

# Key Programmatic Points



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**DIE LINKE.**

# Key Programmatic Points

## Founding programmatic document of the political party DIE LINKE

(Resolution of the congresses of the WASG and the Linkspartei.PDS held on 24 and 25 March 2007 in Dortmund)

The Key Programmatic Points reflect the common ground established by WASG and Linkspartei.PDS on the road to a new political party. That common ground is a stable enough foundation on which to establish a new party of the Left. We shall preserve and develop different traditions, experiences and competences of those forces that jointly constitute our new party. The »Key Programmatic Points« are not a cohesive party programme of the new Left yet. We invite everyone to work with us on such a programme. We take up different views on analysis,

policy, world view and strategy, inconsistencies and things we have in common productively and develop them as the strength of the new party. What we all want is a party the like of which there has never been in Germany – uniting the left, democratic and socially oriented, ecological, feminist and anti-patriarchal, open and pluralist, belligerent and tolerant, anti-racist and anti-fascist, pursuing a consistent policy of peace. We are a part of the European Left, of the social and peace movements.

## I. Together for a different policy

The Federal Republic of Germany is a rich country. However, participation in the wealth of society and the chances of a good life are distributed unevenly. And yet there are new and growing opportunities for a life in justice, democracy and peace.

However, they are thwarted by destructive processes. These are the consequences of the concentrated power of capital; they arise from the primacy of the international financial markets and the transition of the rulers from a policy of welfare-state regulated capitalism to a radical market policy, a neo-liberal policy.

Our society, like many others in the world, is characterised by mass unemployment, by economic and cultural cleavages. The destruction of nature and human-generated climate change are taking on more and more threatening dimensions. War has once more become a policy instrument. Imperial policies and fundamentalism reinforce each other reciprocally.

Our alternative to this unbridled capitalism is the renewal on principles of solidarity and the consistent democratic structuring of society. We see the diversity of individual life projects and the break-up of traditional gender roles as an opportunity for individual development, the basis of which has to be collectively assured through material and social security. We are opposed to a policy of »Fordern und Fördern« (supporting and demanding), of support based on merit, that turns unemployment into a problem of the individual. Instead of such a policy we are working for general social conditions that make work and personal development possible for everyone. A fundamental change in policy for a socially more just society requires linking the idea of solidarity with responses to new social challenges.

We want to bring together basic concepts of an alternative policy. The fight against the dismantling of social rights, for a just distribution of work in a humanised working environment and for a regenerated welfare state based on solidarity is the point of departure of the Wahlalternative Arbeit und soziale Gerechtigkeit (Electoral Alternative Labour and Social Justice) as formulated in the foundation programme. In keeping with that the Linkspartei.PDS offers as its contribution its historical understanding of democratic socialism as goal, path and value system and as unity of basic social and rights to liberty, as formulated in its Chemnitz Party Programme.

Democracy, freedom, equality, justice, internationalism and solidarity are our fundamental value orientations. They are inseparable from peace, the conservation of nature and emancipation. The ideas of democratic socialism are key guidelines for the development of the political goals of the Left.

DIE LINKE derives its political action from the connection between goal, path and fundamental value orientations. Freedom and social justice, democracy and socialism are contingent on one another. Equality without individual freedom ends in incapacitation and heteronomy. Freedom without equality is freedom only for the rich. Those who oppress their fellow human beings are not free either. The goal of democratic socialism, which wants to overcome capitalism in a transformational process, is a society in which the freedom of the other is not the limit but the condition for one's own freedom.

To that end we take the road here and now against the exploitation of man by man and against patriarchal and racist oppression.

The condition for overcoming aberrations and social divisions is the comprehensive democratisation of all spheres of life. Democratisation of the economy requires subordinating the power to dispose of all forms of property to social criteria. Above all, the profit-driven private control of large-scale enterprises playing a determinant role in the economy has to be curtailed and overcome through broad democratic alliances, co-determination and welfare-state regulation where it conflicts with the common good.

We want to conduct a broad discussion on how that can be concretely realised. In this connection we want to clarify how public ownership as the basis of democratic politics and public welfare can be expanded and made both social and efficient.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, the Basic Law requires that laws and regulations ensure that property serve the common good. Articles 14 and 15 of the Basic Law provide the possibility of countering the agglomeration of economic power to political power. Under those articles, key areas of the economy can be transferred to public ownership. DIE LINKE is working on concrete proposals about how certain key areas of the economy and public welfare services have to be transferred to public ownership for the common good in order to make more democratic control and organisation possible. DIE LINKE sees in the existence of different forms of ownership the basis for an efficient and democratic economy rather than continuing along the road of privatisation and monopolisation.

The task of left politics in creating a modern welfare state is to sustainably protect people in major existential perils such as illness, unemployment and poverty. This also includes social responsibility for health, for the supply of water and energy, for waste disposal, for urban and rural development, for affordable housing in sufficient quantity, for public local and long-distance transport, for universally accessible free education, for a dignified life in old age and for the development

of culture and science. The primacy of politics must be established in the economy as well. In this spirit, the elected representatives of the left should work for the organisation of public welfare systems.

Our party makes a change of political direction its strategic objective. That requires of us a critical reappraisal of the history of left practice in the GDR and the FRG in a spirit of solidarity. We consciously place ourselves in the tradition of enlightenment and democratic socialism and of the great movements for the emancipation of working men and women.

We champion the goals of the women's movement, the environmental and anti-nuclear power plant movement, the peace movement, initiatives critical of globalisation, the social forums and movements against state repression and for the implementation of fundamental rights and rights of liberty. We carry on the commitment of all those who were involved in defeating the criminal fascist dictatorship and have fought and are fighting for the elimination of the causes of fascism.

