Leogang. This may sound like the beginning of a niche industry joke, but a few weeks ago it marked the launch of one of SPORT 2000 Austria's most exciting projects. The initiative, called Leading Austrian Partners (LAP), unites specialised sports retailers facing similar challenges and targeting similar groups, enabling them to form a network and act as sparring partners for SPORT 2000 Austria. One key question is how we can ease retailers' workload when it comes to digitalisation. Which collaborations make sense? How can we support them in brand co-operation? SPORT 2000 Austria wants to ask these kinds of questions of the five tourism experts in order to tap into their opinions, experience and expertise, and focus on what truly matters.





**i****Leading Austrian Partners (LAP)**

The Leading Austrian Partners initiative, founded by SPORT 2000 Austria, connects retailers who share a similar focus. It is a network created by retailers, for retailers.



Happy together: Leading Austrian Partners Tourism meet up



Ski rental is a key focus for several of the retailers.



*Roland Unterlercher is a passionate retailer.*

Anna Kraupatz, who coordinates the project at SPORT 2000 Austria, explains the idea behind it in practical terms. 'At headquarters, we can come up with plenty of ideas and develop concepts, but in this project, it is the retailers who tell us whether our proposals are feasible or not.' The newly formed group serves as a sounding board for new ideas and filters out less effective concepts in the field of tourism. From now on, it will meet regularly. During these sessions, the project team, which consists of Anna Kraupatz, Verena Sowa, Jakob Rieser and Christian Teschl, will present ideas and seek feedback from the retailers. If an idea is well received, it will be implemented, benefiting all SPORT 2000 Austria retailers. 'This is a project by retailers, for retailers,' says Kraupatz.

### **The emphasis is on digitalisation, services, and brand collaboration**

At their first joint meeting in Leogang, they discussed a wide variety of topics. The topics covered tangible improvements such as website analysis, new partnerships, better interfaces between ren-

tal software and merchandise management systems, and joint purchasing terms. After the first meeting, Sebastian Mader-Erhart, COO at Sport Nenner and one of the five participating retailers, reflected, 'We have already made real progress on several topics.'

### **Everyone brings different strengths to the table.**

Even if an initial idea aimed at a specific target group, such as the tourism sector, does not work, the Leading Austrian Partners are there to identify that. This approach already proved successful during the very first meeting. The SPORT 2000 team presented a digitalisation module, which the retailers then discussed in detail. During the conversation, it became clear that the tool offered little real benefit for them. The project leaders immediately decided to drop the idea. For Mader-Erhart, this was an important signal.



'This clearly shows that we, as retailers, can use our advisory role to help SPORT 2000 Austria focus on what really matters.' By getting involved, the retailers are supporting SPORT 2000 Austria and benefiting themselves. In the long term, Mader-Erhart hopes the initiative will lead to higher margins and greater efficiency.

Roland Unterlercher of Sport Unterlercher adds: 'I hope that, in areas where we are small as individual retailers, SPORT 2000 Austria can help us play a bigger part.' The exchange among participants is already proving valuable. Kraupatz and her team carefully selected the group members: Hannes Mitterer (Sport Mitterer), Kurt Larcher (Larcher Sport Mode Rent), Roland Unterlercher (Sport Unterlercher), Sebastian Mader-Erhart (Sport Nenner) and Martin Steger (SPORT 2000 Herzog). Everyone brings different strengths to the table. 'One is more advanced in digitalisation, another in service and another in cooperation with industry partners,' Kraupatz explains. 'That means they can learn a great deal from one another.'

### Retailers inspire each other

One example is Sport Nenner, which has six stores. Five of those focus on high-end products and personalised advice, while the sixth runs more like a lifestyle outlet. Mader-Erhart had recently been struggling with declining sales at that

particular shop. However, during an exchange with Sport Mitterer, another LAP member, he had an eye-opening realisation. He realised that their approach to work was completely different.

Anna Kraupatz is leading the project.



'They display a much broader range of products in their shop. Customers come in, browse at their leisure, and end up with lots of items in their hands,' says Mader-Erhart. 'We are now considering doing the same to boost our sales.'

**“  
We can  
genuinely  
make a  
difference.”**

The LAPs were seeing positive results after their very first meeting. Initially, however, they were somewhat sceptical when approached by SPORT 2000 Austria. 'We retailers in the Alps are especially individualists. Things can vary from valley to valley, and we often find it hard to collaborate,' admits Mader-Erhart. After the pandemic, many retail initiatives had also fizzled out or turned into little more than self-praise. 'SPORT 2000 Austria quickly convinced me that this would be different and that we could genuinely make a difference,' says Mader-Erhart. Roland Unterlercher shares this view. 'All the retailers and the project team are highly committed and actually getting things done.'

Anna Kraupatz acknowledges the initial scepticism of the participants and is therefore all the more pleased with the positive feedback. At the next LAP Tourism meetings, the focus will be on putting the first ideas into practice. Looking ahead, Kraupatz also plans to expand the successful format and establish additional groups. Later this year, they will launch 'LAP Bike'.

Sebastian Mader-Erhart wants to make a difference.





# How committed collaboration can succeed

**Text:** Ralf Kerkeling

SPORT 2000 is focusing on commitment, trust and partnership. Managing directors Margit Gosau and Dominik Solleder explain what opportunities this approach offers for retailers and industry alike.





At SPORT 2000, commitment and trust are highly valued. This is emphasised by managing directors Margit Gosau and Dominik Solleder in their interview.

Anyone looking to gain insight into the future of retail should speak with Margit Gosau and Dominik Solleder. The two SPORT 2000 managing directors think deeply about which values will be decisive in the years ahead, and what this will mean for retailers, partners, and cooperatives. Right at the beginning of the discussion, both emphasise that commitment is one of the key values for the future of retail. According to Gosau, trust is far more than just a management buzzword; it can only grow through commitment. 'It is a value that cannot be prescribed. It develops over years by consistently proving that we keep our promises.'

