

Consistently Social. For Democracy and Peace.

Federal Election Programme 2009

DIE LINKE.

Table of Contents

1. A Protective Shield for People	4
2. Focusing on the Social Interests of the People	6
2.1. Good work!.....	7
2.2. Shape the economy.....	9
2.3. Remodel society ecologically.....	11
2.4. Democratisation of democracy.....	13
2.5. Multifaceted and reliable – reinforce all lifestyles	14
2.6. Venture more unity.....	15
2.7. Social security: solidarity rather than privatisation.....	17
Good pensions.....	17
Health and solidarity-based citizen's insurance.....	18
Prevent unemployment, strengthen unemployment insurance, realign labour market policy, abolish Hartz IV, introduce a guaranteed minimum income.....	19
Ensure affordable housing	20
2.8. Exclude no one – policy of social equality.....	21
2.9. For a socially equitable tax reform.....	22
3. For a Just Society Open to the Future	23
3.1. The backbone of society – public services and utilities	24
3.2. Democratic education reform – education for all from the beginning	25
3.3. Science, research and productivity for tomorrow's mode of production and way of life	27
3.4. Formulating a digital media policy for more democracy	28
3.5. Safeguard the cultural foundations of a dialogue-capable, just society	29
3.6. Without equality, democracy remains incomplete.....	30
4. Protecting Democracy and Fundamental Rights.....	31
4.1. Constitutional state and social state – alternatives to the security state.....	32
4.2. Protection from gender-specific violence.....	33
4.3. Protect civil rights	34
4.4. The humanity of a society is measured by its treatment of people in need.....	35
4.5. Resolutely confront the enemies of democracy	36
4.6. Rely more on the citizens	37
5. Peace and Justice – World-wide!	38
5.1. Development needs justice	38
5.2. Global solutions require global cooperation	40
5.3. German foreign policy: Implement a peace policy!.....	41
5.4. Germany in Europe: for a social, democratic and peaceful European Union	42
6. Consistently Social. For Democracy and Peace.....	43

Resolution of the Bundestag Election Party Congress
of the DIE LINKE party, July 20 and 21 2009 in Berlin

1. A Protective Shield for People

"Neoliberal market fundamentalism has always been a political doctrine serving certain special interests. It has never been corroborated by economic theory, nor by historical experience."

Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel laureate and former chief economist of the World Bank, July 2008

Many men and women who cast their ballots on September 27 will do so with anxiety and a heavy heart. They are worried about their future, are anxious about their jobs, their incomes, their apprenticeships, their pensions. Many of them are angered by and disenchanted with neoliberal policy and the capitalist system. They need a protective shield to save their jobs, wages and welfare benefits.

At least as important, we need a radical about-face in environmental policy. It has been clear at least since the UN released its climate report that we will destroy our habitat if we do not take action immediately. The economic crisis and the ecological crisis are closely intertwined. Here too, profit is pitched against common sense and the interests of the population at large. We need a protective shield for the environment, to halt the increase in temperatures and to prevent the destruction of the environment.

Capitalism has plunged the world into the most severe financial and economic crisis in 80 years. Trade and business dealings are collapsing all over the world. And everywhere it is the poorest of the poor who suffer. Global capitalism is less capable than ever of ensuring relatively bearable conditions for a life in dignity. The policy of social cutbacks, deregulation and privatization, of unfettered financial markets, of the one-sided focus on exports and neglect of purchasing power and internal markets – this policy generates profits for the few on the backs of and at the expense of the majority of the population.

Just two examples to show with how little regard for human life this system functions: Speculation in commodities drives up wheat and rice prices. This causes millions more people to go hungry, and their hunger makes tens of thousands of speculators rich. Here in Germany, financial investors have taken over flourishing enterprises, eviscerated them for the sake of maximum profits and left ruins behind. Wrong-headed free market radicals have only two things on their minds: The market rules. Profits must be high and quick.

Capitalism has produced a society in which the powers that be have made virtues of greed, avarice, egotism and irresponsibility. Their representatives have wrecked the economy. They must not be allowed to run the country any longer. They are not prepared to draw the lessons from the failure of their dogmas. The Deutsche Bank continues to see returns of 25 per cent as its essential business goal.

Market radicalism has failed. In their practical policies, the other parties stand for "more of the same" in principle and for changes in the details: closing a few tax havens, scolding naughty managers, reigning in the financial markets a bit, no new beginning in sight.

People are very worried, and rightly so, that the measures taken by the Federal Government are too little to protect the jobs and incomes of millions of people. The areas in which women work are totally absent from the focus of these measures.

The question of who will ultimately pay for the billion-Euro packages is left open by the other parties. They do not want to present the bill to the citizens until after the election.

We take people's fears of losing their jobs and of further exclusion and impoverishment seriously. We give voice to their anger, we provide them with the assurance that things need not be this way. DIE LINKE is the only party that stands up together with the trade unions, social organizations and social movements for social protection for the majority of

society. We have put the social question back on the parliamentary agenda. The equation applies: the stronger DIE LINKE the more caring our country.

The current crisis is more than just a cyclical crisis. Many factors are coming together that have accumulated in the past decades behind the unbridled greed for profit: financial market meltdown, a profound global recession, gradual destruction of the environment, climate change and energy crisis as well as growing social polarisation. The crisis will not be over in a few months. The decisive question is not, and has not been for a long time, whether the state will take a share in the economy but in whose interest, with what objectives and at whose expense.

Injustice has increased in the country. For two decades the powers that be in politics and business have pursued a single goal: the wages of dependent employees had to sink – and sink they did. The taxes on the wealthy and the big corporations had to sink – and sink they did. Their profits, however, had to rise – and rise they did. The top twenty per cent became richer, the bottom fifty per cent poorer. Public facilities are in a pitiable state. One child in seven lives in poverty; in eastern Germany the figure is one in four. Two out of five single mothers live in poverty. Our education system is in poor condition and is profoundly unfair. The rich are busy turning their large fortunes into larger fortunes. In 2006, private financial assets in Germany totalled 4.5 billion euros; the bottom fifty per cent of the population owns almost none of it, the upper twenty per cent almost all of it. These private fortunes became the fuel for the rocketing investment funds, the hedge funds, for the world power that is the financial sector. Because such funds accumulated billions of euros, they acquired power over political decision-making. Their Anlage investment wishes became commands even for powerful governments. This way of doing business was very harmful to the manufacturing industry; its foundations were undermined. Stable companies were literally plundered, too little research was done and too little thought was given to new markets and new products.

The current crisis is the crisis of an economic system that produces solely for profit. In the last ten years in particular the governments have placed themselves at the service of capital. Wage dumping came to a head with Agenda 2010. For the first time since 1945, wages were cut during a business upswing. This was not just the pinnacle of social injustice, it also ushered in the economic crisis as early as in the spring of 2008 by weakening domestic demand. Wage dumping and the concomitant redistribution, indeed the dispossession of people in Germany and around the world are ultimately responsible for the inflated financial markets. The casino capitalists have been gambling with our money. A financial system that sinks billions in speculative Ponzi schemes instead of funding genuine investments declares itself historically bankrupt.

Capitalism is not just socially unjust and a driving force in global warming. It is also hostile to the economy. Commercial enterprises that curtail wages, eliminate jobs and reduce investments and research even during a business boom so as to distribute the highest possible dividends to their shareholders reduce growth and distributable wealth. Capitalism is destroying the middle classes and causing the extreme concentration of income. It is thereby bringing about the systematic malfunctioning of the economy, the generation of huge over-capacities and serious under-supply. Menacing global imbalances are also emerging. The result is the massive destruction of production and productivity, of jobs and prosperity, of innovation and creativity.

The deep social division in Germany is not bad luck but the result of policies, those of the Greens, the Liberals, the Social Democrats, the Conservatives. They adopted the laws that make it all possible. We are doing all this because we want to help you, they said. Once the work done by people is cheap and the taxes of the corporations and the well-to-do are low, there will be enough growth and jobs for everyone. The big promise turned out to be a big rip-off.

We are faced with a clear alternative: Either a returns-oriented model of society prevails, that is, the politicians and the State clear away the shambles left behind by the free market radicals and the population pays the bill,

or we fight for and win the transition to a different society in which the focus is on the needs of the people. The time has come for real alternatives.

Those who want to fight the current crisis will have to take urgent measures to

- safeguard jobs with a Future Fund and create new jobs with a public investment programme,
- reconsolidate the social security systems and reinforce public ownership,
- introduce a tax on millionaires, nationalise the banks and grant government assistance only in exchange for equivalent ownership interests and decision-making powers for government and personnel.

DIE LINKE stands for a new beginning. The interests of the gainfully employed and the vast majority of society are basically better served in a different economic order, an economic order that would gradually overcome capitalism, build on public and employee ownership in key branches of the economy and make market regulation of production and distribution a part of the social and political responsibility of democratic institutions.

This will succeed if many millions of men and women press for it in enterprises and administrations, in demonstrations, mass protests and strikes. DIE LINKE wants an alliance for social progress in Germany.

We have learned from the history of the labour movement. The social questions and the question of democracy each have their own value. Those values must never again be played off against each other. That is the foundation for a democratic socialism.

In its 2009 federal election programme, DIE LINKE presents its proposals for what needs to be changed in the coming years. We are convinced that a better order of relationships is possible with our proposals, one in which property does indeed serve the public weal.

2. Focusing on the Social Interests of the People

"The capitalist economic system has served neither the state's nor the German people's vital interests."

CDU, Ahlen Programme 1947

Finance capitalism has failed. The policy underlying it has failed as well. After the collapse of this system of enrichment, Union and SPD provided ailing banks with hundreds of billions of euros of tax money without getting anything in return. It is uncertain whether enough resources are left after the bank rescue to protect jobs and incomes. The full force of the effects of the crisis on the labour market will be felt in autumn and winter. Only then will we see how massive the financial pressure on the social welfare systems has been. General warranties for pensions, unemployment insurance, and sickness and care insurance will not be enough. If we want to redeem those warranties we cannot avoid fundamental changes in the financial and economic system and the taxation system. If we want to preserve jobs, incomes and the welfare state with the least possible losses resulting from the crisis we must be ready and able to reverse the redistribution of wealth from bottom to top and from public to private hands – so that the burdens of the crisis do not encumber the public budgets for decades, so that new jobs can be created, so that the social cohesion of the society is restored and so that the necessary decisions are made about the future economic structure.

We therefore want to increase taxes on large incomes, large inheritances and corporate

profits. A stock exchange turnover tax must be introduced. The wealth tax must be re-imposed as a millionaires' tax. To ensure that the state is not crushed by the burdens of the crisis, that it remains able to function, and that ambitious investment programmes can be funded, we want to impose an annual millionaires' tax of five per cent on all private fortunes exceeding one million euros.

From 2009 on, we want an annual 100 billion euro public investment programme to be used for education, climate protection, transit, health and an energy shift. Of that sum, about 18 billion euros more must be invested annually in education by the federal and Land governments. A future fund endowed with 100 billion euros is available to enterprises that want to develop socially and ecologically in products and processes. Thus two million additional jobs paid at the standard union rate are to be created altogether, including one million on the Scandinavian model in public services – especially in the fields of childcare, education, health, social services, sports and culture. We want to stop the privatisation of public property and reverse it in important cases. Energy combines and hospitals belong in the public sphere. Nationalising the banks is the order of the day, so that they can predictably concentrate once more on their main tasks: providing the economy and the general populace with loans and offering different no-risk ways of building up savings.

DIE LINKE supports the struggle of the trade unions and social organisations in the "Bündnis soziales Deutschland" (Alliance Social Germany) for an immediate increase in the standard rates for Hartz IV recipients. For the next legislative period we are calling for it to be increased to 500 euros. A universal minimum living wage on the French model must be introduced and increased to ten euros in the next legislative period.

Only when domestic economic activity is revived through higher wages, higher social benefits and public investments can the existing dangerously one-sided dependence of the national economy on exports be mitigated.

Overcoming the crises – setting a new course. That is the requirement for the coming years in the labour market, in the economic structure, in technology, in the social welfare systems.

2 1.Good work!

"Anyone who contemplates separating culture from work is a fool."

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

The labour market will be dominated in the coming months by growing unemployment and people's fear of losing their jobs. Government must take countermeasures and make adjustments in labour market policy. But action must also be taken to prevent the crisis affecting the labour market from leading to a new round of blackmail of personnel and prevent the further spread of bad jobs. What is needed is a boom in good jobs.

Every woman and every man has a right to a good job, to decently paid gainful employment that makes it possible to have a living income and to share in the wealth of society. A job that does not make them ill. But what we have is the opposite, and fewer and fewer employees are represented by a works council or employees' committee and protected by collective agreements.

Since the time of the SPD/Green government, labour leasing, temporary employment and mini-jobs have increased dramatically. More and more people are working for meagre wages: five to six million receive an hourly wage of less than 7.50 euros, and even wages below five euros are not rare. The number of long-term unemployed remains high. Women's wages are about twenty-five per cent lower than men's. Wages are especially low in the eastern part of Germany, where the unemployment rate is twice as high as in the west. Migrant men and women are particularly often forced to work for scandalous wages. After years of falling real wages, we now need substantial increases in average income once again. The state itself needs to do something as well. The federal, state and local governments must significantly increase their investments within the framework of social and ecological sustainability. In the past few years, hundreds of thousands of full-time public service jobs have been done away with. The trend must be stopped and reversed.

We need to expand social services on the Scandinavian model, especially in the fields of childcare, education, health, social services, sports and culture. This requirement should be coupled with publicly sponsored employment for the jobless. One-euro jobs have to be converted into union wage jobs.

