

Brussels, 17 June 2011

## **ZDF's future Director-General elected by Television Council**

Ruprecht Polenz: "In Thomas Bellut we have chosen an excellent media manager as our next Director-General."

ZDF's governing body, the Television Council, met in Berlin on Friday 17 to elect the next Director-General (Intendant). The public-service broadcaster's new leader is to be the present Director of Programming, Thomas Bellut (56). Of the 73 council members, 70 voted for Bellut, with just one vote against and two abstentions. This result far exceeds the required majority of 47 votes, i.e. three fifths of the statutory membership of the 77-strong body.

Chair of the Television Council (Fernsehrat), Ruprecht Polenz, welcomed this clear expression of support for Bellut: "I proposed to the council today that we choose the incumbent Director of Programming to succeed Markus Schächter. Having sounded out members' views in advance, I was confident that he would receive the necessary majority. We have known Bellut for many years and are in a very good position to judge his qualities as a manager and programming planner. He is one of this country's really outstanding media managers. He stands for the values of public-service broadcasting and for independent journalism. The clear result of the ballot reflects the appreciation of his special strengths by a body that is pluralistic and likes to express its views. I wish Mr. Bellut good luck and every success in tackling the major challenges that lie ahead for him and ZDF. He can certainly count on the Television Council for our critical and constructive support for his work."

Thomas Bellut will not succeed the incumbent Director-General, Markus Schächter, until March 15, 2012. Professor Schächter had announced in January that he would not be putting himself forward again for another period of office. Among the reasons he gave for this decision, Markus Schächter said that ten years in office amounted to a perfect timeframe in which to define objectives, build a team and then achieve those objectives in practice.

The Director-General of ZDF is chosen for a period of five years by means of a secret ballot of the members of the 77-strong ZDF Television Council. The state treaty governing ZDF requires that a minimum of three fifths of votes by the statutory membership – i.e. at least 47 – be received by the successful candidate.

The Director-General represents ZDF in all judicial and extrajudicial matters. He oversees all ZDF's business, including programme-making and programming. The Director-General appoints, with the agreement of the Supervisory Board (Verwaltungsrat), the Director of Programming, the Editor-in-Chief, the Director of Administration and, from among these executives, a deputy to take over in his absence.

The list of ZDF's director-generals to date includes: Prof. Dr. Karl Holzamer (1962 to 1977), Karl Günther von Hase (1977 to 1982), Prof. Dr. h.c. Dieter Stolte (1982 to 2002) and Prof. Markus Schächter (since 2002).



### **Dr. Thomas Bellut**

Born in Osnabrück on March 8, 1955, Thomas Bellut has been Director of Programming at ZDF since December 2002. The journalist, who holds a doctorate in Political Science, had previously worked on ZDF's home affairs coverage for ten years, first as the senior producer for special programmes and the "blickpunkt" magazine and, from 1997, as head of the Home Affairs Department. In that period he was also on camera presenting ZDF's election specials, crisis specials, trends surveys (Politbarometer), news backgrounders (ZDF-spezial) and interview-based formats (Was nun, ...?).

Thomas Bellut began his career in journalism in 1983 at the daily newspaper "Westfälische Nachrichten" before moving one year later to ZDF to learn television journalism, first of all working on the regional current affairs programme "Länderspiegel". Later, he moved to Berlin as a political correspondent. However, he returned to the Mainz headquarters to work directly under the Director of Programming and later developed new programme formats like "Familienmagazin" and "Reiselust".

Thomas Bellut is married and has two children.