A website covering politics, health, and gender that has published false claims about climate change and the COVID-19 virus.

Ownership and Financing

The website is owned by Michael Klein and Heike Diefenbach, who are based in Wales. Klein and Diefenbach also own the consulting agency Textconsulting.net, which offers “expertise on scientific work,” according to its website.

Klein and Diefenbach are outspoken critics of efforts to curb climate change and of the academic field of gender studies.

The site runs advertisements, solicits donations, and links to an online-shop that sells clothing and other merchandise.

Content

ScienceFiles.org’s tagline reads “critical social sciences” (“kritische Sozialwissenschaften”). “The two characteristics that make up the ‘spirit’ of this blog are: critical thinking and methodical work, which together make up or should make up ‘science,’” the site’s Manifesto (Grundsatzprogramm) page states. “In our view of science,” the mission statement continues, “there is only critical science or no science at all: If it is not critical, then it is something else, for example propaganda...”

The site primarily covers German politics, health, and gender. Articles often focus on alleged censorship by established German media organizations or are critical of mainstream science, including the consensus that global warming poses a threat to humanity.

The site also frequently criticizes gender equality and gender studies. For example, the Gender Ideology (Gender Ideologie) page describes a ScienceFiles project that aims to rate all German universities to determine their “degree of infiltration with genderism (Genderismus).” According to the site, “a university that tolerates two, three, four or even five professorships for Gender Studies in its halls cannot be assumed to still have rudimentary forms of academia and rational interest in knowledge.”
Typical articles have run under headlines including “List of scientists who think man-made climate change is a hoax” (“Liste der Wissenschaftler, die menschengemachten Klimawandel für Humbug halten”); “Censorship networks: the climate change mafia at work” (“Zensur-Netzwerke: Die Klimawandel-Mafia bei der Arbeit”); and “The responsibility of the German Greens for the locust plague in Kenya and East Africa” (“Die Verantwortung der deutschen Grünen für die Heuschreckenplage in Kenia und Ostafrika”).

Registered users have access to discussion forums.

Articles on the site do not typically include original reporting. Instead, the site often relies on information from other news outlets — including Frankfurter Rundschau, ARD, and CNN — with added commentary. Articles also regularly cite Wikipedia (a crowd-sourced site) as well as sites such as CGTN that NewsGuard has found to be unreliable.

ScienceFiles.org itself has published false and misleading information. For example, a February 2020 article titled “Chinese scientists: Origin of SARS–COV–2 in a laboratory - is conspiracy theory after all the truth?” (“Chinesische Wissenschaftler: Labor Ursprung von SARS–COV–2 – Verschwörungstheorie doch die Wahrheit?”) stated that the COVID-19 virus “is said to have originated in a Chinese laboratory.” Referring to a not yet peer-reviewed paper by two Chinese scientists, the article claimed, “There is a new scientific paper whose Chinese authors now believe that [the virus] originated in a Chinese laboratory near the Huanan fish market,” adding, “One must increasingly get the impression that neither the WHO nor the Chinese authorities are telling the truth.”

The article further cited one other, not peer-reviewed, study as evidence that the virus originated in a lab, which has also been withdrawn by its authors.

There is no reliable evidence supporting the claim that the new strain of coronavirus came from a lab. A March 2020 study published in the journal Nature Medicine concluded that the virus “is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus.” A February 2020 study in the journal Nature found that the COVID-19 virus is “96% percent identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus.”
The only evidence cited by the two Chinese scientists that the coronavirus outbreak could have originated from the laboratory was the proximity of the facility to food markets in Wuhan, according to fact-checking organization FullFact.org. The article by the two Chinese scientists was removed from ResearchGate, the website where it first appeared, after only a few days.

Asked about this article, the site’s co-owner, Michael Klein, told NewsGuard in an email: “We report what the two Chinese scientists have found out in their scientific work. If you think that this is an ‘unfounded claim’ or even a ‘false claim,’ then you should reconsider their terminology.” He also stated that it was “still unclear where SARS-CoV-2 comes from,” and asked, “Did you study microbiology? If not, please keep your rash and uninformed judgments to yourself.”

A February 2020 article titled “10 years of Climategate: The climate fraud continues unabated” (“10 Jahre Climategate: Der Klima-Betrug geht unvermindert weiter”) stated that climate change is not caused by human activity. Referencing a leak of emails from scientists at the Climate Research Unit of the U.K.’s University of East Anglia in 2009, the article claimed that “the emails painted the picture of a corrupt, conspiratorial group of scientists who, with falsified and manipulated data, with models created to produce a certain result, not to predict something, want to make the world believe that there is global warming attributable to human activity.”

While the leak of emails by scientists at East Anglia did “show a few scientists in a bad light, being rude or dismissive,” an investigation into the matter by FactCheck.org found, it did not prove that research on man-made climate change is false. “[T]here’s still plenty of evidence that the earth is getting warmer and that humans are largely responsible,” FactCheck.org stated.