DIE LINKE demands:

- close the gateways to low wages: equal pay for equal work for women and men, for employees in east and west; no time limits in work contracts without explicit reasons; mandatory social insurance for every hour worked; protection of vocational qualification in the case of unemployment;
- strictly limit labour leasing and push it back by means of equal working conditions and equal pay plus flexibility bonus; limit the maximum leasing period to six months with co-determination of works councils; prohibit temporary employment with labour leasing firms and the use of their employees as strike-breakers;
- ensure, by means of clear legal definitions and effective controls and sanctions, that enterprises do not pressure employees into quasi-self-employment or convert workplaces into quasi-self-employment;
- end the blackmailing of employees: expand protection from dismissal and abolish Hartz IV; enact effective legislation against workplace harassment; put an end to spying on employees; enact effective employee personal data protection legislation;
- make the granting of government contracts dependent on adherence to social and ecological criteria: payment of standard wages or a statutory minimum wage; equal treatment of women and men; promotion and equal access of persons with disabilities and persons with immigrant backgrounds; adherence to the core labour standards of the ILO;
- introduce a country-wide statutory minimum wage on the French model that will be increased to ten euros in the next legislative period and will grow yearly by an amount at least equivalent to the increase in the cost of living; declare higher minimum standard wages in the industries concerned to be universally binding; facilitate the declaration of universal applicability even without the approval of the employers' associations;
- reduce statutory maximum working hours to a regular 40 hours a week; together with the trade unions, implement the 35-hour week and other agreed reductions in working hours without loss of pay; with legally enforceable staffing and function plans, enable works councils and employees' committees to implement considerably more employment and less pressure to perform; establish an enforceable right of initiative of works councils to bring about personnel recruitment;
- ensure good training: introduce a training levy in the dual system; determine training remuneration in all cases through collective bargaining; place extra-company and inter-company courses of training on a par with company courses; expand juvenile labour protection and reinforce youth representation;
- clear legal boundaries between employment and training relationships: ensure career entry through regular labour contracts; remunerate practical training at the rate of at least 300 euros per month;
- make work humane and family-friendly: reinforce the rights of employees with children (protection from dismissal, working hours, overtime); shorten working hours for full-time employees; promote working hours models by which gainful employment, family work and individual lifestyle are better harmonised (more sovereignty for employees over their time instead of mandated flexibility, working hours accounts, sabbatical year, working from home as an option);
- improve the chances for older employees to continue working with mandatory insurance coverage until retirement by providing continuing education, preventive health care and working conditions suited to their age;
- combat wage discrimination against women: equal pay for equal work and work of equal value; better pay in occupations mostly employing women; better legal safeguards through the right of associations to take legal action; equal treatment legislation for private

business that obliges enterprises to take measures until at least 50 per cent representation of women is achieved at all qualification levels up to and including executive and supervisory boards;

- expand employee co-determination: increase the participation of employees and their trade unions in important company decisions; extend parity co-determination of employees in all private, public and social enterprises with more than 100 employees; anchor co-determination in business decision-making in the Shop Constitution Act for smaller enterprises as well;
- improve the rights of trade unions and shop councils: repeal the anti-strike paragraph; extend the right to strike to takeovers and relocations of enterprises; introduce the right of trade unions to take legal action to protect the wage rates in force; implement the right to strike on political grounds as in other countries of Europe.

2.2 Shape the economy

"Capitalist production, therefore, develops technology, and the combining together of various processes into a social whole, only by sapping the original sources of all wealth – the soil and the labourer."

Karl Marx

Millions of people rightly expect the State to exert influence on business. The decisive question is no longer whether or not the government intervenes in the economy but in whose interest, with what purposes and at whose expense it is done. A democracy can only function if it can assert the goals of democratic majorities, even over economic power. The elected representatives of the people must set the goals of business activity for the enterprises and provide them with a clearly defined framework. We therefore advocate a new economic and social order.

As a first step, the finance sector must be placed under democratic control. Savings banks and co-operative banking associations prove that banks can be placed at the service of society. In the future, all banks should serve the common weal. Whoever tries to regulate the finance market without stopping and reducing the ever-growing accumulation of capital and wealth, however, is doomed to fail. The dispossession of millions of working people must be reversed. That is a dictate not just of social justice but of economic common sense, because it is the only way domestic demand can be boosted.

The theme of economic democracy belongs on the agenda. Giving the entrepreneurs and investment funds a free hand means preventing democracy. And that is what we are now experiencing every day. At the enterprise level as well, the "social obligation" of property must be assured. In past years, the increasing subordination of business assets to the interests of the investment funds has been celebrated. These funds are not interested in the long-term development of the enterprise. Mass layoffs in flourishing companies have become the norm, and the rights of employees have landed in the waste paper basket.

We call for the prohibition of mass layoffs in all enterprises that are not at risk of bankruptcy. The thing now is to reverse the constant dispossession of the employees through loss of jobs, reduced hours of work and "wage dumping" (severe reductions in wages). DIE LINKE therefore demands that government aid be provided only in exchange for an equivalent ownership interest and decision-making powers for government and personnel; the major creditors must be named.

Last but not least, we need a new international economic policy. That speculators can determine trade and capital flows and unleash severe crises is global lunacy and unacceptable. At the European level, regulatory and oversight structures must be erected and the existing ones reinforced. At the international level, it is also necessary to reform the monetary system so as to end the dependence of exchange rates on speculative capital transactions. Target zones for exchange rates must be instituted in order to stabilise world trade. It is important that tax havens really be closed down.

Socialisation of the finance sector, democratisation of the economy, more social justice, a

stronger domestic market and consistent ecological restructuring – these guidelines are at the same time an effective policy for small and medium-sized enterprises. They are also worth supporting by means of a proactive taxation and incentive policy.

DIE LINKE demands:

- nationalise private banks, subject the finance sector to public oversight and regulate it strictly: place the private banking sector in public hands and pledge it to the public weal, like the savings banks; prohibit short selling, off-balance sheet special purpose entities, derivatives, hedge funds and private equity firms; shut down tax havens, ensure the low-interest funding of worthwhile investments; offer fair terms to small and medium-sized enterprises and consumers; make free chequing accounts available to everyone; introduce a stock transfer tax for German and if possible international stock exchanges; reform the European Central Bank, obligate it to attach as much importance to promoting sustainable development and job creation as it does to price stability and control it through the European Parliament and the Economic and Financial Affairs Council; reform the international finance system and restrict currency speculation through firm but variable exchange rates;
- launch a future programme for two million jobs: combat the crisis with investments of 100 billion euros a year in education, health, climate protection, infrastructure and transit; set up future funds for a sustainable economy and endow them with 100 billion euros for the viable socio-ecological development of manufacturing jobs, support for enterprises in converting their production to energy-efficient and raw materials-efficient processes and quality products; create one million such jobs in the public service and another 500 000 jobs in a publicly funded not-for-profit employment sector;
- make the distribution of income and wealth more equitable: a substantially greater share of national revenue as wages and an equitable taxation policy that places a much greater share of the tax burden on unearned income, large inheritances and financial transactions than hitherto; a millionaires' tax to cope with the effects of the crisis;
- democratise business: give personnel a share in the big corporations; grant government aid only in exchange for equivalent ownership interest for government and personnel; couple nationalisations and partial nationalisations with democratic control and co-determination; prohibition of mass layoffs in enterprises not at risk of insolvency; parity co-determination in all enterprises employing more than 100 people; resolutely combat white-collar crime and corruption;
- expand sustainable agriculture: increase the share of organic farming in agriculture; prevent speculation in agricultural raw materials and land; reduce the use of mineral fertilizers and pesticides; give substantially greater attention to animal welfare in breeding and transport; hormones and antibiotics do not belong in animal feed; no patents on living beings or their genes; stop price dumping by retail chains at the expense of farmers; prohibit agro-genetic engineering; tighten the labelling obligation for GM components in food and feed down to the limit of detection of 0.1 per cent; support GM-free regions and initiatives leading to such regions; apply EU subsidies for social and ecological performance by agricultural enterprises and make their allocation transparent; promote natural forestry, ensure equivalent living conditions in villages and small towns as well;
- expand public services and utilities instead of privatising: reverse any privatisation that has already taken place in that sphere; re-municipalise service and utilities enterprises and expand the public sector;
- protect small and medium-sized enterprises more effectively: create better depreciation rules, defer IHK (Chamber of Commerce and Industry) contributions up to an operating profit of 30 000 euros; create rules for granting contracts to and by large corporations (small lots); establish more stringent competition and anti-trust legislation for power and gas corporations; adopt legislation facilitating the assertion of claims; reform patent legislation with the goal of making the utilisation of inventions easier and faster for small and medium-sized enterprises as well;
- support an economy based on solidarity; increase support for co-operatives and make

the instruments of labour market policy available to them.

2.3. Remodel society ecologically

"We treat this world as if we had another one in the trunk."

Jane Fonda

The drive for social justice and a radical ecological remodelling of our way of living and economic situation are two sides of the same coin. Thus ambitious climate protection is not only important for the preservation of our natural environment but at the same time a contribution to the struggle for global social rights, since advancing climate change heightens the day-to-day struggle of millions of people for survival. The concrete definition of environmental policy, however, must not lead to a further division of society into "rich and poor". Affordable energy and mobility must be assured for low-income strata of the population as well.

End the fossil/atomic age

A radical energy shift to renewable energy sources is a key investment in an ecological and peaceful 21st century. In the struggle against climate change, greenhouse gas emissions in Germany must be reduced to half the 1990 figure by 2020 and reduced by at least 90 per cent by mid-century. Those who bank on regenerative energy today and share knowledge about sustainable energy supplies with threshold and developing countries will not participate in resource wars for oil and gas tomorrow. As interim goals for 2020 DIE LINKE demands: in the electric power field, at least half should be renewable energy, and in the heating and cooling sector a quarter. A decentralised supply of power in public hands is especially important.

A key task for the future will be to adapt to the climate change that has already been set in motion. All land use, urban development, transport, coastal protection and landscape conservation planning measures must take into consideration both climate protection aspects and climate change adaptation aspects.

The energy changeover can succeed only if energy efficiency is markedly increased and energy is saved on a large scale at the same time. We need an ecological engineering efficiency revolution embedded in alternative lifestyles. In the medium term, all energy needs in Germany must be met from renewable sources.

Scientific studies have shown that an energy supply from renewable sources without nuclear power and a medium-term exit from the generation of energy from coal are possible. We want to pursue that goal forcefully. We therefore oppose the planning and construction of new coal-fired power plants, as well as the illusory solution propagated by the energy business, the compression and underground storage of carbon dioxide. The necessary changeover in the regions dominated up to now by mining should be undertaken in an ecologically and socially balanced manner.

EU emissions trading as the core climate protection instrument of the EU has failed so far. It has led to billions in annual windfall gains for the energy combines and has not contributed to climate protection. In the future, drastically more stringent limitations on greenhouse gas emissions must be imposed on power plants and companies.

The red-green atomic consensus of 2000 is nonsense, since the guaranteed remaining life serves above all the profit interests of the nuclear industry. The operation of nuclear plants, however, involves irresponsibly high risks; secure final storage of nuclear waste for a million years and more cannot be guaranteed. The fiasco in the Asse and Morsleben nuclear waste storage facilities shows how negligent the practice has been up to now. DIE LINKE therefore demands the immediate and irreversible decommissioning of all atomic plants and prohibition of the export of nuclear technology. Nuclear waste transports must be stopped until the problem of final storage has been reliably resolved.

We want to turn the energy concerns into public property and subject them to democratic

oversight. The energy cartel must be broken up, the energy supply largely re-municipalised and the energy monopolies gradually dissolved.

Give business, transport and agriculture a new, ecological direction

It is not just the age of petroleum that is irrevocably ending. Other raw materials are becoming scarce as well. The rivers of materials that we pump into our industrial society must therefore be reduced in the coming decades by a factor of ten. Capitalist economic growth should give way to sustainable lifestyles and socio-ecological housekeeping.

Transport is the only sector in Germany that is causing increasing climate stress . DIE LINKE therefore fights for an ecological change of direction in the field of transport. Public transit must be expanded on a massive scale and be made wheelchair accessible and considerably cheaper. Mobility as a precondition for people's participation in social life must not depend on the size of one's bankroll. In the long term, we strive for free urban transit.

The rail networks and the urban transit supply must grow again. We oppose the privatisation of the railway and urban transit. A strategy of short distances must be established with the aid of active transport, structural, and regional planning. Pedestrian and cycle traffic must be promoted much more energetically. Goods traffic must be shifted from road to rail and existing waterways.

Air traffic is more harmful to the environment than any other means of locomotion – and at the same time the most highly subsidised. Kerosene and marine diesel/heavy oil must finally be taxed and the exemption of international air traffic from value added tax must be lifted.

The consumption of fuel and energy by all carriers has to be reduced sharply. Agrofuel is no alternative to a radical change of direction in transport policy. The increased cultivation of large-scale monoculture crops for agrofuel heightens world hunger and accelerates tropical deforestation. Using organic waste and "energy crops" to produce heat and power is far more efficient than using them as motor fuels.