She has seen, especially in times of crisis, how trust keeps partners together. For the SPORT 2000 CEO, trust is a genuine competitive advantage. Those who demonstrate reliability earn loyalty. Solleder highlights the practical aspect: 'In every partnership, there are grey areas that contracts do not cover. That is exactly where commitment is needed for trust to grow.' This is particularly true within a cooperative structure, where independent retailers and the central organisation must work closely together. This makes commitment not only reasonable, but also necessary. It may even be vital for survival.

### **SPORT 2000's strength lies in its diversity.**

In practice, commitment means being reliable and trustworthy, and maintaining long-term partnerships. It does not mean losing individuality. Many retailers are concerned that new concepts might restrict their freedom. Gosau addresses this concern. 'Nothing is being imposed on anyone. Standardisation is applied where it makes sense, such as with digital services. Its purpose is to ease the workload and create more freedom.'

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**Trust is a value that cannot be prescribed. It develops over years.”**

She believes that the strength of SPORT 2000 lies in its diversity and the balance it strikes between collective impact and individual character. Standardisation where necessary; freedom where possible. Drawing on his experience working with retailers, Solleder also emphasises this point. Through many conversations, he has witnessed the meticulous way in which some retailers plan their assortments. In those cases, there is no need for central guidelines. However, others benefit greatly from standardised concepts, particularly in team sports. 'The key is that everyone has a choice. Our formats are designed to offer advantages, but no one is forced to follow them,' says Solleder.

### **Leverage data**

Commitment is particularly important in practical collaboration, especially when it comes to sharing data. Some retailers fear that sharing data will make them vulnerable or reveal their competitive position. However, Gosau sees this as one of the greatest opportunities for the future of retail. 'Anonymised benchmarks help identify potential. They show where you stand compared with the group and how you can make your business more profitable through adjustments.' Solleder also refers to specific examples, such as those within the Outdoor Commission. Even sceptics there





The HandelsCockpit tool uses its range check feature to provide detailed analyses of sales performance for selected brands and products. These evaluations help retailers prepare for discussions with suppliers.

have seen how valuable shared data panels can be. 'Many retailers have now realised that benchmark analyses provide practical insights. They reveal which product categories are particularly profitable, which brands deli-

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**The goal is not to monitor individuals, but to create collective value.”**

ver the best margins, and where processes can be streamlined. The goal is not to monitor individuals, but to create collective value.'

At the same time, personal connections should be strengthened. Commissions, experience groups and trade fairs are important platforms for achieving this. Solleder also mentions roadshows as a possible future model, offering closer interaction, greater knowledge sharing and the opportunity to reach beyond Mainhausen. 'We want to present useful services and benchmark data in a decentralised way,' Solleder explains. 'This allows us to reach retailers in regions that would otherwise have few opportunities to participate.'







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# A lobby for our industry

**Text:** Julia Post

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Today, retailers operate in a political environment characterised by bureaucracy and complex regulatory conditions. The challenges are considerable, and the industry can only bring political change by working together. This is where lobbying comes in, and cooperatives and retail alliances can play a key role.





From left to right: Thomas H. Günther, Wolfgang Zolper, Frank Schuffelen, Michael Boddenberg and Dr Carsten Lehr. This photo was taken at an event hosted by the Economic Council of Hesse.

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**From the outside,  
you only see the  
result. But behind  
that are often  
years of networ-  
king and countless  
conversations.”**



Britta Goertz, a shoe retailer, is speaking on a panel at the European Parliament.

Pandemic, lockdown, closed shops. In 2020, retailers found themselves up against tough times. 'How am I supposed to generate sales, pay my employees and cover the rent?' many wondered. 'The frustration was enormous,' recalls ANWR CEO Frank Schuffelen. From one day to the next, in-store retail came to a complete standstill. 'We had to react quickly.'

### How can the interests of a community truly be brought into view?

What he meant became strikingly clear in the days and weeks that followed. The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry for Economic Affairs consulted the ANWR GROUP directly, as well as through industry associations, on crisis talks. Board members such as Schuffelen were consulted on the design and implementation of financial and emergency support programmes, including

KfW fast-track loans. But that was not all. As the non-food retail sector, including footwear and sports, was at a disadvantage compared to other industries, a coalition of associations and partners came together to file lawsuits and legal statements, working tirelessly day and night. 'Our central message was that shoes are an essential part of everyday life, especially for children and people with orthopaedic needs. The scale and intensity of our joint efforts was enormous,' recalls Schuffelen. 'It was a tremendous effort that challenged and united the entire industry.' We achieved short-term success in Bavaria. For one week, we secured permission for shoe stores in the state to reopen, while many other non-food retailers remained



Representatives of Independent Retail Europe, including Martina Novotny, met with ECB President Christine Lagarde at the European Central Bank in Frankfurt.

closed. This sent an important message. 'This challenging period showed us that political advocacy can make a real difference, but it also demonstrated the importance of maintaining direct connections with policymakers,' concludes Schuffelen.

### Why lobby?

In uncertain times, lobbying is becoming ever more important. This is why the CEO of the ANWR GROUP is actively involved in the Economic Council of Germany, the German Retail Federation (HDE), and the MITTELSTANDSVERBUND ZGV e. V., which represents around 230,000 medium-sized companies in Berlin and Brussels. What matters most to him is: 'Advocacy for us does not mean pushing individual agendas, but making the concerns of our community visible.' But how can the interests of a community truly be brought into view? 'Explaining what lobbying is about requires a





Britta Goertz, Schuhhaus Meyer, Lübbecke, and member of the ANWR GROUP Supervisory Board.



