

**Programme of DIE LINKE Party  
First Draft**

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## **Preamble: What DIE LINKE stands for**

DIE LINKE stands for alternatives, for a better future. We are not and will not be like those parties which devoutly submit to the wishes of the powers of economy and precisely therefore are hardly distinguishable from one another. We pursue one concrete aim: We fight for a society in which no child has to grow up in poverty, in which all people live in peace, dignity and social security and are able to democratically shape their social conditions. To achieve this, we need a different economic and social system: democratic socialism.

We do not accept a world in which a few hundred large trusts decide on the life prospects of billions of people, and entire countries are cut off from hope and the future by ruthless exploitation, by wars for raw material and sales markets, and by imperialism. A society in which every movement of life has to pay off is inhumane. Where profit reigns supreme there is no room for democracy. The unbridled freedom of the financial magnates implies the lack of freedom of the majority of the people.

We proceed from the traditions of democracy and socialism, the struggles for human rights and emancipation, against fascism and racism, imperialism, and militarism. We strive to overcome all social environments in which humankind is exploited, underprivileged and incapacitated and in which its social and natural living conditions are destroyed. We strive to consistently harness the new possibilities of a society of science/ knowledge, communication and culture to a social, democratic and peaceful civilization and to a habitable environment. We want to overcome patriarchal structures. We defend the achievements of the struggles for political, social, and cultural human rights, for a constitutional, democratic and social state. We want to continue and further develop these accomplishments.

Limitless wealth for the upper echelons of society, degradation for an ever growing number of poor and shrinking prosperity for the vast majority of people are not the outcome of globalization but of global capitalism. The consequences for Germany are omnipresent: the dismantling of industry; a growing low wage sector; the reckless annihilation of jobs; the ruination of social services; impoverished municipalities; the lack of vocational training facilities; education privileges for the upper classes; a two-tier medical system; old people living in poverty and without human care. The neo-liberals have adopted the interests of corporate bosses and big capital owners as their political guiding force. This agenda is pursued at the expense of the majority of the people.

We want to help turn passive resentment into active resistance. We set ourselves against wage-dumping, the ruthless dismantling of social welfare, the selling off of public property. We want to change the social power relationship and fight for a different policy. Our fundamental values are democracy, freedom, equality, justice, internationalism, and solidarity. These are intrinsically linked with peace, the preservation of nature, and emancipation. We stand for a change of system, because capitalism, being rooted in inequality, exploitation, expansion, and competition, is incompatible with these goals.

Together with trade unionist forces, social movements, and other left-wing parties, with people, men and women, in Germany, Europe and the world over, we are searching for a social alternative. We want to build a society of democratic socialism in which the freedom of each and every individual conditions the development of all in solidarity. We have united to

form a new political force which stands for freedom and equality, which single-mindedly campaigns for peace, is democratic and social, ecological and feminist, open and plural, militant and tolerant. We are working to change the direction of politics with the aim of opening the road to a radical transformation of society and overcoming capitalism.

Our programme is determined by the combination of three fundamental ideas:

- Individual freedom and personal development for everybody through socially equal participation in a self-determined life and solidarity. This we consider to be the foremost guiding principle of a society of solidarity, which has overcome the dominance of profit.
- The subordination of the economy and ways of life to development in solidarity and to the conservation of nature. This we consider as our second guideline. It requires a socio-ecological turnaround towards sustainable development instead of profit-oriented growth.
- The implementation of these two dimensions will require a process of emancipation which will take time, and in the course of which democratic, social and ecological forces will do away with the predominance of capital and create the society of democratic socialism.

DIE LINKE fights:

- **For a different, democratic economic order**, which subordinates the market regulation of production and distribution to democratic, social and ecological frame definitions and controls. This order has to be founded on the public and democratically controlled ownership of general public service, social infrastructure, the energy industry and the finance sector as well as on the democratic socialization of further structure-setting sectors on the basis of state, municipal, cooperative or workforce ownership. The private sector of the economy must be subject to strict competition control. Strong employee rights and co-determination have to be ensured in all companies.
- **For the right to useful work sufficient to provide a living**, for full employment and for the redistribution of work through shorter working hours, instead of low-wage jobs, starvation wages and the replacement of regular contracts by temporary employment or fake self-employment. We hope that people in a self-determined manner can combine gainful employment, work in the family, the care for children, partners and friends and last but not least personal education and leisure.
- **For a socio-ecological transformation** towards sustainable resource-saving and environment-preserving modes of economy and life. We need regulated, selective growth on the basis of regenerative power sources.
- **For a life in social security**, for a sufficient basic income without sanctions, and for comprehensive protection against unfair dismissal. The Hartz IV laws must be scrapped, and nobody should be forced to accept employment disregarding his or her professional qualification or to work for a starvation wage.
- **For adequate statutory retirement pensions** for all gainfully employed persons, to be financed in parity by employees and employers, ensuring a decent living standard at old age and – unlike private insurance – not being subject to the vagaries of the financial markets. A society which condemns millions of elderly people to life in poverty is inhumane.

- **For a solidarity-based state insurance for health and care** to which all people contribute in accordance with their income and which in case of need covers all medical services and care. Medical services must not be subject to one's private purse.
- **For a secure, free education from nursery level on which is accessible to all** and lays the foundation for a self-determined life in solidarity, for active participation in society and democratic engagement. We want an education system which unifies society through common learning, evens out disadvantages instead of increasing them and opens professional avenues and life prospects to everybody.
- **For a just tax system**, which unburdens small and medium earners while imposing higher taxes on the high income brackets, and which commits large properties, inheritance of large estates, capital revenues and corporation profits to financing commonwealth and the socio-economic transformation to a much higher degree. We want to redistribute incomes and properties from top to bottom and secure and improve the financing of public services.
- **For peace and disarmament, against imperialism and war**, for a world without weapons of mass destruction, for an immediate halt to all military engagements of the Bundeswehr, for a ban on armament exports, for civilian development support and an end to the economic exploitation of the Third World. War does not solve any problems but is always part of the problem.
- **For a renewal of the European Union** as a democratic, social and peaceful union, for high minimum standards of social and environmental protection, constantly adjusted across the continent, for business and wealth taxes, for a democratically controlled European Central Bank and a European economic government. A European Union geared to competition for locations, rivalry, and the dumping race discredits the European idea.
- **For the implementation of democracy and constitutional legality**, against the blackmailing power of large trusts; for a ban on business donations to political parties as proclaimed in France, for the incompatibility of political with economic mandates, for more direct democracy in the form of referenda, for the enforceability of legal rights irrespective of one's income, for political strikes and general strikes as an employees' instrument of struggle, for the expansion of civil rights and the democratization of all spheres of society. Capitalism destroys democracy through its economic power. We, therefore, say: Democracy and freedom in a society of democratic socialism without exploitation and oppression.

## **I. Where we come from and who we are**

DIE LINKE proceeds from the left-wing democratic positions and traditions of the socialist, social democratic and communist workers' movement and of other emancipation movements. We combine the political experience of the German Democratic Republic with that of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century bourgeois revolutions fought for freedom, equality and fraternity against religious dogmas and the privileges of the nobility. Humanism and enlightenment, human rights and democracy determined the workers' movement and the women's movement. They demanded the implementation of rights and freedom for all people. But only liberation from the rule of capital can facilitate the socialist aims of freedom and equality for all people. This was shown in particular by the socialist theorists Marx and Engels.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century workers organized themselves into trade unions. They put up resistance to the exploitation by capital in order to implement their interests. They fought for better working and living conditions, higher wages and co-determination rights. They formed cooperatives and associations to shape their everyday life and leisure time in solidarity, and to implement their cultural and educational aspirations. As the workers' milieu became more and more politicized, the workers' movement formed its bodies of political representation. These were fiercely suppressed by the state power using carrot and stick methods, by social reforms and the law against socialists. Nevertheless, on the threshold of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, social democracy became a powerful political and cultural force, the traditions of which we cherish.

In 1914, the war divided the German social democracy. The SPD leadership advocated a policy of nationalist separation and eventually consented to the war. The European workers' cooperation for peace was abandoned. Along with Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg many people put up resistance to this disastrous development and paid for it with their lives. With the help of the social democratic leadership, the German revolution of 1918-19 was crushed. Contrasting attitudes towards the revolution in Germany and later on also towards the Soviet Union aggravated the division of the workers' movement. The USPD, the KPD and leftwing socialist movements today are as much part of the historical heritage of DIE LINKE as is the history of social democracy.

After it lost World War One, until the summer of 1919 Germany was torn by a bloody civil war which claimed thousands of lives and left deep bitterness. The consequences were dramatic: the division of the workers' movement facilitated the rise of the Nazis and prevented joint resistance to their seizure of power. Hitler's Act of Enablement in 1933 put an end to the Weimar Democracy. The resistance of communists, social democrats, trade unionists and others to Nazi barbarism ultimately failed. Many were killed by the Nazis; others were interned in prisons and concentration camps or escaped.

The barbarism and the criminal war of the German National Socialists devastated all of Europe. After the war, under the influence of the victorious powers the USA and the Soviet Union, bourgeois democracies with a capitalist economic system were established in Western Europe while states aspiring to socialism were set up in Eastern Europe.

In West Germany, as in other countries of Western Europe, aspirations for a new socialist order after the war remained unsuccessful. In the Federal Republic of Germany, founded in 1949, the Communist Party of Germany was weak and faced growing repression. In 1956 it was banned. During the Adenauer era, the SPD remained in the opposition. From 1959 on it gradually abandoned its aims of a reorganization of the economy and society going beyond capitalism.

People in the Federal Republic, including the lower strata of society, experienced growing social prosperity and a parliamentary democracy. At the same time, however, repressive and authoritarian state structures continued to exist. From the 1960s on a socio-critical extra-parliamentary opposition emerged. This was a movement for more democracy, against authoritarian trends, for different life projects, for more individual self-realization, against the power of the media and capital.

In difficult struggles the trade unions achieved wage rises, shorter working hours and improved state social services. They called for more democracy in the economy and society. The experience of these struggles, however, shows that in a capitalist society, democracy ends at factory gates and shop doors. Constant struggle is necessary to safeguard respect for human dignity, reasonable working conditions and privacy protection, also in factories.

