

DIE LINKE.

Programme Of the DIE LINKE Party

DIE LINKE

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Questions from a Worker Who Reads

Who built the seven gated Thebes?
In the books you can read the names of kings.
Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?
And the many times destroyed Babylon –
Who rebuilt it so many times? In which houses
of the golden shining Lima did its builders live?
Where went the masons the evening the Chinese Wall
was completed? The great Rome
is full of triumphal archs. Who raised them? Over whom
the emperors prevailed? Had the much sung about Byzantium
palaces only for its inhabitants? Even in legendary Atlantis,
when the sea was devouring it at night,
the drowning yelled at their slaves.

The young Alexander conquered India.
He alone?
Caesar defeated the Gauls.
Was not at least a cook with him?
Philipp of Spain cried, when his fleet
went down. No one else cried?
Frederick the Second won the Seven Years' War. Who
won it beside him?

Every page a victory.
Who cooked the victory feast?
Every ten years one great man.
Who paid the expense?

So many reports.
So many questions.

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Preamble – what DIE LINKE stands for

DIE LINKE as a socialist party stands for alternatives, for a better future. We democratic socialists, the democratic left with different political biographies, ideological and religious influences, women and men, old and young, established and immigrants, people with and without disabilities, have come together in a new left party. We cling to the dream of mankind that a better world is possible.

We are not and will not be like those parties that obsequiously submit to the wishes of the economically powerful and for that very reason can scarcely be told apart. We pursue a concrete goal: we fight for a society in which no child has to grow up poor, in which all men and women can live a self-determined life in peace, dignity and social security and can democratically shape social relations. To achieve this we need a different economic and social system: democratic socialism.

We want to use the grandiose ideas, the visions and creative forces of men and women for convincing political projects, to overcome hunger and poverty, to get the consequences of climate change and environmental disasters under control.

We are not prepared to accept a world in which profit interests determine the prospects of millions of men and women and in which exploitation, war and imperialism cut whole countries off from hope and the future. Where profit rules above all else, there is little space for democracy. The untrammelled freedom of the big corporations means bondage for the majority of men and women.

We proceed from the traditions of democracy and socialism, of the struggles for human rights and emancipation, against fascism and racism, imperialism and militarism. We want to overcome all social relationships in which people are exploited, disenfranchised and deprived of the right to make their own decisions and in which the social and natural foundations of their lives are destroyed.

We want to use the new possibilities of knowledge acquisition, cultural exchange and communication for a future that is worth living. We want to expand the rule of law and the welfare state so that women and men can make sovereign decisions concerning their working and living time and can seize opportunities to participate, to acquire education and to be there for one another socially.

Limitless wealth for the upper echelons, humiliation for the growing mass of the poor and decreasing prosperity for the vast majority are not the result of the internationalisation of production and trade but of global capitalism. The consequences for Germany are omnipresent: a growing low-wage sector, annihilation of jobs, cutbacks in social benefits, impoverished municipalities, the lack of training places, social privileges in education, two-tier medicine, elderly people in poverty or without decent care. Current politics has been subordinated to the interests of corporate bosses and the wealthy. This agenda runs counter to the interests of the majority of the people. We believe in global co-operation rather than the concept that might makes right. A world under the diktat of an omnipotent global capitalism is not a world

worth striving for. Business and politics must be centred on the vital needs and interests of the majority of the people.

We want to help turn passive resentment into active resistance. We put up resistance to wage dumping, the robbing of welfare recipients and the selling off of public property. We want to change the balance of social power, and are fighting for a different policy. Democracy, freedom, equality, justice, internationalism and solidarity are among our fundamental values. They are inseparable from peace, the conservation of nature and emancipation. We are fighting for a system change because capitalism, which is based on inequality, exploitation, expansion and competition, is incompatible with those goals.

We have united in a new political force that stands for freedom and equality, fights resolutely for peace, is democratic and social, ecological and feminist, open and plural, militant and tolerant. Together with citizens in Germany, in Europe and throughout the world, with trade unions and movements, we are looking for alternative solutions and social alternatives. We want to build a society of democratic socialism in which reciprocal recognition of the freedom and equality of every individual is the condition for the development of all in solidarity. We are fighting for a change of course in politics that will open the way for a fundamental transformation of society, that will overcome capitalism.

Three basic ideas are linked together in our Programme:

■ individual freedom and personal development for everyone through a socially equal share in the conditions for a

self-determined life and solidarity; we consider that to be the first guiding principle of a solidarity-based society. In it, the dominance of profit is overcome and reliable and good living conditions for all are the goal of economic management;

■ the subordination of the economy to development in solidarity and the conservation of nature. We regard that as the second guiding principle. It requires a social and ecological conversion to sustainable development instead of profit-oriented growth.

■ The realisation of these two dimensions is a long emancipatory process in which the dominance of capital will be overcome by democratic, social and ecological forces and the society of democratic socialism will emerge.

DIE LINKE fights

■ **for a different, democratic economic order** that subjects the market regulation of production and distribution to democratic, social and ecological framing and control. It has to be based on public and democratically controlled ownership in services of general interest, of the social infrastructure, in the power industry and in the financial sector. We want the democratic socialisation of further structurally relevant areas on the basis of state, municipal, co-operative or workforce ownership. Business must be subject to stringent competition control. Effective employee rights and co-determination rights must be assured in all enterprises.

■ **for a socio-ecological transformation** in the direction of sustainable, resource-saving and environment-conserving economies and lives. We need regulated,

sustainable development in conjunction with more social justice. We want a change in energy policy based on renewable energies, without nuclear power, that is not at the expense of the people in the global south and is not attained through the destruction of further environmental resources.

■ **for the right to a good job providing an adequate livelihood.** Good work for everyone, but less work for each individual – that is what we want by way of new full employment. DIE LINKE stands for the redistribution of work through shorter working hours, for equal pay for equal work and a statutory minimum wage providing an adequate livelihood. We stand for comprehensive protection against dismissal and we fight against cheap jobs, starvation wages and the replacement of the regular workforce by temporary agency work or bogus self-employment.

■ **for an inclusive society** in which every man and woman finds overall conditions in which they can develop their skills, capabilities and talents, no one stands outside society and everyone can make a contribution.

■ **for fair distribution of all jobs between the sexes.** There should be enough time in the lives of men and women for gainful employment, for the family, care for children, partners and friends, for political engagement, for individual continuing education, leisure and culture. DIE LINKE advocates that all people should be given more scope to decide how to spend their lives. Advocacy for being able to dispose of one's time is our response to a history of oppression, domination over labour and disposal over others.

■ **for a life in social security,** for a penalty-free, poverty-proof guaranteed minimum income and comprehensive protection against dismissal. Hartz IV has to go. Everyone has the right to work and the right to reject concrete job offers without having to fear suspension of benefits or other penalties.

■ **for a poverty-proof, solidarity-based statutory pension for all** gainfully employed persons that is funded equally by employees and enterprises, ensures maintenance of one's standard of living in old age and, unlike private pension provision, does not depend on the vagaries of the financial markets. A society that condemns millions of elderly people to live in poverty is inhuman. To combat poverty in old age, we want a poverty-proof, solidarity-based minimum pension for elderly persons within the framework of retirement insurance.

■ **for solidarity-based citizen insurance for health and care** that all people pay into depending on their income and that covers all medical and nursing services in case of need. Medical care must not be a question of one's personal wallet – we reject the unequal treatment of patients.

■ **for good, free education accessible to all from the day-nursery through training and higher education to continuing education.** Education should create the foundations for a self-determined, solidarity-based life, active participation in society and democratic engagement.

■ **for cultural diversity and the participation of all in the cultural riches of society,** for cultural education from the very beginning. All people should have the possibility of cultural self-expression and of participating in cultural communica-

tion. The state has the obligation to protect and promote culture.

■ **for a fair taxation system** that reduces the burden on low and medium earners, increases the load on top earners and draws substantially more on large fortunes, inheritances, capital gains and corporate profits to finance the common weal and socio-ecological transformation. We want to redistribute income and assets from the top to the bottom and ensure and improve the funding of public services.

■ **for the implementation of democracy and the rule of law**, against the extortionate power of big corporations, for the prohibition of corporate donations to political parties and the incompatibility of political and economic mandates, for more direct democracy in the form of referenda and in other forms, for the enforceability of one's rights regardless of one's ability to pay, for political strikes and the general strike as employees' weapons, for the expansion of civil rights and the democratisation of all spheres of society. Capitalism destroys democracy by means of economic power. We therefore say: democracy and freedom in a society of democratic socialism without exploitation and oppression.

■ **for the abolition of every form of discrimination** based on gender, age, social status, philosophy, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation and identity or based on disabilities of any kind. For DIE LINKE, active antifascism is linked with the struggle against warmongering, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, racism and national arrogance.

■ **for restarting the European Union** as a democratic, social, ecological and peace-

ful union, for giving priority to social rights over domestic market freedoms, for high and better European minimum standards of social and environmental protection and of corporate and wealth taxes, for a democratically controlled European Central Bank and a coordinated and democratically controlled economic policy that counters competitive undercutting through degradation of wages, working conditions, social benefits and environmental standards. An EU that counts on locational and other competition and the dumping race and military backup for it discredits the European idea.

■ **for peace and disarmament, against imperialism and war**, for a world without weapons of mass destruction, the prohibition of arms exports and the conversion of the arms industry to civilian production, i.e. the promotion of weapons conversion. DIE LINKE will never agree to German participation in a war. War does not solve any problems, it is always part of the problem. The Bundeswehr must be withdrawn from all foreign operations, its domestic deployment must be strictly forbidden; the State of Emergency laws providing for and allowing domestic deployment of the Bundeswehr must be repealed. DIE LINKE demands respect for international law and human rights, the strengthening of civilian development support, conflict prevention, peaceful conflict resolution and an end to the economic exploitation of the Third World.

■ **For international solidarity and cooperation** in improving living conditions for all people. The world is rich enough to sensibly feed the whole of mankind. We stand in solidarity with all those who

fight for peace, social and political justice
and the realization of human dignity

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1. Where we come from, who we are

DIE LINKE builds on the left democratic positions and traditions of the socialist, social democratic and communist labour movements and feminist and other emancipation movements. We combine political experience from the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany.

The bourgeois revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries aspired to liberty, equality and fraternity and opposed religious dogmas and the privileges of the nobility. Humanism and enlightenment, human rights and democracy were decisive for the labour movement and the women's movement. They demanded the realisation of justice and freedom for all people. But the socialist perspective of liberty and equality for all people will only be achieved when they are liberated from the domination of capital and from patriarchal relationships. That was shown in particular by Marx, Engels and Luxemburg.

In the 19th century, working men and women became organised in trade unions. They put up resistance to exploitation by capital in order to assert their interests. They fought for better working and living conditions, higher incomes and co-determination rights. They formed co-operatives and associations to shape their everyday and leisure time in solidarity and to fulfil their cultural and educational ambitions. As the working class environment became increasingly politicised, the labour movement also evolved bodies to defend its political interests. These were vehemently combated by the state with carrot and stick, with social reforms and the Anti-Socialist

Laws. Despite this, social democracy became a powerful political and cultural force in Germany on the threshold of the 20th century, and we are committed to its traditions.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the women's movement gained strength. It fought for the political, economic, social and cultural equality of women and for a change in gender relationships, including in the private sphere. We refer to political theories of the women's movement and feminism that focus on criticism of all power relationships that suppress and discriminate against women and demand the implementation of human rights for women and the abolition of all discrimination based on gender all over the world.

In 1914, attitudes towards the war divided German social democracy. The SPD leadership supported the policy of nationalist delimitation and in the end voted in favour of war. The European solidarity of labour in favour of peace was abandoned. Together with many others, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg resisted this devastating development, and they paid for it with their lives.

The 1918/19 revolution in Germany was one of a series of revolutionary movements and uprisings following World War I both inside and outside Europe. It was quelled with the help of the social democratic leadership. Contrasting attitudes towards the revolution in Germany, and later towards the Soviet Union as well, deepened the division of the labour movement. The USPD, the KPD and left

socialist movements are as much a part of the historical heritage of DIE LINKE as After World War I and up until the summer of 1919, Germany was engaged in a bloody civil war that claimed thousands of lives and left a legacy of profound bitterness. The consequences were dramatic. The division of the labour movement facilitated the rise of the German fascists and prevented joint resistance to their assumption of power. In the Reichstag the members from the bourgeois parties, by approving Hitler's Enabling Act, voted for Hitler's absolute power and hence for the end of the Weimar Republic.

The resistance of communists, social democrats, trade unionists, religiously committed people and others to the emerging fascist barbarism was brutally suppressed. Many were murdered by the Nazis, others were incarcerated in prisons or camps or became refugees. The struggle against anti-democratic positions, against anti-Semitism, against racism, against the suppression of labour organisations and against warmongering is therefore associated for us with active antifascism.

The barbarism and the criminal war of the German fascists destroyed large parts of Europe. Millions of Jewish men and women, Sinti and Roma, persons with disabilities and homosexuals were systematically murdered. A war of extermination was waged against the Soviet Union. It made the greatest sacrifices in smashing fascism. After the war, under the influence of the victorious powers, bourgeois democracies with a capitalist economic system were established in Western Europe and states with socialist ambitions were established in central and eastern Europe.

is the history of social democracy.

Because of the unprecedented crimes of the Germans against Jewish men and women during the period of German fascism, Germany has a special responsibility and must confront any kind of anti-Semitism, racism, oppression and war. This responsibility in particular obliges us as well to take a stand for the right of Israel to exist. At the same time we stand for a peaceful resolution of the Middle East conflict within the framework of a two-state solution and thus for the recognition under international law of an independent and viable Palestinian state on the basis of the resolutions of the United Nations.

"Never again war, never again fascism", the Buchenwald oath, was very influential in the fifties not only in East Germany but in West Germany as well. "The extermination of Nazism with its roots is our slogan. The building of a new world of peace and freedom is our goal." We feel committed to that goal. The experience of those persecuted by German fascism shaped the original right of asylum laid down in the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany, which is now so full of holes it is unrecognisable and which DIE LINKE wants to restore.

Socialist reform efforts in West Germany, as in other countries of western Europe, were unsuccessful. The insipient Cold War dictated political developments. The Communist Party was weak when the Federal Republic was established in 1949 and was the target of increasing repression. In 1956 the KPD was banned. Thus antifascist resistance fighters also suffered from such acts of repression as renewed arrests and employment bans. Denazification in society, on the other

hand, was largely absent. The SPD was in the opposition during the "Adenauer Era". From 1959 onwards, it gradually abandoned its conceptions of a realignment of the economy and society transcending capitalism.

The experiences of people in the Federal Republic included increasing social prosperity that all social strata shared in, as well as parliamentary democracy. Yet at the same time the authoritarian state structures persisted. In the sixties, a socio-critical extra-parliamentary opposition began to develop. It was a movement for more democracy and solidarity, against authoritarian tendencies, for other life projects, for more self-realisation of the individual, against educational privileges, the power of the media and capital and the US war in Vietnam.

Through hard bargaining, the trade unions managed to gain wage increases, shorter hours of work and improved social welfare benefits. It was felt that more democracy should be possible in the economy and society. The experiences of these struggles also showed, however, that in a capitalist society democracy ends at the factory gates and at the office and shop doors. Constant confrontations are necessary to ensure respect for human dignity, acceptable working conditions and the right to privacy in the enterprises as well.

A new women's movement took shape to fight against patriarchal, women-oppressing and discriminatory structures in the public as in the private sphere. On the path to a change in gender relationships with the goal of a non-sexist society, the equal status of men and women proved to be a significant step. The expe-

periences of these struggles show, however, that in a patriarchal society equal status ends at the front door and women's liberation can only be achieved through abolition of the unequal division of labour between the sexes.

The environmental movement came into being, advocating sustainable ways of producing and living and opposing the use of nuclear power. Internationalist groups supported liberation movements in Africa, Latin America and Asia and fought for solidarity-based development co-operation.

The peace movement called for disarmament and above all the elimination of weapons of mass destruction. It supported and shaped the policy of *détente*, which managed in the seventies and eighties to water down and thus defuse the dangerous confrontation of the post-war blocs. Despite the increased wages, shorter working hours and improved social welfare benefits achieved through hard bargaining by the trade unions, the State of Emergency laws and a repressive domestic policy in the course of the conflict with the RAF meant that the fulfilment of the aspirations of the democracy movement fell by the wayside.

In the eastern part of Germany the socialism experiment shaped the life history of the people. After 1945, many east Germans worked for the construction of a better social order and a peace-loving, antifascist Germany. The nationalisation of large scale industry, of banking and insurance and the agrarian reform created ownership structures intended to ensure that economic activity was directed towards the public weal and the protection of working people from exploitation.

The Socialist Unity Party of Germany was founded in April 1946. The amalgamation of KPD and SPD was a lesson drawn from the decades of division in the labour movement and was justified in part by the common resistance of members of the SPD and the KPD to fascism. The great majority of the members of the KPD and the SPD were in favour of that necessary amalgamation. But the amalgamation also involved pressure. Above all social democrats who resisted it were persecuted.

The experiences of people in the eastern part of Germany included the elimination of joblessness and the economic autonomy of women, the overcoming of poverty to a large extent, a comprehensive social security system, a large measure of equality of social opportunity in the education and health systems and in culture, and the restructuring of agriculture into co-operative and state farms. The principle that "War must never again start from German soil" was *raison d'état*. This was counterbalanced by experience with government despotism and limited freedoms, including the erection of a surveillance apparatus by the state against its own population.

Again and again, important reform initiatives were cut short in an authoritarian manner. Democracy fell by the wayside, and there was little chance of an ecological orientation. The centralisation of economic decision-making and the bureaucratic way of planning and managing the economy as well as the far-reaching curtailment of plant autonomy led in the long run to a lag in innovation and performance capabilities. The attractiveness of the GDR economic model declined.

It has become clear that an experiment in socialism that is not democratically shaped by the majority of the people but is controlled by the government and party leadership in an authoritarian manner will inevitably fail sooner or later. No socialism without democracy. For that reason the members of the SED/PDS employed this formulation at an extraordinary Party Congress in autumn 1989: "We are breaking irrevocably with Stalinism as a system." That break with Stalinism applies equally for DIE LINKE. To reduce the history of the GDR, and of the SED, to Stalinism, however, is unhistorical and false. In the GDR too there were different stages of a lively socialism discussion, a rich cultural and intellectual landscape, magnificent films, novels, fine arts and music, and a dedication to bringing art, culture and education to the population at large. The break with Stalinism does not just concern the East, it is of great importance for the West as well. Democracy, the rule of law and the separation of powers are indispensable.

Parts of the GDR civic movement, including reformers within the SED, took a stand in autumn 1989 for a new peaceful, democratic, social and ecological beginning and political change for a better socialism. But that project failed in 1990. The attempt at a democratic re-foundation of the united Germany failed as well. The democratic renewal in the East ended up as just an accession and a painful social descent for many people. On the one hand there was a gain in democratic rights, individual freedom, constitutional security and opening to the outside world, on the other an economic and social nosedive for many East German regions and the appropriation of East German state property by national

and international corporations with the aid of the Treuhandanstalt privatisation agency. Little use was made of the achievements and experience of the East Germans in the united Germany.