DIE LINKE demands:

- total restructuring of the energy business: press ahead forcefully and rapidly with renewable energy sources all the way to a fully regenerative power supply; make the Renewable Energy Act still more effective; press ahead with renewable energy heating and cogeneration; introduction of an energy-saving fund focusing on incentive programmes for low-income households; stricter ordinance standards for energy consumption in office equipment and household appliances including prohibition of standby modes consuming more than one watt; "Top Runner" programmes for electrical appliances under which the most energy- resource-saving appliance is proclaimed the minimum legal standard every three years; thermal retrofit of existing buildings and climate neutrality of new buildings; federal statutory specifications for ecological urban land use planning; abandon Gorleben and the Konrad Shaft as final storage sites; look for new sites, in a transparent and juridically verifiable manner, at the expense of the nuclear industry; immediate and irrevocable withdrawal from the nuclear industry; nationalisation of power and gas grids; re-municipalisation of core elements of the energy supply; introduce subsidised rates on a mandatory basis; guarantee the supply of electricity and heating for everyone; taxation of the windfall profits made by power concerns from emissions trading; re-introduction of electricity and gas price monitoring by the Laender and establishment of consumer advisory boards in price monitoring; auctioning off emissions certificates instead of giving them away free; use the auction yield for climate protection and to cushion the impact of the energy changeover; gradually make CO₂ restrictions more stringent for industry and private transport; no agro-energy imports from non-EU countries and focus on the cogeneration of heat and power in biomass utilisation;
- ecological restructuring of the energy industry: make manufacturing processes and products sustainable; give priority to regional economic circuits; phase out subsidies and tax breaks that are harmful to the environment; set social and environmental standards for

business and research funding; stringent criteria when approving and registering chemical substances; rejection of waste incineration as general practice; priority instead to alternative procedures such as mechanical/biological waste treatment; immediately raise the requirements for existing incinerators to the latest technological and scientific standards; prohibition of the export of waste across borders;

- environmentally sound and barrier-free mobility for everyone: massive expansion of public transit; sustainable increase in investment funds for rail traffic to at least 2.5 billion euros a year; increase regionalisation funds; ensure and expand long-distance passenger traffic by rail by means of long-distance travel legislation; reduce value added tax on long-distance passenger traffic by rail to the reduced rate of seven per cent; introduction of a country-wide subsidized ticket and a subsidized Bahncard for low-income households; transport of bicycles in ICE trains; 120 kilometre per hour speed limit on the Autobahn; repeal of the people-hostile fast-track legislation for traffic infrastructure planning; reform of federal traffic infrastructure planning; no new Autobahn projects; no privatisation of the road network and its maintenance; expansion of the traffic safety structure; improve the driving and rest periods for truck drivers; prohibit the introduction of monster trucks (gigaliners); prolongation of the tax incentives for installing soot filters in cars that expire at the end of 2009; end subsidies for airports; introduce a kerosene tax and an air ticket levy; enforce bans on night flights; increase noise control and minimise particulate matter emissions;
- conserve nature and use it sustainably: expedite the designation and networking of conservation areas; work for the binding protection under international law of the planet's remaining large expanses of nature (Arctic, Antarctica, the world's oceans, rainforests, boreal forests etc.) from further exploitation; stop the privatisation of conservation areas (exception: environmental and nature conservation organisations); drastically reduce land use – unseal soil; increase the quantity of unsegmented, low-traffic landscape areas; expand floodwater containment areas; expand peatbog protection; extensive information, participation and legal action rights for citizens as well as environmental and nature conservation organisations; general ban on animal experiments, which may not be carried out except in exceptional circumstances; alternative test methods must be sought more energetically; intensify environmental education through rapid implementation of the goals of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in all fields of education, in part through programme and project funding.

2.4. Democratisation of democracy

"Thorough democratisation of all spheres of life is the only possible way of keeping a democratic system alive."

Oskar Negt, 2008

Political freedom and equality are fundamental conditions for a democracy. DIE LINKE stands in the tradition of the Enlightenment, the Declaration of Human Rights and the French Revolution. Liberty, Equality, Solidarity – the labour movement and other social forces have fought for democratic and social emancipation for over 200 years. The democratic pledge involves the reciprocal recognition of all as equals. Every vote counts equally, and there is always the chance of changing any majority that has emerged.

Democracy is not limited to elections and polls. Democracy includes the active defence and expansion of civil and fundamental rights. We work to have laws and government action in parliament and elsewhere gauged by the yardstick of fundamental and civil rights. In the last few years politics and business have become more closely interwoven. DIE LINKE has long criticised the sending of paid lobbyists to the federal ministries by businesses.

Democracy is more than a formal set of rules. It must be experienced by citizens every day. DIE LINKE therefore works for the comprehensive democratisation of all social spheres. Citizens should have the chance to influence even individual significant aspects of government policy directly. We therefore need a new method of citizens' participation.

Democracy includes strong municipal self-government. But when the towns and communities do not have the money, it is scarcity that rules. The crisis of the financial markets and the economic recession have aggravated the financial plight of the municipalities as well. For the year 2009, the local government central associations predict a drop of up to 18 per cent in business taxes alone. It is high time to put an end to the structural distortion of municipal funding in the federalist system once and for all. The federal and Land governments have been promising a municipal funding reform for many years, but so far nothing has happened.

DIE LINKE demands:

place no limits on fundamental rights and civil liberties and bring about complete transparency and oversight of government action: ensure access to public administration information free of charge and transparency in all decision-making;

clearly separate business interests and politics: Members of Parliament must not be on the payrolls of business associations and large companies, parties must not accept donations from associations, large companies or their owners; adopt a mandatory and transparent lobby register; disclose who benefits from lobbying activity, do not employ any lobbyists in federal ministries, and make their contribution to the drafting of bills visible to everyone at all times;

extend the right to vote: the right to vote and be elected for all persons the centre of whose vital interests is in Germany; reduce voting age to 16;

reinforce direct democracy: introduce popular initiatives, referenda and plebiscites at the federal level; provide for mandatory popular votes on important changes to the Basic Law;

make the right to petition more people-oriented and transparent: open meetings of the petitions committee to ordinary citizens; increase the weight of mass and collective petitions and reduce the necessary quorum for a public hearing from 50 000 to 20 000 signatures;

ensure the ability of the municipalities to take financial action: institute a municipal finances reform; safeguard the economic activity of the municipalities through federal and European legislation; guarantee municipal services and utilities;

re-order the share of the municipalities in community taxes: make lump-sum investment payments to financially weak municipalities in east and west.

2.5. Multifaceted and reliable – reinforce all lifestyles

"In Germany, there is a growing gap between the children who grow up healthy, safe and encouraged and those whose daily life is marked by hopelessness, poverty and exclusion."
UNICEF Report on the Situation of Children in Germany, 2008

All people who bear social responsibility for one another need social support. Spouses, partnerships without marriage certificates, gay parents, single parents or "patchwork families" – they all need more time, a high-quality, universally accessible infrastructure and targeted social benefits.

The CDU/CSU and the SPD pride themselves on doing a great deal for children and families. But for years, instead of reliability being increased, cuts have been made in social benefits. Solidarity and responsibility are left to the individual. Child poverty in Germany has taken on frightening proportions. Occupation and family are seldom reconcilable, especially for women. In West Germany in particular, there is a lack of public childcare facilities. The parental allowance improves the financial situation of some, but worsens that of the majority.

Officially, all kinds of families are accepted in our society. The real situation is different, however. The tax system in which husband and wife each pay income tax on half the total

of their combined incomes rewards the traditional division of labour between husband and wife, whether they have children or not. Being a single parent is still one of the greatest poverty risk factors – 43 per cent of single parents rely on Hartz IV. Poverty is feminine. Ninety per cent of single parents are women. All in all, at least 2.5 million children have to live on the low standard Hartz IV rates.

DIE LINKE stands for an emancipatory and socially just family policy. All citizens, whatever their age, must be able to live in dignity and develop to the full. In particular, the rights of children to unlimited personal development must be expanded. Family policy and equal treatment of women and men must go hand in hand and gainful and household work must be shared equally between the sexes.

DIE LINKE demands:

- guarantee high-quality public childcare all over the country free of charge: introduce a legal claim to an unpaid all-day childcare space for every child from its first year of life; make the hours of operation of childcare facilities flexible;
- develop the parental allowance into a socially designed parental allowance account: establish a non-transferable equal claim for fathers and mothers for twelve months, and 24 months for single parents; make it claimable in at least two-month segments until the child is seven years old;
- a higher standard rate for children and young people drawing Hartz IV benefits: immediately raise the standard rate substantially; give young adults 18 years of age or over a claim to a household of their own outside the parental home; introduce an independent minimum insurance entitlement for children with consideration given to their personal incomes and maintenance claims;
- prevent child poverty permanently: immediately raise the need-oriented child bonus and the family allowance to 200 euros each; combine the two benefits in a need-oriented basic child safety net and develop it further; pay family benefits to all children and families living in Germany, whatever their citizenship and residence status;
- ease the financial situation of single parents: Do not deduct advances on maintenance payments from housing subsidies; rescind the full deduction of child benefit and abolish the time limits on entitlement to benefits;
- support people requiring care and assistance; for a true care reform in the direction of a humane and solidarity-based care insurance that guarantees solicitous and holistic care and social participation on the part of the persons relying on care and assistance;
- do away with the tax system in which husband and wife each pay income tax on half the total of their combined incomes: introduce individual taxation; provide tax incentives for actual care performance and for living with children;
- treat all kinds of families equally: establish the right of adoption for lesbian and gay couples.

2.6. Venture more unity

"A young man from Schwerin who has to chase after his exploitation relationship all the way to Bavaria can hardly feel free."

Matthias Wedel

Large parts of eastern Germany and a growing number of rural districts and towns in the west are suffering under special regional problems. Masses of jobs are lacking; there is an exodus of young people, schools are closing. DIE LINKE is the only party that supports the goal of bringing about equivalent living conditions in the regions. Even after two decades of "Reconstruction East", the people in the eastern federal Laender sense that fundamental problems have still not been solved. Maps showing the distribution of unemployment, income, investments, taxing capacity or other economic and social factors among Laender and rural districts in Germany still clearly indicate the earlier east-west divide.

There is a shortage of about two million jobs there. The gulf between the few ascending and the many structurally backward regions is widening. The municipalities are under-funded. The lag behind from the development of western Germany has become no smaller in over ten years. There is a real danger of further division. For those reasons, the main instruments of regional policy have to be placed on a reliable footing. And for that reason it is also the case that equal pay for equal work during the same hours must finally apply between east and west. And the same pensions for the same lifetime performance. Last but not least, a respectful approach to the differing biographies in the east and west of Germany belongs to the creation of internal unity. DIE LINKE takes a critical approach to the history of the GDR and the Federal Republic of Germany. Both are part of German historiography.

Eastern Germany needs prospects for the future. "Reconstruction East" as "Clone West", still the device of all the other parties, has collapsed. It was scuttled mainly by the arrogant assumption of those in the west that they could carry on after the end of an epoch as though nothing had happened. It was scuttled by the hubris of a part of the West German elites who assumed, without taking a close look, that there was and is nothing in eastern Germany that could interest the West except land.

The east German economy will have a chance if what is necessary world-wide is done there proactively: banking on renewable energies and resource efficiency, forcefully pressing ahead with the corresponding technologies and products. East Germany can take the lead in these globally imminent socio-economic upheavals. If the political will is present and if the people on site can conceive realistic prospects, eastern Germany can become a model socio-ecological region.

DIE LINKE demands for eastern Germany:

- realise the principle of equal wages and salaries for the same hours worked and the same work; adopt a statutory minimum wage that is the same for the whole country;
- do away with pension inequity: align pension values in east and west and retain the high valuation of earnings of east German employees until wages and salaries have been aligned; eliminate the transfer gaps and injustices;
- continue the investment subsidy at the 2009 level;
- ensure funds for the solidarity pact until 2019 and use them proactively in the framework of regional models;
- democratise regional planning: reinforce the role of associations, clubs, other civil society actors, and citizens in regional planning, develop regional models and anchor them in society; design socio-ecological restructuring regions;
- preserve, expand and modernise the public education system and organise longer joint learning;
- retain eastern Germany's "facilities edge" in early childhood care and education and the ramified cultural landscape, make it the standard, transfer it to the west and improve its quality;
- energetically combat the low-wage sector that is especially prominent in eastern Germany; promote union-wage jobs in the framework of public procurement;

DIE LINKE demands a viable regional policy in east and west:

- provide substantially more resources for the "regional economic structure community project" and set different goals: move away from one-sided export orientation towards strengthening regional economic circulation;
- invest in promising resources and technologies and proactively promote the corresponding research and development;
- strengthen networks among the promising enterprises, universities, trade unions and small and medium-sized companies;

- return the electric power supply to the municipalities, reconvert largely to renewable energy sources and encourage rural districts and municipalities to achieve energy autonomy with non-fossil energy sources:
- guarantee area-wide medical care in rural areas using the experience gained with polyclinics and community nursing stations/social stations.

2.7. Social security: solidarity rather than privatisation

"It is salutary to be reminded that even the strongest can weaken and even the smartest can be wrong."

Mahatma Gandhi

SPD and Greens, and later CDU/CSU und SPD, have torn huge holes in the social safety net. Many people fear poverty in old age and social descent and worry about not being able to pay for health and care benefits. Poverty and exclusion became the law with Hartz IV. That is obviously political calculation: The millionfold fear of Hartz IV improves the chances for companies to cut wages.

Instead of privatisation and poor relief we stand for strong public systems based on solidarity and their reliable and equitable funding. All occupation groups must be involved. The expansion of the social security systems draws groups needing protection into the social network just as it ends the preferential treatment of the well-to-do that has prevailed up to now. A good social safety net is possible and affordable if the right path is chosen. That applies as much to pensions as to support in the case of unemployment and for affordable housing. It applies in the field of health and care, since all medically necessary services and humane care must be guaranteed in an ageing society as well.

By means of our proposals for reform we want to make it possible for people to plan their lives in security, improve living standards and help reduce poverty and social exclusion sustainably.

Good jobs and equitable funding are the prerequisites for a good welfare state. Those who have good jobs can build up sufficient entitlements to social security benefits. If there is growth in good jobs and wages and not in mini-jobs, one-euro jobs and precarious employment, the social insurance funds will have more money at their disposal. If employers contribute on a parity basis and higher-income earners contribute without the earnings ceiling to funding social insurance, good benefits and social adjustments can be paid for. The welfare state is threatened with loss of revenues and additional outlay in the millions due to the economic crisis. Many people fear that the Union, SPD, Greens and FDP are not telling them the truth and will make cuts in all social benefits after the elections.