A new women's movement emerged to combat patriarchal structures suppressing and disadvantaging women both in the public and private spheres. On the road to changing the gender relationship with the aim of a gender-equitable society, the equality of men and women proved to be an essential step.

The environmental movement emerged. It advocated environmentally sound ways of production and life, and opposed the use of nuclear energy. Internationalist groups supported liberation movements in Africa, Latin America and Asia and fought for development cooperation based on solidarity.

The peace movement called for disarmament and, most of all, for the liquidation of weapons of mass destruction. It supported and moulded the policy of détente which in the 1970s and 1980s succeeded in softening and thus resolving the dangerous post-war confrontation of blocs. In his policy of peace and détente, SPD Chairman and Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt deliberately proceeded from the founding principle of social democracy: that humanism and war exclude each other, and that more democracy should pave the road to social change. For this he gained the Nobel Peace Prize in the same way as Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, did later on. The latter made a call for new thinking by making far-reaching disarmament offers and in 1988 withdrawing the Soviet forces from Afghanistan.

In East Germany the attempted building of socialism moulded the biographies of people in contradictory ways. After 1945, many East Germans dedicated themselves to building a better social system and a peace-loving antifascist Germany. In April 1946, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) was founded. The merger of the Social Democratic and Communist Parties was substantiated by their common resistance struggle against fascism. Yet it was achieved under pressure. Many social democrats who opposed that merger faced persecution. The large majority of communists and many members and leaders of the SPD,

however, supported the unification. They saw it as a lesson from the decades-old division of the workers' movement.

The people in East Germany experienced the elimination of unemployment, the economic independence of women, the far-reaching abolition of poverty, a comprehensive social security system, a large degree of equal social opportunities in the education and health systems as well as in culture. On the other hand, they experienced arbitrariness on the part of the state and the restriction of freedoms. In an authoritarian manner, important endeavours for reforms were again and again nipped in the bud. Democracy fell behind, and there was no room for an ecological orientation. The centralization of economic decision-making and the bureaucratic way of planning and managing the national economy, coupled with far-reaching restriction of the independence of plants, in the long run resulted in a stagnation of innovation and performance capacity. As a result, the attractiveness of the GDR's economic model declined. This clearly demonstrates that an attempt to build socialism that is not democratically moulded by the large majority of the people, but steered by a state and party leadership in an authoritarian manner, is bound to fail sooner or later. There can be no socialism without democracy. This is why the irrevocable breach with Stalinism was a basic founding consensus of the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), one of the predecessor parties of DIE LINKE.

Part of the civil movement in the GDR, including reformers within the SED, in autumn 1989 committed themselves to a new peaceful, democratic, social and ecological beginning and to political change for a better socialism. In 1990, however, this project failed. Equally unsuccessful was the effort to put united Germany on a new democratic foundation. The democratic new beginning in the East was reduced to a mere accession causing many people bitter social downfall. While on the one hand democratic rights, individual freedom, constitutional security and international opening were gained, there was on the other hand the economic and social decline of many East German regions and the appropriation of East German state property by trans-national corporations with the help of the Treuhandanstalt privatizing agency.

In united Germany the experience of the East Germans went unused. In a difficult and self-critical process the PDS emerged from the former SED. It asserted itself as an independent force and grew stronger with its claim to politically represent the interests of the people in East Germany. Its attempts to win over people in West Germany, however, had little success.

For a long time, the left in Germany remained on the defensive. It was weak and marginalized and whenever it tried to promote political changes within social democracy, its scope of action was very limited. Some of the leftists opted for the Greens or minor socialist and communist organizations. Many leftists were active within the trade unions and other social movements without being affiliated to any party.

The "Red-Green" project, in which many people had placed high expectations, disappointed these hopes from 1999 on, when it subordinated social and ecological goals to the interests of capital, and opened the door to international military engagements of German troops. At a rapid pace SPD and Bündnis90/the Greens discarded principles of social justice, ecological sustainability and the desire of the majority of the population for a peaceful world. The "new social democracy" stood for dismantling the social welfare state and redistributing wealth from the bottom to the top. The Hartz IV law and the Agenda 2010 caused many socially- and

left-minded people to finally break with the SPD and the Greens and resulted in the emergence of a new political force, the Electoral Alternative for Labour and Social Justice (WASG).

In 2007 the Linkspartei.PDS and WASG merged into the new DIE LINKE party. We invite all people who are seeking different politics and a better world and who are committed to freedom and equality, to emancipation and social justice, to international solidarity, peace and ecology to join us.

There are alternatives to the ruling policies and the capitalist system with its crises and injustice: a society in harmony with nature, founded on freedom and equality, a society without exploitation and oppression. Let us jointly fight for it.

## **II. Crises in capitalism – crises in civilization**

Capital promotes productivity, inventive spirit and innovation whenever it can reap profit from them. Simultaneously, it scraps jobs, destroys welfare and plunders nature. Bloody wars are overlooked if they help to boost and secure profits.

In the two centuries of its existence, capitalism has produced immense wealth and increased the prosperity of large sections of the people in many countries. At the same time billions of people are excluded from this prosperity. Social inequality has grown, the gulf between poverty and wealth is constantly widening. The crises in the capitalist market economy are producing mass unemployment and loss of income. Capitalism, though having created the technological prerequisites for eliminating poverty for good, cements a world order in which every five seconds a child dies from starvation and more than one billion people are undernourished and have no access to clean drinking water.

This contradictory nature is also present in the post-war development of Western Europe. The idea of a ‘social market economy’ emerged in response to the shock of crisis, fascism and war and so resulted from the experience of unbridled barbaric capitalism. It was an answer to the struggles of strong trade unions, anti-capitalist movements and social democratic, socialist and communist parties. The existence of the socialist world was a challenge which also evoked concessions towards a social state. Social security systems were expanded, democratic rights enhanced, and prosperity grew.

The social market economy formed a compromise between wage labour and capital, which never challenged the latter’s rule. The model kept functioning as long as rapid productivity and high growth rates stabilized the profits of big corporations, and strong trade unionist and democratic opposition forces existed.

The economic crisis of the 1970s marked the end of those ‘golden years’ of high growth. Gradually, the long post-war period of economic upswing turned out to have been an exception. Capitalism returned to its normality, including its periodic phases of crisis and stagnation. The number of people pushed out of working life rose and solidified as structural mass unemployment. The individuality many people had won grew ever more into the individualism of competitors fighting against each other. As jobless figures kept rising and trade unions and political opposition grew weaker, the demands of the capital owners once more gained in aggressiveness. They were bolstered by the growing power of large trusts whose potential for blackmail had considerably increased because of their growing activities in the international market. They were able to tow politics along in their wake, and politics offered no resistance.

### **The neo-liberal turn – Re-distribution and speculation**

The neo-liberal turn that came in the 1970s ultimately served the aim of boosting the profit rates of big corporations. The central instruments were the deregulation of labour markets and the political weakening of the trade unions in order to deplete wage levels. Social rights and services were dismantled, and taxes on profits and capital lowered, in order to disburden companies and increase their flexibility. Comprehensive privatization of once public enterprises and services, and social security provisions, opened up additional profitable

investment spheres to capital. The ruling class attempted to usurp the social wealth that was growing with technological progress as part of its private possession and power.

The neo-liberal turn was initiated by the collapse of the post-war currency system, and the discarding of regulated fixed exchange rates in the early 1970s. First, the currency markets were more and more liberalized, and subsequently the global financial markets. The developing countries were forced to open their national economies, to remove capital movement controls, to curb social expenditure and to privatize public goods. The neo-liberal advance march culminated in the transition to a capitalist market economy in Eastern Europe and the successor states of the Soviet Union.

As a result, the nation states gave up control of the formation of important prices in the world markets, such as currency and interest rates, and left these to the speculation of banks and currency traders. Global currency circulation today is many times greater than the world's social product. Abrupt changes in the direction of capital flows today can spell the ruin of entire national economies. The deregulation of financial markets has not only created an additional source of instability. These financial markets have also opened up a wide field of speculative profit-chasing, on which global capitalism is concentrating growing part of its economic activity.

The European Union, the foundation of which once had helped to secure peace in Europe, has also gradually developed into a motor of neo-liberal transformation. Cities, regions and countries are outdoing each other in the common internal market by offering the lowest possible tax rates, slack environmental standards, low wages and social security contributions. The competition for production sites has resulted in a dumping race with disastrous consequences, last but not least for public budget revenues. This has necessarily resulted in the lowering of the government spending ratio, comprehensive privatizations and a gradual destruction of the European social model. This development was reinforced by the pressure for liberalization and deregulation generated by the European Treaties, the European Commission and Court of Justice.

### **Financial bubble and social division**

As a result of neo-liberal capitalism a huge bubble of monetary assets and debts has been swelling above a stagnating real economy. Soaring profits, and the redistribution of income in favour of capital owners and the higher income brackets, has produced a high surplus of capital looking for investment worldwide. This is added to by worldwide trends towards privatizing retirement provisions and further social security systems.

At the same time, the uncoupling of wages from productivity development, and declining social incomes, have aggravated the problem of industrial overcapacities and discouraged real investment. An economy of expropriation makes the majority poorer in order to make the wealthy even wealthier. The fact that we are living in a class society can be gauged from the increasingly uneven distribution of incomes and properties.

Three decades of economic growth left many people in the cold, not only in Europe but also worldwide. While for millions of people, especially women in the developing countries, opportunities opened for gainful employment and hence emancipation, these countries were confronted with new capitalist constraints and the loss of social cohesion and natural living

spaces. The living conditions of low earners and the jobless in the industrial countries have considerably deteriorated. Many of them do not know how to make ends meet in their daily life and those of their children. More and more young people are poorly trained and start working life without any prospects. Meanwhile informal and precarious, underpaid and socially unsecured work has become part of normality. Under this pressure, more personal responsibility at work is coupled with increased self-surrender and adjustment to relationships of subordination and domination.

Neo-liberal policy has fulfilled none of its promises. Instead of performance fairness, it stands for harsh redistribution to the detriment of working people and to the advantage of income through interests and dividends without any merit. The principle of more personal responsibility instead of a socially concerned state has led to more marginalization and more poverty. It has not created more competition but rather an unprecedented concentration of economic power.