In a difficult and self-critical process the Party of Democratic Socialism emerged from the former SED. It asserted itself as an independent force and grew in strength the more it took on the concrete problems of the people on the ground and fought for democratic solutions. An essential component of that engagement was the ambition to represent the interests of the people in East Germany politically. But its attempts to win over people in West Germany met with only limited success.

The left in Germany was on the defensive for a long time. It was weak and marginalised, and when it aspired to political changes within social democracy its scope for action was very limited. Some on the left put their trust in the Greens or smaller socialist and communist organisations. Many on the left who were active in the trade unions and other social movements had no ties to any political party. The anti-globalisation movement that emerged in the second half of the nineties, which was reflected in many international mobilisations and summit protests and at the same time opened the way to a political critique of capitalism, inspired and encouraged many on the left in Germany.

The "red-green" project, welcomed with high expectations by many, brought disappointment from 1999 onwards since it subordinated social and ecological goals to the interests of capital and opened the door to international war missions for German soldiers. With breakneck

speed, SPD and BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN turned their backs on principles of social justice, ecological sustainability and the interest of the majority of the population in a peaceful world. The "Hartz IV" legislation and Agenda 2010 led to the final breach of many socially-minded and left-oriented people with the SPD and Greens and to the development of a new political force, the Electoral Alternative for Labour and Social Justice (WASG).

In 2007, the Linkspartei PDS and the WASG merged in a new political party, DIE LINKE. DIE LINKE is a part of the European Left Party, founded in 2004. We invite all people who want a different politics and a better world, who take a stand for freedom and equality, for emancipation and social justice, for international solidarity, peace and ecology, to be a part of it.

There are alternatives to the prevailing politics and to the capitalist system, to its crises and injustices: a society in harmony with nature that is based on freedom and equality, a society without exploitation and oppression. We want to fight for it together.

2. Crises of capitalism – crises of civilisation

Today's capitalism has no spatial or temporal boundaries; it has subjected the whole world to its domination. The relationship with nature and almost all human relationships are becoming commodity relationships. Plant, animal and human genes are being patented and thus placed beyond public reach. Seed is no longer freely available, and water, from village wells to big cities, is being privatised. Maternity is becoming a commodity and land theft is destroying entire communities. Food is an object of stock market speculation, millions of people can no longer afford adequate and healthy food, and moreover the fruits of the soil are ending up as fuel in the tanks of the better-off. Multinational corporations determine prices, determine what will be planted and what will be mined, and dominate the retail chains. They exert a decisive influence on the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which determine international trade currents and define economic and social policies world-wide. The power of the multinational corporations must be limited, curtailed and broken. Land and agrarian reforms are important steps towards ensuring food sovereignty and the right to food. Under the conditions of unfettered capitalism, productive forces turn more and more rapidly and extensively into destructive forces. At the same time, jobs are wiped out, affluence is destroyed, and nature is ruthlessly exploited. Even wars are accepted if profits can be increased and ensured in that way, if necessary also under the cloak of humanitarian aid.

In the centuries of its existence, capitalism has generated immeasurable wealth and increased the prosperity of large parts of the population in many countries. At the same time billions of people are excluded from that wealth. Social injustice has become greater, the gap between poverty and wealth is growing ever wider. That applies nationally, and even more so internationally. The crises of the capitalist market economy have brought mass unemployment, losses of income and welfare-state cutbacks in their wake. True, capitalism has created the technological preconditions for overcoming poverty once and for all. Yet it has cemented a world order in which a child dies of hunger every five seconds and more than a billion people have too little to eat and no access to clean drinking water.

This inconsistency can be found in Western European post-war development as well. The idea of a "social market economy" was a response to the shock of crisis, fascism and war and therefore resulted from the experiences with an unfettered barbaric version of capitalism. It was the response to the struggles of strong trade unions, anti-capitalist movements and social democratic, socialist and communist political parties. The existence of the "socialist camp" was also a challenge that was reacted to with welfare state concessions. Social security systems were expanded, democratic rights were extended, prosperity grew. Now that the competition between systems has ceased, the balance of power between labour and capital has shifted to the detriment of wage and salary earners.

The "social market economy" was a compromise between wage labour and capital that never challenged the rule of capital. The model functioned as long as rapid productivity gains and high rates of growth stabilised the profits of the large companies and strong trade union and democratic counter-forces existed. The compromise between wage labour and capital eliminated neither the predatory exploitation of nature nor the patriarchal relationships in the public and private spheres.

The economic crisis of the 1970s marked the end of those "golden years" of massive growth. Capitalism returned to its normal state, including periodic phases of crisis and stagnation. The number of people excluded from work increased and solidified into structural mass unemployment. The growing individuality that many people won increasingly turned into individualism in competition with one another. As the jobless figures grew and the trade unions and political counter-forces weakened, the demands of the shareholders became more aggressive. They were underpinned by the growing power of the corporations whose potential for extortion had risen sharply as a result of increasing activities in the international market. They were able to take politics "in tow", and politics allowed it to happen.

Patriarchal oppression and division of labour

At the beginning of the 21st century we find a society in which a few enrich themselves at the cost of many, in which a few decide over the life and time of the many, in which the pursuit of profit has embraced all areas of life and in which women still live under the old relation-

ships of oppression. The foundations of these relationships, the foundations of capitalism and patriarchy start with the history of labour and its distribution.

The increasing division of labour made it possible to produce more effectively and in greater quantity, and inversely the increased productivity made further division of labour possible. A decisive form of division of labour was the separation of "women's work" and "men's work". Men became engaged in production activities in which technical progress was expedited and which increasingly took place outside the home, in separate production plants, generating income, while women were assigned the work around the house and the responsibility for looking after and caring for all family members, i.e. non-income work. Even today, society attaches greater value to traditional "men's work", while work that is traditionally viewed as "women's work" is held in less esteem and is either unpaid or less well paid.

As productivity increased it became possible to have an ever-growing number of people provided for by the community. At the same time, a part succeeded in making use of the work of others, disposing of their time, dictating what they would do and thus to establish class relationships and relationships of domination. This hierarchic division of labour became the prerequisite for the oppression of women. The division of labour in the family made women and children the property of the man, who disposed of the labour power and the body of the woman. Even today, property and class relationships are closely intertwined with the patriarchal family.

Patriarchal oppression existed long before capitalist production was introduced. Yet in capitalism as well the oppression of women, the imbalance of power between the genders, is firmly anchored in the economic, social and cultural structures and is used to preserve the existing conditions. By displacing or taking over traditional production methods and areas not previously organised along capitalist lines, capitalism can successfully pervade all areas of life and spread to all corners of the earth. In the industrialisation phase, the labour power of women was exploited so massively that in the end even the reproduction of the next generation was endangered. In the following phase, women were made responsible for restoring the family breadwinner's labour power and for bringing up the next generation, while men were assigned to the field of gainful employment, in exchange for an income that was intended to feed the whole family but was often inadequate for that purpose.

Even today women do the bulk of the housework and family work. The West German post-war order was characterised by the ideal of the stay-at-home housewife, and even today that type of marriage enjoys tax privileges. If women were in gainful employment at all it was only to supplement the man's income, and they remained financially dependent on the "breadwinner". In the GDR, women were integrated into gainful work to a large extent, often in traditional "male occupations", with equal pay for equal work. On the one hand there was a substantially better infrastructure and substantially better compatibility of vocation and family. On the other hand, however, the distribution of home and family work was not fundamentally dif-

ferent. Many women had leadership functions, but they were not adequately represented in the top leadership bodies. Today there are still a considerably larger number of women in precarious employment, at lower wages and in part-time jobs.

The dominant breadwinner-centered model of the work and family relationship was based on the naturalness of heterosexuality. Lesbians, gays, trans- and inter-sexual and transgender people still have to contend with constant discrimination in employment, they usually have to hide their sexuality and their form of relationships in order to gain career advancement opportunities.

Gender relationships are production relationships

Capitalist production takes place as commodity production and is predicated on the constant reproduction of the labour it employs. In the production of goods and foodstuffs the productive forces develop rapidly, a surplus is generated and thus the foundation is laid for human and social development. The old gender setup continues to function in the organisation of reproduction work. It is mostly women that work in the fields of work on people, education, health, nutrition and nursing, unpaid and underpaid and often underappreciated. In that role women are sidelined to social insignificance and are without public influence.

Today the gender-specific separation of social areas of work and their hierarchic arrangement still results in the social oppression of women. In the occupational sectors employing mostly women the wage levels are generally lower.

Companies profit from the oppression of women by employing women at low wages. In addition to their gainful employment, women work a huge number of unpaid hours a year in the families, to a much greater extent than men.

It is easily overlooked that the paid and unpaid jobs of looking after children and adults in need of care as well as housework are of fundamental importance for the functioning of capitalist society and for social well-being. DIE LINKE sees itself as a socialist and feminist political party that wants to eliminate patriarchal and capitalist relationships.

Gender relationships in a state of upheaval

All this time, women have been fighting for their rights: suffragettes fought for and won women's right to vote. The proletarian women's movement took a stand for the rights of working women and the preservation of peace. Like the bourgeois women's movement, it fought for the equal status of women and men. After 1968, the new women's movement fought for comprehensive social emancipation. As a result, the women's movement can be seen as one of the most successful of the social movements. Women have broken down the boundaries of the home as women's alleged place; they have won the right to education, to independent vocational development and to financial independence from men. Women can be freer in their sexuality and engage in family planning more independently. Today's girls have a much better education than their grandmothers and great-grandmothers had; they can study, have a career, learn "male occupations".

The majority of women are gainfully employed in the meantime, but a large proportion of them have only part-time jobs that do not pay enough for them to make ends meet and that they often have to take against their will. In Germany, women earn more than 20% less than men. They bear the double burden of employment and family almost on their own. If they want to be successful they have to adapt to a male-dominated world. Women are still clearly underrepresented in leadership positions in business, science and politics. Tax law and social legislation are still tailored to the traditional one-earner family. The patriarchy still frames the symbolic order in language, culture, physicality and politics. Women and girls, especially those with disabilities, still fall victim to rape and domestic violence. Women with disabilities still face multiple discrimination.

The traditional bourgeois nuclear family with the gainfully employed husband and the dependent wife is losing its significance and is increasingly being called into question, since the development of new methods of production has changed the way people live their lives. The old Fordist capitalist gender contract between the male provider and the housewife has been revoked. That has brought women many new freedoms and often financial independence of their husbands. But neo-liberal deregulation burdens them with demands for flexibility, deprivation of freedom through precarious and unsteady work, a twofold burden and overexertion. Although more and more women are joining the work force in the industrialised countries, the proportion of household and family work assumed by men lags far behind that assumed by women.

Often women with poor employment prospects or migrant women are hired for such jobs at low pay and under precarious conditions. This leads to new inequalities among women. We are far removed from genuine emancipation.

In this situation, all the demands for equal status, for alternative family models, for compatibility of employment and family are not enough. The multiple burden must not be individualised. The difficulty in reconciling employment and family has social and economic causes. Family is where people assume responsibility for one another, whether as a married or unmarried couple, as a multi-generational household or in other forms of community. Family is where people, whatever their sexual orientation, are there for one another.

Germany – a class society

Germany is a class society. The vast majority of goods and services are produced in private enterprises with the goal of reaping the greatest possible profits. The vast majority of working people are wage earners or salaried employees. They receive only a part of the values they create as wages or salaries; the surplus is appropriated by the shareholders. The latter decide on how it will be used, on what to invest it in and consequently on economic development and the working and living conditions of the employees. The key factor in economic and social development, as well as government activity and politics, is the interests of capital. People's prospects for life and education depend in large measure on their class position and social origin.

The structure of the working class has changed substantially in the course of its development. The proportion of people working in manufacturing and the large enterprises is sinking and more and more people are working in the service industries and in small and medium-sized enterprises. The activities and job content have changed as well. The proportion of manual and physical work has fallen, while the proportion of mental, supervisory and planning activities has increased. The differences between wage and salary earners have become less pronounced. To some extent there is also more scope for working on one's own responsibility.

The working conditions have changed as well. The proportion of regular full-time jobs is declining. More and more jobs are being filled only on a temporary basis, are being converted to temporary agency jobs or split up into several mini-jobs. The proportion of employees who are protected by collective agreements has fallen. The number of persons employed in the low-wage sector is expanding. Precarious employment is increasing. On the other hand, more self-employment categories have come into being. Often, however, this is not real and voluntary self-employment but forced and feigned self-employment with low payment and financial insecurity.

The jobless are in the worst position, especially if they have been out of work for an extended period and have little chance of getting a good job. They are increasingly vulnerable to poverty, repression and exclusion.

Even though the working conditions and activities are highly differentiated, the common class position still follows from

the general character of wage labour with its dependence on capital. Those dependent on wages have a common interest in improving their incomes, working conditions and social security through company, salary and legal arrangements and thus limiting capitalist domination and exploitation.

On top of this women are subject of oppression through patriarchal structures. The oppression of women and the imbalance of power between the sexes are firmly anchored in the economy and society. Gender relationships are a part of the relations of production and find expression in particular in the organisation of reproduction. Women are burdened with the main responsibility for bringing up children and caring for relatives.

The common class position does not necessarily imply common representation of interest or indeed class consciousness. The latter is hindered in particular by the diversity of working and living conditions. Differences in income, vocational status, qualifications and family origin and different migration backgrounds characterise the different milieus of the wage earners. Together with philosophical, religious and political traditions, all that leads to different value orientations and political preferences within the working class. Competition among wage earners is heightened under the pressure of mass unemployment. A common consciousness and a common representation of interests are most likely to emerge in social conflicts.

On the other hand, however, the class of capitalists is by no means homogeneous. Capital as ownership and capital as function are often separate, so that one has

to differentiate between shareholders and their agents, the management. This difference in position can sometimes be matched by differences in interests.

In addition to the big capital holders and finance magnates, however, there are many small and medium-sized entrepreneurs and freelancers who do not live exclusively from the exploitation of the work of others. To some extent they suffer themselves from the overwhelming power of big capital. They therefore have different interests and definitely have some things in common with the wage-earning majority of the population.

The neo-liberal turnaround – redistribution and speculation

The neo-liberal turnaround since the 70s served above all the purpose of driving up the rate of profit for the big corporations. The key means to that end were the deregulation of the labour markets and the political weakening of the trade unions in order to lower the wage level. Democratic and social rights and benefits were cut back and taxes on profits and capital were reduced in order to provide relief for the enterprises and heighten their flexibility. Extensive privatisation of previously public enterprises and services as well as the social safeguards opened up additional profitable spheres of investment to capital. The ruling class is trying to usurp the social wealth that has been swelled by technological revolutions to augment their personal wealth and their power.

The neo-liberal orientation was initiated with the collapse of the post-war monetary system and the abandonment of fixed exchange rates at the beginning of

the 70s. First the currency markets, then the global financial markets were liberalised more and more. The liberalisation of the financial markets was expedited in large part through the EU. The EU treaties – from the Maastricht treaty to the Treaty of Lisbon – and the EU guidelines on liberalisation in the field of the provision of public services of general interest cemented the neo-liberal policy of privatisation, deregulation and greater flexibility, partly through orientation towards an "open market economy with freedom of competition". The developing countries were forced to open up their national economies, dismantle restrictions on the movement of capital, limit social spending and privatise public goods. Many were obliged to dismantle protective mechanisms for their own agriculture and to develop agrarian export production, resulting in the loss of their food sovereignty. The triumphal march of neo-liberalism reached its peak with the transition to capitalist market economies in central, eastern and south-eastern Europe and in the successor states of the Soviet Union.

As a result, the nation states relinquished their power to influence important prices in the world markets, such as exchange and interest rates, leaving it to the speculation of banks and currency traders. Global capital circulation now amounts to many times the gross world product. Sudden changes in the direction of capital flow can plunge whole national economies into the abyss. The deregulation of the financial markets did not just produce an additional instability factor, however. The deregulated financial markets at the same time opened up a wide range of speculative profit-making, which has become the focus of growing

segments of economic activity in global capitalism.

The European Union, the formation of which once contributed to ensuring peace between the EU member states, has also increasingly developed into a driving force of neo-liberal restructuring. Cities, regions and countries are competing in a common internal market with the lowest possible tax rates and lax environmental requirements, low wages and low social contributions. The competition between locations leads to a dumping race with devastating effects on public sector revenues, among other things. This made the reduction of the share of GDP attributable to public expenditure, extensive privatisation and the gradual destruction of the social systems in the member states inevitable. Entire national economies in the EU are threatened with collapse. The German social and wage dumping policy in particular, but also the plundering of the national economies by the banks, bear the responsibility for that situation.

Financial bubble and social division

As a consequence of neo-liberal capitalism a gigantic financial bubble consisting of financial assets and debt has swelled above a real economy with poor growth rates. Rising profits and the redistribution of income in favour of stockholders and high-income people have led to a huge surplus of capital looking for investment opportunities worldwide. This is further intensified by world-wide privatisation tendencies in old-age provisions and other social security systems.

At the same time the uncoupling of wages from the development of productivity and sinking social revenues exacerbate

the problem of industrial overcapacity and discourage real investments. An economy of dispossession makes majorities poorer in order to make the rich richer. We can see we live in a class society by the increasingly unequal distribution of income and assets.

Three decades of economic growth have passed many people by, not just in Germany but world-wide. It is true that possibilities of gainful employment and thus of emancipation have opened up in the developing countries for millions of people and especially for women. At the same time, however, they have been subjected to new capitalist constraints. Social cohesion and natural biospheres have been destroyed. Living conditions have worsened substantially for employees with low incomes, the unemployed, the small-scale self-employed and creative people in the industrialised countries. Many no longer know how they can finance their daily lives and those of their children. Many young people are excluded from comprehensive education and training. Informal and precarious work, underpaid work and work without social security have now become normal. More personal responsibility and creativity in their work has become associated for many under this pressure with increased helplessness and adaptation to relationships of submission and domination; the lines between work and leisure have become blurred, and personal and social living conditions in general have increasingly become subject to the selfish pursuit of profit and maximum yield expectations.

Neo-liberal policy has not kept one of its promises. Instead of more performance equity it stands for ruthless redistribution at the expense of working people

and for the benefit of non-performing revenues from capital. More personal responsibility in place of the welfare state has led to more exclusion and poverty. Not more competition, but an unprecedented concentration of economic power has been the consequence.

To increase demand despite the attacks on mass revenues, the framework conditions were established in the USA as well as in other countries for excessive consumer debt. The American model of making up for falling wages with rising debts was at the same time the precondition for the gigantic export surpluses of other countries, such as the Federal Republic of Germany. The rising debt of the US government to finance armaments and wars also helped inflate the financial bubble.

In the big business corporations themselves, debt-funded takeovers and share buyback programmes to increase short-term returns have increasingly displaced real investments in new equipment and technologies as well as innovative research and development. Big investors and financial investors coerce enterprises in whose shares they often invest only for a short time into making ruthless streamlining drives, divesting themselves of less profitable parts of the firms, and slashing wages and labour and social standards. Even highly productive firms with respectable profit margins and low labour cost quotients are thus forced to lay off thousands of employees or even to close down plants.