Our recognition goes to the efforts towards social and welfare state controls on capitalism as well as the attempts to overcome capitalist property and power relationships.

DIE LINKE examines the history of the GDR and the FRG as well as the history of the forces of the left in the old Federal Republic and draws conclusions from historical developments and experiences for its platform and strategy in present and future conflicts. In doing so it opposes simplifications, anti-communist prejudices and one-sided judgments and tries to arrive at sophisticated and balanced assessments.

We have learned from history that respect for the views of dissidents is a precondition for liberation. We reject every form of dictatorship and condemn Stalinism as a criminal abuse of socialism. For us freedom and equality, socialism and democracy, human rights and justice are inseparable.

## II. Another world is necessary

In the sixties and seventies of the 20th Century, a world-wide crisis, primarily an economic crisis, developed. Growth rates in the cumbersome planned economies of state socialism dropped sharply. The oil crisis marked the beginning of an intensified crisis-ridden development of the capitalist world economy. The catch-up development of the south that had begun so promisingly with decolonisation was regressing in large regions of the world. In the same period, movements for more freedom, solidarity and democracy emerged. It was

the time of the student movement in the West, the overthrow of fascist regimes in Greece, Spain and Portugal, and the victories of the liberation movements in Vietnam and in the Portuguese colonies. In Chile, on the other hand, the socialist changes were bloodily beaten down. During that period, the trends towards stagnation were becoming stronger in real socialism. The violent end put to the Prague Spring shattered the world-wide hope for a combination of democracy and socialism. The capitalist countries tried to find a way out of the crisis by

discarding welfare-state »fetters« in a neo-liberal version of capitalism. When the greatest counterweight ceased to exist with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the destructive tendencies of the unbridled capitalist market were able to develop more and more. Today, transnational corporations and the capital and finance markets increasingly control social development.

Neo-liberalism claims to be for greater freedom, yet all fields of life are subordinated to capital utilisation and in particular to increasing the value of stocks in the financial markets. Neo-liberal forces call for less state and dismantle the welfare state in favour of a repressive competition state. They pay lip service to democracy and try to weaken the trade unions and other democratic organisations and movements. They pursue a non-solidarity policy of privatisation, deregulations and subjection of all spheres of life to the market. They start new imperial wars and heighten the danger of terrorist acts. Instead of promoting equal opportunities they widen the gap between the top and the bottom. Low-wage sectors are spreading. Rising profits go hand in hand with continuing mass unemployment. Large sections of the population are turning away from participating in the democratic decision-making process.

One inconsistency is becoming more and more acute: On the one hand, productivity, levels of education, economic and technological efficiency, the international division of labour and possibilities of emancipation and personal development are more advanced than ever. Poverty, hunger, thirst, slum-dwelling, illiteracy and many diseases can be overcome. The outdated division of labour between the sexes and deep-rooted patriarchal patterns of behaviour are historically obsolete. With shorter working hours under humane conditions and without harm to the environment, it will be possible to achieve better satisfaction of human needs. A radically new relationship with nature is absolutely necessary and it is possible as well. The 21st century can be marked by the global development of all peoples and regions in solidarity and peace, by a world society of the free and the equal. Standing in the way of these possibilities on the other hand are the domination and ownership structures of modern capitalism. Through the global finance markets the profit claims of capital have a limitless and world-wide effect. Loss of jobs, decline in real incomes and precarious employment are daily routine for many people. The transition to flexible production and a flexible labour market in response to the needs of capital destroys family life and community life. Public property is being privatised and made inaccessible to political organisation. Social security is being undermined at an ever increasing speed. Possible paths towards combating unemployment and poverty are not being taken in Germany.

The openly emerging schism between the classes in our society coincides with other oppressive relationships: Despite efforts to achieve equal status, the privileging of men is structurally unbroken. People of other origins, skin colour, sexual orientation or religion are discriminated against. Racism and anti-Semitism are spreading.

Global capitalism is intensifying the ecological crisis. Its economy is oriented towards short-term stock market shifts. This stands in deep contradiction to the long-term cycles of nature. Environmental technologies are highly developed, but nowhere is the ecological restructuring of business and ways of life being energetically tackled. This is all the more depressing since whether a global climate catastrophe can still be prevented will have to be decided in the next few years. Drastic change in our way of life will be unavoidable.

Neo-liberal capitalism means dismantling democracy. Immense power is concentrated in the hands of the international finance funds, the transnational corporations and the supranational organisations of global capitalism – the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and so on. They are shielded from any democratic control. The substance of democracy is being undermined. The proclaimed »war on terrorism« is used to justify a massive curtailment of fundamental rights and rights of liberty. Barbaric methods of domination are being resorted to with less and less restraint.

The European Union has given us a new space for joint social struggles, movements for peace and sustainable business management, for democracy and against racism and nationalism, a new space for class struggles. In Europe the free movement of capital, the displacement of production sites and the migration of labour are normal and reflect the neo-liberal orientation of European integration manifested by the Maastricht Treaty. The coming together of trade unions, democratic initiatives, peace, women's and ecological movements, however, is only beginning. The Confederation of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL) in the European Parliament came into being as a result of the elections to the European Parliament and makes a substantial contribution to giving profile to a left European policy in Parliament. With the Party of the European Left, a force has taken the road to uniting members of various left parties in Europe in joint political action. The European Social Forums and the European trade union movement are intervening in social and political conflicts.