Martina Novotny, Chief Digital Officer (CDO) and member of the ANWR GROUP Executive Board

certain sensitivity,' says board member Martina Novotny. She is active in Independent Retail Europe (IRE), a European umbrella organisation representing the interests of cooperative groups and affiliated retailers at EU level. 'From the outside, you often see nothing for a long time, and then suddenly, a door opens. Behind it are often years of networking and countless conversations.'

### **Committees create a platform for exchange with other organisations.**

Exchanging ideas with other retail sectors within the European network is always highly valuable. 'Where do our interests overlap, and how can we combine our arguments to influence political change?' Committees provide a platform for discussing both smaller issues and major forward-looking topics. One example of the latter is the dialogue with the European Central Bank (ECB). During a discussion with ECB President Christine Lagarde, Martina Novotny and numerous colleagues from various industries and companies discussed the introduction of the digital euro. A subject with significant implications for retail payment processes. 'Encounters like these show that we have the opportunity to influence key decisions from an early stage,' says Novotny.

### **A platform for retailers' voices**

Individual retailers' voices are being heard. For example, at an event organised by IRE and SME Connect, a cross-party European network that supports small and medium-sized enterprises at the EU level, held in the European Parliament. Independent retailers from across Europe met with Members of Parliament and policy advisers to discuss the importance of brick-and-mortar retail, the challenges it faces, and the support it requires from the EU. Among the panellists was Britta Goertz, a shoe retailer and member of the ANWR GROUP Supervisory Board. She emphasised the vital role of cooperative models and local retailers in fostering competition, innovation, and thriving communities. Her message



was clear: 'Help us to establish fair competition, strengthen regional economies and ensure that European consumers have access to safe, sustainable products.' She believes that, together, we can build a strong and resilient European market.

### Fighting for fairness takes stamina: the example of Temu

Fair competition also involves tackling online discount retailers such as Temu and SHEIN. Alongside other non-food organisations, ANWR GROUP co-financed an expert report through the HDE which analysed and provided a legal assessment of the business practices of Temu and SHEIN. This report provides the basis for exposing these irregularities. Like many others, Frank Schuffelen has repeatedly addressed these issues, including on LinkedIn. Recently, these efforts began to bear fruit when, after months of review, the European Commission provisionally concluded that the Chinese retailer was in breach of European law. Fines worth billions are on the table. 'This is a

## For advocacy to be effective, visibility is essential.

first success,' says Schuffelen. 'But one thing is clear: we must continue to fight for fair competition for our retailers.'

### With visibility and persistence

No matter which of the many topics are at stake, one thing is certain: For advocacy to be effective, visibility is essential. 'The better policymakers understand what ANWR GROUP and its subsidiaries stand for and the issues we represent, the more likely it is that retailers' concerns will be heard,' emphasises Frank Schuffelen. 'It's not about putting ourselves in the spotlight,' adds Martina Novotny, 'but about demonstrating the importance of our industry.'

The mid-sized retail sector is a driving force of →

Together for fairness in retail

TEMU,  
SHEIN  
& Co.

Die Politik muss  
dringend intervenieren\*

\*Urgent action is needed in politics

the economy. It keeps city centres vibrant and, as an employer, it takes on social responsibility for many people. It drives innovation and strengthens local regions. 'Many smaller, owner-managed retailers deserve to be heard just as much as the big players,' says retailer Britta Goertz. 'Retail must be visible to decision-makers'. 'That's why we join forces in advocacy, to turn many voices into one strong voice,' adds Frank Schuffelen.

Irina Andorfer sums it up clearly: 'It often takes a long time to achieve results. It's about visibility, and about making your mark again and again. The truth is, sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.' However, one thing has become clear, says Schuffelen. 'Visibility and persistence pay off.'



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### A look at Austria

Lobbying often takes place at regional and national levels, as can be seen in neighbouring Austria. Irina Andorfer, Managing Director of SPORT 2000 Austria, is committed to both the sports industry and retail. Since 2024, she has been a member of the executive board of the Association of Austrian Sporting Goods Manufacturers and Retailers (VSSÖ), representing the interests of specialist retailers. 'The VSSÖ is the most important platform for uniting the interests of the sports industry and the sporting goods trade in Austria, and for achieving common goals,' Andorfer explains. She is also a board member of the European Outdoor Group (EOG) and, since spring 2025, a presidential council member of the

Austrian Retail Association. 'We continuously work to highlight and advance the key issues affecting retail and our industry, acting in the best interests of retailers,' she says.

And the effort is paying off. Austria's new federal administration's 2025 government programme already includes tangible improvements for winter tourism and specialist retail, ranging from tax and bureaucratic relief to targeted funding. Andorfer explains that the decisive factor now will be ensuring that the government's business- and innovation-friendly initiatives are implemented swiftly and effectively — something she is determined to push forward.





Irina Andorfer, Managing Director  
of SPORT 2000 Austria

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**We join forces  
in advocacy,  
to turn many  
voices into one  
strong voice.”**

## Imprint

### Publisher

ANWR GROUP eG, Nord-West-Ring-Str. 11,  
63533 Mainhausen, anwr-group.com

### Editor-in-Chief

**(responsible under German press law)**

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### Design

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### Images without individual attribution

Adobe Stock, iStockphoto, private, unsplash

### Printing

Druckstudio GmbH, druckstudiogruppe.com

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This magazine is 100 % alcohol-free, printed with mineral oil-free organic vegan inks and Blue Angel-approved dispersion varnish. The paper used was made from materials that come from well-managed, FSC®-certified forests and other controlled sources. The entire production process was climate-neutral.