DIE LINKE guarantees: With us there will be no cuts in social benefits and no encumbrances on social insurees after the election. We call on all the other parties to join us in a nonpartisan pact to implement a welfare state guarantee.

Good pensions

Persistent mass unemployment, the spread of precarious employment and falling wages are leading to growing gaps in the employment records of more and more working people and hence to missing insurance contribution periods in their retirement insurance. Added to that are lower contributions owing to lower wages. The so-called pension reforms, first by the Union and FDP and then by the SPD and Greens, also lowered the standard of the statutory pension substantially. The insured are expected to make up for these cuts through more private coverage without employer contributions ("Riestering"). But those without jobs and those working for low wages do not have a real opportunity to do even that. The decision of the SPD/CDU to raise the retirement age to 67 is not only a two-year pension cut, for most people it will be followed by a further reduction since not very many will be able to keep working until that age and will have to accept further pension deductions. The risk of poverty in old age is thus heightened exponentially. The pension

reforms of past years have led to partial privatisation of the pension system, benefiting the insurance trusts and companies more than anyone else. For the insured, the financial burdens and risks have risen. Unlike the statutory pension scheme, the funds invested in old-age security are not protected from a financial crisis. The goal of preserving the living standards of pensioners has thus been explicitly abandoned.

DIE LINKE demands a radical change of course in pensions policy:

strengthen the solidarity-based public system of statutory pensions: safeguard living standards in old age and provide those who have contributed for many years with pensions appreciably over the basic social welfare rate; delete all curtailment factors from the pension formula so that pensions will again be pegged to wages;

turn the statutory retirement insurance scheme into a solidarity-based labour force insurance scheme: include the self-employed, civil servants, and politicians; rescind the earning ceiling, level out the ensuing pension increase and expand the scope for a solidarity-based redistribution; on that basis, discontinue government support for private insurance coverage and transfer the entitlements acquired and the government subsidies;

strengthen the solidarity adjustment in the statutory pension: revalue upwards periods of unemployment, child care, including those before 1992, other care and low wages in order to prevent poverty in old age; support independent old age security for women;

lower the retirement age: repeal the increase in the retirement age to 67 and create flexible provisions for retiring before the age of 65 without discounts; continue the promotion of part-time work for older employees by the Federal Labour Office and provide easier access to reduced earning capacity pensions without deductions; re-introduce the disability pension;

prevent poverty in old age: no person can be allowed to have less than 800 euros a month to live on;

eliminate the pension inequity between east and west.

Health and solidarity-based citizen's insurance

Health is not a commodity. A health policy geared primarily to the interests of the pharmaceutical industry prevents the provision of holistic health care for all regardless of income, education and social status. Health is a basic individual right and must be within reach of all in a system of public services and utilities.

Since the 1990s, measures to restructure the health system have been designed to increasingly open it up to private providers and the capital markets, to align it with the competitive interests of business and to redistribute assets at the expense of those covered by statutory health insurance. That path is being followed with the health fund as well. The same is true here: an additional burden is placed on the insured and taken from the enterprises. The financial pressure on doctors and hospitals remains and with it the uncertainty of the patients as to whether they will receive the required medical treatment. This system pays too little attention to emotional and social problems as conditions for disease.

We have the goal of developing the statutory health insurance scheme (GKV) and the statutory care insurance scheme into a solidarity-based citizen's insurance fund and expanding it on a new foundation. The object is to expand the funding and the circle of persons insured and hence the revenue base. In that way, a stable financial base will be established for the solidarity of society as a whole.

DIE LINKE demands:

- configure the statutory health insurance and care insurance in such a way that all occupational groups and income groups participate in its financing; abolish the earnings ceiling and the compulsory insurance earnings threshold and repeal the special contribution for employees and pensioners; change the financial incentives in the health system to make health maintenance and healing more profitable than increasing turnover through the highest possible number of "cases";

- gear the list of services paid for by statutory health insurance once again to medical needs: re-introduce unlimited access for all, abolition of additional payments, including the Practice Fee; restore the entitlement to glasses and dentures;
- place the interests of patients in the foreground: do not subordinate effectiveness and quality to profitability, make medicines affordable by adopting a positive list (list of reimbursable medicines) with firm prices, lower the value added tax on drugs to the reduced rate of seven per cent; expand and strengthen the rights of patients and persons in need of care; gear research to medical needs;
- do not introduce the electronic health card, protect the right to informational self-determination: by foregoing the electronic health card, rule out the access of health service providers, pharmaceutical companies and above all employers to an electronic health record on a long-term basis and place the sick person instead of the transparent patient at the centre of solidarity-based health policy;
- ensure need-oriented, close-to-home treatment for everyone: stop or reverse the privatisation of hospitals and medical care centres; make the same wage scales as those of public service employees a prerequisite for charity enterprises entrusted with public services; retain government hospital planning and funding; counter the shortage of doctors and nursing personnel in out-patient and in-patient facilities, especially in rural regions, by means of scheduled promotion of young talent, good pay and close networking of outpatient and inpatient facilities (polyclinics), the establishment of community nursing stations or municipal social stations and the proactive promotion of under-supplied regions;
- consistently practice health promotion: begin health promotion already during pregnancy and continue it during childhood and adolescence with the involvement of educational institutions; adopt prevention legislation so as to prevent disease from occurring where possible or detect it and treat it early; expand municipal health services;
- eliminate the nursing crisis: give nursing and health system employees better training and pay them union wages, adapt the care payment rates to the needs of those in need of care, improve in-patient care for nursing home residents; develop uniform staffing ratios, make holistic care possible, provide counselling for relatives and carers and improve their financial situation and their social security status.

Prevent unemployment, strengthen unemployment insurance, realign labour market policy, abolish Hartz IV, introduce a guaranteed minimum income

Unemployment is not just a cyclical but also a structural problem. It must be resolved through a sustainable public investment policy, through a socio-ecological realignment of economic policy, through the creation of good jobs and through employment policy. Expanding the low-wage sector and increasing the pressure on jobless people as the Agenda 2010 has done are among the serious consequences of Schröder-Fischer policy. The division of the jobless into "promising" job seekers in ALG I and alms-takers "at the margins of the labour market" in the so-called relief system of ALG II must be overcome. The massive reduction of contribution to unemployment insurance from 6.5 per cent to 2.8 per cent was a billion-euro gift to business people. The long-term unemployed, like all other unemployed persons, are entitled to good counselling and support in their quest for jobs.

DIE LINKE demands:

- improve protection through unemployment insurance: extend and expand short-time compensation in the crisis, increase reimbursement obligations of firms after the crisis, facilitate the establishment of rescue and job creation companies, extend the period of entitlement to unemployment benefit;
- expand active labour market policy: reinforce continuing education and training, create a publicly supported employment sector with jobs covered by social insurance and enshrine the entitlement to support as an insurance benefit;
- formulate new conditions for reasonable employment for ALG I recipients: create a living income; give credit for vocational qualifications, be guided by previous earnings, reduce flexibility and commuting time requirements, respect freedom of political and

religious conscience, ensure voluntary participation in labour market policy promotion programmes;

- abolish Hartz IV and thus remove the damaging effects on the labour market: treat all jobless persons equally; create equal access to labour market integration efforts and convert all one-euro jobs into union-wage jobs covered by social insurance;

- replace Hartz IV with a guaranteed minimum living income without sanctions, one that really prevents poverty and respects the civil rights of those affected:

-entitlement for all persons living in the Federal Republic of Germany who do not have sufficient incomes and assets to cover their minimum requirements;

- DIE LINKE supports the struggle of the trade unions and social organisations in the "Bündnis soziales Deutschland" (Alliance Social Germany) for an immediate increase in the standard rates for Hartz IV recipients. For the next legislative period we are calling for it to be increased to 500 euros. After that the standard rate must grow at at least the same rate as the cost of living. Looking ahead, we attach importance to the introduction of a minimum living income without sanctions;

- demonstrable special needs will be covered as a supplement;

- no deduction of the family allowance;

- abolition of sanction paragraph 31 in SBB (Social Code) II;

- compensate reasonable housing costs to the amount of actual outlay (benchmark for living area: subsidised housing criteria, benchmark for rent: mean value of the local rent index, total rent including heating); relocation – after a transition period of one year at the earliest – is unacceptable if it involves social hardship or the municipality cannot find an adequate replacement flat;

- end the snooping practice of home visits;

- cancel the U25 Rule;

- eliminate the communal household, introduce the individual principle on the basis of statutory maintenance obligations;

- raise the exempted assets limit to 20 000 euros per person and the exempted assets for old age security to 700 euros per year of life;

- repeal the right of recourse of the state to the heirs of persons receiving minimum income payments (§ 35 SGB II).

Ensure affordable housing

Whereas high-income households pay only 13 to 14 per cent of their income for housing, for middle-income families the figure is 26 to 29 per cent and for those with low incomes up to 50 per cent. The number of households with debt problems is increasing. Rent arrears play a considerable part in this. Above all, the ancillary housing costs for water and sewage, Electric power and garbage disposal are increasing. The cost of heating and hot water (oil and gas) has exploded in the last few years. Yet the Federal Government sees no need for a further adjustment of the housing allowance.

The fire sale of public, hitherto relatively reasonable priced housing units continues. The public housing assets acquired over decades and up to now serving the provision of low-rental housing are increasingly being conveyed to the finance industry, which speculates on dizzying profits from tax write-offs and expected returns from rental.

- **DIE LINKE wants to reform housing policy radically:**

- the basic right to decent housing must be included in the Basic Law: homelessness must be overcome; the housing allowance must be increased to meet the need;
- end the sellout of public housing firms: promote re-communalisation; relieve municipal firms of old debts; increase cooperative ownership of housing;
- increase funds for subsidised housing construction: use such funds solely for building rental housing or making existing buildings wheelchair accessible or energy-efficient; strive for socially balanced distribution of existing urban housing;
- limit rent increases: introduce a mandatory rent index throughout the country; rule out rent increases in the case of re-letting without improvement in living quality;
- lower overhead costs: promote insulation and modern heating and energy systems; introduce a mandatory overhead and heating cost index throughout the country;
- make urban redevelopment social and ecological: for a city of short distances – wheelchair accessible, family-friendly and senior-friendly.

2.8. Exclude no one – policy of social equality

"If we want humanity we have to create humane conditions."

Bertolt Brecht

Social exclusion is frequently a result of unemployment, debt problems, separation, the loss of family ties, chronic diseases. It is often intensified by discrimination against women and minorities as well as persons with disabilities. With Hartz IV, the solutions offered for persons in difficult situations were reduced to the one-sided fixation on employability at the expense of integrated consulting and support services. A social climate emerged in which everyone was suspected of ripping off the system and the principle that all persons have civil rights was abandoned. Protection of personal data, freedom of movement, and protection of privacy were razed by Hartz IV.

Persons in precarious situations require comprehensive and targeted assistance. It is crucial that psychosocial counselling services and social services are accessible and that there is interdisciplinary cooperation between them. Prevention of exclusion is the best and cheapest social assistance. People are neither cost factors nor illegal. They are not born into the world as shoppers. They are not commodities that can be reduced to entrepreneurs of their own labour power. Left policy advocates that all people – irrespective of age, sex, origin, disability, religion and world view, state of health or sexual orientation – can live the life of their own choosing.

DIE LINKE is guided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by Germany in December 2008. Our demands for equal opportunities, the elimination of barriers and non-discriminatory equalisation go straight through all social and political spheres. We defend the claim of persons with disabilities to self-advocacy. Workplaces in workshops for disabled persons are sheltered workplaces. In future they must no longer be misused as assembly-line workplaces for manufacturing goods under piecework conditions. The goal must be intensified personal promotion and integration into the regular labour market – with the support of an integration helper if necessary.

Germany is a country of immigration. This insight is often accepted only with respect to utility for the labour market. Quotas, contingents and points systems are instruments of an inhuman, selective immigration policy. We want to strengthen the rights of migrants. Family reunification must be made possible both for children and for same-sex and different-sex partners as well as second degree family members. Persons who have fled human rights violations, wars and political persecution must not be denied entry or deported. There must be safeguards to ensure that the basic right to asylum can be asserted. DIE LINKE calls for the right to vote and be elected for those who have the centre of their vital interests in Germany, as well as for equal rights of access to the labour market. All children born here and whose parents live in Germany should be granted German citizenship. Naturalisation

must be made easier once again. Dual citizenship should be possible as a matter of principle.

Sports can lead to intercultural understanding and the reduction of prejudices. It must therefore be made possible for everyone to take part. Women, persons with disabilities, migrants require special promotion. Top-level and mass sport have to be expanded jointly in school, leisure and club sports.

To ensure social equality, DIE LINKE demands:

- end the policy of repression by abrogating the Hartz IV legislation: gear counselling, support and placement work to the situation of job-seekers and match it with social and health counselling services;
- strengthen the integrated counselling approach through more opportunities: give a boost to persons in difficult situations such as over-indebtedness, addiction, homelessness etc. by means of a close-knit network of independent local counselling services;
- ensure social equality in different public spaces and formats: neighbourhood meeting spots, self-help groups, counselling services, low-threshold and structured cultural opportunities in municipal spaces;
- end the social exclusion of migrants: end migration policy based on labour market utility criteria; enable family reunification for children and same-sex partners; no deportation of persons from war zones and victims of political persecution; ensure the right to vote and be elected; facilitate naturalisation; enable dual citizenship;
- ensure equal opportunities for persons with disabilities: bring about the complete elimination of barriers and non-discriminatory compensation; recognise and promote the entitlement of persons with disabilities to self-advocacy; ensure participation in working life and occupational rehabilitation;
- ensure equal participation in sports activity for everyone; promote mass sport and manipulation-free top-level sport.