In order to boost demand in spite of the attacks on mass income in the USA and also in other countries, general conditions were created for the ever increasing indebtedness of consumers. The American model of offsetting declining wages by growing debts was at the same time the precondition for the huge export surplus of other countries such as the Federal Republic of Germany. In addition the growing national debt in the U.S. due to expenditure on armaments and wars has further inflated the financial bubble.

Even in the major industrial corporations, real investment in new plants and technologies, in innovative research and development has been increasingly replaced by debt-financed takeovers and stock repurchase programmes in order to boost short-term returns. Big investment firms and financial investors press companies, in whose shares they invest often just in the short term, into reckless streamlining operations, into discarding less profitable entities and into lowering wages, labour and social standards. In this way even highly productive ventures with respectable profits and low labour cost ratios are compelled to dismiss thousands of their labour force or to even close down.

### **The worldwide economic crisis at the outset of the 21st century**

The deep global economic crisis which began in 2008 is the crisis of an economic order which produces solely for profit, and for which requirements exist only if they manifest themselves as financially promising. A slump, a structural crisis and a crisis in the international financial markets have become the worst capitalist global economic crisis since 1929. With this crisis the global model which distinguished and sustained the development of capitalism in the past three decades has reached its limits.

This also applies to the Federal Republic of Germany. The economic development of this country has been extremely export-oriented and export-dependent. Export surpluses correspond to the enormous capital exports of German firms. This refers not only to direct productive investments but largely also to credits, or the purchase of loans and securities, including a large amount of toxic assets which are now mostly valueless. In this way German firms and big monetary capital owners have contributed in great measure to financing U.S. debts and thus to the emergence of the world economic crisis.

Politically promoted pressure on wages has favoured export growth. The curtailing of public social spending has worked in the same direction, and shifted burdens onto the shoulders of employees and permanently weakened internal demand. Germany meanwhile has one of the lowest ratios of public service employees among European Union member countries. The result is weak and uneven economic development. It serves solely the export sector, and is in the interest of companies and finance capital. It works at the expense of employees and of those firms supplying the internal market, i.e. the majority of small and medium-size enterprises. Weak economic development and tax revenues dwindling due to tax cuts for corporations and capital owners have aggravated the financial crisis in public budgets. This crisis, in turn, serves to substantiate further cuts in expenditure, personnel reduction and the privatization of remaining public goods and enterprises.

Germany has become vulnerable due to the dependency of its economy on exports. If orders from other countries recede because their trade balance gaps, which are the inevitable reverse side of the German export surplus, cannot be bridged indefinitely, this leads to a dramatic under-load of industrial capacities in the Federal Republic. Unless the state counterbalances this development, whole regions will be threatened with deindustrialization and unemployment will rise further.

These developments show: Capitalism does not only harbour social injustice, it also erodes the productive foundations of the economy. It leads to a systematic malfunction of the economy, to the build-up of huge over-capacities on the one hand and to critical shortages and immense ecological damage on the other. The results are menacing global imbalances and the destruction of production and productivity, of jobs and welfare, of innovation and creativity. Capitalism ruins the middle classes and produces an extreme concentration of income and property among the most affluent, which inflates the finance markets and strangles demand in the commodity market.

Through its deregulation, liberalization and privatization, neo-liberal policy has fed the roots of the current crisis which, if not counteracted politically, has the potential to grow into catastrophe. The ideological and political failure of neo-liberalism is obvious. As a first step, a basic re-organization of the economic and social spheres, i.e. a socio-ecological turnaround, is imperative. To overcome the economic crisis and mass unemployment, the social crisis, the energy and climate crisis, another economic order will be necessary, one which is no longer ruled by the hunt for maximum profit.

This neo-liberal capitalism today is in crisis, and at the same time has conjured up a crisis in civilization. The subordination of economy and society to capital utilization imperils the existence of human civilization. Finance market capitalism has accumulated the elements of a fourfold crisis. These concern the questions of power and ownership, the relationship between nature and society, the modes of production and life, and the questions of security and development.

### **Crisis in social cohesion**

*A crisis in social cohesion* has arisen, which is closely linked to an identity crisis. More and more people are forced to live in extreme insecurity and growing poverty. The fear of social

decline dominates the lives of large sections of the people, to an increasing extent including also highly qualified workers. While the working process puts creative challenges to many people, others are forced to accept the most absurd jobs at any price. The education system enhances social and cultural divisions in society. In many countries racism, fascism, anti-Semitism and anti-Islamism are spreading. Immigrants are threatened by deportation violating their human rights. Repressive elements of domestic policy are intensified.

### **Erosion of democracy**

Finance market capitalism plunges any democratic society into crisis. The scope of democratic influence and participation decreases to the degree to which the power of big corporations and finance moguls increases, and the privatization and liberalization of the economy reduces the window of political and public participatory opportunities. The profits of globalization are privatized while its deficits are socialized. Simultaneously, the repressive surveillance state is built up. The rights of citizens are diluted, and their implementation more and more depends on one's personal income. Those who have too little, and at the same are excluded from democratic participation, often become disenchanting with politics. This brings about a dangerous vicious circle of the erosion of a democratic system by the powers of the economy, and reactions of helplessness to this process.

*A crisis of democracy and social regulation* is developing. The decisions of the global ruling elites contradict the interests of the vast majority of the world population. These elites have proved to be both unable and unwilling to change the direction of global development in a social and ecological way. The states and world society are held hostages to the 'haves' and speculators. The competition for locations and the battle for scarce resources expose entire continents, and large sections of the working people, to an unrestrained underbidding competition, cuts in social welfare and ruthless exploitation. Hard-won democracy, the individual freedoms achieved and progress towards a social caring state are eroded by the supremacy of a global oligarchy.

### **The central place of the ecological question**

Global capitalism has failed not only in the social and economic respects but also in the ecological one. Its decisions are fixed at ever shorter time horizons. The subjects of speculation include exchange rate fluctuations, alterations of stock and security prices, interest margins and the changing prices of real estate and natural resources. Such short-term calculations are in gross contradiction to decisions with a prolonged perspective and considerations for long-term natural cycles. Growth during the past 250 years was mainly based on the use of fossil fuels, first of coal, and from the early 20th century also oil and natural gas. Oil, coal and natural gas resources, however, are limited. The peak of their extraction will be reached in the foreseeable future. Thereafter the availability of fossil fuels will recede, while demand will rise due to the unabated fossil fuel demand of industrial and emerging countries. Under capitalist conditions, this will send up fossil fuel prices and hence profits of energy corporations, whose social and political might will be further strengthened.

*A crisis of the natural and social bases of life, a crisis of reproduction* has arisen. Many countries cannot guarantee even the food supply of their populations. The present societies draw upon their substance. The looming climate disaster, the fast exhaustion of many natural

resources, the accelerated destruction of biodiversity on the one hand and the division of society into winners and losers by neo-liberal globalization, excessive luxury consumption and growing starvation on the other are two sides of one coin. Humanity is threatened by global warming and social coldness. The social and ecological questions can only be solved together.

The great challenge at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is climate change. Deserts are spreading, glaciers melt, the water levels of rivers are dropping while the ocean level is rising and whole regions are submerged. Unusual meteorological phenomena are mounting. People are displaced. To limit the global rise in temperatures, fossil fuel consumption has to be curbed radically. Technical solutions such as carbon storage incur incalculable risks and adverse effects and only delay the necessary turnaround. The present experience with emission trade in Europe is also discouraging. It is to be feared that the traded certificates are used as securities for speculative purposes in the same way as other securitized papers. The acquisition of emissions rights by the industrial countries, the very emitters of greenhouse gas, from the developing countries is a cynical barter deal of environmental pollution for poverty. It becomes ever more evident: An ecologically sustainable development is irreconcilable with the capitalist logic of growth. The ecological question is likewise an economic, social and cultural one, a question of system.

### **Imperialism and war**

The capitalist states see to it that their companies have access to all resources worldwide, that they can invest and utilize their capital worldwide and that they can sell their products in all markets. To this effect they employ their economic and military supremacy, and their dominant role in the international institutions of trade and finance. Present-day imperialism mainly exploits economic dependence and indebtedness.

Imperial wars arise from struggles for geo-political power, for economic, political and cultural dominance, for profits and markets. Apart from this, wars arise from poverty and oppression, from climate change, from the scarcity and unjust appropriation of natural resources. They breed further military, ethnic and religious conflicts, the disintegration of states, fundamentalism and terrorism. In disregard of the United Nations Charter, violence and wars are also employed as means of politics. This often happens under the pretext of fighting terrorism or 'rogue states'. Especially lethal is the justification of military interventions by the protection of human rights. After the end of the confrontation of the two systems, war in the 1990s also returned to Europe. Germany was a driving force in the war against Yugoslavia, overtly and covertly supports the illegal U.S. war in Iraq, and takes part in the war in Afghanistan. The danger is looming. A new imperialism is emerging in the space where democracy has been subdued. Powerful groups among the United States ruling elite aim at global supremacy. Also the EU, in a growingly aggressive manner, seeks to strengthen its position in the worldwide tug-of-war for power, influence and natural resources. Ruling forces in the USA, NATO, and the EU again consider wars, including pre-emptive wars of aggression, as a suitable means of politics. The global network of military bases has been expanded. The pretext of the protection of human rights serves to legitimise wars.

The EU, whose great peaceful, political achievement consists in the absence of war in the European Union for more than half a century, takes part ever more often in wars outside its territory: The war in and break-up of Yugoslavia was followed by the involvement of EU

member states in the aggressive wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The growing importance of military means is reflected in the Lisbon Treaty. Not only does it contain the obligation to build up armaments, it also facilitates the engagement of EU military formations in international conflicts.

### **III. Democratic Socialism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

Capitalism is not the end of history. For: A society of the equal and free, where democracy and peace reign, where gender equality is guaranteed and nature is preserved, is possible only if the predominance of capital over the economy, society and nature is restrained and crushed. Capitalism can only be overcome if new horizons are opened to a different approach to work and to life, to a different mode of social production and a new attitude towards nature, to real democracy in the economy and society and to comprehensive international solidarity and joint development, which are the foundations of peace. At the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, too, the question is the same one put by Rosa Luxemburg a hundred years ago: either socialism or barbarism.