The global economic crisis at the beginning of the 21st century

The profound economic crisis that began in 2008 is the crisis of an economic order

that produces solely for profit and only produces for need when it asserts itself as highly solvent demand. An economic depression, a structural crisis and the crisis of the international financial markets culminated in the most severe world crisis of capitalism since 1929. With that crisis, a global model that had characterised and sustained the development of capitalism in the preceding three decades reached its limits.

The Federal Republic of Germany was no exception. Economic development in this country was geared to and made dependent on increasing exports in a most extreme fashion. At the same time domestic demand was stifled so that imports were curbed. The export surpluses correspond to enormous capital exports by German firms. This relates not only to productive direct investments but to a great extent to credits or the purchase of bonds and securities, including masses of "toxic" papers that are now virtually worthless. German firms and rich financial asset holders thus made a substantial contribution to financing the US debt and hence to the development of the world-wide financial crisis.

Politically promoted pressure on wages has fostered export growth and weakened domestic demand. Cutbacks in public welfare spending have acted in the same direction, worsening distribution at the expense of wage and salary earners and lastingly weakening domestic demand. Germany now has one of the lowest rates of employment in the public sector of all members of the European Union. The result has been weak and divided economic development. It benefits only the export sector and is in the interest of the corporations and finance capital and is taking place at the

expense of the employees and those producing for the domestic market, that is, the vast majority of the small and medium-sized enterprises. Feeble economic development and vanishing tax revenues owing to tax cuts for companies and the rich have accentuated the financial crisis of public sector budgets. The crisis in turn serves as grounds for further spending cuts, personnel reductions and privatisation of the remaining public goods and enterprises.

Germany's aggressive export orientation causes severe economic harm in other countries. The flip side of German export surpluses is necessarily deficits and higher unemployment rates in other countries. Germany must discontinue export incentives (such as the instrument of Hermes export credit guarantees, a policy of wage dumping in our country, etc.) and strive for an equal balance of trade instead.

These developments show that capitalism is not just socially unjust. It also undermines the productive foundations of the economy. It leads to systematic mismanagement of the economy, the development of gigantic overcapacities and elsewhere to grave undersupply as well as to tremendous ecological damage. It results in ominous global imbalances and the destruction of production and productivity, jobs and prosperity, innovation and creativity. It bankrupts the middle class and causes an extreme concentration of income and wealth in the hands of the rich, inflating the financial markets and stifling demand in the goods markets.

Through deregulation, liberalisation and privatisation, neo-liberal policy planted the roots of the present crisis, which

may grow into a catastrophe if no political counter-action is taken. The subordination of the economy and society to capital investment threatens the existence of human civilisation. Financial market capitalism has accumulated the elements of a fourfold crisis. They concern the questions of power and property, the relationship between nature and society, the mode of production and way of life, and questions of security and development.

Crisis of social cohesion

More and more people are being driven into extreme insecurity and growing poverty. Fear of falling down the social ladder is a feature of the life of large parts of the population – and to an increasing extent highly skilled specialists are among them. The unconstrained pursuit of profit and growing material inequality are corroding society from within. Competition, distrust, social exclusion and insecurity are growing; co-operation, confidence in social structures and readiness to assume social responsibility are disappearing. Inter-generational solidarity also suffers from this. For our society builds on what the previous generations have created and its future depends on the education, skills, work and sense of responsibility of the coming generation. The education system contributes to the social and cultural division in society. Racism and fascist tendencies, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia are increasing. Migrant women and girls and women driven into illegality, whether with or without disabilities, are exposed even more frequently to violence. Migrants are threatened with deportation in violation of their human rights. Repressive elements in domestic policy are being expanded.

Eroding democracy

The possibility of exerting democratic influence and of co-determination recedes as the power of the corporations and of finance capital grows and privatisation and liberalisation of the economy reduce the scope for political and public action. The profits of globalisation are being privatised, the losses socialised. At the same time the repressive surveillance state is being extended. The rights of citizens are being undermined, the ability to assert them depends more and more on personal income. Those who have too little and at the same time are excluded from democratic participation often react with political disaffection. The result is a dangerous vicious circle of economic power undermining the democratic system and the helpless reaction to that undermining.

A crisis of democracy and of social regulation sets in. The global ruling elites do not make their decisions in the interest of the great majority of the world population. Their interests run counter to social, ecological and peaceful global development. The states and the world community remain the hostages of the capital owners and speculators. Competition between locations and the struggle for scarce resources surrender whole continents and large parts of the working population to a ruthless undercutting race, social dismantling and plunder. The democracy that was fought for and won, the individual freedoms that were conquered and the advances of the welfare state are being undermined by the hegemony of a global oligarchy.

But democracy is being eroded at the institutional level as well. New possibilities of influencing political affairs

through the potential of the Internet go unused. The exertion of more direct democratic influence is blockaded. The social division of society leads to a division in democratic society: a large part of the population remains excluded from exerting democratic influence because it lacks the possibilities of participation. With little or no income, one's scope for political engagement is narrowed and to some extent made impossible. At the same time the repressive surveillance state is being expanded. As technology improves, new ideas are developed to keep watch on citizens and make it easier to impose punishment. The protection of personal data is suppressed, as are freedom of information, freedom of the press and the right to demonstrate. The state and business are constantly initiating new court cases to restrict and regulate the Internet and the possibilities it offers for horizontal communication and opinion-forming.

The impression that politicians do not concern themselves with the interests of disadvantaged residents, as well as the exclusion of possibilities of co-decision, lead to frustration with politicians and political parties. A crisis of democracy and the social order develops.

The centrality of the ecological question

Capitalism does not measure up to social needs, economic challenges and ecological demands. Its decisions are oriented to ever shorter time spans. Exchange rate fluctuations, changes in the prices of stocks and bonds, interest rate differences and changes in the prices of real estate and resources are objects of speculation. Decisions for the longer term and taking long cycles of nature

into consideration are incompatible with short-term profit calculations. Growth in the past 250 years has been based primarily on the use of fossil energy sources, first coal and then since the beginning of the 20th century oil and natural gas. Oil, coal and natural gas reserves, however, are limited. Peak oil extraction will be reached in the foreseeable future. After that the supply of fossil fuels will decline, but since fossil fuel requirements in the industrialised and threshold countries are still immense the demand will increase. Under capitalist conditions, this will drive up the prices of fossil fuels and with them the profits of the energy corporations, further enhancing their social and political power in the process.

A crisis in the natural and social foundations of life, a crisis of reproduction has been reached. Speculation with food and farmland is destroying local agricultural structures and exacerbating hunger and under-nourishment. Today's societies are living off their capital. The capitalist mode of production has led to industrial mass production in particular in the treatment of animals, with unethical forms of husbandry and over-fishing of the world's oceans. The imminent climate catastrophe, the rapid exhaustion of many natural raw materials and the accelerated destruction of biological diversity on the one hand and the division of society into victims and beneficiaries of neo-liberal globalisation, into escalating luxury goods consumption and increasing hunger on the other are two sides of the same coin. The social and the ecological questions can only be resolved together.

The great challenge of the beginning of the 21st century is climate change.

Drought areas are spreading, glaciers are melting, river levels are sinking, the oceans are rising, stretches of land are being flooded. People are being forced to migrate. In order to limit the rise in temperatures on the earth the consumption of fossil fuels must be radically restricted. Technical solutions such as carbon capture and storage (CCS) involve incalculable risks and side effects and only delay the necessary restructuring. We demand the prohibition of carbon capture and storage. The experience with the EU's emission trading so far has also been disappointing. There is reason to fear that the traded certificates will be used for speculative purposes as securities, just like other securitised papers. The acquisition of emission rights by those responsible for greenhouses gases in the industrialised countries is a cynical trade-off of environmental pollution for poverty. It is becoming ever clearer: sustainable ecological development is incompatible with the logic of capitalist growth. The ecological issue is at the same time an economic, social and cultural issue – a system issue.

Imperialism and war

The capitalist states make sure that their companies have access to resources world-wide, that they can invest and exploit their capital world-wide and that they can sell their products in all markets. To that end they make use of their economic and military hegemony and their dominant role in the international trade and financial institutions. Today's imperialism relies above all on economic dependence and debt.

Imperialistic wars grow out of struggles for geopolitical power, economic, political and cultural domination, profits,

markets and raw materials. Wars also spring from poverty and oppression, climate change, and shortages and unjust appropriation of natural resources. They lead to further military, ethnic and religious conflicts, the collapse of states, fundamentalism and terrorism, and environmental degradation. In defiance of the United Nations Charter, violence and wars are also used as instruments of policy. This is often done under the pretext of combating terrorism or "rogue states". Military interventions under the pretext of protecting human rights are especially perfidious. In the 90s, after the end of the confrontation of systems, war returned to Europe as well. Germany deployed soldiers abroad again for the first time since the overthrow of fascism and was directly or indirectly involved in numerous illegal wars. It was a driving force in the war against Yugoslavia, directly and indirectly supports the US war in Iraq, and is taking part in the war in Afghanistan.

But fundamental changes are taking place in the world. The hegemony of the USA as the sole remaining super-power after the bipolar confrontation is being called into question. A multi-polar world is emerging. The EU as well is making increasingly aggressive attempts to strengthen its position in the world-wide contest for power, influence and natural resources. Wars, including pre-emptive first-strike wars, are again considered valid policy instruments by leading forces in the USA, NATO and the EU. The global network of foreign military bases has been expanded. The pretext of protecting human rights is used to legitimise wars.

Since the formation of the European Community, conflicts within the Com-

munity have no longer been settled by military means. Now, however, the European Union and the states of the EU are waging wars outside their territory with increasing frequency. The war to destroy Yugoslavia was followed by participation of the majority of the EU member states in acts of aggression against Afghanistan and Iraq . The growing importance of military means for the EU is reflected in the Treaty of Lisbon. It not only contains a commitment to arms build-up but also facilitates the participation of EU combat forces in international conflicts. We, on the other hand, stand for a policy oriented towards peace, disarmament and international solidarity-based cooperation.

3. Democratic socialism in the 21st century

Capitalism is not the end of history but a stage in human development which, although it fulfilled many of the hopes of the Enlightenment and resulted in an enormous growth in human productive capacity, also brought mass impoverishment, genocide and unimaginable wars over humanity. Today, now that capitalism has become a global system, its plundering of man and nature is leading to a global crisis that poses a threat to human civilisation. We are convinced that the diverse crisis scenarios can only be countered by abolishing the capitalist system of exploitation, changing the mode of production and way of life, practicing global solidarity, overcoming the antagonism between the sexes, democratising all areas of life and changing the relationship between man and nature. Capitalism can be overcome if majorities can be won for a departure towards a new way of working and living.

The first great attempt in the 20th century to build a non-capitalist system failed because of the lack of democracy, over-centralisation, and economic inefficiency. Crimes were committed in perversion of the socialist idea.

This obliges us to redefine our understanding of socialism. We want a democratic socialism that is adequate to the social and global challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

For Rosa Luxemburg, equality without freedom ended in oppression and freedom without equality led to exploitation. We are striving for a socialist society in which everyone can determine their

own life in freedom, cooperating with others in a society based on solidarity.

The most important prerequisites for that are the overcoming of the dominance of capitalist ownership in the economy and a welfare state governed by the rule of law. All people must be able to have a share in the wealth. Socially equal access to the conditions for a life in freedom for every person and the democratisation of all areas of life belong together. Socialism and democracy are inseparable. We want a different kind of economic development and scientific and technological progress so as to conserve the natural environment and leave an improved world to the coming generations. We want the state ruled by law and the welfare state to form a unit and we champion a world-wide order characterised by peace, solidarity and justice. In that way a good life can be organised and a social democracy can be established and expanded.

We are not alone in our struggle for social alternatives going beyond the capitalist mode of production and way of life. The most diverse forces and different movements are convinced that another world is possible: a world without war, exploitation, foreign tutelage and ecological devastation. They are looking for new paths to non-capitalist development and are demanding, as in Latin America, not just our solidarity but our willingness to learn as well. In the countries of the global south, new forms of property and cooperation are developing, making an important statement against neo-liberalism. DIE LINKE is watching with great interest the model

of the ALBA countries, which have agreed on solidarity-based economic cooperation. The complexity of the problems and starting conditions prohibit any claim to a leading role for any country, this or that movement or an individual political party.

It is possible today to ensure a life in social security and dignity for every person. Poverty and misery can be overcome everywhere in the world.

We aspire to a new, just distribution of gainful employment and other socially necessary work. We want all people to be involved in the socially organised labour process, to have an equal role in shaping social development and culture and to be able to influence democratic decision-making processes. To that end we campaign for a public education system that excludes no one but provides everyone with the best possible support and puts them in a position to shape their own careers and lives independently. Education must not be limited to enabling people to adapt to the existing structures. The aim of education must be to put people in a position to change the world, to develop and implement social, ecological and democratic reforms. We want to embed solidarity and common, research-oriented learning in education as guidelines and thus lay the groundwork for common social changes. We want to overcome class society. The new and better order that democratic socialism aspires to is a society freed of class barriers.

DIE LINKE is guided by the aspiration that all people, irrespective of what region of the earth they live in, will be able to live a self-determined life in dignity and solidarity. That aspiration is based on an

image of the human being that proceeds from the universality and indivisibility of human rights and only requires one justification: because I am human. It takes up Marx' vision from the Communist Manifesto: "In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." That vision presupposes the abolition of wars, cessation of the destruction of our environment and the natural bases of life as well as the elimination of exploitation and oppression, discrimination, hunger, poverty and underdevelopment. It will only be attainable through comprehensive democratisation of all spheres of life. It is utopia and realism at the same time. Our goal for democratic socialism in the 21st century is a society without rulers in which all people can live a decent life.

Democratic socialism is based on the values of freedom, equality and solidarity, on peace and socio-ecological sustainability. These also determine the means to achieve a democratic and socialist society. Democratic socialism promotes the development of society's civilising development potentials and aspires to radical changes in the prevailing property, control and power relationships. It combines protest and resistance, action for social improvements and left reform projects under the prevailing conditions and going beyond the limits of capitalism into a great process of social reconstruction that will define the 21st century. It builds on economic developments that already extend beyond capitalist forms of production.

DIE LINKE fights for the democratic socialism of the 21st century within a

great, transforming process of social restructuring. That process will be characterised by many small and large steps towards reform, by ruptures and upheavals of revolutionary profundity. Democratic socialism is always a democratic movement for the liberation of people from all situations of oppression as well.

Property issues and economic democracy

One decisive question of social change is and will continue to be the property question. Economic power means political power as well. As long as the decisions made by large corporations are oriented towards desired returns rather than the public good, politics will be subject to blackmail and democracy will be undermined. To make a social, peaceful, environmentally friendly, democratic society possible, the economic power of those who profit from poverty, exploitation, degradation of the natural environment, armaments and war must be reduced and overcome.

DIE LINKE is fighting for a change in ownership structures. We want a radical renewal of democracy that extends to economic decision-making as well and subjects all forms of ownership to emancipatory, social and ecological standards. Without democracy in the economy, the public interest cannot assert itself over profit interests. Democracy remains imperfect. For that reason we see economic democracy as a cornerstone of democratic socialism. Achieving more democracy in the economy has always been of paramount importance to the labour movement. We see ourselves as a part of that tradition.

Under today's conditions, the achievement of economic democracy has an international, a European, a national and a regional dimension. Given the process of economic internationalisation, economic democracy can no longer be achieved within the nation-state context alone. International rules are essential to limit and reduce economic power.

It is also a matter of making knowledge and information accessible to the public. It is unacceptable that the results of publicly funded research are not accessible to the public. Public access to knowledge and information is essential for a peaceful, solidarity-based and democratic society and must not be the preserve of individuals. We want to subject the economy to the standards of the public weal so that its action will be socially and environmentally acceptable.

Democratic control of economic development presupposes that the financial markets be restrained and returned to their basic function of serving the real economy. An economy that serves people and not profits has to fulfil the following functions above all: first, it has to satisfy the needs of the people and ensure a life in prosperity and social security for everyone; second, be environmentally sustainable, third, react innovatively to new challenges, and fourth, be economical with social resources. It also has to be organised in such a way that all people involved in the economy in one way or the other can develop their skills freely and can continue their education in the course of their activities. In an economic order based on solidarity as aspired to by DIE LINKE, there is room for various forms of ownership: state and municipal, public, private and co-operative forms of own-

ership. The employees, the consumers, the representatives of general interests have to have a strong democratic voice and participate directly in economic decision-making.

Everything that people need and want should be divided up fairly, from both a global and a gender perspective. Everyone must be able to live from their income. Everyone has to be in a position to take part in all spheres of society – gainful employment, family, nursing and household work, social activity and policymaking. All work, paid or unpaid, has to be appreciated.

Equitable distribution of social wealth and all necessary kinds of work and participation of everyone in decision-making concerning the future of the society are among the preconditions for a democratic and socialist society. We develop our reform proposals with an eye to a more just society. We want a life worth living in the here and now.

The issue of working hours is a key issue in the confrontation between capital and labour. As an urgently necessary step, we demand a drastic reduction in working hours and at the same time the right to work and equal pay for equal work. That is a prerequisite if the work of looking after and caring for people, for life and its natural prerequisites is to be retrieved from the corner of neglect and unpaid assignment to women and these activities are to be socially organised and shared among all members of the society.

Public and workforce ownership

We want more public ownership in various forms. We want to transform structure-defining large economic enterprises

into democratic public forms of ownership and overcome capitalist ownership. Which spheres, enterprises and plants should be subject to democratic socialisation and in which public or collective forms of ownership they should be converted (state or municipal ownership, co-operatives, workforce ownership) must be decided in a democratic process. DIE LINKE works to create suitable legal forms to facilitate and promote the joint takeover of enterprises by the employees. Due to bitter historical experience, all-embracing state ownership is not our goal.

Employees must be given real influence over company decisions. We advocate that workforces collectively share in the business assets they create without sacrificing wages. On important issues, as when mass layoffs or plant closures are planned, the workforce must have a vote. Property relations are more than just ownership relations. It is not enough just to change the title of ownership. In the end it is a matter of disposal of and access to social wealth.

Services of general interest, the social infrastructure, the financial institutions and the energy industry belong in public hands and must be controlled democratically. They must not be managed according to the profit calculations of private enterprises. In particular, the attacks by European institutions on the systems of property ownership in the Member States and the massive EU liberalisation pressure in the area of public services of general interest have to be stopped. Instead the EU must give the highest priority to the protection of public goods and provide access to all the benefits of public services of general interest.

The basic provision of people with vital services such as energy, water and mobility as well as housing, the social infrastructure, health, education, culture and sport must not be left to capitalist profit-seeking. It must be publicly organised and guaranteed. For returns-oriented enterprises will adapt their range of products not to human needs but only to creditworthy demand. They court and privilege the well-to-do and neglect the financially weak.