2 9. For a socially equitable tax reform

*"Some with vast Stocks, and little Pains
Jump'd into Business of great Gains;
And some were damn'd to Sythes and Spades,
And all those hard laborious Trades"*

Bernard Mandeville, The Fable of the Bees, 1705

DIE LINKE demands an equitable tax system that relieves the burden on those with small and medium incomes and places more of a burden on those who are wealthy and able to pay taxes. The tax base must be raised substantially on a lasting and socially equitable basis in order to cover the cost of the crisis, socio-ecological restructuring and the expansion of the welfare state.

Taxes have been massively reduced in past years for the higher and highest earners and large corporations. Today, thanks to the former coalition of SPD and Greens, an income millionaire pays 100 000 euros less taxes a year than at the end of the 1990s. Corporate income tax, levied on joint stock companies and limited liability companies, has fallen even more sharply. This alone resulted in tax deficits totalling more than 100 billion euros as compared to the situation at the end of the 1990s. The state is now financed primarily by wage and salary earners. About three-quarters of tax revenue comes from wage, sales and excise taxes. Compared to other countries, the taxes on corporation income and income on investments are far too low.

The Grand Coalition continued the aberrant development that SPD and Greens began. The value added tax was raised from 16 to 19 per cent, the commuter distance allowance was unconstitutionally cut back while at the same time the taxes were again reduced for corporations.

DÍE LINKE demands that the redistribution of wealth from those at the bottom to those at the top be halted and reversed:

- reform income tax in a social and equitable manner: make taxation on the basis of economic capacity a fundamental principle; make tax legislation simple and transparent; decrease the burden on persons and families with low and average incomes and make taxpayers with high and very high incomes pay more;
- raise the base tax-free allowance to 9 300 euros so that more than a gross annual income of 12 000 euros remains tax-free;
- tax investment returns such as interest and dividends at the personal tax rate instead of at a flat rate of 25 per cent;
- raise the maximum tax rate to 53 per cent;
- allow the tax burden to increase linearly up to the maximum rate of 53 per cent (entry point 65 000 euros); this will relieve the burden on those with a taxable income of less than 70 245 euros a year while those who have more will pay more;
- do away with the arrangement by which husband and wife each pay income tax on half the total of their combined incomes: introduce individual taxation; provide tax incentives for actual care performance and for living with children;
- limit the tax deduction for operating expenditure for management, board of directors and supervisory board remuneration to twenty times the wage of a skilled worker working full time in the lowest wage group;
- revise the commuter distance allowance: recognize, reimburse and tax as income all travel costs regardless of means of travel so that low incomes are no longer penalised;
- implement a higher inheritance tax: grant legal heirs a uniform exemption of 150 000 euros; double that exemption for heirs over 60 years of age, children, surviving spouses and one person named by the bequeather (for example the life partner); in the case of business assets, calculate the tax on the basis of fixed assets only;
- re-introduce the wealth tax as a millionaires' tax: tax private fortunes of over one million euros at at least five per cent;
- regulate the financial markets: introduce a stock exchange turnover tax; tax investment income and capital gains from the sale of securities together with other revenues at the personal income tax rate regardless of how long they have been held, retain the depositor allowance and shut down tax havens;
- revoke the reduction of the corporation tax from 25 per cent to 15 per cent and expand the assessment basis;
- extend the seven per cent reduced sales tax to products and services for children, drugs available only in pharmacies and labour-intensive craft, hotel and restaurant services; for small enterprises and the self-employed, arrange for the sales tax to be payable only after the bill has been paid.

3. For a Just Society Open to the Future

"The best way to predict the future is to shape it."

Willy Brandt

"The dignity of man is inviolable." The Basic Law begins with that sentence. Human dignity includes sovereignty over one's own life, now and in the future. Whoever is driven by need is robbed of his dignity. To find meaning in life we need certainty of the future. Women and men want to sovereignly budget the time for work and family, for education, culture and recreation. But millions of people can no longer do that because they live at the poverty level, have no jobs or only tenuous jobs. Society is drifting apart. Social ascent through education – that promise of earlier decades has fallen by the wayside.

Entry into a different society involves placing a new and different value on work, so that all people can be active in the four spheres that a society depends on and whose diversity makes our life richer. Those are work in an occupation and for gain, work in the family and partnership, work on oneself and participation in cultural, political and social life. Along with a radical shortening of gainful work hours, these types of work and these opportunities to help shape the life of society have to be divided up equally, not least between the sexes.

Poverty and the lack of certainty of the future are a political and not a personal failing. To overcome the cause of social division, to strengthen justice as the foundation of democracy, all men and women must have the right and the opportunity to help shape the future.

To decide how we want to live tomorrow we need the chance of intercultural experience, equal treatment and tolerance. We need access to science and media landscapes that are committed to the common weal. Better education for everyone, an ecology-oriented research policy, modern regional policy, a new model for the east and further development of the public infrastructures will put us on track for the future, for the coming four years and beyond.

3.1. The backbone of society – public services and utilities

"It is a fact that the more the state backs out of concern for the life of normal people and allows them to sink into political apathy the easier it is for corporations, more or less unnoticed, to turn it into a self-service store. The fundamental naïveté of neo-liberal thinking lies in the inability to recognise that fact."

Colin Crouch, *Post-democracy*, 2008

For years, damning the state and praising the market as bringer of salvation was seen as the last word in wisdom. Accordingly, the Schröder and Merkel governments substantially curtailed public services and privatised public enterprises. In the country as a whole, 150 000 jobs were thus eliminated in the past years, including 50 000 nursing jobs in hospitals and 10 000 jobs in youth work.

In addition, important spheres like garbage collection, water and energy supply and urban transit have been privatised owing to the poor financing of the municipalities. Cheaper, better and closer to the customer – these were the promises made for years when public utilities, hospitals, water works, garbage collection, transit enterprises and many other public services were sold to private investors. Hundreds of cities, communities and rural districts believed the promises or saw no other possibility of sustaining their budgets.

We now know what the prophecies were worth. Higher prices and fees, inferior service, ruthless exploitation of supply monopolies, poor working conditions for employees, less democratic oversight and lower returns for the municipal households – that is the bitter reality in many places in Germany and Europe. A growing number of municipalities have demonstrated that it doesn't have to be that way. They are again taking important supply and removal enterprises into their own hands.

The public services and utilities perform necessary tasks in a dual sense. They meet the elementary need for services and guarantee equal rights of all citizens. The basis of a just society – equal access to fundamental goods, from water to education, for all – is destroyed by privatisations. Where public services and utilities are in private hands, it is not service to the people that is in the foreground but the drive for profit. Only the rich can afford to have a weak state and a thinned-out public sector. Those who privatise public services and utilities weaken democracy, for the election of different persons or parties no longer has any consequences for public services and utilities. Those who want a just society, on the other hand, must guarantee a reliable and modern public sector. Public procurement must follow a business logic that is not one-sidedly profit-oriented but develops services for different needs in a town or region. It must be judged by criteria of fair trade, ecological sustainability, and the strengthening of the identity and social cohesion of a region and must ensure good working conditions and remuneration for the employees.

DIE LINKE demands:

- end the privatisation of public services, do not enter into any PPP (Public Private Partnership) projects; build and run schools, town halls etc. as a public responsibility; organise elementary public services and utilities such as health services, housing, education, youth welfare, culture, energy, water, buses, trains and garbage collection as a public responsibility or under non-profit sponsorship; gear the public service and public enterprises to social needs and develop them in that spirit; re-municipalise privatised branches of the public services and utilities; repeal the PPP Facilitation Act;
- put a final stop to the initial public offering of the railway; develop local and long-distance public transit for wheelchair accessibility and gear it more to the needs of all users; implement a country-wide service as an alternative to private motorised transport; make prices socially acceptable and family-friendly;
- expand the public sector and modernise it in a citizen-friendly way;
 - review the areas of responsibility and work organisation; make communication with the citizens transparent and results-oriented; make electronic information systems independent of software monopolists;
 - provide comprehensive continuing education and training for staff: strengthen technological skills and social competencies equally;
 - ensure that public service staff have social security and a voice;
 - in a new Public Service Employment Law, limit the Civil Service (Beamtentum) to the immediate jurisdictions of state activity.

3.2. Democratic education reform – education for all from the beginning

"I have the feeling that the German education system does not concentrate on integrating everyone but that it creates divisions instead."

Vernor Muñoz Villalobos, UN Special Rapporteur and education expert, 2006

Germany is in an education crisis. There has been justified protest against this. In an education strike in June of this year, many school students, trainees and higher education students demonstrated in favour of radical education reforms. DIE LINKE supported the education strike and will continue to fight for a change of course in education policy.

The education system in Germany does not offset social differences. On the contrary: They become even greater in the school. International comparisons like the PISA study show that basic skills such as reading and understanding are inadequately developed in some of the young people. The systematic exclusion of the socially disadvantaged, migrants, the chronically ill and persons with disabilities is more extreme in Germany than in any other European country. The number of school dropouts is rising. It is a scandal that there are

still about four million functional illiterates in Germany. Those who do not successfully complete school have little chance of getting an apprenticeship and hence good career prospects.

For DIE LINKE, education is one of the key prerequisites for self-determination and the individual shaping of one's life as well as for responsible cooperation in a spirit of solidarity in a democratic society. Education opens up pathways for a person's personal development and for career prospects. Education must therefore be made free and equally accessible to all persons.

DIE LINKE fights for equal opportunities in education from the beginning. This involves diversified, practice-oriented knowledge and capabilities, intercultural exchange, systematic promotion of both the languages of children growing up bilingual throughout their school careers, environmental awareness and social competence, aesthetic experience, a humanist understanding of society and history, and critical and judgemental faculties.

In all federal Laender, the dominant school forms leave children behind at an early age. Comprehensive schools that combine lengthy joint learning with individual promotion are still the exception. Individual Laender have further commercialised education and created new social and cultural barriers by introducing tuition fees. A serious shortage of teachers is looming for the coming decade; at present, 80,000 specialists are lacking for good early childhood education.

Too few young people manage to graduate from high school and begin higher studies, and of those that do, too many do not complete their studies successfully. The federal/Laender Higher Education Pact and the federal government's Job Training Pact are not capable of coping with the outstanding problems. CDU/CSU and SPD speechifying about the promising role of education contrasts with chronic under-funding. Stimulus programme injections for building maintenance will do little to change this structural disaster.

Further developing their own qualifications throughout their lives, opening up new fields of activity and being able to take new career directions – all that remains out of reach for many people. A socially oriented, radical democratic education reform is long overdue. A socially equitable and future-oriented education system must be made the common mission of federal, state and municipal governments.

DIE LINKE therefore demands:

- enshrine the right to education in the Basic Law: include vocational training and education as a community task in that right;
- formulate a national education pact: increase public education spending to at least seven per cent of the gross domestic product, including country-wide incentive programmes for the expansion of comprehensive and all-day schools; socio-educational support at every school; establish federal/state programmes for training more teachers and childcare workers;
- upvalue educational careers: introduce childcare worker training at the university level and the master's degree for all teachers; create good working conditions and fair remuneration;
- support education from the beginning: link the legal right to all-day care in daycare centres with high-quality care; step up the expansion of daycare centres to safeguard that legal right from the first year of life, including for children with disabilities;
- learning together longer: rally a majority for the comprehensive school up to 10th grade throughout the country and establish it as the standard school; establish individual promotion instead of relying on private tutoring; an inclusive education system at all levels for children and adolescents with disabilities; ensure equality of opportunity for immigrants and end exclusion;
- abolish daycare and tuition fees: ensure that teaching and learning aids are free; abolish school and examination fees in vocational education and training; for that purpose, amend Article 9 1b GG, renewed with effect from 31 December 2007 through the

federalism reform, so that the working basis for the federal/Laender Commission for Education Planning (BLK) is restored;

- strengthen co-determination rights in educational establishments: implement country-wide bodies representing school and higher education students and parents with a general political mandate;
- ensure good and comprehensive vocational education and training: abolish narrow-spectrum training and wait loops; assign responsibility to companies; reform vocational education and training and focus on quality; strengthen co-determination rights for extra-company trainees;
- introduce a training space levy: involve firms in the funding of vocational training on a solidarity basis; ensure that a choice of training opportunities is available;
- enable open access to higher education throughout the country with a University Admission Law: abolish individual selection procedures, overcome the restrictions of the Bachelor/Master system that interfere with learning and, as a first step in that direction, rule out access restrictions in the transition from bachelor to master;
- turn the BAföG (student financial assistance programme) into a parent-independent, repression-free minimum income that satisfies the needs; gradually make it more parent-independent; align the maximum duration of payment with the average duration of studies;
- ensure good studying conditions through a "Study Pact II": increase resources per university place, being guided by the actual costs; better student guidance; more quality and openness and more promotion of women through arrangements between the federal and Laender governments;
- enshrine continuing education as a public responsibility: safeguard the legal right to and funding and quality of continuing education and training with a continuing education law; hold enterprises responsible and establish sectoral funds; expand federal and state laws into an adult education promotion scheme and make life-long learning accessible to all men and women regardless of their financial situations;
- value the competencies of migrant men and women; recognise the university and occupational certificates, qualifications, competencies and vocational experience acquired in the countries of origin.

3.3. Science, research and productivity for tomorrow's mode of production and way of life

"It is in the nature of knowledge to be a common social good and in the nature of a knowledge society to see itself as a culture society."

André Gorz

For the Grand Coalition, science and research are above all a location factor, especially for the export-based economy. DIE LINKE rejects that one-sided policy. New insights and technologies must serve the public weal and help resolve social challenges such as those of overcoming social inequality and dealing with climate change and the scarcity of resources. That can only be done if there are transparent negotiations on the opportunities and risks of innovations with public participation. The decisions on public support for research therefore have to be liberated from the closed circles of the ministries, boards of trustees and industrial consortia. DIE LINKE is open to the public promotion of new technologies if their utility is proven and the risks for man and nature are slight.