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# Conviction as a Business Model

**Interview:** Ralf Kerkeling

**Photos:** Patagonia

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In an industry that often operates according to the principle of ‚more and more‘, Patagonia deliberately breaks the rules. The outdoor pioneer demonstrates how ecological action and economic stability can be combined, maintaining an uncomfortable yet credible stance.



Patagonia supports environmental projects such as the protection of the Vjosa River in Albania, one of the last wild rivers in Europe.



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Stephan Hagenbusch has been Marketplace Director EMEA at Patagonia since 2024, overseeing wholesale, e-commerce and retail operations from the company's Amsterdam hub. Prior to joining Patagonia, he served as Managing Director for Europe at Black Diamond, having previously held senior positions at Amer Sports. He now combines his extensive experience in the international outdoor market with Patagonia's steadfast commitment to sustainability and social responsibility.



For decades, Patagonia has embodied a unique philosophy within the outdoor industry. From its legendary 'Don't Buy This Jacket' campaign to its bold decision to transfer ownership to an environmental trust, the company has demonstrated that commercial success and radical responsibility are not mutually exclusive. For many, the brand is more than just a retailer – it's a role model. In this conversation, Stephan Hagenbusch, Patagonia's Marketplace Director for Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA), sheds light on what truly defines the company's mindset.

***Patagonia has undergone many changes over the past decades. Which milestones were pivotal in transforming the brand from a mountaineering label into a globally recognised, purpose-driven company?***

Patagonia has always had strong links with outdoor sports and the idea of living in harmony with nature. Prior to establishing the company, Yvon Chouinard crafted climbing pitons and was constantly exploring new ways for humans to interact with the mountains. This spirit continues to shape Patagonia today, influencing our business approach and our view of responsible entrepreneurship as the foundation for everything we do. From switching to organic cotton and introducing recycled polyester, to offering free repairs and co-founding '1% for the Planet', many milestones reflect our core values. The most powerful of these was the Chouinard family's decision in September 2022 to transfer ownership of the company to a trust and donate all future profits to environmental causes.

***When the company was transferred into a trust, Patagonia declared: 'Earth is now our only shareholder.' Can you explain how this structure works? Has the era of pure growth come to an end for Patagonia?***

We are critical of growth for its own sake, but we are by no means opposed to organic growth. What matters most to us is acting responsibly and using our profits to protect the planet. The Chouinard family's decision was truly unique and surprised many of us within the company, as there had been no comparable model before. The



official announcement by Yvon Chouinard in September 2022 gave Patagonia a completely new structure. The Patagonia Purpose Trust was established to safeguard the company's core values for future generations. It holds all voting shares and ensures that every decision remains guided by these principles.

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**What matters most to us is acting responsibly”**

The Holdfast Collective, meanwhile, owns all non-voting shares and receives dividends from Patagonia's non-reinvested profits. These funds are distributed to address the climate and ecological crises, protect nature and biodiversity, and support communities actively engaged in environmental action.



With its 'The Dam Truth' campaign, Patagonia aims to raise awareness of the environmental damage caused by dams.



**What role does the concept of an economy for the common good play in Patagonia's approach, and what kind of momentum does it create within the industry?**

For us, the answer is simple: there can be no business on a dead planet. This truth applies to every company, including ours. This is why we try to initiate dialogue not only within our own industry, but also with businesses from different sectors. By launching joint initiatives and sharing our experiences, we can create a stronger, more positive impact together.

**What metrics or benchmarks do you use to measure Patagonia's environmental and social impact, and how can retail partners benefit from them?**

As part of the Science Based Targets Initiative (SBTi), we set clear goals and explore ways to minimise our environmental footprint. A crucial element of this work is collaborating closely with our suppliers and partners along the value chain, since over 90 per cent of our emissions originate there. At the same time, many of our environmental efforts focus on outcomes that cannot easily be measured or monetised, such as helping to establish the first wild river national park on the Vjosa in Albania or collaborating with NGOs in Iceland to end open-net salmon farming in the fjords. Through our Patagonia Action Works programme, we have supported grassroots environmental organisations for many years, empowering individuals who carry out vital practical work in their local communities.

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**We are our own biggest critic.”**

On the right: Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard (far right) began the company's story by crafting climbing gear such as hand-forged pitons for himself and his friends.



**How important are repair and second-hand services to your business model, and what role do retailers play in these areas?**

Repairs form a core part of our business, and retailers play a vital role in this area. Some offer their own repair services, while others use our platform to arrange repairs and return the restored garments to customers.

**Some argue that consuming less is the most authentic approach to sustainability. How does a brand that still needs to sell products deal with this tension?**

Our founder, Yvon Chouinard, once said: 'The best jacket is the one you already own.' We refer back to this again and again. It starts with the quality of our products, which has a significant impact on their longevity and therefore on the footprint of each individual piece. If we buy fewer garments but do so more consciously, and ideally use them for several activities and sports, that's the best thing we as outdoor athletes can do.



***Terms such as 'sustainability' have become overused. How do you define it at Patagonia, and how do you avoid accusations of green-washing?***

At Patagonia, we don't use the term 'sustainability'. We see ourselves as a responsible company. Every product leaves a footprint, and it is impossible for any item to be truly sustainable. Once you accept that, you can start doing real work. The key is to reduce that impact and be transparent about what is required to achieve it.

***Critics point to Patagonia's production in Asia and the associated working conditions. How do you ensure transparency and credibility?***

We are our own biggest critic, which is why we examine very closely where and how our products are made. We publish the locations and factories we work with for each product on our website to make this information transparent for our customers. A key part of ensuring fair working conditions is our partnership with Fairtrade.

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**Quality is one of our core company values and a key design principle at Patagonia.”**

As of this autumn, over 90 per cent of our collection is produced in Fairtrade-certified factories. Together with our suppliers, we are working to increase this number further and improve conditions across our supply chain.