The first great attempt in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to build a non-capitalist order was frustrated by the lack of democracy, over-centralization and economic inefficiency. In a perversion of the socialist idea, crimes were committed. This obliges us to redefine our understanding of socialism. We want socialism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century that lives up to present social and global challenges and possibilities.

In Rosa Luxemburg's view equality without freedom ends in oppression, while freedom without equality ends up in exploitation. We seek a socialist society in which every individual can determine his or her life by cooperating with others in solidarity. The most essential prerequisites for this are the elimination of capitalist ownership in the economy, and a social constitutional state. In this way a good life and a social democracy can be established and extended. All people shall have access to wealth. The socially equal access of everyone to the conditions of a free life, and the democratization of all spheres of life, are contingent on each other. Socialism and democracy are inseparable. We want a different mode of economic development and scientific-technological progress, in order to preserve the natural environment and leave succeeding generations a better world. We want the constitutional state and the social state to form an integrated whole, and are committed to a worldwide order distinguished by peace, solidarity and justice.

The necessity of a social alternative exists worldwide. In Latin America, the experience of capitalist barbarism fomented the rise of strong counter-movements at the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our solidarity goes out to them. They have changed the social and political power relations. A number of Latin American countries have already dared to break out of the neo-liberal logic of development.

Today it is possible to grant every individual a life in social security and dignity. Poverty and misery can be overcome everywhere in the world. We want all people to cooperate in the socially-organized work process according to their abilities and inclinations. We strive for a new, just distribution of gainful employment and all other socially necessary work.

Democratic socialism is guided by the values of freedom, equality, solidarity, peace and socio-ecological sustainability. These also determine the means on the road to a democratic-socialist society. Democratic socialism promotes the unfolding of the civilizing development potential of society, and aims at fundamentally changing the existing ownership, access and power relations. It combines protest and resistance, the commitment to social improvements and leftist reform projects in the present situation, with the transgression of the limits of

capitalism, to form a comprehensive process of social transformation which will determine the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

DIE LINKE, in a huge transformation process, is fighting for the democratic socialism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This process will be marked by many minor and major reforms, by radical changes and transformations of revolutionary depth.

### **The ownership question and economic democracy**

A crucial issue of social change is and remains the ownership question. Economic power implies political might. As long as the decisions of large companies are guided by the return interest of private shareholders and not by the interest of the public, politics is subject to blackmail, and democracy to erosion. A social, peaceful, environmentally friendly, democratic society compels the curbing and elimination of the economic power of those who thrive on poverty, exploitation, the destruction of nature, armament, and wars.

DIE LINKE stands for the transformation of ownership relations. We are for a radical renewal of democracy which also covers economic decision-making, and for subjecting all forms of ownership to emancipatory, social and ecological criteria.

An economy which serves the people and not profit, has to fulfil the following functions above all others: First of all, it has to meet the requirements of people and secure all of them a life in prosperity and social security; secondly, it has to be ecologically sustainable; thirdly, it has to innovatively tackle new challenges and, fourthly, use the social resources economically. Moreover, it has to be organized in a way that allows all people, directly or indirectly working in the economy, to freely develop their capabilities and to engage in learning and higher training in their work. An economic order based on solidarity, as sought by DIE LINKE, encompasses various forms of ownership: state, municipal, social, private, cooperative, among others. Enterprise staff, consumers, representatives of public interest are to be invested with a strong democratic right to speak and to directly participate in economic decision-making.

### **Public and staff ownership**

We intend to transfer large, structure-setting industrial companies to democratic social ownership and to overcome capitalist ownership. Which sectors, companies and plants are to be covered by democratic socialization, and what form of public or collective ownership should be chosen (state, municipal, cooperative or staff), has to be decided in a democratic process?

Workforces should get a real say in enterprise decisions. We hold that workforces should receive shares of the business assets produced by them without renouncing any part of their wages. They should have voting rights on all important issues, such as planned large-scale dismissals or plant closures.

General public service, the social infrastructure, the financial institutions and energy production have to be in the hands of the public authorities under democratic control. They must not operate according to the profit calculations of private enterprises.

The basic supply of vital services such as power, water and transport as well as housing, the social infrastructure, public health, education and culture must not be submitted to the capitalist hunt for profits. They have to be publicly organized and safeguarded. For yield-oriented companies will not adjust their offers to the requirements of the public, but exclusively to financially favourable demands. They are privileging the wealthy while neglecting the financially weak.

Private energy providers favour big industrial clients and disadvantage mainly the poorer households. Energy must however be more expensive for large industrial consumers in order to promote power-saving technologies, while poorer households must be spared from excessive energy costs and supported in energy-saving. In the same way, railway, local and long-distance traffic companies must not be exclusively yield-oriented. Their main tasks must be to provide transport – also between minor places – and to form an attractive, reasonably-priced and environmentally friendly alternative to private transportation. Consistent efforts are required to shift goods transportation from road to rail.

Moreover, current supply, telecommunications, rail transport and other services are obliged to use federal networks which form a natural monopoly. If such networks are in private ownership profiteering is almost inevitable. Often private profit calculation leads to neglect in the servicing and maintenance of networks, incurring prolonged negative consequences.

Therefore network-bounded services and public service facilities must remain public, or be transferred into public ownership and placed under democratic control.

Major natural resources also belong to all, and must be in the hands of public authorities. According to the constitution, property is obliged to promote public welfare and not just that of the upper crust. This constitutional principle can be redeemed only by an economy not dominated by big private and finance investors but resting on a strong public sector. In this, strong and active trade unions are a must. Only with them can regulation by the social state be shaped democratically.

DIE LINKE stands for a banking system resting on three pillars: saving banks, cooperative banks and large state banks. A functioning financial sector is a public good; hence its provision is a public task. Central banks should not be merely oriented on monetary value and currency stability, but also on the targets of employment and sustainable development.

Enterprises owned by the Federal Government, Lands and municipalities also need to be controlled. They must be subject to social and ecological standards, and legally pledged to public welfare. Workforces must be invested with strong co-determination rights, so as to function as a corrective to management decisions. Citizens should get effective means of participation in the development of municipal services. Public enterprises, unlike private firms, are not tied down by expected short-term returns. Public ownership is not a guarantee but a precondition for new criteria and priorities in economic activity. In addition, profits of public enterprises strengthen public revenue, be it on local, Land or federal level, and thus benefit the public and not a small section of private proprietors.

### **Small and medium-size enterprises**

Private profit orientation can promote productivity and technological innovation, as long as no company is strong enough to dictate prices and the range of offers. Therefore the rise of market-dominating private enterprises is to be prevented by competition control and socialization. Strong social legislation and independent trade unions have to protect the rights of employees; consumer protection is to strengthen consumer rights, and strict environmental specifications are to prevent the overexploitation of nature.

Small and medium-size firms and self-employed persons often have a high innovative and creative potential and therefore deserve promotion. A general framework is required which safeguards high social and ecological standards and prevents the concentration of income and property. This includes a redistribution of incomes and properties and a democratic organization and control of economy and society.

We intend to strengthen cooperative ownership mainly in agriculture, with small and medium-sized enterprises, and last but not least in the fields of trade, handicraft production and the new foundation of innovative science and technology firms.

### **Setting an effective democratic, social and ecological framework**

Economic development must not be abandoned to the market and companies, but should be democratically controlled as to its basic directions. Along with efficient public enterprises, target-oriented public investment activity is required.

Economic and financial policies must be geared to seeking full employment, strengthening domestic demand and securing socially and ecologically sustainable development. To this effect working hours must be progressively shortened, with growing productivity and without losses in income. On the basis of a democratic framework and a strategically informed structural policy, regional and sector-specific economic policy must exert a steering influence on the investment activity of companies.

DIE LINKE wants parliaments to be complemented by round tables or economic and social councils at all levels. Such bodies shall be formed of representatives of trade unions, municipalities and consumers as well as of social, ecological and other interest groups. They can elaborate in dialogue what should be considered and socially asserted as the guiding general interest regarding a specific task area. Such round tables or councils shall have the possibility to stop socially and ecologically harmful projects, and to launch legislative initiatives.

## **IV. Left reform projects –**

### **Steps towards social transformation**

The struggle for another, better world, for democratic socialism, commences with changing the society we are now living in. DIE LINKE is fighting for the implementation of social justice. Income and property are the fruits of labour, and should be distributed in accordance with the contribution to the social working process and according to need. Wealth must no longer gravitate to capital and large landowners. Gainful employment, work in the family, the care for children, partners and friends, participation in cultural and political life and, last but not least, individual further education and leisure are essential spheres of life. DIE LINKE wants to enable all people to combine those spheres in a self-determined balance.

We want to implement the basic rights and claims laid down in the Basic Law: The inviolability of human dignity, free development of personality, the equality of all people before the law, the freedom to choose one's profession and place of work, the inviolability of the home, the freedoms of faith, conscience and association, the privacy of correspondence and telecommunications, and the right to asylum of those persecuted on political grounds. Property entails obligations. Its use shall serve the public good. The land, natural resources and means of production may be transferred to public ownership for the purpose of socialization. The Federal Republic of Germany shall be a democratic and social constitutional state. Its task is to protect the natural foundations of life. All state authority is derived from the people and is exercised in elections and other votes. All acts tending to prepare a war of aggression shall be made a criminal offence.

DIE LINKE demands the implementation of economic, social and political reforms which focus on the needs and interests of the people, and not on the claims of the upper crust to private enrichment. By struggling for leftist reform projects today we are working at the same time for our socialist goal.

### **1. How shall we live?**

#### **Useful work, social security and justice**

DIE LINKE wants every person to be able to lead a self-determined life in dignity and social security, to assert his/her right to work, education and culture without being discriminated against or marginalized.

#### **Useful work**

The basis of the development of productive forces today and in the foreseeable time is gainful employment. The social organization and just distribution of gainful jobs and other necessary work, in particular between men and women, plays a key role also in shaping the social living conditions and the social state.

Therefore, mass unemployment has to be eliminated. It humiliates those affected, and it prevents good work because it massively weakens the position of the employees and jobless as well as the strength of the trade unions vis-à-vis capital. It creates immense financial

pressure on the social state. In addition, it impairs all political aspirations to re-shape the mode of production and way of life in a way beneficial to society and ecology.