The aims of imperial policy under the leadership of the United States of America are a world totally subordinated to capital exploitation, unhindered access to raw materials and sources of energy, and the expansion of domination and spheres of influence. The standard of international law

forbidding any offensive war has been revoked. NATO and the European Union are backing global reaction forces. In the name of a crusade against terrorism, thousands of innocent people are dying.

A spiral of violence is generating more and more readiness to commit terrorist acts, the inhuman response to the arrogance of imperial power and the deep rifts between rich and poor countries.

### III. Our alternative: Social, democratic and peacemaking reforms to overcome capitalism

Another kind of politics is necessary and possible. The new Left has its own answers to the challenges of the day – to the greater international integration, chronic mass unemployment, the crisis of the social welfare systems, the limited resources and ecological resistance capacity of the earth and the change in the age distribution of society. We do not agree that limited economic potentials make it indispensable to call upon the population to do without security, self-determination and a high quality of life.

The new Left presents the programmatic outlines of a comprehensive social restructuring to end the power of capital utilisation over the economy and society and meet the challenges of the day with an alternative path of development. It is a programme of change in the direction of policy and of the renewal of democracy. Our aims are:

- a democratisation of society that guarantees equal opportunities to help shape life in society for everyone. The struggle against patriarchal oppression and against all forms of racism, anti-Semitism and right-wing extremism is a part of this.

- a caring work and business environment: The focus now as before is on giving everyone the opportunity to engage in gainful employment and other social organisation. That is the condition and basis for manifold other activities.

- an economic democracy that measures all forms of property by social and ecological criteria. We see in public ownership of public welfare facilities and public control over them the indispensable foundation of a democratic society based on solidarity.

- a new solidarity based on modern public services, solidarity-based security systems and ecological restructuring of society as the foundation of a self-determined life.

- an international order of peace, collective security and solidarity-based development to which an altered European Union should contribute.

We fight for a society in which everyone shares in the conditions for a life in freedom, social security and solidarity. Among the freedom commodities that make this possible in the first place are a

socially equal share of the individual in decision-making in the society, useful work for a living wage, education and culture, high-quality health care services and social security measures. It is imperative to overthrow all property and power relations »in which man is a debased, enslaved, abandoned, despicable essence« (Karl Marx).

#### **1. Work: In self-determination and solidarity instead of in dependence and competition**

Today more than ever before, gainful work is caught up in a tug of war between the drive for self-realisation on the one hand and exploitation and insecurity on the other. Some employment relationships are defined by more personal responsibility on the part of the wage-earners. At the same time, social insecurity, mass unemployment, low wages, extreme dependence and forced subordination are spreading. Work in the home, partnership care, care and upbringing of children and social work are still done mostly by women. The proportion of migrant men and women in poorly paid work is especially high.

We aspire to a society in which every woman and every man can work for a living wage. Gainful employment, work in families and partnerships, work to help organise the society and participation in cultural and social life must be possible for everyone. Socially necessary work and opportunities to participate actively and with influence in social life must be equally distributed. That is what we want as the new full employment.

In order to achieve this goal of a reorganisation of social life opportunities and work, we are working for curtailment of the power of the financial markets, for a substantial decrease in income and wealth differentials, for state or public responsibility for all fields of welfare services, for the expansion of public investments, for a substantial decrease in working hours, leaving men and women more time for domestic work, for social engagement and for themselves, for the upwards revaluation and legal as well as financial safeguarding of the property forms of a solidarity-based economy and a comprehensive system of social security.

For wage labour this means

- Shorter working hours: We oppose the extension of working hours and demand instead their reduction as the basis for a redistribution of gainful work. We strive for a reduction in weekly, annual and life-long working time, choice of working hours, facilitation of sabbaticals and leave of absence for socio-political work and other forms of work. Owing to rising labour productivity, this can be achieved without reductions in income. Shorter working hours would also benefit the changed gender roles in which women and men want to and should divide up gainful and care giving work.

- new jobs through ecological and social restructuring, public programmes for future investment focused on these, and promotion of technological innovations in the field of resource efficiency and renewable energies; need-oriented expansion of public services in the fields of education, science and research, art and culture as well as public transport and other areas of public welfare.

- publicly sponsored and managed employment sectors with cooperative elements that satisfy those social, cultural and ecological needs that are met by neither the market nor the public service.

- an active labour market policy that focuses on those whose chances in the labour market are particularly poor. We want them to be offered regular jobs paid according to standard wage agreements and subject to compulsory insurance through the concentration of public funds and their combination with other funds.

- use of productivity gains to increase real wages and shorten working hours.

- a statutory minimum wage sufficient to provide a living.

- implementation of a new standard employment relationship on the basis of full social security for all employment relationships and humanisation of labour, autonomy in collective bargaining and the universal bindingness of collective agreements, a high degree of protection from dismissal and strong rights of co-determination for all employees as well as alignment of women's wages with those of men.

- legal provisions against the increasing abuse of training practicums.

- applicability of domestic social standards to all those who work here through extension of the law on minimum labour standards for cross-border services to all branches of industry and a radical reform of the European service guidelines to prevent all forms of dumping competition and ensure public welfare-oriented services.

- awarding government contracts to those companies that observe high social and ecological standards domestically and support improvement of such standards in the global context.

We want to expand cooperation with the trade unions so as to be able to realise those goals. We extend solidarity support to actions of the trade unions for the preservation of jobs, collective agreements and social rights.

## **2. Economy and Environment: Strongly committed to public welfare rather than dominated by capital and destructive to the environment**

The prevailing policy has increased the power of the financial markets, the transnational corporations, market supervision and the large trusts. Five hundred trusts control half the national product of all the world's countries. In the power centres of finance capital world-wide, decisions are made virtually unchecked concerning investments, jobs and the life prospects of billions of people. Capital yield has once again become the measure of all relationships. The present economic order is leading to competition for the lowest wages, poverty-driven migration, destruction of the environment, alarming climate change, rank injustice and misery for very many people.