***How important are warranty promises and service offers in demonstrating to consumers and retailers alike that durability is more than just a slogan for Patagonia?***

Quality is one of our core company values and a





Designed to last: Since its beginnings, Patagonia has combined premium materials with a consistent focus on repairability.

key design principle at Patagonia, as it directly affects the environmental impact of each product. We prioritise durability through quality, care instructions and repair services, and this is something that our customers and retail partners truly value.

We introduced our Ironclad Guarantee decades ago, and it is great to see how the repair programme has grown since then. Last year alone, we repaired more than 30,000 products. We are even happier that more and more brands are now offering similar services, saving garments from ending up in landfill.

**How has Patagonia’s relationship with retailers changed since the company was restructured?**

Reliability in working with our retail partners has always been, and will always remain, of great importance to us. The new company structure has not changed this close relationship; in fact, it helps to preserve it. Our consistent focus on values is seen as a key part of that reliability by both our customers and our retail partners.

**What kind of reactions have you seen from retailers, more agreement and new opportunities or some resistance as well?**

The response has been overwhelmingly positive.



A growing number of our retail partners now share our commitment to responsible business practices and environmental protection. Specialist retailers in particular benefit directly from our business model, as high-quality products combined with clear values and comprehensive services ultimately lead to high customer satisfaction.

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**Whenever we have done the right thing, it has also benefited our business.”**

***Is this transformation towards a mission-driven brand ultimately a competitive advantage in the B2B market?***

For us, it is not a transformation; many of these initiatives have existed for decades and are deeply rooted in our company values. As our founder once said, ‘Whenever we have done the right thing, it has also benefited our business.’ We do not view these issues as a matter of competition, but rather as an area in which cooperation within the industry and with other partners is essential. Only by working together can we use the planet’s resources responsibly and protect the very foundation of our existence, especially in the outdoor sector.

***How do you support retailers in storytelling so that Patagonia’s values are communicated credibly at the point of sale?***

We regularly collaborate with retailers on initiatives such as film screenings about environmental issues, repair events for the local community, and climbing activities featuring our ambassadors. Retailers are an important point of contact for many of our customers, and we aim to use this opportunity to share information on topics such as Fair Trade, product repairs, and our environmental campaigns via posters and in-store displays. We want customers to get involved, which is why we provide QR codes that allow them to find out more about our work against salmon farming in Iceland and take direct action by signing petitions.



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**We take action where we can be credible and make a real contribution.”**

***Patagonia is clear about its political views, whether the issue is protecting national parks or tackling climate change. But how far should a company go in taking part in social debates?***

First and foremost, we support projects closely connected to outdoor sports that contribute to climate protection or the preservation of wild places, such as rivers, mountains and oceans. Our aim is to give a voice to the NGOs behind this work. We take action where we can be credible and make a real contribution to these projects. We believe it is important that our communication and storytelling convey positive emotions and a sense of hope, showing that everyone in the community can play a part in these important causes.



A photograph of two women in a workshop or office setting. The woman in the foreground is seen in profile, wearing glasses and a dark top. The woman in the background is also in profile, wearing glasses, a blue denim jacket, and has her hair in a bun. They are looking at a bulletin board covered with various papers, notes, and a map. A book with colorful illustrations is open on a table in the lower right corner.

# Mission: revitalising city centres

Text: Jan Schulte





Business is struggling in some German city centres, and retailers are feeling the impact. In the Sauerland region, two new initiatives are aiming to revitalise local high streets. Preliminary results suggest that these initiatives could serve as a model for other towns.



Willingen is a popular tourist destination in both summer and winter.

Things could actually be going quite well in Willingen, a small town in the Sauerland region. The local ski area has 18 slopes, which are owned by the municipality. There are hotels and a train station, and the town has plenty to attract visitors all year round. With a population of around 8,000, the town markets itself as a destination for active holidays, with hiking, mountain biking and nature exploration all forming part of its appeal. However, a conversation with André Vollbracht paints a different picture. 'We already have a number of vacant shops on our main shopping street,' he says. The problem is that this street is also the town's main traffic route, with no bypass for heavy vehicles. Consequently, lorries travel along the B251 through the centre, causing noise and congestion in the small community.

It is hardly the kind of place that encourages people to stroll or shop. Shoe retailer Vollbracht, which owns several properties in the town centre, feels the impact directly. Even the influx of tourists offers little relief. 'Most visitors only stay for a few nights, going out in the evening but hardly setting foot on the main street,' he explains.

### City centres face many challenges

It is a question that has long preoccupied local politicians, and even more so the retail sector. The restaurant trade is also increasingly concerned, as empty shops mean fewer customers in the streets and fewer people who might stop afterwards to have something to eat. There is rarely a single reason why a town centre starts to struggle. Online shopping has certainly





SHOPS ARE  
STANDING  
EMPTY, WITH  
CUSTOMERS  
STAYING  
AWAY

HOW CAN  
A TOWN  
CENTRE BE  
REVITALISED?

Conversations with local  
retailers have sparked a  
variety of new ideas.





drawn many visitors away, and having a main traffic route running straight through the centre does little to help matters. It is perhaps inevitable that shops in towns like Willingen are closing. Alternatively, a pilot project with real pioneering potential could be launched. This project, called Laden:Lokal:Labore, turns the entire centre of Willingen into a living laboratory. A second real-life laboratory is located about 30 kilometres away in Marsberg. In both towns, young entrepreneurs from the ANWR GROUP are collaborating with local authorities to revitalise the town centres. If they succeed, their approach could encourage other communities to follow suit.