DIE LINKE wants useful work instead of insecure, precarious and underpaid employment. That is why every gainful job should be covered by social security. We fight against the replacement of regular work by temporary work, fake self-employment or mini-jobs.

The principle, irrespective of gender and occupational status, must be: Equal pay for equal work, and an end to starvation wages and wage dumping. The deprivation of employees has to be stopped.

We therefore demand statutory minimum wages sufficient for living on. The declaration of collective wage agreements as generally binding has to be made easier. Government contracts must only be allotted to companies observing wage agreements, paying minimum wages and abiding by social and ecological criteria. The Law on the Posting of Workers has to prescribe to all branches that all bidders must abide by the standards of the site where work is done. Temporary agency jobs must be strictly limited and paid the same as regular work plus a flexibility allowance. The protection against dismissal has to be strengthened and limited contracts narrowly restricted by law.

We want regular wage increases that at the least offset growth of production and price rises. Managerial salaries should be limited to 20 times the earnings of the lowest wage group in an enterprise. Remuneration by share options and excessive compensation must be outlawed.

Working hours must be shortened in keeping with the requirements of people, without wage deductions. Useful work for all, but less work for individuals – this is our principle of new full employment. Gainful employment must be rendered more compatible with child-rearing and care. Employees need more self- and co-determination regarding their working hours and to have sufficient free time for recreation, leisure and self-determined activities. A reform of the Working Time Act should reduce maximum average work-time to 40 hours a week. For the future we aim at a ceiling of 35 hours and, later on, 30 hours with full wage adjustment. The co-determination rights of works councils and staff councils have to be expanded, especially with regard to human resource planning. In this way shorter working hours will lead to more employment, and pressure on performance will ease. We want to improve industrial health and safety protection as well as the legal protection of young workers. Employees' right to further training shall be strengthened.

Useful work for everybody requires enhanced co-decision making by employees at plants and companies. Strong trade unions are necessary. DIE LINKE supports them in their efforts. The unrestricted right to strike including general strikes must be granted.

### **Active economic and labour market policies**

The neo-liberal policy of de-nationalization and privatization of the recent past has led to a massive undersupply in many spheres. It is time to overcome the public investment backlog and to extend public-sector employment. It is a shame that in a rich country like Germany roads decay, school buildings fall into disrepair, children and young people do not get an adequate education, people with care needs are neglected and municipal libraries and swimming-baths are closed for lack of funds.

We need a shift in the direction of economic and finance policy. It shall provide for socially and ecologically controlled selective growth and aim at full employment. This requires the strengthening of internal demand by way of redistribution in favour of small and medium incomes, and strengthened public services. DIE LINKE demands large-scale public future and investment programmes in education and the social, ecological and transport infrastructures. This will foster demand and employment in private firms just as in the public service.

In international comparison, employment in the public and social services sector in Germany is highly underdeveloped and often poorly paid at that. In this sector we intend to create millions of new jobs, with regular and agreed pay, and to satisfy in this way urgent social requirements. This can and must be financed on a solid and long-term basis by a socially just taxation policy that involves the affluent and the financially strong companies.

An active state policy on industry and services is needed to prevent de-industrialization, and to secure jobs in the processing industry, trade and other service sectors. We call for the prohibition of mass dismissals in companies not threatened by insolvency. This will include, on a large scale, the socially secured transfer of employees from shrinking branches into sustainable ones.

We want to establish a public future fund for helping out endangered yet economically viable enterprises, and promoting socio-ecological transformation. In this, governmental aid should be allotted only in exchange for according property shares to the public sector or to employees. These property rights are to be employed for changing management criteria. The present practice of fixing returns exclusively for the benefit of proprietors or shareholders should be abolished, and replaced by economic activity gauging the success of a company by long-term growth, the interests of the employees and ecological sustainability.

We stand for an active labour market policy, in particular providing for people with poor chances in the labour market. Publicly-promoted employment has to offer meaningful jobs with agreed pay. These shall be created specially in areas where the market fails to cover requirements in the social, cultural and ecological spheres.

### **Democratically controlling the finance sector and pledging it to public welfare**

Private banks are essentially responsible for the speculative rush in recent years and the resultant massive losses. Private banks therefore must be nationalized, subjected to democratic control and pledged to public welfare. Strict regulation is to guarantee that the banking sector again fulfils its public mission: the low-interest financing of economically worthwhile investment, particularly also of small and medium-size firms; the processing of monetary transactions and the provision of current accounts for everybody; the safe investment of private deposits. Investment banking, which has exploded in recent years, has to be liquidated; proprietary trading with securities, and speculation with derivatives, are to be prohibited just as is any deal outside of one's personal balance, and deals with companies or persons legally registered in tax havens. There is an urgent requirement for skeleton parameters for credit and asset interest rates. Banks have to be legally bound to provide mid-size firms with a fixed minimum percentage of their balance sheet total in the form of small loans at low interest rates.

We demand effective control and regulation of international capital flows and a ban on highly speculative investment vehicles, which jeopardize the stability of the finance system and hence of the entire world economy. We want to prohibit speculative investment vehicles such as hedge funds and private equity companies from operating in the Federal Republic. We want to levy taxes on all financial transactions such as exchange and off-exchange turnover or currency transactions so as to render speculation unattractive. Empty sales have to be outlawed. As a first step we call for a stock transfer tax to be introduced in Germany. The exchange rates of the main lead currencies have to be stabilized by setting target zones. At the European level regulatory and supervisory structures have to be established or existing ones reinforced. Tax havens – where no effective regulation exists anyway – have to be cut off by prohibiting business with them.

### **Promotion of regions with poor infrastructure, Responsibility in Eastern Germany**

DIE LINKE strives for equal living conditions in all regions of the Federal Republic of Germany, and for the equalisation of living conditions in the European Union. Structurally weak Lands and regions require the support of a cooperative and social federal state. We are opposed to competitive federalism, where Lands compete with one another via differing taxation, standards and conditions in the public service. Such federalism benefits only rich Lands, mobile companies and the affluent sections of the people. It disadvantages the people whose working and living conditions deteriorate.

Because of its historical development DIE LINKE attaches high priority to the representation of Eastern German interests. Eastern Germany needs a new political approach in order to stop extremely high unemployment, lower wages than in the west and the exodus of young people. New development pathways for Eastern Germany, to make up the gap in a targeted way, require Land development concepts and a long-term all-German innovation, investment and structure policy. This includes higher investment in education, training and research, the promotion of future branches and ventures as well as centres of regional economic development, by way of the cooperation of scientific institutes and enterprise networks.

What is needed is stronger regional politics, where the citizens are democratically involved, which promotes all development opportunities in the area via regional development plans and civic budgets. We need improved cooperation and interlacement of growth centres and structurally backward rural areas. The challenge is to create general, good living conditions, especially for young people, through a comprehensive offering of educational, cultural, leisure and child-care facilities, and the promotion of attractive jobs so as to make it worthwhile to stay in Eastern Germany.

### **Redistribution and just taxation**

DIE LINKE wants social security and social justice for all. Social inequality of income and property is justified only if resulting from differing performances or from incentives for tackling social problems. We therefore stand for a social redistribution from top to bottom. Equitable, even distribution conditions are equally important for strengthening democracy, because the possession of large financial means implies the wielding of political power. We intend to strengthen public finances through a just taxation policy, providing higher revenues. Only rich people can afford a poor state. Those profiting from finance capitalism and from the redistribution and bank-salvation policy of governments have to be involved in

covering the cost of crisis management and socio-ecological transformation. We demand the reintroduction of wealth tax in the form of a millionaires' tax of an annual five per cent on property exceeding one million euros in value. We likewise demand a significant rise in legacy tax on major assets. All this is important also for reducing the extreme inequality and concentration of private property.

Corporate groups and other financially strong companies must again pay more taxes. We want to close tax loopholes. We call for a sharp income tax rise for top earners. We demand control notices of banks on capital yields and the obligation to report financial investments abroad. We also want more staff for the finance authorities, to investigate tax evasion and fraud. Capital gains must again be taxed by personal assessment rates instead of the current 25-per cent summary settlement rate. Low and medium-income earners, however, should pay less tax. The married couples' tax splitting should be abolished because it promotes the traditional male-dominated single breadwinner family, works against women's gainful employment and disadvantages different family forms. Instead public measures to promote children should be expanded.

We want to introduce a mileage allowance for commuters, irrespective of the means of transport, also for non-tax paying low earners. DIE LINKE intends to extend the reduced value added tax rate also to labour-intensive handicraft services.

### **Social security in a democratic social state**

Everybody needs social security to live a self-determined life and comprehensively assert his or her right to democratic co-determination. We want an active social state which provides solidarity-based security for the risks of life such as illness, disability, inability to work and unemployment, and facilitates a life in dignity and free of worries in old-age. Services of the social state should be based on individual legal claims so as to prevent patriarchal dependence and arbitrary rulings of authorities.

The policy of de-nationalization, liberalization and unconditional orientation on competition has to be reverted. The satisfaction of basic human needs such as housing, education and health care has to be safeguarded for everybody irrespective of income. The securing of services in the general interest such as the supply of water, energy, transport and communications to all, nationwide, affordably and with high quality, is a public duty. In the same way hospitals, schools and colleges have to be organized as public non-profit institutions. The right to decent housing has to be anchored in law. Participation in cultural life has to be safeguarded. We strive for the easy accessibility to catering and leisure facilities for children and youth as well as to social, family and education assistance services. Every person residing in Germany, irrespective of nationality, has to be protected by the social state against being marginalized.

A major reason for the scarcity of social security funds is mass unemployment. This is added to by political decisions to the detriment of social insurance, wage-dumping and the scrapping of jobs subject to social insurance contributions. These developments have eroded revenue from contributions. Also, there is no demographic reason for cutting old-age pensions. In spite of the fact that elderly people account for a growing percentage of the population, an increase on retirement pensions is feasible. This feasibility owes itself to growing labour productivity and the full use of the manpower potential. If distribution is based

on solidarity, rising labour productivity facilitates progressively rising pensions and wages, even though the share of elderly people in the population keeps growing.