The state bears responsibility for the legal and financial protection of free basic research. The knowledge gained with public monies must then be available to all and must not be privatised. In order to act in the general interest, researchers need good working conditions. The increasing insecurity of scientists below the level of professors in Germany must be overcome. Not least in order to pave the way to science for more women.

DIE LINKE demands that support for research and technology be redirected towards a socially and ecologically sustainable and non-profit perspective.

- gear public research funding to goals oriented to the common weal: end expensive prestige projects, weapons research and industry-led research with public funds; abandon the one-sided orientation towards billion-euro support for export sectors; reject tax funding of research and development in companies as expensive subsidisation without any controlling effect;
- develop new instruments for promoting research: make public and civil society actors such as public service and utilities firms, municipal administrations and not-for-profit project agencies the clients of research services; give priority to the renovation of the public passenger and goods transport, energy supply and storage, health care and care for the elderly, public administration and education systems;
- assume global responsibility for combating neglected diseases: develop new active agents and vaccines against poverty-induced diseases such as tuberculosis or malaria and other tropical diseases; as a first step, use ten per cent of the resources set aside for the "Pharmainitiative" for that purpose;
- fund research for meeting global challenges: increase the resources for environmental and climate development, water and energy supply, north-south equity and civil conflict resolution; give financial support to cultural and social sciences as fields of research entitled to equal treatment and give them more responsibility in matters of equitable, democratic and ethnically diverse social development;
- fortify the eastern German research landscape: launch a special programme for university basic research to the amount of 20 per cent of the volume of the Excellence Initiative; retain and expand the successful support for innovative small and medium-sized enterprises and research cooperation schemes;
- improve the working conditions of scientific workers: strengthen co-determination and democratic self-management in the science facilities of the research organisations and in the universities and make possible science-specific provisions in the collective agreements providing social safeguards for intermediate scientific personnel;
- intensify the promotion of women in science: integrate the gender perspective into all publicly funded research projects; overcome gender-discriminatory selection procedures as well as insecure and ostracising career paths.

3.4. Formulating a digital media policy for more democracy

"Ha Ha! Your medium is dying!"

Nelson Muntz of the Simpsons to a print journalist, 2008

Access to communication and information has to do with fundamental aspects of participation in the democratic process. Those who do not have a command of modern cultural technologies or have no access to the digital world are unable to participate in a growing segment of democratic decision-making.

The private, globally active telecommunications and network operators are mutating into the broadcasters of tomorrow, without public monitoring and transparency, and are threatening the whole dual system of public and private television and radio. Digitalisation is creating new possibilities of controlling and exploiting the behaviour of the users. The technical limitations on a free and equal flow of information on the net are increasing. The special-interest-inspired demands and desires for Internet filters for copyright violations are becoming louder.

DIE LINKE therefore stands for the adoption of a democratic media policy that subjects the digital propagation of knowledge once again to public regulation. The goal is an important one: to safeguard programme and content diversity, preserve and extend freedom on the

Internet and defend human creativity against progressive commercialisation. The different forms of public access programming in the different Laender make a good contribution to achieving that goal. Progressive commercialisation is at the same time characterised by continuing media concentration. Financial investors are invading the media and press sector. Their business strategies produce pressure for profitability that embraces the old established media enterprises as well. The consequence is that reporting, culture and entertainment become shallow and commercialised.

The provisions of the Law on Working Hours and the work safety regulations and socially responsible treatment of employees have now been overridden in the industrially organised part of the creative industry. Permanent positions are the exception. DIE LINKE works to safeguard the interests of all those who are employed, often precariously, in the media and film industry.

DIE LINKE demands:

- good working conditions for media and film workers: introduce a "fair work" seal for games, programmes, platforms and online services;
- anchor the rights of Internet creative workers and users in a modernised copyright law: ensure the long-term right to private copies and copies for education and research purposes;
- guarantee communication and media freedom: formulate a digital democratic media policy; reform public broadcasting; ensure unrestricted publishing rights for public broadcasting on the Internet; constitute media commissions by quota based on current social relationships; put editorial charters in place that ensure a high degree of co-determination for employees;
- include broadband Internet access in the statutory universal service; close supply gaps in the rural regions without delay; end the exclusion of socially disadvantaged persons from digital communication;
- preserve and expand freedom in the Net; prevent Internet filters; preserve Net neutrality in a technologically modern manner;
- make all information and media services handicapped accessible; safeguard and expand public access broadcasting in the Laender.

3.5. Safeguard the cultural foundations of a dialogue-capable, just society

"What a sad epoch when it is easier to shatter an atom than prejudice."

Albert Einstein

Cultural questions are questions about the utopia-making capacity of a society, its history, its cohesion, its narratives. All people ask such questions, whether or not they are in dire existential straits. Where culture languishes as an additive to spice up one's hard life for the educated classes only, crucial questions are not asked. Public debate often begins in theatres, exhibition halls, in subcultures, youth cultures or cultures of protest.

With the ratification of the Convention on Cultural Diversity in 2008, our country spoke out against the boundless liberalisation and exploitation of cultural services. DIE LINKE supports all-round promotion of the cultural infrastructures of our society. This includes the preservation of accessible public spaces for socio-cultures, libraries and music schools, support for independent cultural scenes and small and medium-sized enterprises in the culture industry.

With regard to the ethnic minorities living here, German policy must finally align itself with international standards. Whether they have had their homes here for centuries, like the Danes, Friesians, Sinti and Roma and Sorbs (Wends), or only came here a few decades ago, like the Kurds, Turks or Italians, they all must be able to live here without discrimination and have the same opportunities as Germans. For the traditional minorities, moreover, the

standards of the European Convention for the Protection of Minorities apply.

Cultures of remembrance begin in one's own party. Without openness no understanding can develop for the diversity of the political and cultural confrontation in east and west. We want to make sure of the differentiated cultural history of the formerly divided country, without blinders, without taboos. Government-ordained commemoration policy does not work. DIE LINKE demands more pluralism in the historical placement of German society. The memorial concept of the federal government should therefore foster decentralised structures, the political and substantive independence of the memorials and the process of providing them with a sound scientific basis. Those who speak indiscriminately of the two German dictatorships are downplaying the crimes of fascism. Critical appropriation of east and west German post-war history is not possible without the historical context that led to the Nazi assumption of power in 1933 and the division of Germany after 1945.

DIE LINKE demands that, taking into consideration the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into Culture in Germany

- culture be enshrined in the Constitution as a mission of the state and as a community project: safeguard enduring support for culture on the part of the federal government;
- safeguard and strengthen theatres, orchestras, music schools, libraries, museums and archives under public ownership; stop the privatisation of culture;
- improve the working and living conditions of freelance artists:
 - retain the Artists' Social Welfare Fund;
 - adopt legal provisions for an exhibition fee;
 - adopt artist community legislation: levy culture cents on works no longer protected by copyright to promote art by young artists;
 -
 - establish modern copyright legislation: improve the social situation of creative workers;
- develop a monuments policy with democratic European and east and west German cultural traditions as its pillars;
- provide institutions and projects for nurturing and developing the recognised minority languages and cultures with resources corresponding to the increased tasks in the sphere of science, culture and media; fundamentally strengthen the participation rights of minorities at the federal level.

3.6. Without equality, democracy remains incomplete

"The greatest threat to equality is the myth that we already have it."

Grethe Nestor, 2006

At first glance, equality of the sexes in our society is a paradox. On the one hand we see young women who leave school with better grades than young men. On the other, this educational advance does not lead to more success in accessing training and in gainful employment. When the first child is born, if not earlier, there is a career slump. Average wages for women are still about one-quarter lower than those of men.

In past years the government has made no effort to improve the situation. Indeed, the situation of women has even worsened in many areas. The expansion of the low-wage sector and the Hartz IV definition of a communal household have further heightened relationships of dependence in partnerships and undermined women's right to earn their own livelihood. The Basic Law requires the state to promote the real equality of women and men. DIE LINKE works to have that commitment finally realised. We do not limit ourselves to eliminating barriers to access and creating seemingly "equal" starting conditions. We demand targeted measures to actively combat systematic discrimination. For example, by means of effective equal treatment legislation for private business. Our goal is for women to be able to shape their own lives in self-determination. Men and women must be equally able to be active in all spheres of human existence.

What women need for such equal participation is economic independence. Gender justice is an inseparable part of social justice. But for DIE LINKE, gender justice is also a value in itself that goes beyond social questions and also extends to questions of culture, power and status. We are talking about a society that is more just for women and men in equal measure. If we want a human society we have to overcome the male society.

That also means accepting sexual diversity in society and the equal status of different lifestyles. Lesbians, gays, transsexuals and transgendered persons are denied elementary rights. The registered partnership has considerably less rights than the heterosexual marriage. People are discriminated against because of their sexual orientation in income, income tax, inheritance and adoption law. Equal treatment must be legally implemented in this field.

DIE LINKE demands:

- support women's self-organisations;
- achieve the equal treatment of women and men in all social spheres: systematically take gender relations into account in all spheres of policy; review all measures with an eye to their effect on the equal status of women and men; secure women's policy as a distinct area of policy;
- consistently implement and improve the Federal Equality Act and the Federal Committees Act;
- adopt an equality law for private business; oblige enterprises to promote equality of women and the compatibility of job and family until the average wages of women and men are the same and women make up half the number of people in every wage group; make the public service a model with regard to the compatibility of gainful employment, household work and individual lifestyles;
- end state subsidising of the outdated family model: revoke the one-sided legal promotion of the model of the husband as breadwinner and the wife as supplementary earner at best;
- make possible active anti-discrimination policy: anchor a genuine right of collective action in the General Equal Treatment Act; enable the anti-discrimination office of the federal government to act independently, decouple it from the Federal Ministry of the Family, Seniors, Women and Youth and endow it with binding rights; accord equal rights to registered civil partnerships: introduce individual assessment of all taxpayers regardless of lifestyle; reform adoption and civil service law.

4. Protecting Democracy and Fundamental Rights

*"Democracy does not mean that the majority is right. The majority has the right to govern."
Umberto Eco*

Peaceful, tolerant co-existence in a democratic society cannot be taken for granted. Its foundations must be constantly renewed.

Guaranteeing public safety, protecting citizens from physical violence and criminal acts and threats are among the central functions of a democratic constitutional state. Guaranteeing fundamental rights in daily life and protecting civil rights from unjustified interventions by the state prevent the march into the all-encompassing surveillance state. It is the task of the state to protect the dignity of the individual from being attacked by others without itself violating the dignity and fundamental rights of the citizens.

Confidence in the rules of a democratic society lives from the experience that those rules apply for everyone, for the jobless as for the bank director or the fur-coated millionairess. Tangible equality before the law and through the law is among the most important and fundamental assets of a democratic society. Democratic equality is always violated in daily life when the size of a business translates into political influence and social pressure. Special rights for large corporations and banks are like an insidious neurotoxin for a democratic society. It is thus that the prevailing policy produces fury, powerlessness and anger.

DIE LINKE stands for democratic and social legal and internal affairs policies. We take the legitimate needs of the citizens for protection seriously. That means outlawing violence and persecuting attacks on life and personal property without crossing the boundaries set the state by fundamental and civil rights. DIE LINKE fights against a conservative security policy that one-sidedly upgrades police arsenals and is constantly adopting new criminal law provisions.

4.1. Constitutional state and social state – alternatives to the security state

*"The dignity of man is inviolable".
To respect and protect it is the duty of all state authority."*

"All persons are equal before the law."

Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany

The Basic Law defines Germany as a democratic and social federal state. The inviolability of human dignity is supposed to be the supreme imperative of all state action. The use of property should serve the public weal. The state is called upon to make an active contribution to social equilibrium and social justice. Reality is often at variance with these precepts. Thus unemployed persons receiving Hartz IV payments are deprived of the elementary welfare state freedom to decline work that is beneath certain social standards without existential consequences, the growth of child poverty and child neglect is tolerated and homelessness is put up with.

DIE LINKE considers that the welfare state precept in the Basic Law must be made more stringent. It is not a matter of holding the welfare state responsible for every grievance and every misfortune. It is a matter of explicitly committing the state to take action against social exclusion, injustice, joblessness and homelessness.

Judges are bound to both the constitutional state and to the welfare state and help shape both. In that sense they are political and they should be aware of that fact. The welfare state principle implies their obligation to protect the weaker from the superior force of the stronger.

DIE LINKE demands:

- concretise the welfare state precept in the Basic Law: enshrine fundamental social rights such as the right to work, housing, recreation, education, health and social security in constitutional law;
- enshrine children's rights to promotion, protection and participation in the Basic Law;
- immediately restore socially equitable access to judicial and extrajudicial legal protection for everyone: guarantee effective legal proceedings through socially equitable procedural law; do not exclude low-income persons from legal process through costs of litigation and court costs; expand legal cost and consultation aid; restore legal protection for persons with disabilities by expanding and strengthening care legislation;
- prevent the dismantling of legal remedies (objections, appeals) in administrative and judicial proceedings;
- do not allow the courtroom to degenerate into a bazaar in criminal proceedings: prove the guilt of the accused in a procedure based on the rule of law; treat everyone equally in court; end the chronic underfunding of courts; increase fines proportionately for the wealthy;
- implement the principle of resocialisation in criminal law;
- abolish the special political crimes legislation (§ 129a, § 129b StGB).

4.2. Protection from gender-specific violence

"Violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women's full advancement."

Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995

How sexuality is experienced, who loves whom and how, is of no concern to the state. Protecting that freedom, however, is a responsibility of the state. The right to physical integrity and the right of self-determination over one's own body are inseparable. The right of self-determination is curtailed if a woman cannot decide freely concerning a pregnancy. DIE LINKE believes that every woman has the right to decide about her pregnancy alone and without state tutelage or threat of punishment.