A fundamental change of course in economic and financial policy is needed to make possible a self-determined life and useful and socially organised work for everyone and to commence ecological restructuring, modernise social security systems and make development in solidarity possible globally.

DIE LINKE stands for the primacy of democratic politics over the economy and for a social and ecological change in the European Union. Alternative economic policy is formative policy. It aims at a strong stress on welfare policy instead of its subordination to the necessities of the market. It attaches substantial weight to long-term structural, science and technology policy. Profit-oriented entrepreneurial action is important for innovation and business performance but leads to the destruction of the basis of our existence, increasing social inequality and division if it is not subjected to social limits and rules. For that reason DIE LINKE wants to see a new socio-economic framework set for market mechanisms, because without co-determination, trade union counter-power and welfare state regulation, private entrepreneurial interests lead to aberrations involving huge economic, social and ecological losses. For more investments and to safeguard the welfare state, the state needs money. Only the rich can afford a poor state. By means of higher revenues, debt can also be reduced in a socially equitable manner. We fight for the unity of social, ecological and economic sustainability. The sustainable preservation and restoration of an environment worth living in is a profoundly social matter and central pillar of justice. It is the poor, disadvantaged strata of the population nationally and internationally that

suffer most from atmospheric pollution, noise, an unhealthy diet, lack of potable water, dramatic climate changes and rising prices of scarce natural resources. Destruction of nature and the environment rob future generations of the basis of their existence.

To begin an economic and environmental policy turnaround, we advocate

- government employment-promoting programmes for investment in the future: Government investments and other expenditures in education, research, culture, ecological restructuring and public infrastructure must be increased by at least 40 billion Euro a year. One million jobs at standard wages could be created in that way.

- equitable tax policy: Trusts and other profitable enterprises must be made to pay substantially more taxes again. A wealth tax should be levied again; the inheritance tax on large estates has to be increased. Tax loopholes that mostly benefit the wealthy and big earners have to be rigorously closed and white-collar crime has to be combated more energetically. We want capital gains from the sale of securities and real estate to be taxed without speculative deadlines. The maximum income tax rate should be raised to at least 50 per cent. We call for a tax and finance reform that will provide the states and municipalities with the resources needed for sustainable development.

- ecological restructuring of the energy supply. A shift in energy policy towards decentralised structures, transfer of the grids to public ownership and democratic control of energy policy is the priority goal. Increased energy efficiency, reduction of energy consumption and focusing strictly on renewable energy sources are necessary to resolve our energy problems. Technologies that have already been developed, e.g. hydrogen-propelled motors (fuel cells – alternative energy sources) should be utilised and promoted with financial incentives as quickly as possible. Environment-friendly innovations should likewise be put into practice immediately without making allowances for capital interests. We want a more rapid exit from nuclear energy and oppose new nuclear power plants and the export of nuclear technology.

- sustainable treatment of natural resources. Environmentally harmful material and energy flows should be avoided and the resource efficiency of value added chains should be enhanced. Comprehensive environmental education is required for that purpose.

- social and ecological transport policy. The focus must be on ensuring mobility. We need alternatives to individualised passenger car traffic. In addition to urban and regional planning measures, public transport should be expanded and supplemented with new choices. Privatisations have to be stopped.

Goods transport belongs on rails. Aircraft fuel must be taxed.

- environmentally sound regional business cycles. The regional production and marketing of craft and agricultural products should be encouraged in order to avoid transports and increase regional value added.

- expansion of ecological agriculture and forestry and promotion of a nation-wide and Europe-wide reserve system to maintain biodiversity. Animal protection legislation must be consistently enforced and improved.

- a system of duties and taxes to promote environment-friendly behaviour and punish behaviour that is harmful to the environment.

- democratic control of the financial markets and decentralisation of private economic power: This requires, among other things, limitation of security and currency speculation, European provisions for restricting the transfer of capital to tax havens and the tightening up of anti-trust legislation.

- promotion of cooperatives and other forms of solidarity-based business.

### **3. Welfare Systems: Security and promotion for everyone instead of compulsion and social division**

Dismantling of the welfare state, privatisation, mass unemployment, precarious employment and stagnating or sinking incomes have plunged the welfare systems we have had up to now into a crisis. These welfare systems in their present form no longer conform to the new biographies and needs of the people. The solidarity-based security systems and the welfare state are an important acquisition. Only social security based on legal entitlements makes freedom possible for everyone and not just for the wealthy. We want a democratic welfare state with minimum social standards that enables everyone to participate and share in decision-making.

We advocate the renewal of the welfare state and public services. Social security should provide support for personal development and guarantee comprehensive protection of all members of the society against major social risks, maintenance of one's standard of living in old age and in case of incapacity to work and unemployment, prevent poverty and make possible gender equality and a diversity of lifestyles.

To realise these tasks, we advocate:

- »Get rid of Hartz IV!« for overcoming the Hartz laws.

- for democratisation of social security systems, the reinforcement of their solidarity elements and the renewal of their self-administration.

■ for stronger orientation on the individual principle in tax and social legislation: This would be a way to overcome the preference given by the state to the single breadwinner model.

■ for the introduction of need oriented, repression-free basic welfare services: Anyone who is threatened with poverty should be entitled to individual, tax-funded, need-oriented basic welfare services. Reasonable job offers must take qualifications into consideration and be paid according to collective agreements. We oppose both imposed unemployment and the compulsion to accept any job offered. We continue to discuss proposals for an unconditional basic income with various partners.