Private energy suppliers favour key industrial customers and place the burden mainly on poorer households. In place of that, energy has to be more expensive for large industrial consumers so as to encourage more energy-saving technologies. On the other hand, poorer households in particular have to be relieved of high energy costs and assisted in saving energy. And also, the railways and local and long-distance public transport must not be oriented solely toward returns. The decisive consideration must be that they facilitate mobility, also between smaller locations, and provide an attractive, wheelchair-accessible, reasonably priced and environmentally sound alternative to private transport. The goal of reducing energy consumption in transportation must be pursued rigorously, for example by shifting goods transport from road to rail. The supply of energy and gas, the water supply and waste water disposal, telephone and Internet communications, rail traffic and other services are attached to federal, regional and municipal grids that form natural monopolies. If such monopolies are in private hands, price gouging is the almost inevitable result. Often private profit calculation leads to the servicing and the maintenance of the grids being neglected. This has negative long-term

effects. Net neutrality in digital communication must be defended against the efforts of large corporations to privilege large providers. Network services and institutions of general interest must remain public property or become public property and be subject to democratic control.

Major natural resources also belong to everyone and therefore belong in public hands as a matter of principle. According to the Basic Law, property shall serve the public good and not just that of the upper echelons. This constitutional principle can only be redeemed in an economy in which big private investors and financial investors do not have supremacy, an economy based on a strong public sector. In this context, strong and active trade unions and civil society organisations are indispensable. Only with them can welfare state regulation be organised in a democratic way.

DIE LINKE advocates a banking system with three pillars: savings banks, cooperative banks and large state banks. A functioning financial sector is a public good, so providing it is a public task. The European banking and financial system belong under permanent social control. The central banks have to be oriented not just toward monetary and currency stability but equally toward the goal of employment and the goal of sustainable development.

The form of property alone, whether it is public or private, does not determine the social and ecological quality of development. Enterprises that are the property of the federal, state or municipal governments also need to be controlled. They have to be subject to social and ecological guidelines and be legally ob-

liged to serve the public weal. The workforces have to be guaranteed strong co-determination rights as a corrective to management decisions. The citizens have to be given effective possibilities of participating in the development of municipal services. Unlike private enterprises, public enterprises are not beholden to short-term profit expectations. Public property is no guarantee but is a prerequisite for new economic management criteria and priorities. In addition, the profits of public enterprises strengthen public revenues, be it at the municipal, the State or the federal level, and thus benefit the public and not just a thin stratum of private owners.

Solidarity economics

Cooperatives and other forms of solidarity-based self-help are an attempt to develop new economic structures and practices within the capitalist system that are oriented towards the needs and potentialities of the people. They are based on common ownership and egalitarian rights of utilisation and participation and are directed towards preserving or restoring decent living conditions and solidarity-based relationships in the community. They are part of the tradition of the labour movement, the new social movements and the liberation and appropriation movements throughout the world.

Solidarity economics makes an important contribution to the short-term reduction of the cost of living and to better provision with vital goods and services. In many places it pioneers ecological products, recycling and the implementation of new solidarity-based ways of working and living. DIE LINKE wants to promote solidarity economics through

suitable framework conditions, regional economic policy and support for business start-ups. In particular, housing cooperatives and other joint and democratically organised enterprises and self-help organisations in the housing sector are supported by the DIE LINKE Party to the extent that they pursue the social goal of affordable housing for large sections of the population.

Small and medium-sized entrepreneurs

Balancing the interests of those in the liberal professions and small-scale entrepreneurs with the trade union interests of wage-earners will benefit democracy and the national economy. Without the courage and the persistence of craft enterprises, inventors and small enterprises, sustainable environmental products would often not have been introduced as they have and the expansion of regional cycles would be unthinkable. Moreover, small and medium-sized enterprises and the self-employed often have great innovative and creative potential. DIE LINKE participates in this with help and advice in order to strengthen the common effort for domestic purchasing power, for freedom from being dictated to by monopoly capital and the banks. Self-confident self-employed persons in the crafts, art and other services are indispensable for democratic socialism in the 21st century. As a matter of principle the plural system of property in democratic socialism includes privately owned small and medium-sized enterprises. That also applies to the farmer's ownership of land. We want general conditions preventing self-exploitation and pressure on employees.

Establishing an effective democratic, social and environmental framework

Economic development must not be left exclusively to the market and enterprises; its general tendencies must be democratically controlled. In addition to efficient public enterprises, systematic public investment is necessary.

Economic and financial policy must aspire to full employment, strengthen domestic demand and ensure social and environmentally sustainable development. To that end, working hours must be gradually shortened as productivity increases without loss of earnings. Regional and sectoral economic policy must exert a controlling influence on the investment decisions of companies on the

basis of democratic overall planning and a strategically formative structural policy.

In addition to the expansion of direct democracy, DIE LINKE advocates its extension through round tables and economic and social councils at all levels. Trade unions, municipal councils, consumers and social, environmental and other advocacy groups should be represented in such bodies. They can work out through dialogue what should be seen as the guiding general interest for each of the various areas of responsibility and needs to be emphasised in society. They should be involved in the development of regional guidelines for establishing democratic, social and environmental frameworks and be given the possibility of legislative initiative.

4. Left reform projects – Steps toward societal transformation

The fight for another, better world, for democratic socialism, begins with changing the society we live in. DIE LINKE stands for the realisation of social justice, the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the democratisation of society. Income and wealth are generated through work on the basis of nature, science and culture. Wealth must no longer be concentrated in the hands of capital and large-scale land owners. Gainful employment, work in the family, caring for children, partners and friends, participation in cultural and political life and finally individual continuing training and leisure are essential areas of life. DIE LINKE wants to create the opportunity for all men and women to combine these areas of life in a balance they determine themselves. Their democratic organisation and gender-equitable distribution also have an important role in the organisation of social living conditions and the democratic welfare state.

We want to realise the basic rights and entitlements that are formulated in the Basic Law: human dignity, free development of one's personality, equality of all persons, free choice of a trade or profession and place of work, inviolability of the home, freedom of opinion, faith and association, privacy of letters and telecommunications, the right of asylum for political refugees. Property entails commitments and has to serve the public good at the same time. Land, natural resources and means of production can be turned into common property for purposes of socialisation. The Federal Republic of Germany has to be a demo-

cratic and social welfare state. It has the task of protecting the natural foundations of life. All state power must proceed from the people and be exercised in elections and plebiscites. Preparing for or waging a war of aggression must be made a punishable offence.

DIE LINKE demands the implementation of economic, social and political reforms that centre on the needs and interests of the population and not the enrichment aspirations of the top echelons. In fighting for left reform projects today we are at the same time working towards our socialist goal.

Sustainably overcoming the economic crisis and mass unemployment, the social crisis and the energy and climate crisis requires a different economic order that is not governed by the drive for maximum profits. As a first step, a fundamental change of direction in economic and social development is necessary, a socio-ecological restructuring. For that purpose the entire way of doing business and living, and especially the energy system, must be made compatible with the natural environment and converted to regenerative sources. That must be coupled with a policy of improving working and living conditions for the majority. Social security and the public and social services must be expanded rather than dismantled. Redistribution from bottom to top must be stopped and reversed. The financial sector must be subjected to democratic control. Instead of privatising, the public and not-for-profit sector must be expanded

again. Democratic and social rights and opportunities for education and participation must be enhanced for all people and especially for disadvantaged groups. Peaceful and co-operative conflict resolution, disarmament and global solidarity are needed in place of warfare on whatever pretext. DIE LINKE is convinced that a crisis-free, social, ecological and peaceful capitalism is not possible. But as a result of social and political struggles and

4.1 How do we want to live? Good work, social security and justice

DIE LINKE wants every person to lead a self-determined life in dignity and social security, to be able to make use of his or her right to work, education and culture and not to be discriminated against or excluded.

Good work

Human life includes physical, cultural and intellectual reproduction and thus extends far beyond the realm of paid work. Work is more than gainful employment, for without the work that has to be done daily in the household, in upbringing, care and nursing, in honorary work and in the field of culture the labour power invested in gainful employment could not be reproduced on a social scale either. Gainful employment has the specific significance that in it the incomes are earned and the goods and services are produced that can be bought. The further development of the forces of production takes place for the most part in the area of gainful employment.

Good gainful employment promotes individual strengths, creates potentials

the changes in the distribution of power, it is possible to bring about a change in the direction of development and thus create the conditions for far-reaching democratic and socialist restructuring. The concepts, social forces and majorities for alternatives to capitalism will be developed in such conflicts.

and opens up prospects of personal and vocational development. Good work is compatible with family and social life. The prerequisites for good gainful employment are the following: it must not go against the conscience of the employee, it must ensure a good income, it must take vocational qualifications into consideration and it must not make too great claims on flexibility and travel times. It must not impinge on freedom of political and religious conscience. Gainful employment can be a source of self-fulfilment, but for many, self-fulfilment starts outside their employment relationships.

Mass unemployment is forced unemployment and must be overcome. It is humiliating for the person concerned, it weakens the position of the employees, the unemployed and the power of the trade unions to assert themselves in dealings with capital. It is a cause of great financial pressure on the welfare state. Among other things, this has the effect that social tasks such as looking after and caring for elderly and sick persons and children is increasingly shifted to the unpaid private sphere. In conse-

quence, this often means loss of professionalisation and for women in particular an increase in temporal and psychological stress. Mass unemployment also weakens all political efforts towards social and ecological organisation of the mode of production and way of life. Everyone has the right to work and the right to reject specific job offers without fear of penalty or sanctions. We do not condone any compulsion to accept gainful employment.

DIE LINKE wants good work rather than unsecured, precarious and underpaid employment. All gainful employment therefore has to be socially insured. We fight against regular employment being replaced by labour leasing, bogus self-employment, endless practicum loops or mini-jobs. Regardless of gender, age and employment status, there must be equal remuneration and equal social standards for equal work and work of equal value. We have had enough of poverty wages and wage dumping. The dispossession of employees must be stopped. We therefore demand a statutory minimum wage sufficient to secure one's livelihood. The minimum wage should amount to at least 60 per cent of the national average wage.

It must be easier than it is now to declare collective agreements generally binding. Public contracts must be given only to enterprises that adhere to the collective agreements and disabled employee quota, pay minimum wages and observe social and ecological criteria. Withdrawal from collective agreements must be combated. In future the Posting of Workers Act must stipulate that for all industries the local standards where the work is done apply to all bidders. Labour leasing must be prohibited. Protection

against dismissal must be improved and term limitations must be subject to stringent legal barriers. Inclusive employment for persons with disabilities need to be promoted. Special needs workshop employees also require wages and salaries that make a self-determined life possible.

We want regular wage increases that at least compensate for productivity increases and price increases. Manager salaries must be limited to 20 times the lowest wage groups in the company; compensation in the form of stock options and excessive financial settlements must be prohibited.

We want shorter working hours without any reduction in pay or personnel. Good work for everyone, but less work for the individual – that is what we want as the new full employment. The compatibility of gainful employment with child raising and care must be improved. Employees also need greater self-determination and co-determination rights with regard to their working hours and enough free time for recreation, leisure and self-determined activities. Through reform of the law on working hours, the maximum permissible average work week should be reduced to 40 hours. For the future we aspire to an upper limit of 35 hours and in the longer term 30 hours. We want employees to be guaranteed wage adjustments to ensure that their earnings remain the same. The co-determination rights of personnel councils and works councils have to be expanded, especially with regard to staff schedules and staff appointment schemes. This is the way that shortening the work week leads to more employment and the pressure to perform is reduced. We want to improve occupa-

tional health and safety and the Young Persons Employment Act. We want to expand employees' claims to continuing education and training. The return to work after pregnancy or child-rearing leave must also be facilitated through continuing training opportunities provided free of charge.

Good work for everyone requires expanded co-determination of the employees on the shop floor and in the company. We are in favour of binding veto rights for employees on important social, economic and ecological issues. Strong and militant trade unions are necessary. DIE LINKE supports them in their efforts. The unhindered right to strike, including the right to call political strikes and a general strike, must be guaranteed. The lockout as a weapon of the entrepreneurs against the trade unions must be prohibited, the anti-strike paragraph must be repealed, the exodus from collective agreements must be stopped by law and the right of class action for trade unions must be introduced.

The rapid growth of information and communication technologies and of the Internet contains new opportunities to separate work from its workplace setting and to work self-determinedly with one's own means of production. In particular the solo self-employed in bogus self-employment who are dependent on one client may be unable to survive if orders fail to come in, and they do not have adequate social security. At the same time, it increases the risks that even skilled "information work" will be relocated, awarded to cheaper bidders in and outside the country in order to exert pressure on wages and working conditions. Unprotected jobs, low pay and

poor working conditions are especially prevalent in the cultural and creative economy and in the software industry as well as in call centres. Self-employed persons and mini-jobbers as well as trainees, working under appalling conditions, are exploited on a massive scale. DIE LINKE advocates regulating traineeships as learning relationships and setting minimum rates of pay. Social insurance protection must be extended to all self-employed persons, and their clients should have to make the same contribution to the cost as employers do in the case of employees. Where possible, common rules of remuneration should be applied for services provided to enterprises by self-employed persons.

Active economic and labour market policy

The neo-liberal de-nationalisation and privatisation policy of past years has led to massive undersupply in many areas. Action to overcome the public investment deficit and expand public employment is overdue. It is a disgrace that in a rich country like Germany people live in poverty or homelessness, children and young people do not receive a good education, persons in need of care are neglected, libraries and swimming pools are closed down and school buildings fall into disrepair and streets decompose for lack of funds.

We need a change of direction in economic and financial policy. It must aspire to a new era of full employment, higher mass incomes and the strengthening of public finances. But there must be no fixation on growth that is blind to social and ecological considerations; instead it must be linked with viable restructuring, decreasing raw material consumption

and decreasing environmental pollution. Domestic demand must be strengthened through redistribution in favour of low and medium incomes and the expansion of public services. DIE LINKE demands greater public programmes for the future and investment programmes for education and for the social, ecological and wheelchair-accessible transport infrastructure. That creates demand and employment in private firms as well as in the public service.

Employment in the field of public and social services is severely underdeveloped in Germany in comparison to other countries and in addition it is often poorly paid. We want to create millions of new regular jobs in these areas paid according to scale, thus satisfying urgent social needs at the same time. This can and must be solidly financed through a socially equitable and ecological taxation policy imposing more taxes on the rich and financially robust enterprises and applying special taxes to environmental consumption and resource consumption.

An active state industry and service policy is needed to prevent de-industrialisation and to ensure jobs in manufacturing, commerce and other service areas. We demand the prohibition of mass layoffs. That will include socially secured transitions of employees from shrinking industries into industries with a future on a large scale.

We want to set up a public future fund with which threatened but viable firms can be helped and socio-ecological restructuring can be promoted. However, state aid must only be provided in exchange for a corresponding public sector share in ownership or workforce shares. These proprietary rights are to be used

to change the company's management criteria: the present fixing of returns, benefiting solely the owners or shareholders, must be replaced with another kind of management that measures company success by long-term growth, the interest of the employees and ecological sustainability.

We want an active labour market policy committed especially to helping all those people whose chances in the labour market are poor. The knowledge, skills and capabilities of older employees must be sustainably integrated into the labour market. This involves arrangements to protect people over 50 years of age from dismissal and enable them in case of unemployment to obtain work, paid according to scale, that corresponds to their knowledge and capabilities, for the benefit of all. Publicly supported employment must offer worthwhile jobs paid according to scale. These jobs should be created in particular where the market does not meet the social, cultural and ecological needs. Acceptance of these jobs shall be voluntary.

We are discussing to what extent a publicly supported employment sector can go beyond labour market policy and lastingly develop and strengthen employment in the non-profit area.

Control the finance sector democratically and make it serve the public weal

The private banks are mainly responsible for the speculative bubbles of the past few years and the billions in losses incurred. Private banks must therefore be nationalised, subjected to democratic control and made to serve the public weal. There must be strict regulation to

guarantee that the banking sector returns to performing its public service mission in the future: the funding of worthwhile investments, and especially small and medium-sized businesses, at favourable rates of interest, the handling of payment transactions, the provision of a current account for everyone without charge and the safe investment of private savings. The investment banking that has grown explosively in recent years must be phased out, it must be forbidden for banks to trade in securities for their own account and to speculate in derivatives, as well as to transact any business outside of their own balance and to have any dealings with companies or persons legally registered in tax havens. Framework stipulations for credit and savings interest rates are urgently needed. Banks must be legally obliged to allocate a stipulated minimum proportion of their balance sheet total to small and medium-sized enterprises in the form of micro-loans at low rates of interest.

We demand effective control and regulation of international movements of capital and the prohibition of highly speculative investment vehicles which threaten the stability of the financial system and hence the entire world economy. We want to prohibit speculative investment vehicles such as hedge funds and private equity companies from doing business in the Federal Republic. All financial transactions such as stock exchange turnover, off-exchange trading or currency transactions must be taxed in order to make speculation unattractive. This involves in particular prohibiting speculation with agricultural land and agricultural raw materials of every kind, including water. Short selling has to be prohibited. As an initial step we demand that a stock ex-

change tax be introduced in Germany. The exchange rates of the key currencies must be stabilised through target zones. At the European level, regulation and surveillance structures must be erected and existing ones strengthened. We stand for the coordination of national tax policies in order to end tax dumping inside the EU. Tax havens – where there is no effective regulation in any case – must be put out of operation by preventing business dealings with them.

Sustainable agricultural economies and rural development

Agrarian primary production is one of the key areas in socio-ecological restructuring and in ensuring food sovereignty. Through sustainable production methods and procedures, it must meet the demand for raw materials for safe, healthy food and feed as well as biomass for energy and materials. At the same time the soil must be kept fertile, the water clean and the air pure and biological diversity must be retained in the cultivated landscapes. We want innovative, resource-saving agriculture and forestry, horticulture and fisheries in harmony with nature. We oppose the continuing over-fishing and exploitation of the oceans and inland waters. We demand a significant increase in organic agriculture and environmentally friendly farming by all agricultural enterprises, so that in the future all food will be produced sustainably. In that way the use of agrochemicals, synthetic fertilisers, water and energy can be reduced.

We want to strengthen sustainably operating family farms, co-operative and municipal farms and combat the concentration of private landed property, defend the achievements of the land

reform and support diverse forms of inter-farm, regional and supra-regional co-operation of the agricultural and food enterprises. We believe in socio-ecologically oriented structural change through co-operation.

For GM-free agriculture

DIE LINKE stands for GM-free agriculture. Genetic engineering in agriculture is of benefit only to a handful of international seed and agrochemical corporations that strive for global control of the agricultural sector and the food supply. Genetic engineering in agriculture involves great health, ecological, economic and social risks for farmers, gardeners, beekeepers and consumers. The allegations of benefits for agriculture have long been refuted by the disastrous experiences in other countries such as Canada and India. Agricultural biotechnology can neither reduce the use of pesticides nor solve the world food problem. Coexistence between GM farming on the one hand and organic or conventional farming on the other is not possible. Once transgenic plants have been released they can no longer be contained.

DIE LINKE demands an immediate ban on agricultural biotechnology – here, in Europe and world-wide. Zero tolerance must prevail with respect to seeds. Terminator crops must be prohibited. DIE LINKE supports the establishment of GM-free zones and the creation of producer and marketing communities for GM-free production from conventional or organic farming. The domestic production of protein feed must be intensified. We do not need genetically modified organisms on our fields, in the feeding-trough, on our plates or in our tanks. Sustainable and environmentally friendly

production of healthy food and feed as well as sustainable raw materials is only possible with GM-free agriculture. Agricultural biotechnology is risky technology and runs counter to our objective of socio-ecological reconstruction.