Multiple scientific studies and government agencies have concluded for years that the world’s temperatures are rising, attributing the increase to rising carbon dioxide levels that are caused at least in part by human activities. The German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety
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Because ScienceFiles.org has frequently published inaccurate or misleading information, NewsGuard has determined that the site repeatedly publishes false news and deceptive headlines, and that it does not gather and present information responsibly.

The site does not disclose a political or ideological agenda and frequently includes opinion in news articles.

For example, a March 2020 article titled “Pandemic profiteers: publicly manipulated into communism” (“Pandemie-Gewinnler: öffentlich-rechtlich in den Kommunismus manipuliert”) stated that “The impiety and callousness with which left-wing extremists are currently trying to exploit the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic for their own purposes leaves even us speechless.”

Another March 2020, titled “Exploitation of children and word-wars about alleged refugees” (“Kinder-Instrumentalisation und Sprachschlachten um angeblich Geflüchtete”) said of the young climate activist Greta Thunberg: “Climate Greta is an outstanding example of the exploitation of not only children, but also sick children. Infants are almost as good as sick children.”

A February 2020 article titled “Basic pension: Cheers old age! Federal ministry in contempt of its citizens” (“Grundrente: Prost Alter! Bundesministerium übt sich in Bürgerverachtung”) stated, “[T]oo often what comes out of federal ministries turns out to be simply nonsense, grown on a bed of ignorance, fertilized with hubris and treated with flippancy.”

Because ScienceFiles.org does not disclose a conservative agenda and yet frequently includes opinionated statements in news articles advancing that perspective, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Asked about the site’s lack of disclosure regarding its political orientation, Klein told NewsGuard that “we are critical rationalists, who all studied with [Austrian British philosopher] KR Popper, so the orientation with LIBERAL should be very clear. Otherwise, there is a publication of ours that deals with liberalism and science, read the publication and you know who you are dealing with.”
ScienceFiles.org does not articulate a corrections policy, and NewsGuard did not find corrections on the site.

Asked about the site’s approach to corrections, Klein said, “I am not familiar with the customs regarding corrections. If someone points out a mistake to us and the mistake that was pointed out turns out to be a mistake, then we correct the mistake.” He added, “I could point out corrections to you, but I will not do so, because that is your job, not mine. There are two of them, so much as a hint, two in seven years.”

Klein did not provide these two corrections and NewsGuard was unable to find them.

The site does not include an Imprint page disclosing its ownership. The site does not identify any editorial leaders. The Contact page lists a general email address and includes a contact form.

Asked about the site’s lack of disclosure regarding ownership and editorial leadership, Klein said: “Whoever reads us should base his judgement on the facts presented by us, not on our person. An imprint has no influence on the quality of the posts, as you can easily see on the many miserable sites with an imprint.”

Articles are typically credited to Klein. However, the site provides no contact or biographical information for Klein, or any of its other content creators.

Asked about the site’s lack of content creator information, Klein told NewsGuard that the site had “a number of scientists from Germany working with us who do not wish to be named.”

Advertisements are distinguished from editorial content.

According to a February 2016 article on the site, ScienceFiles.org was launched in April 2011.

Written by: Karin König
Edited by: Marie Richter, Eric Effron, Florian Meißen

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Ownership and Financing

https://www.preussische-allgemeine.de/nachrichten/artikel/alternative-fakten-sind-gut.html
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https://www.textconsulting.net/
https://sciencefiles.org/unser-forschungsprojekt/
https://sciencefiles.org/publikationen/
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Heike_Diefenbach2

Content

https://sciencefiles.org/grundsatzprogramm/
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https://sciencefiles.org/2020/02/22/peer-review-ist-wie-lotterie-spielen-nur-unzuverlassiger/
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Example headlines:
https://sciencefiles.org/2020/03/10/liste-der-wissenschaftler-die-menschengemachten-klimawandel-fur-humbug-halten/
https://sciencefiles.org/2020/03/05/zensur-netzwerke-die-klimawandel-mafia-bei-der-arbeit/
https://sciencefiles.org/2020/03/02/die-verantwortung-der-deutschen-gruene-fur-die-hauschreckenplage-in-kenia-und-ostafrika/

Credibility

https://sciencefiles.org/2020/03/08/frankfurter-rundschau-die-freude-am-tod-der-ander
https://sciencefiles.org/2019/10/05/papier-das-nachste-opfer-der-klimahysterie-elegie-uber-die-nichtrecherchierende-zunft/

Climate change:
https://sciencefiles.org/2020/02/03/10-jahre-climategate-der-klima-betrug-geht-unvermindert-weiter/?highlight=climategate
https://www.bmu.de/themen/klima-energie/klimaschutz/wissenschaftliche-grundlagen/#c9381
https://www.factcheck.org/2009/12/climategate/

Coronavirus:
https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-020-2012-7
https://fullfact.org/health/coronavirus-government-laboratory/
https://www.statnews.com/2020/02/03/retraction-faulty-coronavirus-paper-good-moment-for-science/

Australian bushfires:

Unlabelled commentary
https://sciencefiles.org/2020/03/02/kinder-instrumentalisierung-und-sprachschlachten-um-angeblich-gefluchtete/

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