■ for a new pension policy: There must be a return to raising pensions when wages rise. The statutory pension scheme should be transformed into a gainfully employed insurance system into which persons in all occupational groups are gradually integrated. Civil servants and the self-employed should in future be obliged to contribute to the social security funds on a solidarity basis. We demand that discrimination against East Germans in pension legislation be ended once and for all. We oppose raising the pensionable age to more than 65 as a covert attack on the pension rate. What are needed are flexible possibilities of retiring before the age of 65. Our aim is retirement from age 60 without deductions. This would apply in particular to employees with strenuous jobs, such as shift workers. At the very least, partial retirement should be re-introduced and access to pensions for reduced earning capacity should be made easier.

■ for a new seniors policy: For us old age is a new phase of life with its own entitlements and needs that should not be reduced simply to pensions, care or costs and one that seniors want to take an active part in shaping. We want the life achievements of the older generation to be respected and the skills, competencies and creative potential of elderly citizens to be fostered and utilised. The conditions in seniors' homes and care facilities, home care and the treatment of elderly people are inadequate and in part degrading. We want all necessary conditions to be created to guarantee that the elderly and particularly the sick and the disabled can take part in social life on an equal footing with others. Poverty in old age must be prevented.

■ for a new youth policy: The youth are the future of our society. But for years, business and politics have been systematically worsening their chances for the future through more rigorous selection in the education system, through an inadequate number of apprenticeships and through incapacitation of young adults under 25 years of age (Hartz IV). DIE LINKE opposes all disenfranchisement of young people and advocates in particular a comprehensive concept of a training initiative with the

aim of providing an apprenticeship for every young man or woman financed by a training space levy on companies that provide no or very few apprenticeships.

■ for a solidarity-based universal health insurance scheme: The entire population should be covered by statutory health insurance that covers all medically necessary services. All income should be taken into consideration and the income thresholds should be raised substantially and gradually abolished. We want to restore parity contributions by the employer. The conversion to or supplementing of the employee contributions to social security schemes by a value added levy should be considered. Profit-oriented structures have no place in the public health system. Health is a human right and not a commodity!

■ for restructuring of the public health system: High-quality medical care should be guaranteed for all through structural reforms. There is an urgent need for better cooperation between doctors, hospitals and all service providers, promotion of public health centres and limitation of pharmaceutical industry profits through, among other things, the introduction of a white list for drugs, greater emphasis on prevention and aftercare and improvement of working conditions and reimbursement for medical and care personnel as well as greater rights for patients.

■ for the preservation of public municipal services and utilities and for safeguarding municipal self-management: Public services and utilities for education, health, care and culture, for mobility, water, gas and electricity are an elementary component of social security. We therefore defend the public services and call for their expansion. We want to prevent the sale of publicly owned housing and utilities. Housing is a human right and belongs in the Basic Law (Constitution). Adequate housing and self-determined living are among the most important conditions for social security and human dignity.

#### **4. Politics: Venture more democracy instead of authoritarian »force of circumstance« policy**

The Basic Law with its fundamental principles of inviolable human dignity, the constitutional welfare state and democracy is one of the starting-points for our policy because a democratic change of the economic and social order with the goal of a just, peaceful society is anchored in it. In that sense the Basic Law is a veritable call for democratic socialism.

In more and more areas of society we note a curtailment of democratic rights, in part by means of international organisations and European institutions. The so-called war on terror is used to dismantle basic and liberty rights. We counter the

spreading of mistrust and suspicion, especially of Muslims, with a culture of dialogue and cooperation.

We demand that decisions be made democratically concerning the economic, political and cultural order in our societies and its development. We want democratisation of our democracy and demand:

■ the reinforcement of individual rights: It must always be possible to check what the state does and the individual must be protected from unjustified state intervention. For that reason the constitutional state with the guarantee of recourse to the courts is a great good for us and we need independent bodies to monitor the state security organs. We adhere to the strict separation of police and Bundeswehr and of police and secret services. The routine right to dispose of one's personal data and decide what is done with them is and shall remain unwaivable.

■ Economic democracy: We aspire to the democratisation of the power of disposal over all forms of economic power. Through parity co-determination of employees, their trade unions and representatives of the regions and consumers, the power of capital should be subordinated to democratic interests. As a supplement to trade union co-determination, the co-determination rights of works councils and staff councils must be safeguarded and extended. It must be possible to exercise the right to conduct a political strike, including a general strike.

■ municipalities worth living in: We consider it urgently necessary to enhance the status of the municipalities in the federal system. The organisation of municipal self-government must be geared to the safeguarding of political, economic, social, legal and financial freedoms. Municipal economic activity is an equal pillar of the economic system. The forms of municipal property must be preserved in the interest of providing services to the public. The municipalities should be allotted a larger share in the total tax revenues of the Federal Republic of Germany so that self-government can be realised. By means of public services and utilities the municipalities have to be able to provide high-quality services, taking social and ecological requirements into account. DIE LINKE stands for development in the direction of the citizen's municipality – with a participatory budget among other things – in which people can themselves decide on and manage their own affairs.

■ Gender democracy: Although the Basic Law guarantees equal rights, the unequal distribution of opportunities between women and men has not been abolished. Political and economic power have a patriarchal stamp. For us the degree of social democracy is measured by the freedom of women and men to be able to implement their own life

plans free of role clichés. Fair distribution of work outside the home, housework and child-rearing work between the sexes is an important precondition for that. We need equal status legislation, applicable to private business as well, and women's advancement programmes. Women's self-determination over their own bodies is elementary. Therefore: Repeal of § 218. Violence against women, violence by men against women must be publicly outlawed and resolutely prosecuted. The women and children affected need legal protection and a functioning network of support and information centres.