In all countries of the world, in all social strata, across cultural and religious boundaries, the physical and mental integrity of women and girls is violated. In Germany too, two out of five women experience sexual or physical violence at some time in their lives. Women with disabilities need special protection. Every fourth woman in this country is mistreated by her partner at least once in her life. Violence against women and girls is not a "private matter". It must be a social responsibility to outlaw every form of violence against women and girls and to protect their physical and mental integrity. And yet the governing coalition treats the struggle against violence against women and girls as a subordinate "women's issue", not as a domestic policy task.

The financial situation of women's houses has worsened dramatically; in rural regions in particular, there are too few protection and aid facilities. DIE LINKE works to ensure that every woman finds refuge and assistance without bureaucratic hurdles, regardless of income, place of residence and residence status. This 30-year-old demand is more imperative now than ever before.

DIE LINKE demands:

- abolish criminal liability for abortions: delete § 218, § 219 of the Penal Code; every woman has the right to decide whether or not to carry a pregnancy to term;
- ensure the unrestricted right of intersexual and transsexual persons to self-determination: change the Civil Status Law and given name legislation accordingly; prohibit surgical procedures imposed by others on intersexuals;

- rigorously combat domestic violence: further develop the Protection Against Violence Act; anchor the duty of the civil court to provide information to the police and department of public prosecution; review the effectiveness of sanctions against violent criminals;
- fund women's houses uniformly throughout the country and in line with the need: guarantee open access to women's houses and protection facilities for all women regardless of social background and residence status; include the cost of accommodating children; ensure maintenance and transfer maintenance claims of women who have fled their partners to the state;
- enable women affected by violence to have chances for the future: promote autonomy through initial and continuing education and training, social security or support in finding gainful employment to ensure a livelihood;
- create effective protections against forced marriages: introduce an independent right of residence from the first day of marriage and the right of return for women taken out of the country by force; abolish the discriminatory German language tests for spouses wishing to immigrate;
- give priority to victim protection in cases of human trafficking: strengthen the residence and social rights of victims of human trafficking and forced prostitution; do not link victim protection with the willingness of the women to testify, and create independent anonymous counselling services.

4.3. Protect civil rights

"They who would give up an essential liberty for temporary security deserve neither liberty nor security."

Benjamin Franklin

Terrorism, organised criminality and violent crime are serious threats to peaceful cohabitation. They create a climate of fear, nurture mistrust and paralyse social activity. They must be effectively prosecuted and punished. Police and the courts must be well trained and have modern equipment. The existing laws are sufficient for successfully combating crime.

The fight against terrorism and crime misses its target if constitutional principles and civil rights are flouted in the name of "internal security". "Internal security" at the expense of the rule of law, commensurability and civil liberties is not an achievement that a democracy can be proud of.

If data retention and online searches are all right for the state as the supreme protector of human rights, then the surveillance of personnel by certain firms such as Lidl, Telekom or Deutsche Bahn must be all right as well. But the value of fundamental and civil rights is measured precisely by what they are worth in everyday life.

The separation of the military and police, or secret service work from police work, is an unrelinquishable basic rule of a democratic state structure. This separation is as much a lesson from our history as the rejection of a centralised security agency and the use of the Bundeswehr for policing work inside the country.

DIE LINKE demands:

- sharply separate police and secret services: restrict and dissolve the growing secret sectors of the police and uncontrollable cooperation groups; stop the expansion of the Federal Bureau of Criminal Investigation into a centralised police force; as a long-term aim, abolish the secret services, and until then strengthen democratic control;
- introduce mandatory individual identification for uniformed officers of the federal police;
- modernise the protection of private data and data protection legislation: review large-scale projects, from the health card through biometric ID cards to electronic identity

documents and uniform tax numbers and revise them according to strict private data protection criteria; create effective employee data protection; introduce comprehensive freedom of information legislation and collective suits;

- defend the right of informed citizens to information self-determination: end data retention; renounce online searches and censorship measures on the Internet, curtail covert methods of investigation such as video monitoring and wiretapping operations and dragnet investigations;
- prohibit the use of the Bundeswehr as an auxiliary police force inside the country.
- Drugs are an everyday phenomenon. The differentiation into legal and illegal substances is arbitrary. After more than 30 years of "war on drugs" the cultivation and consumption of illegal drugs continues to spread world-wide. The drug trade is estimated to be the third most lucrative business in the world after the trade in petroleum and weapons, and it prevents peaceful development and the rule of law in entire states.
- The illegalised consumption of drugs as well as its abuse can lead to severe health, social and material problems. We stand for a rational and humane drug policy and liberalisation of narcotics legislation.

DIE LINKE demands:

- establish a German Bundestag commission of inquiry to evaluate current national and international drug policy;
- introduce drug checking services to reduce risks to the health of drug consumers;
- offer sufficient, need-oriented psychosocial guidance and support to drug addicts on a voluntary treatment basis;
- authorise cannabis as a pharmaceutical where indicated;
- define cannabis consumption limits for drivers similar to the permissible blood alcohol level arrangement;
- regulate the drug market, which is totally "free" at present, by means of a dispensing model for cannabis that legalises cannabis possession, acquisition, cultivation and commerce with due consideration given to the protection of minors.

4.4. The humanity of a society is measured by its treatment of people in need

"We have only known that there is such a thing as a right to have rights since millions of people turned up who had lost that right and as a result of the new global organisation of the world are unable to get it back."

Hannah Arendt

People in existential distress require help. To help them is a humanitarian imperative. Open borders for people in distress!

Anyone who denies them help violates an elementary humanitarian precept.

Those who are persecuted on political or ethnic grounds or because of their sex or sexual orientation, those who have to fear for their physical integrity or even their lives and are trying to escape must not be turned away. That is why the fundamental right to political asylum was established in the Basic Law.

That basic right was robbed of its substance by the 1992 asylum compromise and the subsequent "harmonisation of EU asylum policy". The frontiers of the EU were turned into high-security barriers against refugees. As a result, fewer and fewer refugees are even reaching Germany. Those who succeed are subjected to the discriminatory "Asylum Seeker Benefits Law" (accommodation in dormitories, benefits in kind), may not work to earn a livelihood (work ban), and may not leave the place of residence assigned to them (residence obligation).

Those granted political asylum after a gruelling acknowledgement procedure are more and more often exposed to asylum revocation procedures if the authorities are of the opinion that the conditions in the country of origin have changed. DIE LINKE stands for a humane

asylum policy.

DIE LINKE demands:

- substantively restore the right to asylum in the Basic Law; accept the Geneva Refugee Convention and the European Human Rights Convention unreservedly and fully implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- fully recognise gender-specific reasons for flight as grounds for asylum: protect women from deportation who face threats of gender-specific violence – such as female genital mutilation, for example – in their home country;
- recognise flight from civil war-like, non-state conflicts, from militias and warlords as grounds for permanent asylum;
- do not revoke the granting of asylum: treat acknowledged refugees as citizens with equal rights; safeguard access to integration measures; establish central offices against discrimination and racism in all federal Laender;
- rescind discriminatory regulations and laws: end "chain toleration certificates"; abolish the Asylum Seeker Benefits Law and the residence obligation;
- ensure elementary human rights such as schooling and treatment of diseases for hundreds of thousands of "illegals"; suspend official notification requirements; create prospects for legal residence;
- grant comprehensive protection for people who are persecuted because of their sexual orientation;
- grant the secure right to stay to people living here for long periods, regardless of their status under aliens legislation;
- implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: adapt alien and asylum legislation accordingly for under-age refugees;
- end custody pending deportation and its inhuman terms;
-
- enforce a human rights-based asylum policy at the European level: abolish the FRONTEX frontier police agency; prohibit the involuntary relocation of refugees under the unjust Responsibility Principle (Dublin II Regulation); ensure fair asylum proceedings; abolish assembly camps and recognise non-state persecution and persecution on grounds of gender or sexual orientation as grounds for asylum.

4.5. Resolutely confront the enemies of democracy

"Fascism is not an opinion, it is a crime."

Deutsche Geschichte

A democratic society is founded on the promise of all members of the society to respect one another as equals. Without reciprocal recognition as citizens with the same democratic rights regardless of skin colour, gender or origin, religion or world view, neither social justice nor democracy can endure.

Xenophobia, fascism, anti-Semitism, racism and homophobia are directed against the foundations of a democratic society. They deny the principle of democratic equality and call for solutions at the expense of the weak and minorities. Their guiding principle is that the stronger shall prevail, in day-to-day life as in politics.

There are various reasons for the emergence of extreme right-wing attitudes: They keep re-emerging from prejudices, de-democratisation and de-solidarisation and are fostered by social division in German society and democratic deficits. The upsurge of right-wing extremist parties and the spread of right extremist ideas should not be trivialised or, even worse, justified as an understandable reaction to social problems. The repeated criminalisation of protest and resistance against the right, not least at marches, must end.

DIE LINKE demands:

- outlaw, prosecute and forcefully punish right-wing extremist violence: acknowledge and promote civic engagement against right extremist violence; co-ordinate activities by the federal ministries and federal and Laender governments against right extremism, racism and anti-Semitism through a "Commissioner of the German Bundestag for Democracy and Tolerance";
- establish an independent right extremism, racism and anti-Semitism monitoring agency; do not leave the observation of the NPD and Nazi structures to the Office for the Protection of the Constitution alone; strengthen and adequately fund mobile counselling teams, exit assistance and other public projects and initiatives against right extremism, racism and anti-Semitism; promote the relevant education work in school, in training and in politics;
- ban the NPD and aggressively confront right extremism: end the use of clandestine agents (V-Leute) of the Offices for the Protection of the Constitution within the NPD; combat parties and organisations that dispute the right of others to live, that revive National Socialist thinking and want to abolish democracy, and launch prohibition proceedings before the Federal Constitutional Court.

4.6. Rely more on the citizens

"Our public men have, besides politics, their private affairs to attend to, and our ordinary citizens, though occupied with the pursuits of industry, are still fair judges of public matters."

Pericles

Volunteer civic engagement enriches social life. It reflects the skills and courage of the citizens to take things into their own hands. A democratic society lives from that engagement. DIE LINKE stands for all-round promotion of civic engagement. Volunteer honorary work must not be misused as a stopgap for dismantling the welfare state. And it must not be only the business of those who can afford it. The same possibilities of participation must be ensured for the unemployed, low-income earners, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Volunteer work, self-help and honorary office must have greater weight in state and society. Precisely because civic engagement is not for material benefit, it must be honoured by an effective culture of recognition. A good framework for civic engagement creates the foundation for the preservation and extension of social and democratic involvement. Engagement for society, family and occupation and time for oneself must be made more compatible. The civic engagement of migrants is of particular importance for our life together and for involvement. It has to be supported with concrete projects.

DIE LINKE demands:

- improve the legal, financial, insurance and infrastructural framework for honorary work;
- repay outlay for civic engagement or lump-sum allowances in the form of direct grants rather than crediting it against state benefits;
- promote possibilities of testing and free continuing education of volunteers in different fields of engagement.

Strengthen the protection of consumers from the power of producers. Citizens are not powerless. They can make conscious use of the financial resources available to them and not buy goods with harmful ingredients, for example, or can leave products produced in a socially unacceptable manner on the shelves. All too often, however, the suppliers of goods and services have an advantage over consumers. The consumers lack technical knowledge and the relevant information. DIE LINKE therefore wants to guarantee consumers comprehensive transparency and information and reinforce their rights.

DIE LINKE demands:

- strengthen consumer rights and anchor preventive consumer protection in law: accord consumers comprehensive rights to information and transparency; strengthen the rights of

consumers' associations and of consumers; introduce traffic light labelling for food products;

- make consumer policy socially just; give special support to low-income, educationally disadvantaged or inexperienced consumers;
- reverse the burden of proof: expand producer liability, improve victim protection;
- revise the rules on telephone sales: make the validity of contracts entered into over the telephone dependent on written confirmation.

5. Peace and Justice – World-wide!

"I want earth fire bread sugar flour ocean books and belonging for all"

Pablo Neruda

The world we live in has not become more peaceful or safer in the past years. It is convulsed by manifold crises. Wars over resources are intensifying world-wide. Global capitalism has plunged the financial markets into the abyss and the national economies of many countries into a deep depression. In the industrialised countries, this is connected with tangible drops in wealth for the citizens. In the non-industrialised countries poor in raw materials, there has been a catastrophic increase in poverty, hunger and epidemics.

German foreign policy must become peace policy. Good foreign policy that meets the interests of its own country in a world order committed to peace, justice and equality must realise how its own action in the world affects others: For a resident of the southern hemisphere, it must be totally incomprehensible that the EU countries alone should put together rescue packages for banks totalling two billion dollars when a fraction of that sum would be enough to vanquish the worst afflictions of humanity, from hunger to illiteracy. These unbelievable imbalances must be effectively combated.

But in fact the foreign policy of industrialised raw materials deprived countries such as Germany is increasingly taking on the character of an imperial raw materials and energy securing policy. The competition for the remaining raw materials is leading more and more often to violence and wars. The economic, energy and climate crises are exacerbating the world-wide food and primary health care crisis. Billions of people have neither adequate food nor access to clean water and electric power, to say nothing of health care and education. A foreign policy geared to peace must also work for a reform of the world monetary system and for a world key currency that is not based on a national currency.

The drive for predominance and the deployment of military force are no basis for crisis management. If one wants cooperation one must respect international law and human rights. The central institution must be the United Nations; its resolutions must be respected. DIE LINKE is the party of international law and of the implementation of the prohibition of force in international relations.

5.1. Development needs justice

"For the first time in the history of mankind, objective deprivation has been conquered and the utopia of common happiness would be materially possible."

Jean Ziegler, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food

DIE LINKE demands a fundamental realignment of our relations with the countries of the south. Development and foreign economic policy must start with the structural problems brought about by the capitalist world economic order. Effective German development cooperation presupposes a system change in economic, financial, energy and trade policies as well as agrarian policy. The development cooperation of the western industrialised countries has up to now been geared to their own economic advantage. It has become an appendage of foreign economic and security policy. A multiple of what flows from north to

south as aid returns to the rich countries via interest payments, capital flight and unfair trade.