Support for disadvantaged regions; responsibility in East Germany

DIE LINKE aspires to equally good living conditions in all regions of the Federal Republic of Germany and the harmonisation of living standards in the European Union. In this context, European policy must strengthen the regions that are seriously lagging behind in development and at the same time sustain stability in all other regions. The further development of EU structural aid must take into consideration the requirements of climate protection and the energy turnaround; it must stimulate ecological restructuring and the expansion of public services of general interest.

Countries and regions with little or poor infrastructure in a co-operative and social federal state must be supported. We are against competitive federalism, in which the states compete with one another with different taxes, standards and conditions in the public service. It benefits only the rich states as well as the mobile enterprises and wealthy population groups. It hurts the people, whose living and working conditions are worsened.

What is needed is a strong regional policy that democratically involves the citizens in the region and promotes all existing local and regional development potential in regional development plans and participatory budgets. What is required is improved co-operation and the

interweaving of centres of growth and rural areas with poor infrastructures. The aim is to create liveable general conditions through extensive educational, cultural, leisure and childminding facilities and the promotion of attractive workplaces – especially for young people – so that it pays to stay in the region.

Because of its historical development alone, representing eastern German interests is of special importance to DIE LINKE. East Germany needs a new policy approach in order to reduce the extremely high unemployment and lower wages than in the West and to end the continued exodus of young people. New paths of development for East Germany demand state development concepts and a long-term all-German innovation, investment and infrastructure policy so as to specifically offset East Germany's development handicaps. That will involve increased investment in education, training and research, the fostering of sectors and enterprises with a future as well as centres of regional economic development, for instance through the co-operation of research institutions and networks of enterprises.

Redistribution and fair taxation

DIE LINKE wants social security for everyone and social justice. We therefore aspire to social redistribution from top to bottom. Equitable, balanced distribution ratios are also important to strengthen democracy, because disposal of substantial financial resources gives one political power as well.

We want to strengthen public finances by means of an equitable taxation policy that leads to greater revenues. Only the rich can afford to have a poor state. The

profiteers who benefit from finance capitalism, the redistribution policy and the bank rescue operations of the governments must share in the costs of crisis management and socio-ecological restructuring. We demand the re-introduction of the wealth tax in the form of an annual millionaires' tax of five per cent of private millions. At the same time we demand a substantial increase in the inheritance tax on large fortunes. All this is important for reducing the extreme inequality and concentration of private wealth as well. DIE LINKE advocates ecological taxes with an effective guidance function steering toward reducing resource consumption. These taxes must be levied at the production end rather than from the final consumer.

Corporations and other financially powerful companies must pay more taxes again. We want to close tax loopholes. We demand a large increase in the top rate of income tax. We demand control notes from banks concerning capital gains and a requirement to report financial assets abroad as well as more staff for the revenue authorities to combat tax evasion and tax fraud. Capital gains must again be taxed at the personal tax rate instead of the uniform rate of only 25 per cent. On the other hand, we want tax relief for those with low or moderate incomes. We demand abolition of the tax privilege for married couples, because it fosters the traditional male-dominated single-earner marriage and is an obstacle to the employment of women. This places other kinds of families at a disadvantage. Instead, public measures to promote children have to be expanded.

We want to introduce a mileage allowance irrespective of the means of trans-

port used for the trip to and from work, one that also benefits low-paid employees who do not pay taxes. DIE LINKE wants to extend the reduced rate of value added tax to labour-intensive craft services.

Social security in the democratic welfare state

Everyone needs social security in order to live a self-determined life and be able to fully exercise the right to democratic co-determination. DIE LINKE consistently stands for the expansion and more precise definition of the welfare state requirement in the Basic Law. In particular it is a matter of combating existing tendencies in the direction of a welfare state based on good will alone. Fundamental social rights must therefore be inscribed in the constitution. This will require strengthening the welfare state principle in the Basic Law through the introduction of basic social rights such as the right to work, education, housing, a basic socio-cultural standard of living and health care.

We want an active welfare state that provides security against life's risks, such as illness, accidents, dependence on long-term care and invalidity as well as disability and unemployment, protects people from poverty and guarantees a self-determined life in dignity for the elderly. We believe in financial support for self-organisation from public funds, especially for the unemployed. Welfare state benefits must be based on individual legal claims in order to prevent patriarchal dependencies and bureaucratic arbitrariness.

The policy of de-nationalisation, liberalisation and unconditional orientation

toward competition has to be reversed. Satisfaction of such basic human needs as housing, education and health must be ensured for everyone irrespective of their ability to pay. It is a public task to ensure services of general interest in the supply of water, energy, transport and communication services everywhere, affordable for everyone and in high quality. Like hospitals, schools and universities, those services must be organised in public enterprises that are not profit oriented. The right to decent housing must be enshrined in legislation. Participation in culture must be ensured. We want supervision and leisure activities for children and adolescents as well as social services for family and educational support to be easily accessible. All those who live in Germany, irrespective of nationality, must be protected by the democratic welfare state from marginalisation.

Adequate housing and self-determined living for all generations are among the most important preconditions for social security and human dignity. Housing must be affordable for everyone on a long-term basis. This implies a socially balanced rent law, rents commensurate with the value of the home and periodically adjusted housing subsidies. We demand the construction of wheelchair-accessible social housing as well as the promotion of all forms of housing ownership on equal terms and active promotion of urban development. A not-for-profit housing association should be responsible for housing as a service of general interest and contribute to the balanced development of the housing market. DIE LINKE will continue to fight for inclusion of the basic right to housing in the Basic Law.

Mass unemployment is one major reason for the financial problems of the social security funds. Others are political decisions to the detriment of social insurance, wage dumping and the demolition of jobs covered by social security. These developments have led to the erosion of contribution revenues. There is no demographic reason for pension cuts either. Despite the increase in the proportion of the population that is elderly, pension increases are feasible. This possibility is offered by increasing labour productivity and full use of social manpower potential. For the increasing productivity of labour, if distributed on the basis of solidarity, will make possible continuing increases in pensions as well as in income from labour despite the growing proportion of elderly people in the population.

We want retirement insurance based on solidarity as old age security, leading to a statutory pension well above the poverty line and to a large extent ensuring retention of the living standards attained through work. It would make state subsidies for private old-age provision superfluous. The latter cannot avert the threat of poverty in old age and has been a considerable factor in the ballooning of the financial sphere. We call for retirement insurance based on solidarity that provides statutory pension insurance funded on a parity basis for all women and men as well as a solidarity-based minimum pension in the context of retirement insurance to prevent poverty in old age. The solidarity-based minimum pension is fed on the one hand from individual contribution-based pension claims and on the other from taxes, for those whose income and assets would mean a life below the poverty line.

We want to strengthen the solidarity adjustment in the statutory pension scheme and therefore first substantially increase and finally do away with the contribution ceiling and ramp down the pension claims for the upper income brackets. We fight for approximation of the annuity values in the East to those in the West. We adamantly oppose raising the retirement age to 67. We demand access to the full retirement benefit after 40 contribution years, including equivalent periods, and the possibility of leaving the work force at the age of between 60 and 65 without curtailment of benefits.

In the case of unemployment as well, the social benefits must ensure a standard of living close to that attained previously. We therefore demand: Hartz IV must go. DIE LINKE demands in its place unemployment benefits determined by past income but at least providing minimum security, adequate to the need and not subject to penalty, that really prevents poverty and respects the civil rights of those affected. This involves the abolition of penalties, of the special arrangements for young people below the age of 25, and of the communities of need and communities of responsibility and the introduction of the individual principle on the basis of the statutory maintenance obligations.

Some parts of DIE LINKE also champion the concept of an unconditional basic income in order to uncouple the right to a secure existence and social participation for everyone from employment. This concept is being hotly debated in the Party. We want to continue the discussion.

DIE LINKE fights for a guaranteed child allowance for all children and adolescents that prevents child poverty and offers all children and adolescents good opportunities of participation and development and protects them from exclusion and discrimination.

DIE LINKE fights for a democratic public health system founded on the Solidarity-based Citizen Insurance as general health and nursing insurance and public health care. Everyone would contribute to the Solidarity-based Citizen Insurance scheme in proportion to their income (employment, capital and other income). The Solidarity-based Citizen Insurance does away with the distinction between statutory and private health and nursing insurance and is based on the restoration of parity and the abolition of extra payments.

What we and the World Health Organisation (WHO) mean by health is "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." The services of the public health system must unreservedly provide need-oriented, nationwide, near-to-home and prompt health care to the population and be available to everyone regardless of social, financial and residence status.

Health is not a commodity. The public property relations and structures of the health system are to be organised as a branch of the public services of general interest. The prices of drugs must be controlled by law. The democratic co-

determination of the insured, of independent patients' representations and of employees in the health service has to be regulated by law. Surpluses generated in the health system are to be used for the benefit of the insured and the employees. Misappropriations such as speculation with insurance contributions must be prohibited. In-patient and outpatient medical treatment, rehabilitation and nursing services are to be organised across sectors as integrated care. We want to promote polyclinic-type structures, the establishment of outpatient treatment centres employing specialists in various disciplines so as to ensure reasonable use of resources rather than cuts in services. Health promotion and disease prevention must be developed as a separate pillar of the health system and anchored in a Prevention Act.

We want a liberal and enlightened drug policy in Germany. Drugs are an everyday phenomenon. Alcohol abuse is a social problem. The distinction between legal and illegalised substances is arbitrary. Drugs and their abuse can lead to serious health, social and material problems. We therefore advocate a rational and humane drug policy comprising the decriminalisation of drug consumption and in the long run the legalisation of all drugs. That would mean decriminalisation of the addicts and the organisation of assistance and legal and controlled administration of drugs to them. Basically we want a society that relies not on punishment and repression of drug consumers but on preventive action and public information.

4.2 How do we want to make decisions? Democratisation of society

The Federal Republic of Germany needs renewal as a democratic and social state governed by the rule of law. Representative parliamentary democracy must therefore be supplemented by direct democracy. Referenda should become an important means to that end. Changes in property relations, especially in the financial sector, strengthening of the public sector and a democratic public are our alternatives to neo-liberal privatisation and an authoritarian law-and-order state.

Strengthening of the parliaments and participatory democracy

For DIE LINKE, political and social, individual and collective civil liberties and participation rights belong together. DIE LINKE wants to expand democratic control and co-determination in the economy and in the state, in the mass media, education, science and other areas of society. Factories and workforces must no longer be at the disposal of financial investors. We therefore advocate the extension of parity codetermination and for assertion of the right of the workforce to veto the closure of factories that are not threatened with insolvency.

Capitalism has undermined the foundations of democracy as the rule of the people. Elections become a farce if those elected allow their decisions to be dictated by big corporations and the wealthy and thus evade democratic scrutiny. We therefore demand that business associations and businesses not be allowed to donate to political parties and be forbidden to have members of the state parliaments, the federal parliament or the European Parliament on their payrolls. Large donations by private individuals must also be limited so as to

protect democracy from the influence of big money.

We advocate the strengthening of all representative bodies – from the municipal council to the European Parliament – as democratic decision-making bodies. To that end, the representative bodies need the corresponding rights and resources so that they can act on an equal footing with governments and administrations. The parliaments must not only be informed in a more timely and comprehensive manner by the governments about the preparation of decisions but must also be involved in the process. Parliamentary public relations has to be improved. The positions of trade unions, social, environmental, consumers, tenants and disabled associations, self-help organisations and democratic movements must be heard at an early stage. The rights of committees and members of legislative bodies to be informed and to inspect records must be reinforced.

The European Parliament must be given an independent right of initiative. As the European Union has become bigger and more complex geographically, socially, and culturally as well as administratively and its decision-making powers have become more extensive, greater monitoring and participation rights of the federal and state parliaments have become a necessary and indispensable element in the European legislative process.

DIE LINKE continues to demand that the voting age in all elections be lowered to 16. We advocate the development of new forms of politics from below. That includes the political strike and the general strike as well.

A vibrant democracy must create expanded opportunities of direct democratic decision-making about and participation in popular initiatives and plebiscites as well as public petitions and referenda. At the same time, obligatory referenda on the EU treaties should be introduced; citizens EU-wide must be granted the right to effectively influence European decision-making through citizens' initiatives, petitions and referenda.

Democratic municipalities

The freedom of citizens to determine their own lives themselves depends in great measure on the municipalities. Important everyday issues as well as issues concerning the future of the society are decided there. DIE LINKE is therefore committed to the strengthening of municipal self-government, to strong municipal property and to the efficient development of public services of general interest. If democracy is not to be an empty shell, municipalities need adequate financial resources and possibilities of intervening in economic and social processes. For that reason as well, we oppose the privatisation of public services of general interest and social security systems and demand the reinforcement of public property.

For DIE LINKE the municipalities are not just an administrative level but also a decisive creativity level. Here the citizens experience all the inconsistencies of social development directly and learn how politics functions. With the instruments of direct citizen participation, they can bring about changes. Municipalities must have a stronger position in the federal system. In that way citizens will have greater influence on the way local and regional problems are resolved. In

the municipalities, there is a chance of trying out new lifestyles. For that purpose, space must be made for political, social and cultural self-organisation. Services of general interest must be provided by the municipalities themselves. There must be no room for profit interests in this context. It is therefore in the interest of the public weal that public property be preserved and that no further privatisation of municipal services be permitted. Instead, re-municipalisation is necessary to strengthen services of general interest.

To reinforce the position of the municipalities in the federal system, changes are needed in at least three areas. Municipal constitutional law must be framed in such a way that the municipalities can undertake tasks on their own responsibility to a greater extent. A financial constitution is needed to ensure need-based funding of the municipalities. Municipal commercial law must be framed in such a way that municipal enterprises can take part in economic life on equal terms. Public enterprises must be reinforced so that regional business cycles can develop better. To implement these three areas of action it is necessary to expand municipal democracy. The related strengthening of citizen participation in decision-making processes will safeguard municipal services of general interest.

DIE LINKE acts for a participatory budget policy, for participatory budgets as an important form of municipal democracy. Our vision is solidarity-based citizen's municipalities in which people can determine and manage their own affairs and take the social and ecological restructuring of their communities into their own hands, independently.

Civil society self-government is an important field for democratic co-determination. It strengthens social cohesion in the cities, villages and municipalities. Associations, clubs and initiatives enable many citizens to assume responsibility for societal tasks in many areas. DIE LINKE therefore advocates supporting civil society actors who assume societal tasks. It demands transparency and public control in this connection so as to ensure the observance of social and ecological standards. The preconditions are democratic legitimisation and adequate funding.

Rigorous implementation of the separation of powers – Implementing self-administration in the judiciary

Germany is the tail-light in Europe and was called upon by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to follow the example of the overwhelming majority of European states and ensure the independence of the judiciary by making possible the self-administration of the courts and public prosecutors through judicial councils.

DIE LINKE therefore works at the federal and state levels for rigorous implementation of the principle of separation of powers and democratisation of the judiciary. The Judicial Councils to be formed are independent of party politics and exclusively bound to implement the requirement in the Basic Law that justice be granted. Judges and public prosecutors should be appointed exclusively by electoral committees. Care must be taken to ensure that the candidates selected adequately represent all strata of society. Only the representative compo-

sition of the judiciary provides a guarantee that justice will indeed be done in the name of the people. Strengthening the rule of law also requires independence of the public prosecutors equal to that of judges.

Democratically controlled media

Media power and media manipulation are a threat to democracy. That makes it all the more important to preserve a free Internet without censorship and with binding network neutrality. For DIE LINKE the Internet is a public good; the network infrastructure belongs under social control and must be democratised. Democratic media demand democratic editorial statutes, the strengthening of a broad counter-public and the application of anti-trust law to the media sector.

In the digital age, media education must be seen as a task of the whole of society. DIE LINKE demands media education opportunities that are open to all population groups regardless of age, social position and region to teach competence in dealing with the Internet and digital media.

Citizens must develop analytical skills in order to understand and critically evaluate digital media and content and be able to communicate in a variety of contexts. A patriarchally conceived pedagogy of prohibition and preservation, designed to limit competent media behaviour on the basis of a repressive concept of protecting minors is not compatible with an emancipatory view of humanity and is rejected by DIE LINKE.

Many people have no access to modern media and can therefore not make use of the possibilities offered by modern

information technology. The mass media are for the most part owned by a few corporations and financial investors. They co-determine what we should learn and know, talk about and think. Media use and control by the media increasingly overlap. DIE LINKE fights against this division, against surveillance and control, for freedom of information and opinion and for the strengthening of public media.

Democracy in the digital society

The net offers new opportunities for participation, openness and transparency. More and more, public opinion is being shaped there. The possibilities of greater social participation in political decision-making in the digital age have to be seized by DIE LINKE – in the interest of citizens who have turned their backs on politics as well. DIE LINKE is aware of the democratic potential of the web to defend and expand social participation through Open Government and E-democracy (e.g. online petitions, participatory budgets). We are calling for a wider range of offers and the use of open data, that is, non-sensitive data such as archives and budget data or legal texts.

Social networks on the Internet, search machines, geodata services, online shops and other content providers also collect the personal data of millions of people world-wide, even against their will, and link those data. More and more diverse data profiles of users are being put together and used for private business. The advantage of freely accessible information and social interaction is cancelled out by the exploitation of private data. The world as a media village needs protective mechanisms to prevent

people from being buried under data sets and their exploitation in the digital age.

Equality and freedom online

Information has become an even more decisive resource and productive force. In the networks of digital information production and communication, users have made decentralised stocks of knowledge retrievable world-wide, have democratised access to the cultural memory and have created new forms of community. Access to knowledge production and the power to decide on the selection and utilisation of information determine how and by whom the networks of digital communication will be controlled in the future. Access to communication and information, as the ownership issue, and the possibilities of acquiring the technology of digital culture form the basis for democracy, pluralism and opinion-forming on the Internet. DIE LINKE demands that everyone be provided with the infrastructure for fast Internet as a basic utility.

We want to defend and expand the freedom of knowledge in the digital world. The open information system is meeting with increasing resistance on the part of business and control interests. They want it to be subjected to sweeping restrictions. Private business oligopolies and state surveillance interests threaten the decentralised nature of the Internet and hence equality and freedom online. We stand for network diversity. Information must be free. Digital technology has opened up and extended access to knowledge and cultural goods. It has become customary to see them as public goods. Instead of criminalising users, one should develop political

solutions for new reimbursement models for creative and cultural workers.

The Internet can be used as a platform for free self-organisation, for evading corporate constraints and dominance over opinion-making. It enables everyone to become individually creative and to create a counter-public. We support users whose cause is the freedom to be informed and to express themselves.

Reinforcing individual rights

To counter the dismantling of civil rights and the expansion of the security state, we advocate the reinforcement of individual rights, the protection of personal data, participation opportunities for social organisations and movements, and independent democratic control of the state's security agencies. We support initiatives for the democratic self-administration of public spaces. We oppose the expansion of the surveillance state and demand strict separation and democratic control of the police, the army and the secret services. We want to do away with the secret services.