■ active equal status and anti-discrimination policy: We reject discrimination on grounds of age, gender, sexual identity, disability or ethnic or religious affiliation. We want an active equal status policy that counteracts discrimination and stigmatisation at work and in civil society. This requires, among other things, an effective, comprehensive anti-discrimination law that includes the possibility of class action.

■ a close link between parliamentary and direct democracy: Petitions for referendums and referendums as well as citizens' budgets should enable the citizens to have more influence and a greater voice in decision-making.

■ strengthening democratic co-determination: We want democratic planning, monitoring and veto rights for environmental organisations, consumers' associations, trade unions, clubs and other forces of civil society as well as for citizens.

■ equal rights: All those living and working in Germany and the European Union are entitled to the same rights, including the right to vote. We regard the background of those living in Germany today from different cultures as an enrichment and accept the organisation of the integration of the population that has immigrated and been living here for a long time as a social challenge. For the minorities living on German territory (Danes, Frisians, Sinti and Roman and Sorbs), we demand expansion of their rights of participation and adequate public support for the preservation and further development of their languages and cultures.

■ Constitutional Welfare State: The constitutionally guaranteed principle of the constitutional welfare state, beyond the grasp of the legislator, is the path and goal of left law policy. The concept of the constitutional welfare state is aimed at a change in the relations between state, economy and society. The crucial aspect of the idea of the constitutional welfare state is the challenge to reshape the economic and social order socially in a dynamic, democratic process. Solidarity as a component of the welfare state requirement is a basic principle of the Constitution. The welfare state requirement should be concretised through codification of the

principles of social justice and the requirement that the state cover the main risks in life. Social justice also involves ensuring a fair distribution of social wealth. Basic social rights should be added to the Basic Law in the interest of establishing the social state.

■ open borders for people in need: We support the restoration of the basic right to asylum and advocate harmonisation of asylum law in Europe at a high level.

■ outlawing right-wing extremism and neo-Nazism: We will combat these forces politically, defend the public space against them and intensify anti-fascist educational work. We therefore want to strengthen civil society structures against right-wing extremism, in part by having the corresponding initiatives and counselling teams receive public funds and having existing support expanded. One of the priority tasks of the Left is to develop a coherent concept against neo-Nazism going beyond the selective measures taken up to now. DIE LINKE will devote greater attention to the development of neo-fascism in the international context.

### **5. Gender justice: Recognising diverse forms of cohabitation instead of privileging marriage**

We combine the experiences of the women's movements in East and West with different feminist policy approaches. That gives one the chance to advance a feminist reading of economic and social processes and a corresponding political organisation in the world of work, education, the social systems, the public and in one's own organisational and political development.

As a consequence we are drafting a positive equal status policy for women making possible their access to social decision-making without imposing ways of life that they pay for with renunciation of possibilities of personal development. The compatibility of family and career is more than a women's policy demand for recognition of professional skills. Both for men and for women, what is at stake is nothing less than a rethinking and reappraisal of social labour – whether it be at the computer, in the home, at the workbench, on the playground or in caring for relatives.

To us, quotas, an equal status law for private business, equal pay for work of equal value and expansion of day care to meet the need are key political demands. The division of social roles into male and female and structural discrimination against the female gender must be abolished.

We want to eliminate the existing patriarchal provisions in social and tax legislation. Social relationships between the sexes must lose the character of power relationships. We demand political instruments that abolish family dependencies and reinforce mutual responsibility in

all the various ways of life, because the institution of bourgeois marriage cannot be the only recognised kind of family. A new image of the family must include the ways of life of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgenders. An active policy is needed for people with children, regardless of what kind of relationship they live together in. The model of the man's role as sole breadwinner in the family belongs to the past. New relationships between family members are emerging. They need to be recognised in law.

### **6. Science and education, media and culture: Contribution to enlightenment and emancipation instead of self-marketing**

The findings of the sciences and the revolution in information and communication technologies have increased the opportunities for development of the individual. Yet science, education, culture and information, specifically in Germany, are not equally accessible to everyone. Neo-liberal strategies subordinate these potentials to locational competition and the dictates of self-marketing. They are banking on knowledge that will pay off in the short term rather than comprehensive education. This perspective limits the possibilities of getting an education. Scientific work must focus much more on the crucial unsolved problems of the society. That means science cannot be subjected to business management criteria.

The ideological and religious neutrality obligation of the state and stringent separation of church/religion and state. We stand for the constitutionally guaranteed freedoms of religion, belief and conscience as fundamental pillars of democracy and enlightenment and oppose forcible proselytisation, state-ordered indoctrination and legally privileged special status for churches and religious communities. Religious and ideological commitment is the right and freedom of every individual, a part of everyone's intimate private sphere.

With our political alternatives we want every person to share in all the riches of science, education, culture and information; we want to awaken creative potentials and increase participation in social change. The right to education free of charge belongs in the Basic Law. We demand implementation of that basic right for everyone regardless of nationality, social status, gender or physical or mental condition. Learning, cultural exchange and media competence should enable one to live an independent and free life. Science and culture are a democratic good and have a duty to the general public.

This involves:

■ education from the beginning: Every child must have the right to free all-day care in a day care centre. Government-funded pre-school education must be upgraded.

■ longer learning together in a public education system close to home. The goal is an integrative school for all children from first to at least ninth grade that ends social selection and provides individual support for children and young people with learning disabilities and special talents. We want to support all-day schools and a country-wide supply of all-day education.