We want a solidarity-based universal health insurance scheme to which every citizen contributes according to his/her income and which, in case of need, covers all medical services and care. We want to restore the system of polyclinics that is outpatient centres employing various medical specialists. This will provide a lot of advantages both to patients and doctors and help the reasonable management of resources. Cost will not be reduced by curtailing services but by legally controlling pharmaceutical prices. We are opposed to statutory co-payment and private health insurance schemes. It is also imperative to secure high standards in the public health services.

We want secure and adequate statutory pensions, which are distinctly above the poverty line and safeguard the living standard attained in one's working life. This saves government contributions to private old-age provision schemes. These contributions, while insufficient to forestall poverty in old age, have considerably furthered the inflation of the financial sphere. We want all gainfully employed persons to be included in a parity-financed statutory pension insurance scheme. We are fighting to erase the difference between annuity values in Eastern and Western Germany. We want to strengthen the solidarity balance with the statutory pension scheme, while lifting the contribution ceiling. To prevent poverty in old age, we intend to introduce an increased needs-based old-age security. We strictly oppose raising the retirement age to 67.

In the case of unemployment, too, social services have to facilitate, approximately, the previously achieved living standard. We therefore demand: scrap the Hartz IV law. Instead we need unemployment benefit adjusted to the previous income, and a need-adjusted sanction-free minimum benefit: enough to prevent poverty and safeguard the recipient's civil rights. We demand the abolishment of humiliating means tests, and an end to the coercion into accepting jobs paid below the pay-scale or one's qualification level.

To allow people with disabilities to enjoy equal rights of participation in social life, disadvantage benefits and the right to self-representation at all levels are imperative. We demand the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

### **Equality and gender justice**

Even today there is no even and just relationship between the sexes. Now as before traditional role stereotypes influence the lives of men and women, impair their quality of life and their social and career opportunities. Patriarchal structures keep penetrating all social spheres. Women do more than half of the work in society but their work is less recognised, and paid less than that of their male colleagues. Accordingly lower is their entitlement to social services. In particular working conditions, poorer payment and long working hours disadvantage women and cement the traditional gender relationship. As a result, women are often unable to secure their livelihood. Economic dependence nourishes relationships of violence.

DIE LINKE considers itself as a party with a socialist and feminist approach. We fight for a self-determined life in solidarity which reconciles gainful employment with work in the family and the social and political activity of men and women. We stand for reorganizing the social

security systems, the working environment, the offer of public services and the general conditions for political participation in the economy and politics, in a way that removes disadvantages. All political decisions and proposals have to be systematically gauged by the consequences they have for women and men.

We support measures helping increase the quota of working women, stand for equal pay for equal work, for shortening working hours, and for men and women sharing equally in gainful work and work in the family. We demand an equal status law also for private business. Making work more flexible must not prejudice life together in the family and subject it to the dictates of the usability of labour. We reject precarious, insecure employment and the growing flexibility of work, also because these are hostile to families and children. Instead we want to transit to increasing flexibility of working hours and opportunities and make them socially secure, so as to foster the interests of families and children. We demand the right to free all-day care in nurseries and kindergartens. This is a principal precondition so that women and men can reconcile gainful employment and family life equally. Quotas remain an important instrument of promoting gender justice.

## **2. How shall we take decisions?**

### **Democratization of society**

The Federal Republic of Germany needs renewal as a democratic and social constitutional state. Therefore representative parliamentary democracy has to be enhanced through direct democracy. An important vehicle for this will be referenda. Our alternatives to neo-liberal privatization and an authoritarian surveillance state are the change of ownership relations, in particular in the finance sector, the strengthening of the public sphere and of a democratic public.

### **Strengthening of parliaments and participatory democracy**

DIE LINKE holds that political and social rights, individual and collective rights of freedom and participation are inseparable. DIE LINKE envisages democratic control and co-decision making in the economy and the state, in the media, in education, science and other spheres of society. Companies and workforces must not remain any longer a material at the disposal of short-sighted finance investors. We therefore stand for expanding parity and asserting the rights of workforces to veto the closure of plants not threatened by insolvency.

The freedom of citizens to determine their lives to a large degree depends on municipalities. This is where important issues of everyday life and of the future of society are decided. For this reason, DIE LINKE is committed to strengthening local administration, to strong municipal property and the efficient development of general public services. To ensure that democracy will not become an empty shell, municipalities and the government must possess adequate financial means and instruments of influencing economic and social processes. For this reason we are also opposed to the privatization of general public services and social security systems, and call for the strengthening of public property.

DIE LINKE is working for a participatory budgetary policy, for participatory budgets as an important form of local democracy. We have the vision of solidarity-based citizens'

communities where people themselves determine and shape their affairs, and take on the social and ecological transformation of their communities themselves.

Local-led administration in civil society is an important field of democratic co-decision making. It cements the social cohesion of the communities. Societies, associations and initiatives provide many citizens with the chance to assume responsibility for social tasks in diverse realms. DIE LINKE therefore stands for promoting civil society activists who tackle social tasks. This, however, requires transparency and public control to ensure the observation of social and ecological standards. All this presupposes democratic legitimization and an adequate financing of the assigned tasks.

We strive to strengthen parliaments as democratic decision-making bodies. To fulfil this task they have to be invested with the requisite rights to act on a par with governments and administrative bodies. Also at the European level, the parliamentary scope of influence and control has to be strengthened.

Capitalism has eroded the foundations of democracy as people's rule. Elections become farcical if the elected have their decisions dictated to them by large companies and asset holders, and thus withdrawn from democratic control. We demand that economic associations and companies be prohibited from making donations to parties and having on their payrolls members of Land assemblies, the Bundestag or the European Parliament.

A living democracy has to create enhanced possibilities for direct, democratic decision making through public initiatives and petitions for referenda. This also applies to European treaties of principal importance. We stand for the development of new forms of politics from grassroots level. These include political strikes and general strikes.

### **Strengthening of individual rights**

Our alternative to the dismantling of civil rights and the expansion of the security state is the strengthening of individual rights, the protection of private data, more participation opportunity for social organizations and movements, and the independent democratic control of state security agencies. We support initiatives for the democratic administration of public realms. We are opposed to the expansion of the surveillance society, and call for the strict separation and democratic control of the police, the Federal Armed Forces and the intelligence services. We advocate equal political rights for all those living in Germany and the European Union, because political and social rights are human rights. The constitutional state must become a social state. Today the prerequisite for a living democracy, guaranteed equality before law, is not actually being provided. Only a person with the requisite financial means today can afford a lawsuit involving a major amount in dispute. This has to be changed so that all people are equal in court.

### **Immigration country: Germany**

Germany is an immigration country. We want to strengthen the rights and opportunities of immigrants. The subsequent immigration of children and life partners of the same or different sex and of second-degree relatives should be possible. Key in this respect is promoting language proficiency and educational success. Ethnic minorities should be provided with optimal scope and financial support to cultivate their language, culture and identity.

DIE LINKE calls for a respectful coexistence, acknowledging the different ethnic origins of people. This prominently requires the democratic co-decision making of immigrants in all social issues. DIE LINKE advocates the voting rights and eligibility of all whose main place of residence is Germany, as well as equal access to the labour market. All children born in Germany whose parents are living here should get German citizenship. Naturalization should be made easier. Dual citizenships should fundamentally be allowed.

People who have fled from human rights violations, war or political persecution in their countries must not be turned back or deported. We call for the restoration of the fundamental right of asylum and oppose the illegalization of refugees, deportation and are against any kind of special laws such as residency obligation and holding camps. The inhuman policy of the EU towards those outside it must stop - we do not want Europe to be a fortress.

### **Anti-discrimination policy**

DIE LINKE comes out against all kinds of discrimination on grounds of sex, age, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation and identity or on grounds of physical or mental disabilities. With the active involvement of people affected by disability and their families, we will in concerted efforts remove and overcome all barriers – in mobility, school and vocational education, careers and communication. We want the diversity of cohabitation forms to be equally recognized, respected and protected. A change of paradigms in family policy is urgently necessary and requires a new image of the family. Along with married and unmarried parents and patchwork families also lesbians, gays, bisexuals and others who do not fit traditional gender roles are to enjoy the right to bring up children. DIE LINKE is campaigning for an active anti-discrimination policy, equality under law and the promotion of civil society structures for lesbians, gays and others outside of traditional gender patterns.

### **Emancipatory education**

Education shall enable people, as individuals and together with others, to lead a free, socially responsible and self-determined life, and to actively influence social development. Such an emancipatory education requires the self-determination of learners and promotes creativity, the capacity for critical assessment and action, solidarity and historical-political awareness. It fosters competence in tackling the key social and global problems facing man.

Nowhere among the industrialised countries is one's educational success so determined by social background as in Germany. The education structure, with its several elements of higher and primary education, reinforces social selection and cements upper-class education privileges. We want to enforce the basic right to education for all and remove educational barriers. DIE LINKE does not want an elite and the exclusion of children and juveniles, but an education system which embraces and advances all children and gives room to all children to learn together as long as possible, in an integrated school promoting all of them. This requires the creation of environments i.e. community, borough, leisure, sports and group life oriented around the welfare of children and youth. We are for a legal claim to pre-school education irrespective of parents' employment status. High-quality education requires the better training for teachers and better pay for them.

This includes continuous co-determination in all spheres and at all levels of the education system, the upgrading of pre-school education, the general abolition of fees from nursery

level to advanced education. Moreover, DIE LINKE wants a structural reform of the education maintenance allowance towards a publicly-financed need-oriented adult education allowance for adults in training or advanced training. Such allowance will not depend on parents' income, and will protect trainees against fresh social disadvantages. To this end, comprehensive changes are required in tax and maintenance legislation so as to unburden low-income households, and to oblige affluent households to pay their social share for the training of young people and for advanced training. In our view, such promotion of adult education is an imperative prerequisite for implementing the life-long right to education for all. Nurseries and kindergartens, schools and universities as well as adult education facilities have to be organized publicly and democratically. Privatizations have to be stopped and reversed. By introducing a four-way parity composition of university and college boards we intend to strengthen the influence of students, employees and the mid-level faculty staff.