We call for equal political and social rights for all persons living in Germany and the European Union, for political and social rights are human rights. The state governed by the rule of law must become social. The condition for a vibrant democracy, that equality before the law is guaranteed, is materially unfulfilled at present. Only those with the requisite financial resources can afford a court case if a large amount of money is in dispute. This must be corrected so that all people are on an equal footing before the courts.

The right to informational self-determination is increasingly coming under threat. The idea of transparent citizens frightens us. For us the right to privacy and informational self-determination is an indispensable prerequisite for democratic statehood. The "data strip-tease" places the entire population under general suspicion; this particularly affects the socially disadvantaged when they apply for benefits and those who are politically active on the left, who are subjected to total surveillance. We call for frugality in recording data and for extensive procedural rights with regard to their processing and their security. Specifically, we are against the erection of censorship infrastructures on the Internet and online legal searches and against the extension of video surveillance and the comprehensive storage of telecommunications data.

Equality and gender justice

There is still no balanced and equitable relationship between the sexes. The traditional role stereotypes still influence the lives of women and men and compromise their quality of life and their chances of vocational and social development. Patriarchal structures still pervade all areas of society. Women do more than half of all work in society, especially unpaid domestic, caring and reproduction work, but their work is less acknowledged and in the field of gainful employment they are still paid substantially less than their male colleagues. They have correspondingly lower claims to social benefits. The working conditions, inferior pay and long working hours in particular place women at a disadvantage and consolidate the traditional gender relations. The consequence is that women often cannot earn

their own living by themselves. Financial dependence often encourages the emergence of violent relationships as well.

Every third woman in the world and every fourth woman in Germany and Europe is exposed to violence. Violence against women is an important instrument of warfare. But women experience violence at the hands of men in the private sphere and in the family too. Women are sexually harassed at work as well. Violence has many faces. Violation of the right to self-determination, physical and emotional harassment, humiliation and discrimination. Migrant women and women forced into illegality are victims of violence even more often. DIE LINKE therefore wants to expand prevention, and ensure lasting funding for independent women's shelters and shelters for victims of violence. Gender-specific violence must be fully recognised as grounds for asylum and victim protection must be expanded. This applies not just to gender-specific persecution on the part of the state but also to persecution in the family and social sphere – forced marriage and genital mutilation, for example. Victims of trafficking in women must be accorded the right of residence. We want to combat sexual mutilation and forced marriage effectively. DIE LINKE rejects the instrumentalisation of women's rights as justification for racism and wars.

DIE LINKE sees itself as a party with socialist and feminist aspirations. We advocate a self-determined, solidarity-based life in which gainful employment, family work, social and political engagement are compatible for men and women. We advocate changing the social security systems, the organisation of the world of

work, the supply of public services and the framework conditions for political participation in the economy and politics in such a way that discrimination is abolished. All political decisions and proposals must be systematically judged by the effects they have on women and men.

We support measures that contribute to increasing the rate of women's employment; we fight for equal pay for equal work and work of equal value, for shorter working hours and for the equitable distribution of gainful employment and family duties between men and women. We call for an Equality Act that also applies to private business. Increasing labour flexibility must not lead to social interaction and leisure being subjected to the dictates of 24/7 availability. Another reason why we reject precarious, insecure employment and the increasing flexibility of work is that such working conditions are harmful to families and children. Instead we want working hours and job opportunities to be made flexible and socially secure in such a way that they are family- and children-friendly. We demand the right to all-day free care and education in crèches, kindergartens and day-care centres for all children. That is a fundamental precondition for good early childhood support for all children and is necessary if women and men are to be able to reconcile gainful employment and family life on an equal footing. Quotas remain an important means of promoting gender equity. We advocate a self-determined life in solidarity and the removal of the termination of pregnancy as a criminal offence (§218) from the Penal Code.

Sexual diversity and self-determination

DIE LINKE stands for an emancipatory policy that takes into consideration and supports different lifestyles. Heterosexuality and the idea that there are only two genders is tacitly accepted as the political and social norm. This norm excludes. DIE LINKE supports the rights to sexual and gender diversity in society. This implies the equal social status and acceptance of the basic rights of lesbian, gay, transsexual and transgender persons. Civil status law must take into account in particular the human rights of intersexual and transsexual persons. Sexual adaptation operations on children must be stopped. We demand equal legal status in all areas of law and in all legal institutions.

Migration and integration as a social and democratic issue – open borders for persons in need!

Germany is a country of immigration. DIE LINKE rejects a migration and integration policy that grants social and political rights on the basis of whether people are “of use” or “of no use” to capital. We want to achieve social and political participation for all men and women living in Germany.

Family reunification must be made possible both for children and for same-sex and opposite-sex partners as well as relatives in the second line. Promoting language development and promoting educational success are important, but insufficient for integration. We want to eliminate the structural discrimination in access to education, to the training and labour markets and to social services. Health care must be guaranteed to all

persons living in Germany, regardless of their residence status. Persons seeking protection must not be turned away. We demand open borders for everyone.

DIE LINKE advocates respectful social interaction in recognition of the diversity of all people of different ethnic origins. That requires above all the democratic co-determination of migrants in all societal decision-making. DIE LINKE works for the right to vote and be elected for all those who have the focus of their lives in Germany, as well as equal rights of access to the labour market. All children born here and whose parents live in Germany should be given German citizenship. Naturalisation must be made easier again. Dual citizenship should be possible as a matter of principle. DIE LINKE is in favour of recognition of certified qualifications acquired abroad for all migrant groups.

Persons who have fled human rights violations, wars and political persecution must not be turned away or deported. We demand restoration of the fundamental right of asylum and we fight against making refugees illegal, against deportations, against every form of special legislation such as restriction of movement and against detention camps. The closed doors policy of the EU is inhuman – we do not want Europe to be a fortress. DIE LINKE bases its refugee policy on humanity and human rights, so that the protection of people in need is in the foreground and not regulatory or economic considerations. For that reason DIE LINKE calls for abolition of the border agency FRONTEX, which is the EU’s main instrument for keeping people out.

Anti-discrimination policy

DIE LINKE opposes any discrimination based on sex, age, philosophy, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation and identity or based on any physical, mental or psychological impairment. We want to purposefully break down and overcome all barriers – in mobility, in school or vocational education, in occupation or in communication – with the active involvement of persons with disabilities and their families. We want the diversity of different forms of partnership to be equally respected, honoured and protected. A paradigm shift in family policy is urgently needed and calls for a new concept of the family. In addition to married parents, unmarried parents, patchwork families and also partnerships of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, intersexuals and others who do not fit into the traditional gender roles have to be recognised as parents. DIE LINKE fights for an active anti-discrimination policy, the legal equality of lesbians, gays and those who do not conform to the usual gender roles, and the promotion of their civil society structures.

Equality and justice for people with disabilities

To make it possible for persons with disabilities to share equally in the life of society, measures to compensate for disadvantages and the right to self-representation at all levels are indispensable. DIE LINKE stands for a policy that respects and implements the rights of persons with disabilities in all social spheres. In all administrations, in the municipalities, in the educational establishments, in the welfare and social assistance institutions, in the health system, in the political parties, associations, in-

terest groups and in business – the civil rights to accessibility, freedom, equality, participation, emancipation, inclusion and solidarity must be enjoyed everywhere.

DIE LINKE works for freedom of development of the personality and unrestricted participation of all people in our society. Social(ist) policy leaves no one out. We demand human rights for all: persons with and without disabilities as well as for men and women and for people of all ethnic origins.

Left disability policy is seen as an enriching interdisciplinary task for all policy fields and for all planning. It is not just a question of appropriate legislative action to create equality of opportunity, need-related compensation for handicaps or active anti-discrimination policy. We want to help bring about a positive awareness with appreciation of special strengths and competences and promotion of respectful interpersonal relations. It is a question of protecting dignity and justice, of autonomy and civil liberties, of reducing prejudices. It is a question of experiencing diversity. The full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in our country is the will and one of the goals of DIE LINKE, its members and its elected officials.

Combating neo-fascism and racism

We actively oppose neo-fascism, right-wing populism, racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Ziganism, Islamophobia, homophobia and other forms of inhumanity. We take an active part in democratic alliances and work together in civic movements and citizens' initiatives with all those who take a stand against the

extreme right, right-wing populism and racism. We struggle against neo-fascism, right-wing populism and racism in the streets and in political bodies. We demand the prohibition of all organisations of the extreme right; in doing so, we realise that prohibition is no substitute for public debate. We advocate an active anti-discrimination policy and call for more democracy, participation and civic involvement at all levels.

DIE LINKE agrees with other democratic forces that the struggle against neo-fascism and racism is a struggle that has to be waged everywhere in Germany and always with the courage of one's convictions and publicly. We decisively oppose racist-inspired violence and state racism as well as everyday racism and xenophobic positions from the centre of society.

Anti-fascism is a basic stance of the DIE LINKE party. For us it means repelling all extreme right, right-wing populist and racist ideologies, parties and movements, combating all traditional and new forms of anti-Semitism, confronting historical revisionism and all ideologies that are predicated on the inequality of human beings, and maintaining the political, scientific and cultural heritage of the anti-fascist movement.

DIE LINKE vehemently opposes the equation of left ideas with fascist thinking through the totalitarianism doctrine and extremism theory. Our vision of a peaceful, more just and democratic world can in no way be compared with the inhuman world view of the (neo)fascists.

Equal rights for Danes, Frisians, Sorbs, Sinti and Roma

The minorities living in Germany – Danes, Frisians, Sinti and Roma and Sorbs – must be able to articulate and realise their specific claims and concerns on terms of equality. Policy-makers have to create framework conditions to ensure the preservation and further development of the identity, language and culture of the minorities. What is needed is the formulation of the corresponding federal policy principles, which must culminate in an article of the Basic Law in the medium term. DIE LINKE advocates that the rights of these minorities, and especially their right to self-determination, be protected and their representation and involvement in the societal process of opinion-forming and consensus-building be fostered. In the Federal Republic, policy-making at the federal and state level must at long last be guided by internationally recognised standards.

Participation from the start – Active involvement of young people

We see the active participation of young people in social decision-making processes as an indispensable basis for an emancipatory democracy. Young people should be able to shape their lives on their own responsibility and take an active part in changing social relationships. We give high priority to political education to encourage democratic participation, for example in the form of youth parliaments or forums. These must have powers and not just be for show. We are committed to ensuring that children and young people can share in the decisions that affect them

and can take an active part in designing youth and leisure facilities.

Ageing, actively and with dignity

Older people have a wealth of knowledge and interesting experiences behind them. They want to shape their lives individually and be active in the community. After periods of gainful employment they have to be able to live in a self-determined and dignified manner. A decent pension, good health care and an age-appropriate living environment that satisfies their increased need for security are prerequisites for a new culture of age and ageing. But age is more than pension, health care, nursing and costs. There must be a change in thinking in the media, politics, the economy and society addressing the whole day-to-day life of an ageing society and the challenges of old age. We are counting on the vibrant cohesion of the generations, more social involvement and participation.

DIE LINKE will therefore support seniors' representations in the federal states, districts and municipalities so as to have more resources and opportunities developed for mobility, encounters, counselling and a good living environment for elderly people. We advocate self-determined living in old age and accessible forms of housing. We want to encourage elderly people to be active in seniors' clubs, leisure facilities and seniors' academies, to make use of civic associations, cultural-historical societies and sports clubs and to be active in citizens' initiatives and political organisations. We consider it worthwhile to shape solidarity more actively in discussions between elderly people and ado-

lescents, in historical projects and in cultural and sports events.

Culture for a society that is just and open to dialogue

Cultural diversity and the arts in all their manifestations are indispensable for a vibrant democracy. For us on the left, creating favourable conditions and scope for their development is therefore an essential part of our struggle for a democratic and socially just society. Culture belongs in the Basic Law as a national policy objective.

DIE LINKE advocates a democratic culture in which all groups and milieus can find and express their cultural identity. All people should have the opportunity to share in the cultural life and cultural wealth of this society. This presupposes cultural education from the beginning. Access to education and culture, to traditional as well as to modern forms of culture and communication is one of the most important social issues of the 21st century and substantially determines the development possibilities of each individual and of society as a whole. Culture and cultural education are prerequisites for emancipation.

We are committed to the preservation of the public-sector funding of culture and oppose the limitless liberalisation and exploitation of cultural achievements and the privatization and dismantling of public infrastructure. We want to preserve and promote the diversity of agents of cultural production - from public and free non-profit initiatives to independent publishers, studios, agencies and artistic production companies. We want to promote cultural life in all regions and milieus. We want good jobs

providing a secure livelihood in the field of culture. Artists and all cultural workers should be able to live from their work and benefit from social security.

Through the arts, in the diversity of their directions, the freedom of individuals and their integration in society are imagined and experienced in all their inconsistency. Because art is an important factor in the great social debates, DIE LINKE wants to secure and protect its own worlds of the arts as autonomous spaces, testing grounds and refuges. It sees in new artistic trends stimuli for an expanded understanding of the world and society that need to be encouraged to the greatest possible extent. And it needs the ideas that come from artists.

DIE LINKE feels strong ties with all those who take a critical view of this society and insist on it being changed. We are open to the various designs for another, decent life and want to encourage liberation outlooks.

People of different socio-cultural backgrounds and different political cultures converge in the DIE LINKE party. Their experiences are an enrichment on the way to a broad cultural understanding of a new social left.

Culture is remembrance. Culture links tradition and today. Only an awareness of the cultural heritage gives rise to a sophisticated conception of culture. Consequently the basis for understanding and tolerance lies in culture. DIE LINKE will make its contribution to a democratic culture of remembrance. We want to be sure of the cultural history of the formerly divided country in its European context.

Sport for everyone

DIE LINKE wants to expand the cultural conditions that are necessary to make sport possible as a part of personal development. Sport performs an important social function. DIE LINKE seeks to roll back the commercialisation of sport for the purposes of profit maximisation and to enhance the teaching of such values as tolerance, respect and fairness in sport, sustainably improve school and vocational school sports through quality standards and teach children and adolescents to find enjoyment in movement. Violence and discriminations are to be combated. Persons with and without disabilities and irrespective of social, ethnic, religious or sexual backgrounds should have access to sport. DIE LINKE promotes nature-compatible, manipulation-free sport.

Churches and religious and philosophical communities

DIE LINKE defends the right of all people to commit to a philosophy or religion. It calls for the protection of philosophical and religious minorities. For us, secularism means the necessary institutional separation of church and state.

We face up to our historical responsibility and have drawn the lessons from the wrongs committed against believers in the GDR. As early as 1990 the PDS party executive admitted its responsibility for the misguided policy of the SED which led to tragic fates, discrimination, suspicion and helpless consternation and asked believers, churches and religious communities for reconciliation. Today Christians are working in DIE LINKE alongside members of other religious communities as well as atheists for

common goals and values that have their roots as much in the great religions as in the ideas of the enlightenment and humanism: social justice, freedom, altruism and tolerance.

DIE LINKE respects the churches and religious communities, their social activity and their independence. However, fundamental rights and labour rights must apply in the churches and religious communities and their institutions as well, including the right to strike and the Works Constitution Act.

No one who does not profess a faith may be disadvantaged in any way. We oppose any political abuse of religion. Schools should convey knowledge about religions and promote the mutual tolerance of communities of belief. Classes must be given within the context of the educational mission of the state by government-recognised teachers and not be influenced by churches or religious communities.

4.3 How do we want to do research and learn? Free access to education and knowledge

Education is a human right. It should enable people individually and together with others to lead a socially responsible and self-determined life and take an active part in shaping the development of society. Such an emancipatory education requires self-determination on the part of the learner and promotes creativity, the capacity to criticise and act, solidarity and an awareness of history and politics. It develops the skills needed to work on the key social and global problems of humanity. For us education is all-round personality development and must not be limited to the acquisition of economically usable knowledge. We work for a corresponding about-face in education policy at the European level as well.

Education for everyone

There is hardly another industrial country where social origin has so great an influence on educational success as here. The education system intensifies social ostracism instead of being integrative; educational privileges of the upper classes become entrenched. We want to assert inclusive education as a fundamental right and establish an inclusive education system in which all children and young people learn together as long as possible and are supported in the best possible way.

Education must be free of charge. That applies from early childhood education through the school and vocational education all the way to university. Education is a public good and not a commodity. It must be a public responsibility and publicly funded. We oppose privatisations in the

education sector because they heighten injustices in education and weaken the public educational institutions. Equal education opportunities for all require substantially better funding of the public educational institutions and better cooperation between the federal and state governments. The possibilities children and adolescents have of acquiring education are determined by their living conditions. Community living, leisure and sports activities should be developed as a public responsibility, should be accessible to all and should be oriented towards the well-being of children and adolescents. Good learning conditions also require good working conditions for teaching personnel. Precarious employment, heavy workloads, lack of time and poor wages, however, are part of everyday life in many areas of education. DIE LINKE is on the side of the trade unions fighting for better working conditions and good social protection for employees in education.

We stand for the democratisation of all areas of education. Pupils, trainees and students should be able to share in decision-making on the organisation of education processes.

Good education from the daycare centre to continuing education

We stand for a legal claim to all-day early childhood education and care for all children regardless of the employment status of the parents. To improve the quality of support, we aspire to university-level training for educators.

The goal of our education policy is the comprehensive school, an inclusive school of joint learning that dispenses with the division of learners.

Comprehensive schools have the ambition and develop the capacity to take all children and adolescents, regardless of their personal and social prerequisites, to the best possible learning progress and the highest possible school leaving certificate.

We demand a country-wide supply of selectable training places. There must be a solidarity-based levy on all companies to help finance it. We want good training allowances in all industries so that trainees can cover their living costs independently where possible. For us the dual system is the core of vocational education and training. We want to improve the quality of training and are determined to ensure that in the future employers, employees and government work toward that goal on equal terms. Substantial co-determination rights must be established for trainees in companies, in the vocational schools and on the job.

DIE LINKE wants to expand the universities and substantially increase the number of university students. This involves opening up the universities to persons with vocational qualifications as well. All students must be allowed to decide on their content priorities independently and be given access to master's courses. Education and research should form a unit. Armaments research has no place at universities and research institutions; the exertion of economic influence and utilisation interests must be curbed. DIE LINKE is vehemently opposed to Bundeswehr recruitment in educational establishments, for example through youth

officers, simulation games and study materials. Instead, education and science should be at the service of the people and the social, ecological and peaceful development of society. We want to win more scope for critical science.

Learning does not end with the first job. We want to expand continuing education and life-long learning as a public responsibility and a personal right. The companies must be made to bear more responsibility for the further training of their employees. At the same time we need extensive public services that are accessible free of charge and include general, cultural and political continuing education.

We want to combat social inequalities in vocational and continuing education by means of structural reform of the training promotion system up to and including publicly funded adult education promotion measures. All adults undergoing training should in the case of personal need receive support to meet that need independent of their parents. It should be granted without any repayment obligation and in future it should not be limited to initial training.

Knowledge production and copyright

We want a development in science that leads to greater social responsibility on the part of scientists and users and that enables more and more people to share in its findings and results and incapacitate its destructive forces. Private monopolies on social knowledge are contrary to democratic principles of free access to a common good, the body of knowledge of humanity. We therefore reject the privatisation of science institutions as well as of libraries, museums, theatres and other

places of science and culture. That includes using the sciences to conserve and preserve the natural environment as well as assessing the consequences of the use of technology.