■ a wide range of extracurricular education opportunities: This applies in particular to extensive choices offered by publicly funded adult education centres, music schools, libraries, children's and youth clubs and sports facilities.

■ the basic right to training: The withdrawal of the employers from their responsibility for vocational education and training must be stopped. We are advocating a selection of training places to be available all over the country. For that we need statutory assessment financing.

■ the abolition of fees in the education sphere: For us education is a public good which, owing to its importance for society and every individual person, should be available free of charge. We therefore oppose tuition fees in every form and advocate free teaching aids in the schools. Pupils and students from low-income homes must once more be guaranteed adequate training assistance.

■ the democratisation of the universities and colleges: The profit-oriented exertion of influence on universities and colleges should be rolled back and public financing should be increased. We aspire to university self-government with three-way parity representation. There should continue to be free access to all graduate courses. The transition from vocational education and training to university-level studies must be made easier.

■ continuing education and training for all: We demand better quality in continuing education and public responsibility for this field. The inadequate public funding of continuing education and the reduction of continuing education to ensuring employability must be stopped. We advocate the expansion of training support to the continuing education and training field and a Federal Continuing Education and Training Act.

■ a new direction for research: We advocate increased basic research, a balance between theoretical and application-oriented research and teaching, the dismantling of hierarchic structures and greater independence for the mid-level faculty. We oppose patents on genes of organisms or parts of organisms and particularly of human beings. This also applies to software and many other developments serving to benefit mankind. We support the open source and open access software movement.

■ cultural freedom and diversity: Culture and media policy should take into account the diversity of the sponsors of culture and promote public and not-

for-profit institutions, independent publishing houses, studios, agencies and artistic production firms.

■ cooperative culture federalism with a European dimension: It has as its starting-point municipalities worth living in that are in a position to promote regional cultural life for all social backgrounds and ensure free space for cultural self-determination for all age groups.

■ freedom of information and opinion: We want to safeguard public broadcasting and reinforce freedom of the press in the editorial offices of the media corporations. There should be a substantial tightening-up of anti-trust legislation to end the monopolisation of the mass media. We want to bolster the rights of copyright holders in their dealings with the utilisation companies and at the same time arrive at a balance so that non-commercial use is limited as little as possible.

## **7. A new start for East Germany and underdeveloped regions of West Germany instead of retardation and division**

East Germany needs a new political approach. A policy of »more of the same« is irresponsible. It is high time for a change in perspective and strategy, for the form of German-German unification and the renunciation in large measure of a constructive policy with an eye to the specifics of East German problems have turned the country between the Elbe and the Oder into a structurally dependent transfer region. Moreover, location competition heightens regional inequality, and this at the expense of economically underdeveloped regions of West Germany as well.

With the method of respectful partnership between our two parties proceeding together towards becoming a new left, we have set a signal for overcoming political and cultural differences between east and west in Germany.

In the future, when it is more firmly anchored both in east and west, our party will still assume its historically evolved special responsibility for defending East German interests in the German party system. When the GDR joined the FRG, important experiences from the GDR, such as comprehensive child care, a modern school and education system, the equal economic status of women and men, local cultural facilities and the principle of outpatients' clinics were neither examined with a view to their adoption in Germany as a whole nor adopted. Instead scientific and cultural potentials, social performance standards and diverse possibilities of direct socio-political participation of the people in East Germany were destroyed and the life experiences and achievements of many GDR citizens, men and women, were treated with disdain and were not seen as an enrichment and a benefit for a united Germany.

We want a democratic and social realignment for the whole of the Federal Republic of Germany and, in that context special efforts to bring about self-supporting economic and social development in East Germany. A different macroeconomic policy in Germany is a necessary condition for that. In view of the underlying problems, which are beyond the compass of market mechanisms alone, the charting of new development paths for East Germany demands a new, all-German innovation, investment and structure policy as well as stepped-up promotion of self-organisation from below in the local spaces, regions and Lands.

Specifically, there is a need for

■ recognition and respect: We stand for respect for the lifetime achievement of people in East and West. We want the special experiences of the East Germans to be cast to the winds no longer.

We demand equal pay for equal work and the abolition of all discrimination against East Germans in the pension system.

■ general conditions worth living in: For young people in particular, education, cultural, leisure and childcare facilities, interesting jobs and the ability to reconcile family and employment must be developed so that it pays to remain in East Germany.

■ a new regional policy: That means above all concentration on the development potential that exists in all regions, but differs widely – whether it be high tech, industry, universities, public health industries, cultural facilities, ecotourism, or organic farming – and their special promotion as a condition for the preservation of existing jobs and the creation of new ones. There is a need for the cooperative integration of growth centres and underdeveloped rural and peripheral regions. Specific regional development concepts are needed that provide all regions with the prospect of a future worth living in.

■ greater investment in education, qualification and research: from day care centres through universities and research facilities to innovative enterprises and economic cycles.

■ a change in industrial, agricultural and structural policy: It should promote future-oriented industries and enterprises and together with scientific establishments it should create regional economic development centres that help reinforce regional economic cycles. The conditions for that are the granting of sufficient loans by Land banks to the East German enterprises, which are often short of capital resources, and planning reliability with regard to disposal of resources from the EU, the Federal budget and the Solidarity Pact. Lands with major structural and budgetary problems should have to co-finance not fifty per cent of incentive funds but only a smaller portion

## **8. International Policy and the European Union: A world of peace, social justice and democracy instead of militarisation and privatisation**

The end of the Cold War became the beginning of a wave of new wars. The struggle for global dominance, access to important resources and geopolitical control is openly being waged militarily. World-wide arms spending has risen to over 1,000 billion dollars. Through their colonial history and the depletion of resources, through neo-liberal policy and militarisation in a whole series of regions of the world, the EU as well is substantially responsible for poverty, civil wars and environmental and ethnic conflicts in those regions.