We demand an area-wide, varied offering of education and training facilities. For that we need statutory assessment financing of professional training. Universities and colleges have to be expanded and the number of students increased. There must be less regularization and more free scope for critical sciences. We reject the progressing social selection of students and call for a comprehensive educational maintenance allowance not subject to partial repayment. Every student should have the right to master's studies. We want to recover freedom for critical science. Higher studies should prepare students for their careers and develop their ability for critical thinking. Self-determined continuing education has to be provided and ensured to everybody legally and financially. All this requires more public funds for education, and improved cooperation between the Federal and the Land governments. The architecture of state finances has to favour and not impair education expenditure. Education is not a commodity but a public good!

### **Learning and cultural society**

Education, knowledge, social competence, creativity, the ability to bring people together and inspire them, have turned into vital productive forces. Technological progress today enables people to cooperate globally while retaining a high degree of autonomy. The users of new media are at the same time their most important creators. Education, knowledge and communication are of central importance in the economy and society, and in democratic decision-making processes. Not all, however, have a chance to acquire competence in these fields. As a result, sharp rifts emerge between those with knowledge at their command and the ability to productively use it, and those who find access to knowledge difficult or are denied it.

We strive for a development of learning which leads to the greater social responsibility of academics and users, and which allows ever more people to share in findings and results and to eliminate the destructive capacities of learning. This includes the employment of learning in preserving and protecting the natural environment. The private monopolization of social knowledge contradicts democratic principles of free access to knowledge. For this reason we are opposed to the privatization of scientific institutions and libraries, museums, theatres and other centres of knowledge and culture.

Emancipation is only possible on the foundations of cultural society. We therefore advocate diversity in providers of cultural production such as public and non-profit institutions, independent publishers, studios, agencies and artistic production firms. We want to promote

regional cultural life in all social environments, safeguard free space for the cultural self-determination of all age groups and open access to and participation in culture to all people.

### **Democratically controlled media**

Many people have no access to modern media and thus cannot use the opportunities inherent in modern information technology. The majority of the media are owned by a few companies and financial investors. They co-determine what we learn and know, what we talk about and what we ought to believe. The use of media and control by the media are overlapping each other more and more. DIE LINKE fights against this division, against surveillance and control, for the freedom of information and opinion and for the strengthening of public service media.

DIE LINKE stands for the diversity and freedom of the media and modern communications such as the internet, for the protection of creative copyrights and the unrestricted use of the internet. This is a public task as is the promotion of Open Source software, the restriction of digital property rights and the securing of large commonly accessible digital bodies of knowledge.

We want to increase the rights of creators versus companies who use their creations, and at the same time find a balance facilitating the least restriction of non-commercial use. We want to defend and enlarge public spaces of information and culture, as well as press freedom in editorial departments. The struggle for the public goods of learning and culture is decisive for the future of our society.

### **Churches and religious communities**

DIE LINKE respects churches and religious communities, their special mission and their independence. In the ministration of proclamation, divine service and community service they shall be independent and not exposed to any influence by the state. State and church are separate. We defend the right of all religious communities to freely practice their faith. However, basic rights must be observed also in churches and religious communities and their institutions. Non-believers should not be prejudiced against in any way. We come out against any political abuse of religion. In schools, ethics and religious instruction are to impart knowledge about the religions and promote tolerance among the various denominations.

### **Fight fascism and racism**

Our practice of anti-fascism is pledged to the Oath of Buchenwald: “Our watchword is the destruction of Nazism from its roots. Our goal is to build a new world of peace and freedom.” In this spirit we demand the political and criminal prosecution of fascism, right-wing extremism, racism and anti-Semitism and call for a ban on all fascist organizations. We strongly oppose any denial of the crimes of National Socialism. So called ‘nationally-liberated zones’ (where right-wing extremists exclude other groups through fear and violence) must not be tolerated but pushed back via enlightenment and targeted actions. The same applies to Nazi venues and stores. We are committed to stepping up anti-racist and anti-fascist education work.

### **3. How to preserve nature and society - Socio-ecological transformation**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century must be a century of distribution equality, sustainable development and qualitative, selective, environmentally sound growth. It is very important not to react to environmental damage with hindsight, but to ensure no harm is done to the environment in the first place. Nature conservation and the protection of animals have to be consistently ensured.

#### **Socio-ecological transformation**

DIE LINKE views socio-ecological transformation in Germany and Europe as one of its pivotal aims and as an essential cross-party task in all spheres of politics. It wants the production of goods and services to be no longer geared to profit as their ultimate aim, but to be oriented on socio-ecological objectives. For achieving a socially and ecologically sustainable development, absolute priority is to be attached to a drastic reduction of material and energy expenditure in Germany. The European Union should act internationally as an ecological pioneer.

Socio-ecological transformation requires developing new, environmentally-friendly ways of living and a new type of welfare. Without advocating ascetic lifestyles, we are attaching a growing role to social security, new relations of solidarity among people, health, leisure, education and culture.

Sustainable responsibility for the environment implies that, considering varying natural living conditions, every person on earth is entitled to the same access to the resources of the earth. We demand ecological justice and solidarity-based support for the world's poorer countries in solving their environmental and food supply problems. Germany and Europe have to honour the obligations they have made in the context of the UN development targets to reduce poverty, infant mortality, illiteracy, backwardness and environmental destruction.

#### **Energy turnaround**

We are committed to an energy turnaround and a solar revolution. An energy turnaround is the centrepiece of socio-ecological transformation. It includes as requirements promoting and improving power efficiency, but most of all economizing on energy and raw material consumption, and changing the energy mix in favour of regenerative energies. This is not merely a question of technological transformation; we will have to change our way of production and lifestyle. Preferential regulations for renewable energy and the combined heat and power cycle have to be introduced while abolishing all subsidies for nuclear and fossil fuels. DIE LINKE stands for unconditionally halving greenhouse gas emission in Germany by 2020 as compared to 1990, and advocates a 90 percent reduction by the mid-century.

We want to transfer power companies to public ownership and submit them to democratic control. The energy syndicate has to be broken up, power supply largely re-municipalized, and the energy monopolies progressively dissolved. We want an immediate nuclear energy phase-out. In the medium term the entire energy demand must be covered by renewable sources. It is urgent that we transform the energy system of industrial society in favour of renewable power sources such as solar power, wind energy, hydropower, tidal energy and the use of biomass. Concerning the latter, it has to be seen to that no agricultural area required for

human food production is withdrawn for growing agro-fuels. This is important nationally but even more so in Europe and southern agrarian countries.

### **Regional economic cycles and the transformation of transportation**

We want to orient the economic, science and technology policies, structural and regional policies and transportation policy towards the ecological transformation of the economy and society. An important way out of environmental destruction and underdevelopment is the construction of regional economic cycles with minimized material and power consumption. Public local and long-distance transportation has to be expanded and local transport made free for passengers in the mid-term. In the course of socio-ecological transformation, goods transportation has to be shifted as far as possible from road to ship and rail. Mainly in German-wide and European transportation, air traffic should be restricted. The challenge is to socially and ecologically restructure towns.

## **4. How shall we make peace? Disarmament, collective security and joint development**

DIE LINKE founds its internationalist policy on four principles: peace by way of collective and mutual security; disarmament and structural incapacity for aggression; a solidarity-based policy of overcoming poverty, underdevelopment and environmental destruction; the commitment to a social, democratic and peaceful European Union; the reforming and strengthening of the UN.

### **Peace in solidarity instead of terrorist wars**

For DIE LINKE, war is no means of politics. We advocate dissolving NATO and replacing it with a collective security system including Russia. We demand the termination now of all military engagements of the Federal Republic. This includes German engagements in UN mandated military missions under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. To win acceptance for the militarization of foreign policy there is increasing talk of ‘civilian-military cooperation’ and of ‘interlinked security’. DIE LINKE is opposed to interlinking military and civilian measures. It does not want civilian aid to be exploited for military purposes.

### **Disarmament and strategic non-capacity for aggression**

In the place of armament, foreign military engagements and the EU-NATO partnership, a turnaround to a peaceful foreign and security policy which strictly abides by the prohibition of the use of force in international relations laid down in the UN Charter is necessary. DIE LINKE opts for disarmament and arms control, demands a strict ban on arms exports to conflict areas, and the transformation of military forces on the basis of their strictly defensive potential. The EU and Germany have to renounce nuclear weapons fundamentally, and all nuclear weapons deployed in Germany have to be removed and completely destroyed. All weapons of mass destruction have to be outlawed. The European Union should be in the vanguard of civilian conflict prevention and create requisite resources.

All foreign military bases in Germany must be closed down. The infrastructure of the Federal Republic must not be used to facilitate wars contradicting international law and the deportation of prisoners in violation of human rights.

### **A democratic, peaceful and social EU**

The European Union is an indispensable political field of action for the safeguarding of peace in Europe, for economic development there and for the tackling of economic crises, for guarding employees' interests, for socio-economic transformation in Europe and for solving global challenges. Together with other leftist parties, DIE LINKE stands for a change of politics in Europe. We want a different, better EU! The European Union has to become a truly democratic, social and just union of peace.

The present contractual foundations of the EU as laid down in the 2009 Lisbon Treaty are unable to achieve this because they are centred on asserting the basic neo-liberal freedoms of the market and the companies, oriented on further militarization and forbid the control of the movement of capital.

The European Union requires a democratic re-foundation through a constitution subject to referenda in all member countries. DIE LINKE wants a European constitution which clearly pledges the EU to the safeguarding of peace, to civilian conflict resolution and disarmament. Such a constitution must anchor democracy and human rights for all people. It must be a constitution which protects the environment and culture, a constitution which does not impose basic regulatory measures on the functioning of the EU economy and a constitution which anchors social rights and the principle of the social state, in order to banish poverty and marginalization. We want a European Union with a strong European Parliament and transparent decision-making processes in all European institutions and, with more direct cooperation from its citizens.

We want a European Central Bank which is democratically controlled and which is obliged to pursue along with price stability the aims of full employment and sustainability. The stability and growth pact must be replaced by a pact for sustainable development, full employment, social security and environmental protection. Instead of the ruinous competition for locations, instead of social tax and wage dumping, we call for a European economic government. By way of coordinated economic and employment policies, it has to provide for qualitative growth, full employment through useful work, social and ecological sustainability and the maintenance and expansion of public services and goods.