DIE LINKE works to promote the diversity and freedom of the media and modern means of communication and unrestricted use of the Internet. All users must be able to send and receive the data of their choice. The neutrality of the web must be assured and all people, poor or rich, urban or rural, must be given equal access to the Internet. That is as much a public responsibility as the promotion of freely accessible (open source) software, the limitation of digital property rights and the safeguarding of large and universally accessible bodies of digital knowledge. We want to reinforce the rights of authors vis-à-vis the collective rights agencies. DIE LINKE works for the prohibition of contracts in which all rights to exploit works are assigned to a collective rights manager without limitation of time or space for a lump sum payment (total buy-out). We advocate that binding remuneration rules or authors' collective agreements be reached if possible for all groups of authors. We want the services of professional creative workers to be adequately reimbursed and at the same time we want to strike a balance so that non-commercial use and creative re-working is restricted as little as possible. We want to further develop copyright law for the age of the Internet in that spirit.

No patents on life

DIE LINKE advocates a world-wide ban on patents on plants, animals, human beings and other living things as well as on their organs, genes and gene sequences and on breeding and growing methods. We need

a corresponding amendment in international agreements, e.g. the Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and the European-level patent legislation (EPC).

DIE LINKE stands in solidarity with the environmental, agricultural, development aid and consumer protection organisations that oppose the increasing monopolisation of seed and farm animals through patents. A handful of profit-oriented corporations are attempting to acquire the most extensive possible protection by patent world-wide, at the expense of the general public, so that they can levy licensing fees for farming and breeding, testing and processing methods, fodder and foods – from farmers, market and leisure gardeners, small and medium-sized breeders, food processors and consumers. At issue here is the global domination of the entire agricultural and food sector, that is, the ultimate profit-making opportunity for a few agricultural genetic engineering corporations. Farmers and gardeners are increasingly dependent on them. Biopatents contribute to the reduction of biodiversity and a decline in plant species and livestock breeds in agriculture. Breeding progress and agricultural research is increasingly being hindered by biopatents.

DIE LINKE assesses biopatenting as a fundamental evil because it promotes biopiracy. Through patenting, researchers and companies usurp the right to dispose of genes that they may have discovered, but certainly did not “invent”. This form of “scientific colonialism” is devoid of any ethical basis. It is hard for indigenous peoples and developing countries in particular to defend themselves from this. The genetic material of all living things on this planet that has existed for millions of

years belongs to no one. This form of biopiracy must be prohibited.

Patents on life are tools of oppression and profit increase. This is contrary to the principles of a democratic socialist society. Therefore there must be no patents on life..

4.4 How do we preserve nature and society? Socio-ecological reconstruction

DIE LINKE sees socio-ecological restructuring in Germany and Europe as one of its key objectives and as a crucial multi-sectoral task in all policy areas.

Every person has a universally equal right to a share in what the earth has to offer and a universally equal duty to defend his or her own livelihood. The equality of rights of use and the equality of duties to defend must become the model for global action. The European Union and Germany must assume a pioneering role internationally. It is a matter not just of observing the obligations undertaken in the context of the United Nations development goals to alleviate poverty, hunger, child mortality, illiteracy, underdevelopment and environmental destruction but of leading the way. That includes above all the socio-ecological reconstruction of our society. It is not just ecologically necessary, it is also an ethical, social and economic imperative. Our present mode of production and consumption can never be just, one reason being that it is too un-ecological. And one reason it can never be ecological is that it is unjust.

The goal of a significant reduction in materials and energy turnover, which is now generally accepted, will only be achieved once the society has simultaneously become more social, more democratic and more free. That is the only way the development of new environmentally friendly ways of life and a new kind of prosperity can find acceptance. Social security, reliable and adequate vocational and income prospects, and less domination at work and in so-

ciety, are the basis for more interpersonal relationships, health, education, culture and leisure. A happier society that wastes less resources needs more equality. DIE LINKE by no means wants to dictate particular ways of life; there are many ecological lifestyles. The important thing is that everyone's ecological footprint remains within the globally permissible bounds, that is, that it does not exceed about one ton of carbon dioxide per year. How it comes to be is a matter of individual choice, but it is not the task of the individual alone. The point is to shape the general conditions in such a way that a life without the need for a great deal of resources becomes attractive to everyone.

Sustainable economics requires the reduction of the use of fossil resources by 90 per cent. A substantial reduction, oriented on the fossil resources, is essential for other resources as well. DIE LINKE wants the production of goods and services to no longer have profit as its top priority but instead to be oriented towards socio-ecological objectives. The combination of ecological governance with more social justice and with the expansion of prospects of personal fulfilment will be crucial. If ecological governance makes the use of environmental resources more expensive, through a carbon tax for example, the less well-off must benefit disproportionately from the ensuing revenues, either through direct payments or through the extension of public services.

An economy oriented toward socio-ecological objectives does not aspire to

growth for the sake of growth. An increasing gross domestic product does not automatically lead to greater prosperity. Socio-ecological reconstruction means relieving society and the economy of the pressure for growth that results from excessive profit orientation and unjust, oppressive relationships. High inequality in the distribution of income, wealth and working hours, excessive indebtedness of public budgets and inadequate safeguards in the social security systems against life's risks are obstacles to turning away from the growth fixation. Seigniorial and highly competitive living and working conditions promote ecologically and socially questionable economic activities and consumer behaviour.

We want to orient all policy areas towards the socio-ecological restructuring of the economy and society. These include in particular economic and finance policy, social and education policy, science, research and technology policy and infrastructural and regional policy, but peace policy and transport policy as well.

Climate protection and energy turnaround

DIE LINKE associates the conversion of the energy industry with decentralised energy generation and supply structures. This must lead to the democratisation of the energy industry, promote citizen participation and contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions. In the long run, this will result in a secure, environmentally benign, import-independent and affordable energy supply.

DIE LINKE is in favour of a fifty per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in

Germany by 2020 compared to 1990, without preconditions. We want to work toward a reduction by at least 90 per cent by mid-century. Our aim is an energy supply that is 100 per cent from renewable sources, predominantly exhausting the regionally usable sources, by 2050. We will achieve this by means of defined threshold values for carbon emissions and not through market-based emission trading. In that way jobs can be created in the regions and the municipal budgets can be lastingly strengthened. The use of biomass from renewable resources to generate energy is justifiable only if total self-sufficiency in food and feed as well as industrial raw materials from agriculture is guaranteed. We reject the import of biomass resulting from predatory exploitation and monoculture. The use of biomass for energy must not lead to a rise in food prices and must be done in a sustainable manner.

The Renewable Energies Act is a successful piece of restructuring legislation. We advocate its preservation and expansion, one reason being to ensure the priority feed-in of renewable energy. The costs for the levy, pegged to ecological success, must, however, be borne primarily by heavy consumers in industry and private households. Base usage must remain affordable for everyone and be financed by the extra payment made by the heavy consumers.

We demand the immediate decommissioning of all nuclear power plants and the prohibition of nuclear technology exports. The prohibition of all use, peaceful or military, of nuclear energy must be inscribed in the Basic Law. The search for a permanent disposal site must be open-ended and transparent, the population must be involved, and

the nuclear waste must be stored in places with the least risk at the expense of the originator.

We want to prevent the construction of new coal-fired power plants and the underground storage of carbon dioxide. The use of coal must become so expensive that it is uneconomical to operate existing and plan new coal-fired power plants.

Improved energy efficiency as a part of the energy turnaround applies to all areas of society. Above all, there is great potential for optimising energy consumption in buildings. Renovation measures that are not refinanced by lower energy costs must be subsidised. The costs must be covered not by the tenants but from the profits of the energy industry. We therefore demand the transformation of the energy corporations into public property and democratic control of the enterprises with the objective of achieving ecologically responsible management of energy and socially responsible funding of the conversion measures.

To improve the energy efficiency of electrical appliances, we want to introduce legal regulations guaranteeing that the standards of the appliances using the least energy and resources throughout their entire life cycle are made binding within a short time. Ease of repair should be included in the evaluation as a further criterion. This arrangement should be applied to other products as well.

The research funds and subsidies that have been used up to now for nuclear power, including nuclear fusion, and fossil energy systems are to be diverted to the expansion of renewable energy

systems and storage methods, the improvement of energy efficiency and the expansion and regulation of the grids. Particular support needs to be given to the conversion of the grid infrastructure with a high proportion of fluctuating renewable energy, for example through the integration of power/heat co-generation.

Nature is our life

One person's use of nature is denial of use to the other. Whoever demands constant growth endangers the elementary right of others to development. Sustainable handling of natural resources is not an annoying cost factor but opens the door to a more liveable future. We want to preserve natural habitats in Germany, Europe and the world. Biological diversity must be preserved for its own sake and as the foundation of our life. This involves preserving and protecting the remaining large natural habitats on this earth as well as cross-linking protected areas. Forests, seas and landscapes should be used and protected as a public responsibility in such a way that their natural regenerative capacity is retained. The assignment of protected areas to private persons is not conducive to the attainment of that goal. We aspire to more democratic planning, control and veto rights for environmental organisations and citizens. We advocate retaining the natural courses of rivers to serve as protection from floods as well as to preserve the typical animal and plant species and the aesthetic value of the meadow landscapes.

We want to counteract the progressive sealing of landscapes for expanding settlement and traffic areas through greater

internal development of urban areas, reduced distances between homes and workplaces and the expansion of local public transport. The change in settlement structure must correlate with a changed price structure. Housing, commerce and trade in the inner area can be subsidised, for example, with the proceeds of a sealing tax. What is desired must be made easier and what is undesirable must be made harder to obtain, without restricting the options of poorer people. Inner city rents and property prices must have upper limits so that green-field housing developments and shopping malls lose their attractiveness.

We stand for the protection of animals living in the wild and in the care of humans, and especially for species-appropriate husbandry of farm animals and the discontinuation of animal experiments. We promote a marked increase in organic farming and demand that all farms operate ecologically. To achieve that we want organic farming, like regenerative energy production, to be systematically paid preferential prices, funded perhaps by levies on non-organic production. That will make it possible for everyone to buy organic foods.

Although it is now a national policy objective, we are still very far from effective prevention of cruelty to animals. We stand for a country-wide right of class action for animal welfare associations. Social legislation should facilitate appropriate animal husbandry. Transporting animals, breeding them and keeping them in zoos has to be subject to stricter conditions and democratic control. DIE LINKE advocates an animal welfare seal on foods. We reject agricultural genetic engineering owing to the incalculable

risks involved. Mandatory labelling should start at the technically feasible detection limit. We reject animal and plant patents.

Mobility for all – ecological traffic turnaround

Sustainable infrastructure development relies on traffic avoidance, short distances and energy-saving means of transport. The satisfaction of fundamental mobility needs with the least possible harm to the environment must be guaranteed for all, irrespective of their ability to pay. It is an essential part of public services of general interest. Our goal is a country-wide, wheelchair-accessible public transport system with attractively frequent service, good transfer facilities and socially acceptable fares. We see free local public transit as a vision that we want to work towards in the long term. Local and long-distance public transit must be regulated and operated co-operatively and democratically with the involvement of representatives of the interests of the passengers, employees, environmental associations and other persons concerned.

The Deutsche Bahn must be subject to broader democratic control. We reject the privatisation of public transport companies. The long-term goal is a rail transport sector exclusively under public influence. The federal government has to ensure the maintenance and requisite extension of the railway lines to the fullest extent and provide the states with adequate funds on a permanent basis for transportation services and expansion of the infrastructure in local public transport. We reject the establishment of a competing overland bus network.

Citizens and special interest groups must be included by the planning authorities from the beginning and more thoroughly in the planning of traffic projects, and referenda must be made possible at an early stage.

We want a thorough reform of the Federal German Transport Plan up to and including environmentally friendly mobility planning. The backbone of our mobility concept is the Environmental Grid – walking, cycling, bus and train. We want to increase substantially the proportion of routes travelled in the Environmental Grid and reduce private motorised traffic. In development planning we stand for short distances between the places of residence, leisure, work and education as well as for a settlement structure that is amenable to pedestrian and cyclist traffic. We want to achieve a significant improvement in the quality of life through the rededication of traffic areas: local recreation instead of noise and exhaust pollution.

We are opposed to the expansion of the autobahn and road network. We are in favour of a general autobahn speed limit of 120 km/h. Electric cars and biofuel are no solution to the problems that arise from energy and resource consumption, traffic jams and accidents.

As much as possible of German domestic air travel and a large part of air travel within Europe is to be shifted to rail. The first steps in that direction are the introduction of a uniform EU kerosene tax and an international air ticket tax. The subsidisation of airports must end. Goods traffic must be substantially reduced, with the external costs being added to transport prices. Higher taxes on oil and a binding HGV road user fee

throughout Europe are means to that end. We want to shift the remaining goods traffic from road primarily to rail and to environmentally friendly sea and inland waterway transport. We want to promote drives that are easy on resources and the environment by means of a fossil fuel tax that applies worldwide if possible and otherwise Europe-wide. Through co-operation instead of competition between port locations we can direct flows of goods in a targeted manner and make optimum use of the existing capacities and infrastructure. A modernised inland waterway fleet is used in a goal-oriented way, uses meaningful innovations and does not require any further expansion of rivers.

Investing in the traffic infrastructure must be done in a much more sustainable way and with a view to accessibility. Pollution and hazards to the health of many people resulting from traffic noise and airborne pollutants such as particulate matter and nitrogen oxides must be reduced. Traffic noise from existing roadways and airports must be substantially reduced by means of strict threshold values and active noise control. We advocate a ban on night flights.

Regional economic cycles

We want to make the transition to regional, job-creating economic and material cycles. For that purpose we need not only self-administered regional development funds, a different municipal income distribution system and structural and start-up aid but also a decentralised food production and energy supply and higher transport prices. Other areas of the public services of general interest, such as water/sewage, waste disposal, health and culture have to be decentra-

lised and regionally organised where possible.

We advocate the rigorous conversion of the waste disposal industry into an energy-efficient resource industry. For that purpose the Recycling Act needs to be developed further in the direction of heightened re-use, higher recycling quotas and stricter requirements. The export of waste must be prohibited. The goal is the compatibility of man-made and natural cycles. That is, the use of raw materials and chemical products is admissible only to the extent that it does not overburden natural processes and sinks.

4.5 How do we want to radically remodel the European Union? Democracy, the welfare state, ecology and peace

The European Union influences the life of citizens in all member states directly and to an increasing extent. Decisions of the European Parliament, the European Council, consisting of the heads of state and government of the member states, the Council of the European Commission and the European Court of Justice substantially affect the living conditions, the day-to-day life of people in the Federal Republic of Germany. The decisions adopted at the EU level are of crucial importance for safeguarding peace, for economic and social development and for solving the ecological challenges on the continent and beyond. That being so, left policy in Germany now more than ever must take the European dimension into consideration and make suggestions of its own for shaping European policy.

The European Union is an indispensable political activity level for DIE LINKE.

Together with other left political parties, we stand for a fundamental change of policy in the European Union. We want a different, a better EU. The European Union must become a truly democratic, social, ecological and peaceful union.

The current European Union treaty bases are not suitable for that purpose. For that reason we rejected the Lisbon Treaty. Our criticism was and still is directed above all against the assertions contained in the text of that treaty about the militarisation of EU security and defence policy, against the fundamental orientation of the EU on the standards of

neo-liberal policy, against the absence of a welfare state clause, against the kind of intensified police and security service cooperation aspired to, and against the persisting democratic deficit in the EU and its institutions.

The euro crisis delivered further proof that the EU treaties are of no benefit for a democratic, social, ecological and peaceful Europe but on the contrary help to exacerbate the crisis.

The European Union needs a new start with a complete revision of the basic elements of EU primary legislation, which are militaristic, undemocratic and neo-liberal. We therefore continue to work for a constitution that is co-designed by the citizens and on which they can vote in a referendum held simultaneously in all EU member states.

We want nothing less than a radical change in the policy of the European Union that places European integration on a new foundation in the interests of the vast majority of the people.

We want a European Union that does not sacrifice democracy and nation-state sovereignty to the financial markets. We reject all attacks on democracy in Europe, for example through the establishment of rights of intervention in nation-state budgets.

We want a peaceful European Union that outlaws war in the spirit of the United Nations Charter, that is structurally incapable of aggression and is free of

weapons of mass destruction, that foregoes both the build-up of military power and world-wide military operational capability and world-wide military operations. We believe in disarmament, civil co-operation and the development of relations based on partnership in Europe and world-wide.

We want a European Union without exclusion and poverty, an EU in which well-paid and socially secure work guarantees a life in dignity for everyone. The welfare state must be among the values and aims of the EU and have the highest priority when any EU policies are being implemented. DIE LINKE advocates that a social progress clause be anchored in EU primary legislation. Just as competition is controlled in the EU, the observance of social provisions must be monitored EU-wide and infringements must not go unpunished. To prevent tax dumping, in addition to harmonisation of the corporate tax base, DIE LINKE demands that an EU-wide adequately high minimum tax rate be determined for corporate profits.

We want a European Union whose legal foundations are economically neutral in their formulation and are open to a mixed economy with a significant public sector as well as future social developments. The economic policy of the EU should promote social progress and ecological structural change. That will necessitate more public investments and the strengthening of the domestic economy. The Stability and Growth Pact must be replaced by a pact for sustainable development, full employment, social security and environmental protection that includes foreign trade stability measures as well. The EU needs a coordinated and democratically controlled

economic policy to counter any attempt to undercut the competition by curtailing wages, working conditions, social benefits and environmental standards. The European Central Bank must be democratically controlled and its action must be directed towards not just price stability but also employment and sustainable development.

We want a Common European Agricultural Policy that is consistently socially and ecologically oriented and gives greater consideration to the interests of the developing countries. Primary agricultural production enterprises, regardless of size and farming method, must receive support for social and ecological performance so as to reduce the influence of non-farming capital.

We want a European Union that acts world-wide to have the financial markets subjected to strict control so that they return to serving the general interest and stop encouraging speculation. It must be made possible to control capital movements Europe-wide. The EU needs a public institution to grant the governments loans without having to go through private commercial banks.

We want a European Union with a strong European Parliament and transparent decision-making processes in all European institutions and more direct involvement of the citizens. The human and fundamental rights that belong to the constitutional traditions in Europe must have priority over the fundamental freedoms of the domestic market in European policy.

We want a European Union where women and men are truly equal in rights and where discrimination against people

because of their ethnic origin, gender, religion or world view, a disability, age or sexual identity is out of the question. We want women to finally have the same opportunities in occupation and society as men. This requires legal measures, for example to secure child care and to combat wage discrimination.

We want a solidarity-based expansion of the European Union in which all issues – especially incentive and investment policy – are approached in such a way that the regions co-operate as partners and the focus is on improving working and living conditions. In the EU budget, the requisite funds must be made available through redistribution of funds as well as by increasing the financial contributions of the member states.

We want a European Union in which the rule of law, freedom and security are guaranteed and the war on crime is not waged at the expense of fundamental and human rights. The EU must commit itself to the principle of separation of powers and the separation of police, secret services and armed forces. The fundamental right to asylum must be guaranteed. The FRONTEX border agency must therefore be dissolved. Neo-fascism, xenophobia, racism, religious fundamentalism, sexism and homophobia must be outlawed throughout Europe.

