

Göttingen's new ESG - criteria to exclude nuclear weapons

In May 2017, the city of Göttingen adopted new [investment guidelines](#) that regulate the city's investment funds prohibiting investments in "military weapons." Other environmental, social and governance criteria included in the divestment policy (i.e. composing the investment 'negative list') are nuclear and other climate-damaging energy producers, companies involved in child labour and severe cases of corruption and bribery. The new guidelines apply also for the [city's pension reserve fund and several foundations](#), amounting to around 80 Million Euro.

The divestment decision was undertaken in response to a public campaign by [Fossil Free Göttingen](#) which is part of a [global fossil fuel divestment mobilisation](#). The decision to also promote divestment from military weapons was based on a strong view amongst campaigners that public investments should not be detrimental to security and sustainability as a whole. The new Göttingen investment guidelines are based on the United Nations' [Brundtland-Commission](#), which notes that:

Among the dangers facing the environment, the possibility of nuclear war is undoubtedly the gravest. Certain aspects of the issues of peace and security bear directly upon the concept of sustainable development. The whole notion of security as traditionally understood in terms of political and military threats to national sovereignty - must be expanded to include the growing impacts of environmental stress - locally, nationally, regionally, and globally. There are no military solutions to 'environmental insecurity'.

The existence of nuclear weapons and the destructive potential inherent in the velocity and intensity of modern conventional warfare have given rise to a new understanding of the requirements for security among nations. In the nuclear age nations can no longer obtain security at each other's expense. They must seek security through cooperation, agreements, and mutual restraint; they must seek common security

As in some other German cities' divestment decisions, the implementation of the guidelines with respect to weapons systems leaves room for some interpretation as there is no clear legal definition of the term 'military weapons'. However, a guide for such interpretation could be [Article 26 Section 2 of the German Constitution](#) which defines 'weapons of war'. This definition includes nuclear weapons and dedicated nuclear weapons delivery systems.

Other items on the *Göttingen City investment negative list* are genetically manipulated organisms (plants and seeds), animal testing and fracking. The finance department of the city is tasked with the evaluation and monitoring of the investments.