### Maastricht as a role model?

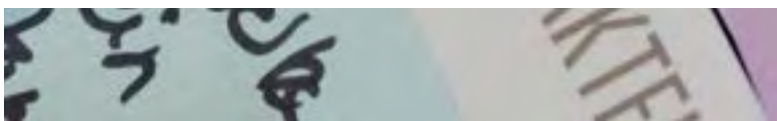
The concept was developed during a workshop in Maastricht last year. Although the Dutch city is often seen as a model for successful urban design, its circumstances make things a little easier. Maastricht sits at the crossroads of three countries and is a picturesque city that attracts large numbers of tourists. Furthermore, the Netherlands generally invests far more in public infrastructure than Germany. 'The path taken by Maastricht also has its downsides,' says Léon Gross, an urban and regional developer who organised the workshop with his colleague David Nil Morsi and now oversees the Laden:Lokal:Labore projects. For example, the city is very homogeneous, with even the size of posters strictly regulated. There is little space left for young

people to express their creativity. 'We don't want to copy Maastricht; we want to find our own way.'

The Laden:Lokal:Labore in Willingen and Marsberg are designed as spaces where different ideas can be tested. The goal is to encourage cooperation between stakeholders from retail, hospitality, culture, administration, and politics. These are cocreative projects in which collaboration among diverse participants is key. In Willingen, local retailer André Vollbracht is the main contact, and in Marsberg, Gross and Morsi are working closely with retailer David Wegener and Anja Daoudi from the Marsberg vacancy management initiative.

**“  
In urban  
development,  
anything  
is possible.”**

'Retailers are more than just their shops; they are part of the urban fabric,' says Gross. He cites many examples of creative reuse from previous projects, including in rural areas. 'In the small town of Wittenberge, for instance, an old department store was transformed into the Stadtsalon Safari, a thriving cultural venue that also serves as a workshop for community initiatives and their ideas,' he explains enthusiastically. He adds that landlords could also transform vacant spaces into event venues. 'Young people could then use them to host clothing swap parties, for example.' Admittedly, it may generate less rent, but it makes the town centre more attractive overall and helps bring it back to life.





Top: Despite having a beautiful church and a central square, Marsberg's town centre is far from lively.

Left: Politicians, retailers and restaurateurs discuss the future of the town centre.



**Willingen  
and Marsberg  
are ideal  
locations for  
the Reallabore.**



**MAKE USE  
OF STATE  
FUNDING  
PROGRAMMES**

'Retailers can be sources of ideas. In urban development, anything is possible. The only question is who takes the initiative,' says Gross.

### **City tours create space for ideas**

According to Gross, Willingen and Marsberg are ideal settings for these real-world labs. Both towns are typical medium-sized or small communities in a rural region. They are experiencing demographic change and the migration of younger generations. There are vacant



During the city tours, there was plenty to discuss.

properties and difficult traffic routes, yet also many committed people who want to make a difference. What distinguishes the two towns is this: Willingen is strongly shaped by tourism, while Marsberg is not. Marsberg is also larger and economically weaker.

### **Concrete ideas for redesigning the town centre already exist.**

To move Willingen forward, shoe retailer Vollbracht joined Gross and Morsi in organising a city tour in September. They stopped at several vacant shops along the way. 'We deliberately did not want to sit in a hotel conference room,' says Gross. The emptiness needed to be felt, and using those spaces for a meeting encouraged some retailers to get creative. During the walk, they carried a map dividing the town into different zones where





participants could make notes and record ideas: What is the problem at this crossroads, and what do we know about the owner of the property opposite? Other retailers, hotel owners, the head of the cable car company and the local economic development agency took part in the city tour. 'I would have liked to see more political representatives,' says Vollbracht. During the walk, it was noted that, while the number of vacant shops on the main street is currently manageable,

this could look very different in five years. Several shop owners will soon retire and there are no young successors. During the tour, they therefore discussed what kinds of improvements might be needed at different locations.

### Urban development is networking

'We would love to have a bypass,' says Vollbracht, knowing full well that this is rather unrealistic and would, in any case, take many years. 'But the traffic could at least be calmed.' 'Perhaps a 30 km/h zone might be possible,' he hopes, although he doesn't really believe it himself. According to Vollbracht, the tour also showed that retailers are not the only ones who see the problems. 'The hotel owners would also appreciate it if guests did not have to walk through a ghost town in the evening,' he says. They now want to explore whether they can be included in one of the state of Hesse's funding programmes. One of these, Zukunft Innenstadt (Future City Centre), has already caught Vollbracht's attention. The state would contribute up to €200,000 to a municipality that presents a strong concept for redesigning its town centre. Most importantly of all, there are already concrete ideas on the table.

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**A digital ideas hub is intended to promote shared exchange through a kind of ping-pong of ideas.”**

'Visitors are always drawn to things that reflect local character. That might be food or other regional specialties,' says Vollbracht. In Willingen, for example, there is a disused mine that visitors can explore. 'So why not create a historical trail through the town where people can scan QR codes to learn more about our history?' suggests the shoe retailer. In the end, he says, it does not matter whether the outcome is more cafés or a wooden discovery trail with carved figures, since Willingen is surrounded by forest. 'We need to create more footfall, and then everyone will do better business,' Vollbracht sums up. No one can achieve that alone, neither a single retailer nor a hotelier nor the town administration. That is why Vollbracht now wants to strengthen local networking in Willingen. 'At the moment, there is no central place to present your ideas,' he says. To change that, he is creating a website that will serve as a digital ideas hub where people can view others' proposals and add their own. 'Often something develops through shared discussion, through the ping-pong of ideas,' says Vollbracht. How fruitful these efforts will be remains to be seen, perhaps in a year or two. But if it works, Willingen could become a blueprint for many other towns and communities.









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# And then the world becomes a little better

Text: Nils Heck  
Photos: TOMS

How the shoe brand TOMS became big and well known through charitable action, and what it has to do with the ANWR Children’s Aid Foundation.