We want a European Union that as part of the one world promotes international relations on equal terms, aspires to a solidarity-based world economy and fulfils its responsibility for resolving global problems.

These principles will be the basis of all our political work.

The Left in Europe is called upon to take up the fight for the European Union. Another Europe, an EU that uses its formative potential in the interest of millions of people all over the world, is possible – if we succeed in changing the policy and development of the European Union, orienting it toward peace and non-military conflict resolution, toward democracy, toward overcoming patriarchy, toward social security and ecological sustainability in an economy that serves the people. This other Europe can be crucial in helping to make another world possible.

DIE LINKE will contribute to having the battles against neo-liberal policy in the municipalities, regions and member states increasingly fought at the EU level as well. We shall defend our European policy approaches in protests against the policy of the European Union and the member states just as we do in the parliaments at all levels. We want to win people over with convincing concrete projects and encourage them to participate in politics again. That is how we can attain our political goal of a democratic, social, ecological and peaceful reshaping of the foundations of the European Union. That is how we shall prevent neo-fascists and racists in the EU member states from gaining support for their dehumanising ideologies.

4.6 How do we bring about peace? Disarmament, collective security and joint development

DIE LINKE is an internationalist peace party that stands for non-violence, be it within societies or between states. From this we derive our commitment to oppose war, breaches of international law, human rights violations and military patterns of thought in dealing with conflicts. In addition to criticising the protagonists of violence and the violence-promoting power structures, we are interested in enlightening people about deeper interconnections between the causes of conflicts. Together with peace movements and all peace-oriented partners, we are struggling to find pathways to structural violence prevention and non-military conflict behaviour. Our guiding principle is the idea of a just peace, which means more than just the absence of violence, because it regards socially as well as economically and ecologically sustainable conditions as the precondition for lasting peaceful development.

DIE LINKE bases its internationalist policy on four principles: peace through collective and mutual security, disarmament and structural offensive incapacity; a solidarity-based policy to overcome poverty, underdevelopment and environmental destruction; action for a democratic, social, ecological and peaceful European Union; reforming and strengthening the United Nations.

Peace in solidarity in place of wars

For DIE LINKE, war is not a policy instrument. We call for the dissolution of

NATO and its replacement with a collective security system with the participation of Russia that has disarmament as a crucial goal. Irrespective of any decision on Germany remaining in NATO, DIE LINKE will advocate in any political constellation that Germany withdraw from the military structures of the military alliance and that the Bundeswehr be withdrawn from the NATO high command. We call for an immediate end to all combat operations of the Bundeswehr. That includes German participation in UN mandated military operations under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter as well, especially since the Security Council has never adopted resolutions pursuant to the Charter against aggressors such as NATO in the case of the war in Yugoslavia or the USA in the war in Iraq. To gain acceptance for the militarisation of foreign policy, there is increasing talk of "civilian/military cooperation" and concepts of "interconnected security". DIE LINKE rejects the coupling of military with civilian measures. It does not want non-military aid to be instrumentalised for military purposes. It wants to have an arms export ban inscribed in the Basic Law.

Reforming and strengthening the United Nations

As an internationalist political party DIE LINKE regards international law and the United Nations as the most important institution for peaceful understanding among the states and societies of the

Earth. Humanity can only meet the global challenges peacefully, in dialogue and multilaterally on the basis of a legal framework that continues to develop consensually. The United Nations must be brought back to the basis of its own Charter. Issues and challenges of poverty, climate change, mass diseases, wars, nutrition, water supply, energy security, regulated globalisation and equitable trade structures are topics for everyone. They can be dealt with and brought closer to solution only in global interaction. The central task of the United Nations continues to be safeguarding world peace, that is, prevention, dispute settlement and sustainable non-military conflict resolution on the basis of international law. That end is served in particular by the principles of non-violence and equal security, plus the rules of peaceful conflict resolution in compliance with the spirit and letter of the Charter. This requires the reform that is long overdue, encompassing greater rights for the UN, greater economic rights, greater effectiveness of the UN agencies and better legitimisation of the UN Security Council. In particular, strong representation of the African and Latin American states is lacking. It is also necessary to enshrine greater rights for the larger General Assembly. But regional organisations such as the OSCE can also make specific contributions to attaining the goals of the Charter.

Disarmament and structural offensive incapacity

Instead of armament, military operations abroad and EU/NATO partnership, i.e. the logic of war, we need to revert to a peaceful foreign and security policy that

strictly adheres to the prohibition of the use of force in international relations contained in the United Nations Charter. DIE LINKE therefore stands for disarmament and arms control and demands the strict prohibition of arms exports and the conversion of military forces on the basis of purely defensive potentialities. The EU and Germany must give up all nuclear weapons options; all nuclear weapons deployed in Germany have to be removed and completely destroyed. All weapons of mass destruction have to be banned. The European Union should be in the vanguard of non-military conflict prevention and create the capacities required. A military/civilian European Foreign Service, participation in military operations in the context of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) as well as EU battle groups and EU armed forces for intervention therefore have to be rejected. DIE LINKE is against the militarisation of the EU.

DIE LINKE opposes the conversion of the Bundeswehr into an army of warfare to be deployed world-wide. DIE LINKE works for the gradual disarmament of the Bundeswehr; the most warfare-capable components should be disarmed first. Disarmament has to be accompanied by a conversion programme for the arms production employees, for the soldiers and for the real assets of the Bundeswehr.

DIE LINKE pursues the long-range goal of a Germany and a Europe without armies, a world without wars. The Basic Law prohibits the preparation of and participation in wars of aggression. War must never again emanate from German soil: that precept must be enforced once again. The Bundeswehr must be brought

back from all operations abroad, their deployment inside the country beyond necessary disaster relief has to be strictly prohibited, the emergency laws providing for and enabling the deployment of the Bundeswehr inside the country have to be repealed. Instead of the expeditionary force DIE LINKE wants humanitarian aid. We want the billions that up to now have been spent on wars used for aid in dealing with international crises and disasters. Effective disaster control requires trained helpers: not military but doctors, engineers and scientists. We therefore propose the establishment of a civil task force – the Willy Brandt Corps for International Disaster Relief. It is the peaceful alternative to the expeditionary force.

DIE LINKE demands an end to the participation of federal and state police in international police operations in support of wars and authoritarian regimes. Military counselling missions must also be ended. DIE LINKE calls for the establishment of a civilian disaster response service with its own non-military resources under the umbrella of the United Nations. Germany should act at the international level for a UN-led international disaster relief corps. The Willy Brandt Corps should be lastingly integrated into it.

All foreign military bases in Germany must be closed down. It is not permissible for the infrastructure in the German Federal Republic to be used to facilitate wars contravening international law and violations of human rights such as the extraordinary rendition of prisoners.

International co-operation and solidarity

Our goal is a solidarity-based world economic order that creates sustainable development prospects for the poorer countries and asserts global and social, ecological and democratic rights instead of fostering competition for shares in world-wide export markets. Direct investments and transnational corporations must be subjected to strict rules and controls. Compliance with social and ecological standards must be guaranteed. International institutions must be democratised.

Solidarity-based development and peace are interdependent. Public development co-operation amounting to at least 0.7 per cent of the gross domestic product must finally be provided as already agreed on decades ago. Those countries in particular that are most affected by underdevelopment, disintegration of the state and civil war must be strengthened. Measures such as debt relief, a rapid increase in development aid, support in building efficient public services, especially in the fields of education, health and services of general interest as well as democratic constitutional structures and appropriate transfer of technology can contribute to that objective.

The socio-ecological restructuring of the 21st century will only succeed if it is global and solidarity-based. Simply averting a climate catastrophe, in the estimation of experts, will take an annual 100 billion dollars or thereabouts in assistance to the South from the North – in addition to the long overdue allocation of 0.7 per cent of the gross domestic product of the rich countries to development aid. DIE LINKE demands that the

Federal Republic and the European Union make their contribution at the necessary level to combating poverty and adapting to climate change in the developing countries as well as to limiting it without any preconditions. Environmental technologies should be made available to the developing countries at no cost to them or on the most favourable special conditions. We strongly oppose any relocation of energy-intensive and resource-intensive production from the North to the South.

Development policy must strengthen South-South relations as well as regional markets and smallholder production, promote the processing of raw materials in the developing countries, ensure fair

prices on the world markets, favour gender justice as a development policy priority and foster education for girls and women. Speculation with foodstuffs should be prevented through regulation of the financial markets and the establishment of regional reserves. Agricultural raw material imports for generating biofuel must be ruled out. We are against subsidising exports to the developing countries and are in favour of helping them ensure their food sovereignty. Energy partnerships between the EU and countries in the global South should be organised in the interest of joint entry into the energy turnaround. Projects that hinder the overcoming of poverty, underdevelopment and environmental degradation must be stopped.

5. Together for a policy change and a better society

DIE LINKE has begun to change the balance of political power in the Federal Republic of Germany. It helps ensure that the struggles for higher wages, a public future investment programme, free higher education, social security, a sustainable energy policy and protection of the natural environment, democracy and peace are waged with renewed vigour. Today politics can no longer be controlled by a cartel of neo-liberal parties.

DIE LINKE stands in fundamental social and political opposition to neo-liberalism and the rule of capital, imperialist policy and war. It fights for a democratic and social, emancipatory and peaceful society. By mobilising for social resistance and taking action for a fundamental restructuring, we are setting out for a socialist society. In doing so we are taking up the welfare-state, constitutional and democratic achievements and ecological regulations that have already been attained in the social and political struggles of the past. We want to develop them further and take them as the starting-point for more far-reaching changes.

The core strategic task of DIE LINKE is to help bring about a change in the balance of power in society so that the restructuring of society based on solidarity and a left democratic, social, ecological and peaceful policy will prevail. We aspire to a change in the relations of power and property. For that purpose it will be necessary to generate solidarity among wage-earners, from the core personnel to the unemployed and precariously employed. One important task of DIE LINKE is to underscore their common

interests. The traditional labour movement with its combination of trade union and political mass organisations, educational and cultural associations, consumer cooperatives, women's and youth organisations and its deep roots in the working-class residential areas has largely dissolved. That makes it difficult to mobilise large mass movements against social cutbacks and de-democratisation and for left alternatives. Yet we are experiencing conflicts that can engender a new class consciousness.

The emergence and assertion of class power requires trade union and political organisations in which common interests are formulated and struggles are waged for their assertion. It is the task of the DIE LINKE party to promote that process consciously and actively.

Broad left alliances

DIE LINKE sees itself as a learning party. It wants to shape policy together with the citizens. We know that we cannot make our ideas of a better society come true alone or in opposition to social majorities. We want to campaign with the better argument, in a public, transparent, cultured and democratic fashion; to take up concepts from the midst of our society, develop our own, and gain broad majorities in that society. A change in political direction cannot be achieved at the parliamentary level alone. It can only succeed in the interplay of political arguments in the extra-parliamentary and parliamentary spheres.

Social and political change must grow out of society and be supported by large

numbers of people. So we are fighting for a broad societal alliance against neo-liberalism and capital rule and for a left democratic, social, ecological and peaceful policy for restructuring society in solidarity.

That alliance should appeal to both wage-earners and socially disadvantaged persons and to the threatened middle class and other libertarian, humanitarian and socially oriented milieus. We proceed from the common interests of people who are employed, unemployed or discriminated against in Germany and on a European and international scale and their concrete problems.

We want an alliance of trade unions, initiatives critical of globalisation, socio-critical initiatives, social movements, progressive people in the sciences and culture, and the left in party politics. We support alliances against neo-fascism, racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia and want to work with all those who campaign for social justice, better education, emancipation and more democracy, peace and the conservation of nature.

To bring about a change in political direction and solidarity-based restructuring we need strong, active, militant trade unions operating independently of political parties. They do not act only in civil society but are anchored in the world of work as well. That gives the union-organised employees a position of social power that is of crucial importance for bringing about social and socialist transformations. Social movements with their mobile, campaign-capable networks and independent structures are also of outstanding importance in bringing about social changes.

Proceeding from its function as a left political party, DIE LINKE brings its own competencies into political alliances and supports them with its resources. As a party we take up the concerns and activities of our political partners and perform our own functions. We encourage our members to take an active part in the work of trade unions, social organisations, initiatives, projects and anti-globalisation movements.

We want to encourage people to take a stand against policies inimical to their interests, with demonstrations, petitions and civil disobedience as well as with such instruments as the political strike and the general strike. As other European countries have shown, such strikes are among the most effective forms of struggle to set limits to the rulers and to capital and to force through changes.

We will work with other left forces on key alternative projects for starting social development in a new direction and will strongly support them. Such projects grow out of present-day social and political conflicts and must be developed in public discussions and in actions by the most diverse forces. We see the coupling of democratic and social protest, present-day political decision-making and the development of long-range reform alternatives as a strategic challenge.

Confronting neo-liberal ideology

DIE LINKE counters neo-liberal ideology with alternative positions offering a different path of development. We want to link these with the experiences and conflicts in the enterprises, in the municipalities and in everyday life and present them in a popular and assertive manner

in public debates. We see the aggravation of economic, ecological and social problems primarily as the result of neo-liberal-inspired answers to the new challenges under the influence of capital interests and as an expression of the crisis processes and inconsistencies brought forth by the capitalist economy. DIE LINKE exposes the inconsistency between the micro-economic perspective and the perspective of society as a whole. What is needed is critical debate, public relations work and actions, wide-ranging education work and involvement in networks and participation in scientific and media discussions.

Work in parliaments, representative assemblies and governments

Parliamentary and extra-parliamentary political work are inseparable for DIE LINKE. We defend our alternative reform projects in elections and political struggles and want to win over majorities to put them into effect. We organise our parliamentary work in such a way that it facilitates co-operation with extra-parliamentary left forces and public presentation of our own reform proposals and thus in the end the development of new power relations in society and political majorities. We strive to make political processes transparent and want to expose and prevent the abuse of political power.

Both parliamentary opposition and participation in governments are means for DIE LINKE to take political action and shape society. The success of our political actions is measured by how we struggle to improve the situation of the disadvantaged, develop and implement left and reform projects, change power relations and usher in a change in policy.

We enter into parliamentary alliances with other political forces whenever they foster the change in the direction of politics and society that we aspire to. We take the various opportunities for political action at the local, state, federal and European levels into account in our policy. But it is the federal level that is crucial for bringing about a change in policy. It is there that most of the competencies required for that purpose are to be found and most of the agendas are set.

The precondition for the appeal, backing and success DIE LINKE enjoys is our credibility before and after the elections. DIE LINKE must be recognisable by its programmatic profile and its basic positions of substance in all political constellations. We want another policy and are fighting for hegemony in the public discussion. The participation of DIE LINKE in governments only makes sense if it can bring about a shift away from the neo-liberal policy model and the beginning of a change of socio-economic direction. DIE LINKE seeks participation in government when it will enable us to improve people's living conditions. In that way the political power of DIE LINKE and the social movements can be enhanced and the feeling of helplessness and lack of alternatives that many people have can be assuaged. Participation in government has to be discussed in the light of the specific conditions at the time and gauged by those political requirements. With this in mind the relevant Party Congresses decide on the electoral programme and coalition agreement.

We will not participate in any government that wages war and authorises Bundeswehr combat missions abroad, that promotes armament and militarisation, that privatises services of general

interest or curtails social services, and whose policy worsens the way the Public Service performs its duties. For us a change of policy at the federal level has to centre on increasing the financial latitude of the public purse and reinforcing the welfare state. Especially important for us are a strengthened public service that is more capable of acting, enforcement of the statutory minimum wage, the fight against wage dumping and substandard wages and abolishing the Hartz IV system. DIE LINKE calls for a policy that does away with social and cultural education privileges and improves the situation of the poorer population groups. It campaigns for greater democratic rights and takes a stand against the surveillance state and further inroads into civil rights.

Left policy must always be able to rely on the trade unions and other social movements and the mobilisation of extra-parliamentary pressure, in government as well and indeed especially there, so as not to succumb to the structural power of capital interests and parliamentary logic. We want to encourage people to go into action themselves for their interests.

European and international cooperation

Together with the Party of the European Left, the members of the Left group in the European Parliament, activists in political and social organisations and social movements, we will continue to fight for a democratic, socialist, ecological and peaceful Europe. Such a re-orientation of the EU cannot be imposed just from within the Parliament. Without the effective extra-parliamentary organisation of a countervailing force, neither

the democratisation of the institutions nor the democratisation of economic power in the EU can be achieved. For that reason we want to promote the Europe-wide networking of extra-parliamentary political grids and projects in all subject areas.

DIE LINKE will make its contribution to ensuring that the Party of the European Left can act as an important factor in the political life of Europe. Just like our party in Germany, the Party of the European Left is a step towards uniting the left and can shift the balance of power toward a democratic, social, ecological and peaceful Europe. We stand for equal rights for all on the left within our European party. We want our party and the Party of the European Left to focus on their commonalities, without forgetting the differences that exist. Only if we come together on the basis of our shared ideas and political approaches will we be strong. In that spirit DIE LINKE will continue to participate with its own proposals in the work of the Party of the European Left and in the shaping of left policies in Europe. We are looking for partners who are willing to join us in the fight for another Europe. That is the way alternatives emerge that can rally majorities behind them, that can intervene in society's debates and bring about changes in the interest of the majority of Europeans.

We attach special importance to the partnerships with branches of left parties in other European countries and especially in the states neighbouring on the Federal Republic. DIE LINKE has irrevocably broken with the Eurocentric point of view. DIE LINKE is an internationalist party. It stands for world-wide alliances with social movements.

A new political style

DIE LINKE stands for a new political style of transparency, societal dialogue and direct involvement of the citizenry. It is only as strong as its roots in society and the support it receives from society. Left policy in parliaments requires driving criticism, public pressure and extra-parliamentary mobilisation. Women have to experience DIE LINKE as a representative of their interests and find in it a political space where they can act for political changes unhindered by patriarchal gender relationships. Career politicians work closely with those active for DIE LINKE on a volunteer basis. All members of the state, federal and European parliaments are obliged to disclose details on the source and amount of their income. No member of parliament may be on the payroll of a company or business association during the period of his or her mandate. Our party does not accept donations from corporations or banks.

The potentialities of DIE LINKE reside in the skills of its members, their roots in society and their experience of life. Involvement and interest in politics arise through self-determined and equal ac-

tion and democratic co-determination in shaping and advancing social processes. We want to live that vision in our own party as well. DIE LINKE develops its policy democratically anchored in the grass roots, in close collaboration between elected leadership bodies and members. Pluralism and transparency are cornerstones of our party. DIE LINKE must discuss decisions on political direction in the party with the participation of its extra-parliamentary base and resolve how it will conduct itself in binding members' votes.

Together for a better society

More and more people are rejecting unbridled capitalism and want a society of freedom, social equality, justice and solidarity. Together with them, DIE LINKE wants to fight for a democratic, social and ecological society, for democratic socialism. The alternative is not "freedom or socialism" but democracy and freedom in a society of democratic socialism without exploitation and oppression. Together we can change this country and build a better society