In the same way in which the EU controls competition it should control the observation of social directives and punish violations across the continent. To prevent tax dumping, uniform and broad assessment criteria as well as uniform and broadened high minimum tax rates should be introduced. DIE LINKE calls for a social progress clause to be anchored in EU primary law. DIE LINKE demands that within the EU services are offered in line with the conditions of the country where they are performed.

### **International cooperation and solidarity**

Our aim is an international economic order of solidarity, creating development perspectives for the poorer countries, asserting global and social, ecological and democratic rights instead of propelling competition for shares in the worldwide export markets. Direct investments and

trans-national corporations have to be subjected to strict regulations and controls. The observance of social and ecological standards has to be safeguarded. International institutions must be democratized.

Development in solidarity and peace are contingent on each other. Public development cooperation must be increased to at least 0.7 per cent of GDP as was agreed on decades ago. In particular those countries hit hard by underdevelopment, the break-up of the state and civil war have to be consolidated. Measures contributing to this are a debt write-off, a rapid increase in development aid, support in building efficient public services, particularly in the fields of education, health, general public service and of constitutional democratic structures, as well as an adequate technology transfer.

The socio-ecological transformation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will only succeed if tackled globally and in solidarity. Averting a climate catastrophe alone, according to expert estimates, will require the Northern Hemisphere to provide one hundred billion dollars of support to the Southern Hemisphere. This sum does not include the overdue 0.7 per cent of the GDP of the rich countries as development aid. DIE LINKE demands that the Federal Republic and the European Union make their financial and technological contribution to fighting poverty and to compensating and restricting climate change in developing countries. Developing countries should be provided with environmental technology free of cost or on special favourable terms. We are strictly opposed to any shift of high energy and resource-consuming production from the North to the South.

Development policy has to strengthen relations within the Southern Hemisphere as well as regional markets and small-scale agricultural production; advance raw material processing in the developing countries; ensure fair prices in the world markets; focus on promoting gender justice and advancing girls' and women's education. Speculation with foodstuffs is to be halted by way of regulating the financial markets and building up regional reserves. Imports of agrarian produce for bio-fuel production have to be ruled out. We are opposed to the subsidizing of exports to the developing countries, and stand for supporting those countries in securing their independence in food supply. EU energy partnerships with countries of the South should be designed in the interest of a common contribution to the energy turnaround. All projects which impair the elimination of poverty, backwardness and environmental destruction must be halted.

## **V. Together for political change and a better society**

DIE LINKE has started changing the political power balance in the Federal Republic. It has added fresh impetus to the struggle for higher wages, a public future investment programme, free studies, social security, a sustainable energy policy and the protection of the natural environment, for democracy and peace. Politics today can no longer be dominated by a cartel of neo-liberal parties.

DIE LINKE is in fundamental social and political opposition to neo-liberalism and capitalist rule, imperialist policy and war. It stands for a democratic and social, emancipatory and peaceful society. By mobilizing social resistance and engaging ourselves for a radical transformation we are on the way to a socialist society. In this we proceed from the democratic achievements of the social and constitutional state, and from ecological regulations, which have already been asserted in the social and political struggles of the past. We want to develop them further and use them as starting point for further changes.

The focal strategic task of DIE LINKE is to help change the social balance of power in order to implement a solidarity-based transformation of society and left-wing democratic, social, ecological and peaceful policies. We aim at changing power and ownership relations.

### **Broad left-wing alliances**

A political shift of direction cannot be made on the parliamentary level alone. It can only be achieved through the combination of political struggles both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary. Social change and political change have to grow out of society and be supported by many people. We therefore struggle for a broad social alliance against neo-liberalism and capital rule and for leftist democratic, social, ecological and peaceful policies for a transformation of society based on solidarity.

Such an alliance should appeal to wage and salary earners, the socially disadvantaged and the hard-pressed middle classes and others with social, liberty- and humanitarian-minded backgrounds. We proceed from the common interests of wage labour, unemployed and downtrodden people in Germany, in Europe and elsewhere in the world, and from their very real problems. We want to forge an alliance of trade unions, initiatives critical of globalization and society, social movements and progressive people from learning and culture and the party-political Left. We shall support alliances against right-wing extremism, racism, anti-Semitism and anti-Islamism. We want to cooperate with all men and women who take a stand for social justice, emancipation, democracy, peace and the conservation of nature.

Especially important are strong, active, militant trade unions capable of independent political action. They are distinguished from other social forces and movements by the fact that they are not only active in civil society but are anchored in the world of labour. This invests unionized labour with a social power position not held by other social groups, and is of central importance for asserting social and socialist transformations.

Proceeding from its function as a leftist party DIE LINKE brings into political alliances its very own competencies, and supports them with its resources. As a party we take up the concerns and activities of our political partners and fulfil our own functions. We encourage our

members to actively work in trade unions, social organizations, initiatives, projects and anti-globalization campaigns.

We want to encourage people to stand up against policies which are contrary to their interests – with demonstrations and petitions for referendum and civil disobedience, but also with instruments such as political strikes and general strikes. The latter belong to the most effective forms of struggle, as shown in other European countries, for setting limits on the rulers and capital and enforcing changes.

Together with other leftist forces we will work on central alternative projects for starting a shift in the direction of social development, and fight for them. Such projects grow out of the social and political struggles of the present and have to be advanced in public debates and actions of diverse forces. The strategic challenge for us is to combine democratic and social protest, the political influence of the present with the development of long-term reform alternatives.

### **Confronting the neo-liberal ideology**

DIE LINKE counters the neo-liberal ideology with alternative positions offering a different path of development. We shall link these with experience and conflicts in the enterprises, communities and in everyday life, and give expression to them in the public debate in a popular and assertive manner. We see the aggravation of the economic 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 generated by the capitalist economy. In the public debate, DIE LINKE exposes the inconsistency between the microeconomic perspective and consideration of the society as a whole. There is an urgent need for enlightenment, public relations work and actions, broad-based education, the formation of networks and participation in scientific and media discussions.

### **Work in parliaments, people's representations and governments**

For DIE LINKE parliamentary and extra-parliamentary work are inseparable from each other. Elections and political struggles are used by us to advocate our alternative reform projects and gain majorities for their implementation. We shall organize our parliamentary work in such a way that it serves our purpose of cooperation with extra-parliamentary forces on the left, publicity for our own reform proposals and thus ultimately the formation of a new social balance of power and political majorities. We shall strive for the transparency of political processes and for exposing and preventing the abuse of political power.

Both parliamentary opposition and participation in governments are for DIE LINKE means of political action and the shaping of society. The yardsticks for participation in governments are the improvement of the situation of the disadvantaged, the development and implementation of left-wing and reform projects, the change of the power relationships and the initiation of a change in policy. We shall enter into parliamentary alliances with other political forces only when it furthers the shift in political direction that we aspire to. In our policy we shall take into account the most different possibilities of political action at the municipal, Land, federal and European levels. Decisive for implementing a shift in policy, however, is the federal level. It is there that most of the requisite competences lie and the course is set in most cases.

The precondition for the appeal, acceptance and success of DIE LINKE is its credibility. Participation in governments makes sense only if it can enforce real improvements and a break with the neo-liberal model of politics, and initiate a socio-ecological shift in direction. In this way the political impact of DIE LINKE and the social movements can be strengthened and the feeling of helplessness and lack of alternatives felt by many people can be restrained. Participation in government has to be discussed in light of the respective conditions and made contingent on binding criteria.

DIE LINKE seeks participation in government only if we can achieve an improvement of the living conditions of the people. It shall not take part in any government which pushes privatization and promotes the erosion of social benefit and jobs. On federal level, DIE LINKE, moreover, shall not participate in a government which is engaged in wars, permits military missions of the Bundeswehr abroad and advances armament and militarization. Further imperative conditions are the implementation of legal minimum wages and the campaign against wage dumping and pay below tariff. DIE LINKE demands a policy which eliminates social and cultural education privileges, and improves the situation of the lower social strata. It is committed to the extension of democratic rights, and fights the surveillance state and further curtailment of civil rights. To not submit to the structural power of capital interests and parliamentary logic, left policy – also in governments, indeed precisely there – must always be able to rely on the trade unions and other social movements, and the mobilization of extra-parliamentary pressure. We want to encourage people to themselves take action for their interests.

### **A new political style**

DIE LINKE stands for a new political style of transparency, social dialogue and the direct participation of the citizenry. DIE LINKE is strong only to the extent that it is anchored in society and receives the support of society. Left policy requires driving criticism, public pressure and extra-parliamentary mobilization. Women have to experience DIE LINKE as representative of their interests and find in it a political home where they can fight for political changes without being impaired by patriarchal gender relationships. Salaried politicians and honorary activists of DIE LINKE work closely together. All members of state and federal parliaments shall be obliged to make details public concerning the source and amount of their income. During the period of his or her mandate, no member of parliament may be on the pay roll of an economic enterprise. Our party also does not accept donations from companies and banks.

### **European and international cooperation**

The Party of the European Left is an important factor in the political life of Europe. Like our party in Germany it is a step forward towards the unification of the Left and can shift the balance of power towards a social, democratic and peaceful Europe. We stand for intensified exchange of experience, close cooperation and an effective political struggle of left forces in Europe and worldwide. As part of the European Left Party, we struggle to strengthen the European forces for a social, democratic and civilian re-orientation and re-foundation of the European Union.

### **Inner-party democracy and solidarity**

DIE LINKE sees itself as a party in the process of learning. It wants to shape politics together with the citizens. We are well aware that we will neither be able to assert our concept of a better society by ourselves, nor against social majorities. We shall campaign by making the better argument – in public, in a transparent, cultured and democratic manner. We shall take up concepts from the society, develop our own, reach broad sections of the society and gain majorities. The potential of DIE LINKE lies in the capabilities of its members, their integration in society and their life experience.

Political participation and interest are generated in self-determined and equality-based action and democratic co-decision in shaping and developing social processes. We want to live this vision also inside our party. DIE LINKE develops its policies in close cooperation with elected executive bodies and members anchored in grassroots democracy. Pluralism and transparency are supporting pillars of our party. Decisions determining political direction have to be clarified in debates within DIE LINKE party and in consultation with its extra-parliamentary basis, and are subject to membership votes which are binding.

### **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 will 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, free of exploitation and oppression. Together we are able to change this country and build a better society.