The federal government has increasingly coupled development aid with a secure supply of raw materials; in the European Union, it is the German government in particular that is expediting a policy of free trade with the developing and threshold countries in order to tap the markets there. It is not rare for development aid to be used as a pawn to force the markets open. The present crisis shows: The policy of free trade and liberalisation has failed. It is leading to ever greater susceptibility to crises and still more dependence. It hinders development in the south and the world-wide implementation of the human right to food. The priority development policy goal of DIE LINKE, on the other hand, is to strengthen self-determined development and food sovereignty in the countries of the south.

For that purpose, development policy must strengthen south-south relations and regional markets as an antipole to global trade policy, promote the processing of raw materials in the country of origin and see that prices are just. The promotion of small farmers must be intensified at the expense of the purely export-oriented agrarian industry. The local producers have to be protected from the price dumping and cutthroat competition that is encouraged by EU agricultural export subsidies and free trade agreements.

Women play a leading and decisive role in sustainable development at all levels, in education, in the economy, in family relationships. Successful development policy, as world-wide experience has shown, is always active women's advancement policy as well.

In essence, development policy cooperation must be geared to liberation from poverty, illiteracy, oppression, exploitation and war. In addition to national and supra-regional institutions, world-wide social, ecological and anti-militarist movements such as the World Social Forum, trade unions, locally controlled development initiatives at the municipal and regional level, self-help groups and non-governmental organizations are important allies in that effort.

DIE LINKE demands:

- implement the human right to food and food sovereignty: centre demands on appropriate technologies for small farmers and a just distribution of land and resources;
- prohibit speculation in food: regulate financial markets, prohibit hedge funds and speculative transactions with food; rule out importing agricultural commodities to produce bio-fuels before there is an assured sustainable global food supply;
- make the advancement of women a development policy priority: consistently promote gender justice at all economic, political and social levels; take the gender-specific division of labour, for instance in agricultural production, into consideration when allocating monies; invest in women's advancement projects, support high-quality elementary education for girls and continuing education schemes for women;
- reform the IMF and World Bank along democratic lines and integrate them fully into the United Nations system; strengthen regionally based and oriented lending institutions;
- create equitable trade structures, write off the debts of developing countries: abolish EU export subsidies; renegotiate the "Economic Partnership Agreements" with the ACP (Africa, Caribbean, Pacific) states and other free trade agreements; create fair mediation procedures for insolvent states;
- ensure effective and reliable emergency assistance: place payments for international emergency aid on a mandatory basis and make them safe from finance crises; provide aid without imposing economic policy conditions;
- link development policy with civil conflict prevention, international law and human rights and active peace policy: end the subordination of development cooperation to foreign and security policy and so-called civilian-military cooperation; strengthen the democratic and progressive movements of the south directly, involve the project target groups in planning and implementation and coordinate international aid better;
- make licenses for low-cost drugs available to developing countries;

- set aside 0.7 per cent of the gross domestic product for development aid.

5.2. Global solutions require global cooperation

"Our job is to make the world nicer, safer and better than we found it."

Muhammad Yunus, Nobel Peace Prize laureate

International law is the only legal basis for inter-state relations. If it is allowed to be violated, there is no law except the law of the jungle. For that reason DIE LINKE, in contrast to the other parties, will not countenance any breach of international law.

But as long as the veto powers in the UN Security Council and their allies violate international law without having to expect sanctions the United Nations will be rather powerless. We want the United Nations to be strengthened politically. We reject UN-mandated wars as well as any further militarisation of the United Nations. The Member States must provide the United Nations with more resources and competencies for social development, health and education as well as civilian conflict resolution.

Only then can the United Nations be helpful in solving international problems and promote and ensure peace and social justice world-wide. The democratisation of the United Nations is indispensable. Irrespective of the overdue reform of the United Nations, the current devaluation of international law must be stopped. There is no such thing as a "humanitarian" military intervention. DIE LINKE therefore rejects all military and war operations in violation of international law, with or without a UN mandate. Wars are always inhuman and the most serious violation of human rights.

Germany and the EU must emphatically support the "millennium goals" of the United Nations and help ensure that the reform of the world economic order does not remain a matter for the G8 and G20 states but is placed on the agenda of the United Nations. An effective global climate policy demands a United Nations that is active in climate policy.

The present system of emission trading has proved largely ineffective. As a rule, emission allowances are given away for free. The CO₂ emission requirements have been too weak. They did not provide for development policy controls. Global climate policy must start from the principle of human equality. On a per capita basis, each person must be allowed the same amount of CO₂ emissions, and it must have a low global environmental impact in the long run.

If one takes this principle of global equality seriously one will see that it is primarily the industrialised countries that have to take rapid and energetic action.

The left-leaning states of Central and South America have shown that mutually advantageous economic cooperation – without looting and injustice – works. The Federal Government must seek paths of cooperation instead of confrontation with the left-leaning governments of Latin America and lift the blockade of Cuba.

DIE LINKE demands:

- gear German foreign policy to the strengthening of the United Nations: recognise, implement and further develop international law as the contractual foundation for inter-state relations.
- reform the United Nations democratically: end the use of the United Nations to mandate wars; subordinate military alliances to the United Nations; grant more rights to the United Nations General Assembly;
- realise the millennium goals of the United Nations by 2015: drastically reduce the worst scourges of mankind – such as poverty, hunger, lack of food and drinking water, epidemics and diseases, maternal and infant mortality, underdevelopment and illiteracy – and enact arrangements for combating them that are binding under international law;
- accept an active role of the United Nations in reforming the world economic order: do not leave the new economic order to the powerful states alone; strictly regulate the financial markets; create a system of fixed exchange rates; overcome the dogmas of

privatisation, liberalisation and free trade in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and strengthen sensible development policy goals in the context of an ecologically sustainable and socially, politically and economically just world economic policy; strengthen the United Nations as a global authority for dealing with vital tasks such as the attainment of food sovereignty, access to water and climate change;

- substantially increase the compensation to the states of the south for the consequences of climate change;
- a change in the provision of energy in the direction of energy sovereignty for the states of the South by means of a mix of renewable energy sources and intensified global knowledge and technology transfer.

5.3. German foreign policy: Implement a peace policy!

"If we are expected to lift up the murder weapons against our French or other foreign brothers, we shall declare 'No, we won't do that!'"

Rosa Luxemburg on 25 September 1913 at a rally in Fechenheim (for that "Invitation to disobey the law and directives of the authorities" she was sentenced in 1914 to one year in prison)

German foreign policy was militarised by the SPD and Greens and increasingly geared to the imperial assertion of capital interests. Since the war of aggression against the former Yugoslavia, the Federal Republic of Germany has been actively involved in actions violating international law.

The prohibition of the use of force in international relations as the core of the United Nations monopoly on the use of force needs to be respected. However, Germany is taking either a direct (Kosovo, Afghanistan) or an indirect part (Iraq) in military interventions and wars in violation of international law. As a NATO member state, Germany accepts NATO's New Strategic Concept, which proclaims the pursuit of economic interests to be a military task.

The two major wars of recent years have been the Afghanistan war and the Iraq war, a war for oil. The war in Afghanistan in particular is stubbornly defended against all criticism because NATO sees its intervention capability called into question if it should fail. Its actual war aim is to appear as a global intervention force. But that is making the situation in Afghanistan considerably more difficult. There can be no military victory in the so-called war on terror.

Measured by the global challenges, German foreign policy is counter-productive. In its foreign policy the federal government is guided more by the confrontation and intervention policy of the USA and NATO than by the task of finding cooperative answers to global problems.

DIE LINKE demands:

- withdraw the Bundeswehr from Afghanistan immediately;
- do not allow any foreign military operations by the Bundeswehr – not even with a UN mandate: do not send any military advisors to support authoritarian regimes;
- reduce the size of the military budget and expand the Civil Peace Service;
- immediately abandon the plans for military use of the Kyritz-Ruppiner Heide area as a "bombodrome"; no "bombodromes" anywhere;
- dissolve NATO and replace it with a collective security system with the participation of Russia: prevent the missile defence shield from being erected in Poland and the Czech Republic; expand the civilian partnership and cooperation agreements between the EU and Russia; take the security interests of Russia into consideration when shaping the Eastern Partnership with states of the former Soviet Union;
- disarm radically: abolish conscription; remodel the Bundeswehr as a defence army and reduce its size substantially; with a federal conversion programme, support the

abandonment of military sites and the civilian use of abandoned military property; permit youth officers to speak in schools, universities and labour agencies only with persons holding opposing views; take a stand against the tendency to privatise military services and in particular, take a stand for the international prohibition of private armies;

- do not consent to any attempt to expand NATO: refuse to participate in the NATO Response Force (NRF) and multinational armament programmes; do not consent to any expansion of the NATO mandate (strategic maritime transport, disaster control, energy security); end the NATO doctrine of preventive wars and deployment of nuclear weapons; take active steps towards a nuclear weapons free world;
- implement UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security: protect women and girls in situations of war and crisis and actively involve them in peace processes; launch a national action plan for implementation of UN Resolution 1325; prohibit the manufacture, use and distribution of cluster bombs and land mines, destroy the stockpiles of these weapons;
- prohibit arms exports;
- close down all military bases of foreign armies in Germany and have all nuclear weapons destroyed.

5.4. Germany in Europe: for a social, democratic and peaceful European Union

"The international financial markets have reached a degree of complexity today that is on a par with that of the world weather."

Susan George, 1998

The European Union is an indispensable field of political action for safeguarding peace in Europe, for mastering the global economic crisis, for preserving the interests of employees, for the socio-ecological restructuring of the European internal market, for meeting the global challenges and global cooperation. Europe and the European Union are not well equipped for the task.

The governments of the EU states have gambled away the enthusiasm of many citizens for Europe and it will take a long time to regain it. A race for the lowest taxes, wages and social benefits has been promoted and employees in the European countries have been played off against one another. Up to now the European Union has not bothered to create the political tools for reacting appropriately to the global crises of economic, climate and energy policy and the food supply. The European Union, the EU Commission and the European Court of Justice have up to now been pledged to a policy that is among the causes of these crises: assertion of European economic freedoms, service and capital freedoms, de-nationalisation, privatisation and deregulation. That must change.

DIE LINKE demands:

- establish European economic governance: co-ordinate monetary, financial and economic policy;
- oblige the European Central Bank (ECB) to attach as much importance to sustainable development and employment as it does to price stability: control the ECB through the European Parliament and the Council of Economics and Finance Ministers;
- replace the Stability and Growth Pact with an agreement for sustainable development, full employment, social security and environmental protection;
- insert a social progress clause into European treaties with the heading "Ensure the same pay for work of the same value in the same place";
- allow citizens to help formulate a European constitution and present it to be voted on simultaneously by all citizens of the European Union;
- realise equal treatment of women and men; expand protection against discrimination: rule out discrimination against people on grounds of ethnic origin, gender, religion or world view, disability, age or sexual identity throughout Europe;

- provide EU regional and structural policy with adequate funds: establishment and consolidation of traffic links between eastern and western Europe; more vigorously develop the cooperation in the frontier regions, for example between Germany and Poland and the Czech Republic;
- abolish the FRONTEX border control agency;

- replace the European Defence Agency with a disarmament agency;

- end foreign military operations in the framework of European foreign and security policy;
- expand cooperation with the eastern and south-eastern European neighbour countries; make Germany a forerunner for reconciliation and understanding; accelerate the expansion of traffic links between western and eastern Europe;
- support and intensify the regional cooperation of the German-Polish and German-Czech border regions through the federal government.

6. Consistently Social. For Democracy and Peace

"What disturbs me most is the appalling social injustice of the socialised costs of system failure hitting the most vulnerable social groups the hardest. (...) Politics makes itself a laughing stock when it moralises instead of relying on the restrictive law of the democratic legislator. Politics, and not capitalism, is in charge of public interest orientation."
Jürgen Habermas, November 2008

In the present world economic crisis, even the neo-liberal fundamentalists are crying for the saviour state. This is politics' moment! In the crisis, he who misses the opportunity to radically change the rules of the game is paving the way for the next crisis by omission. He is remiss in his responsibility to the interests of the majority: jobs, income, prosperity, security, health, education, culture in a well-organised society that resolves its public affairs in democratic equality of all instead of being blackmailed by the power of banks and corporations.

DIE LINKE stands for social justice, for the restructuring of economy and society, for the interests of wage-earners and for the participation of those excluded and rejected by capitalism on a footing of equality.

DIE LINKE stands for the peaceful and solidarity-based cooperation of the peoples and states, for exclusively civilian conflict resolution. We champion these goals in the German Bundestag and in society.

Left works! The past four years have shown that it has an effect. The other parties are reacting to a stronger LEFT because they are afraid of us and afraid of losing their voters. If other parties now vie for votes with such demands of the LEFT as minimum wage, stock market transaction tax, longer unemployment insurance benefits, abolition of wage discrimination against women, more education spending, that is as it should be, although terrible experiences with election promises are not forgotten. We shall take them at their word! We shall bring the problems up and put our proposals to the vote!

The change of policy that is necessary now, in the midst of the crisis, calls for resoluteness and courage. It also calls for political pressure from the society, from associations, enterprises and social movements, for active intermeddling. Our parliamentary party will continue in the coming four years to be open to the protest and demands of the workers and their trade unions, the globalisation critics, the persons with disabilities, the women's movement and the unemployed, of the representatives of science, culture and religion and of socially responsible entrepreneurs. Their ideas and their engagement are needed.

DIE LINKE works. To do so we need your votes on election day, votes that our parliamentary party sees as a commitment to act accordingly.

The stronger DIE LINKE, the more social the country.