It’s the kind of story that Silicon Valley loves to tell: an entrepreneur has a revelation while travelling and creates a business model that promises to do good while making money. Blake Mycoskie has recounted his story many times. In 2006, he travelled to Argentina, played polo, learnt the tango, and met children who had no shoes. This encounter inspired him to create a company that would donate a pair of shoes for every pair sold. He called this idea ‘One for One’, and it made his brand, TOMS, famous around the world while aiming to improve the planet. The company name still carries that spirit: ‘Better Tomorrows’.

Almost twenty years later, the numbers show what that small idea has achieved. Since its foundation, TOMS has donated over 200 million US dollars’ worth of shoes and financial support to charitable organisations worldwide. According to TOMS, these efforts have positively impacted the lives of over 105 million people in 95 countries, including Germany.



Left: Becky Kent, Vice President of Impact, TOMS  
Top: Neil Urwin, General Manager, TOMS EMEA



**TOMS has had a positive impact on the lives of more than 105 million people.**







The company has also been awarded B Corporation certification, recognising its compliance with B Corp standards for transparency, accountability, and social and environmental performance.

In anticipation of TOMS' twentieth anniversary in 2026, a new collection has been launched alongside a special donation. To celebrate the tenth anniversary of its collaboration with the ANWR GROUP, TOMS is donating 10,000 euros to the ANWR Children's Aid Foundation, to which the charity will add a further 20,000 euros. Founded in 1980, the ANWR GROUP's Children's Aid initiative supports social projects that receive little or no government funding.

## **TOMS has always sought to improve the world through its products.**

The organisation's focus is on supporting children and young people with physical or mental disabilities, as well as those facing challenging circumstances. The organisation is a prime example of the commitment behind the Children's Aid initiative. TOMS has always aimed to improve the world through its products, consistently focusing on children and their future. Over the years, TOMS has supported a wide range of organisations and projects, including the Mental Health Initiative in Germany, which promotes youth mental health and works to prevent psychological illness, and the International Medical Corps, which provides medical care and training in regions affected by humanitarian crises. Today, TOMS continues to direct its donations towards areas where they can have the greatest impact, thereby supporting the future of children and young people. 'We are proud to support the wonderful work of the ANWR Children's Aid Foundation,' said Neil Urwin, TOMS EMEA's General Manager. 'It aligns perfectly with

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**We are proud to support the wonderful work of the ANWR Children's Aid Foundation.”**



our mission and reinforces our commitment to one of our key markets.' TOMS has long followed the practice of accepting donations primarily in the form of financial contributions rather than shoes. This reflects the broader changes that the company has undergone in recent times.

As an original 'One for One' company, TOMS initially attracted media attention and raised awareness of social issues. However, the brand later recognised that providing direct financial



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**Impact is  
at the heart  
of TOMS.”**



support enabled local organisations to respond more effectively and flexibly to the needs of their communities.

Today, TOMS donates a portion of its profits to support children's education, health, and well-being. This approach has a greater impact, as Becky Kent, Vice President of Impact, explains: 'Impact is at the heart of TOMS.' The same applies to the company's local and regional focus. 'The donation to the ANWR Children's Aid Foundation also reflects our ongoing commitment to local communities,' adds Kent.



# 'Collective action is key'

A word with Thomas Tiefenbacher

Interview: Ullrich Lücke

**Mr Tiefenbacher, self-interest is an integral part of retail. Everyone wants to be successful. So, when does genuine added value arise?**

Real added value for the community emerges when collaboration achieves more than any individual could alone. This creates shared visibility, strengthens resilience, enables economies of scale, and embraces social responsibility. This brings together the strengths of everyone involved to support those who need it most.

**As a part-time member of the ANWR GROUP'S executive board, can you give an example of how this is reflected in your day-to-day work?**

The desire for individual success is what drives the willingness to collaborate. This is precisely where the strength of our retail cooperative lies. Self-interest provides the motivation, the community provides the strength, and ultimately everyone benefits.

**You started out in a family-run shoe workshop before expanding into a company with over 100 years of history. What have you taken from Schuhhaus Tiefenbacher AG into your work on the ANWR GROUP'S executive board?**

Values such as responsibility, reliability, humanity and a clear, long-term perspective are important. These principles foster close relationships with customers and employees, build trust, and establish a solid foundation for a stable and meaningful corporate culture.

**What personal values do you bring to your role at the ANWR GROUP?**

Integrity, commitment, empathy, loyalty and an open mind are all values that are extremely important to me.

**What plans, goals and topics would you personally like to drive forward on the executive board?**

It is particularly important to me that our cooperative continues to offer its affiliated retailers clear prospects for the future and supports them in achieving their goals. From my Swiss perspective, I am also strongly focused on the internationalisation of the group's offerings and services.

**What role does collective action play in this?**

In the face of growing challenges, collective action is crucial for the future. Industry boundaries should not matter. For me, sharing knowledge, pooling strengths and learning from one another are central motivations in my work on the executive board.

**Let's move on to some personal questions. Which two pairs of shoes are indispensable in your everyday life?**

It's almost impossible to narrow it down to just two! It's the variety that makes it so fascinating. As my father used to say, every shoe sold is a beautiful shoe.

**What are the three things you could never be without?**

Good shoes, delicious food enjoyed in good company, and my motorbike, which allows me to clear my head when I ride through the mountain passes.

A portrait of Thomas Tiefenbacher, a middle-aged man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark blue blazer over a light blue shirt. He is sitting on a set of wooden stairs, leaning forward with his hands clasped. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with more stairs and some foliage.

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**Thomas Tiefenbacher**

CEO and co-owner of Schuhhaus Tiefenbacher AG, Dietikon (Switzerland) since 1995.

Positions within the ANWR GROUP:

- Part-time member of the ANWR GROUP eG executive board since 1 July 2025
- Member of the Board of Directors of ANWR GARANT SWISS AG since 2004
- Member of the ANWR GROUP eG supervisory board from 2015 to May 2025.
- Member of the Supervisory Board of DZB BANK GmbH from 2016 to May 2025.





# Where do cooperatives originate from?

Text: Lukas Homrich



The cooperative idea emerged in response to social hardship. Its history demonstrates why it is needed now more than ever.

In everyday life, we are surrounded by cooperatives, although many people are unaware of this fact. We wake up in apartments built by housing cooperatives, charge our electric cars with energy produced by cooperative wind farms, withdraw money from cooperative banks, shop at cooperative supermarkets, buy products made by cooperative farmers and processors, and receive treatment from cooperative medical associations.

This is the result of a centuries-long success story that continues to this day. 'Cooperatives first emerged during the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century, a time marked by social hardship and a lack of solidarity,' explains Theresia Theurl, Director of the Institute for Cooperative Studies at the University of Münster. At that time,

large numbers of people were moving from the countryside to the cities, which were unprepared for such an influx. The result was a housing shortage, widespread unemployment and poverty. Under these conditions, it was almost impossible for most people to establish a livelihood because they lacked capital. 'Most had no access to credit,' says Theurl. 'There were banks for landowners and wealthy citizens, but not for ordinary people.' They had to rely on private moneylenders, who often charged exorbitant interest rates.



Those affected in the local communities and the church refused to accept this situation. When state support for cooperative credit banks failed to materialise following the German Revolution of 1848–49, craftsmen and farmers decided to take matters into their own hands. In 1849, Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen founded a charitable association that organised the purchase of livestock for farmers who could not afford it. A few months later, Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch established the Delitzsch Loan Association to provide loans to craftsmen. The principle was the same then as it is today. The central goal is supporting members, for example through collective purchasing at fair prices. Members provide the capital, and profit is not the aim. If there is any, it is reinvested.

Every member has one vote, regardless of what they contribute. In other words, it's a case of shared ownership, shared decision-making and shared benefits.

### Cooperatives are more relevant than ever

These pioneers made the advantages of the cooperative visible to everyone. 'People were suddenly able to build a livelihood through the help of others,' says Theurl. This led to greater social stability and economic momentum in structurally weak regions. Over the following decades, the cooperative principle spread across the country to other professions and was officially enshrined in law with the Cooperative Societies Act of 1868.

### **The aim is to solve the problems of independent members by collaborating.**

Since then, the success of cooperatives has been unstoppable. At the beginning of the 20th century, there were more than 22,000 active credit cooperatives in Germany, with over 2.6 million mem-

bers. Today, almost 7,000 cooperatives bring together over 22 million members nationwide. More than one million people are engaged in cooperative work across a variety of sectors, including banking, energy, housing, retail, and services.

The aim has always been to solve the problems of independent members by collaborating. 'Cooperatives didn't just appear out of nowhere. They were founded by people negatively affected by change,' says expert Theresia Theurl. 'They took their destiny into their own hands.' This applies not only to the problems faced by the first cooperative members, but also to modern challenges such as climate change, the shortage of affordable housing, the provision of services in rural areas, the dominance of large platform companies and the crisis facing healthcare systems.

Cooperatives can help to expand renewable energy, run village shops, build socially responsible platforms, and organise independent care services. They are also inherently sustainable because they must finance their own investments. 'Cooperatives must think long-term,' says Theurl. 'They are built to last.' This is why UN Secretary-General António Guterres describes cooperatives as 'a solution to many of the global challenges of our time', as they make a vital contribution to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. A good idea never gets old.



Scan the QR code  
to find out more



# Is your head spinning? Let ANNI do the thinking.

Text: Julia Post

ANWR's network intelligence makes life easier. It finds ideas, plans and conducts research. Here are five examples of how ANNI can support you in your day-to-day business.



## What makes ANNI better than any other AI?

- **Simple and efficient:** ANNI knows you, your store and the ANWR.
- **Secure:** ANNI is a closed system, unlike ChatGPT. This guarantees that no information leaves the network.
- **Specialised:** ANNI understands retail and the ANWR Group inside out.

## ANNI is evolving every day. Have you seen these new ANNI features?

- Talk to ANNI – no typing needed!
- Ask ANNI to send you a summary of your personal activities via email.
- Send ANNI a photo, e.g. of a poster, and receive improvement suggestions.

Coming soon: ANNI creates personalised sales reports and analyses your bestsellers.

## Ask ANNI, for example:

Create an apprenticeship job advert and publish it on [easy@jobs](mailto:easy@jobs) for me.

**Soon it will be time to place orders. How should I structure my limit planning optimally?**

**Can you provide an assessment of supplier XY and their terms and conditions?**

How could this event poster be improved to attract more visitors?

What would a cool Instagram post about Sunday shopping look like, and how could it be implemented?

**By the way:**  
**Our RETAIL BEATS festival is taking place again on 25 and 26 June 2026. If you want to know more, ANNI can fill you in.**





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*Die Spendenquittung kommt bis Januar  
vom ANWR Kinderhilfe e.V.*

#### Kontakt TOMS Germany:

TOMS Showroom SOC / B10:  
An der Pönt 45, 40885 Ratingen, DE  
sales.de@toms.com

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TOMS ist mehr als nur Schuhe – das Unternehmen hat es sich zur Aufgabe gemacht, Leben zu verbessern. Als zertifiziertes B Corp™-Unternehmen spendet TOMS einen Teil des Gewinns.

[www.TOMS.com](http://www.TOMS.com)





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# Das ANWR Zukunftsfestival

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