This process has to be reversed. Our foreign and peace policy has its basis in international law, it aspires to global justice and the realisation of human rights and it demands disarmament and the world-wide prohibition of weapons of mass destruction. Only social justice, sustainable development and democracy can guarantee stability and peaceful cooperation.

■ German and European foreign policy must become a policy of peace: We fight against war and reject the militarisation of German foreign policy. The Bundeswehr must no longer be used for military intervention abroad. On the basis of manifold experience, the question of whether military deployments on behalf of and under the control of the UN – when these are military actions with reference to Chapter VII of the UN Charter – contribute to a return to peaceful development under the present conditions in regional war and civil war constellations can be answered in the negative. The use of military bases on German soil and in the EU for wars of aggression and kidnappings in violation of human rights must be ended. We want to overcome military alliances like NATO. The military potential of Germany and the EU must be reduced and remodelled in the direction of structural incapacity for aggression or intervention. We want civil conflict prevention and resolution as an alternative to military deployments. Military deployments are no solution. They are often part of the problem. Germany and the EU should renounce the development and production of offensive weapons, ban arms exports, terminate the stationing of nuclear weapons in Germany and make disarmament a task of the state, including through bold unilateral measures. World-wide disarmament and the prohibition of all weapons of mass destruction belong on the international agenda. We reject the deployment of the Bundeswehr inside the country.

■ construction of a just world economic order: This includes the control and regulation of the international financial markets, a stop to the privatisation of public welfare tasks, the transfer of important natural resources to state ownership, a compre-

hensive debt write-off for poor countries, and an increase in development aid to more than 0.7 per cent of the GNP of industrialised countries. Sustainable development and the restoration and expansion of social rights must replace capital-oriented neo-liberalisation. German policy in the United Nations, the WTO and the World Bank as well as in bilateral treaties and European agreements with Latin America, Africa and Asia must be guided by this as well.

■ democratising the UN: The goal of the United Nations Charter, to achieve a world of peace and preservation of human rights, requires further strengthening and democratisation of the UN, more rights for the General Assembly and democratic restructuring of the Security Council. Kidnappings, secret prisons and torture have to be outlawed world-wide. The coordination of international efforts to achieve a just world economic and social order should be in the hands of a democratised and strengthened UN.

■ change in the European Union: We are in favour of the EU evolving from a European economic and monetary union into a European employment, social, environmental and peace union. A European programme for future investment in employment and the environment and a minimum tax on capital yields and company profits as well as democratic control of the European Central Bank would be important first steps. Nation states and the European Union have to enter into a new relationship. The key to that is democratisation of the nation states and the EU. We will not accept the militarisation of the EU and demand dissolution of European battle groups and renunciation of European armament projects; we oppose European military deployments and call for dissolution of US military bases in Europe. There is a need for a humane and democratic European asylum and refugee policy that prevents Europe from increasingly being turned into a fortress against people from other parts of the world.

## IV. For a Change of Direction

So far, the neo-liberal zeitgeist still prevails. Strikes against workplace reductions, demonstrations against Agenda 2010 and Hartz IV, and electoral successes of the left show that it does not have to remain that way. Citizens are beginning to resist. The key strategic task of the Left is to change the balance of forces as a precondition for a shift in direction. We therefore have the following strategic objectives:

■ confronting the ideology of neo-liberalism and developing alternatives: We counter the neo-liberal ideology with alternative positions offering a different path of development. We shall link these with experiences and conflicts in the enterprises and in everyday life and give expression to them in the public debate in a popular and assertive manner. We see the economic and social problems primarily as the result of false, neo-liberal-inspired answers to the new challenges under the influence of capital interests and as an expression of crisis processes and inconsistencies generated by the capitalist economy. In the public debate, DIE LINKE stresses 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, formation of networks and participation in scientific discussions.

■ alliance against neo-liberalism: It will only be possible to resist the influence of neo-liberalism if a broad alliance and broad-based political movement for a shift in direction is formed in our society. We proceed from the common interests

of wage and salary earners in Germany and on a European and international scale. We want to contribute to a social alliance that brings together highly qualified workers and core personnel as well as those in precarious and part-time jobs, plus unemployed and self-employed persons and socially oriented entrepreneurs. We shall support alliances against right-wing extremism, racism and anti-Semitism. We want to speak to all men and women who take a stand for social justice, emancipation and more democracy, peace and the conservation of nature, regardless of their origins and world views.

■ strategic cooperation: It will only be possible to change the social balance of forces if the political Left together with strong forces of the trade unions, globalisation-critical and other social movements take an active stand, together with socio-critical initiatives and progressive representatives of science and culture, against neo-liberalism and all oppressive relationships in society. As a political party, we shall take up the concerns and activities of such movements and perform our own functions. We shall encourage our members to take an active part in those movements.

■ extra-parliamentary and parliamentary work: We shall mobilise citizens against drives for dominance by the ruling class and work for a new broad-based movement. Political struggles and elections are used by us to advocate our alternative reform projects and gain majorities for their implementation. We shall organise our parliamentary work in such a way that it serves the purpose of coopera-

tion with extra-parliamentary forces of the Left, publicity for our own reform proposals and the introduction of alternative legislation, transparency of political processes, investigation of the abuse of political power, the development of new social power relationships and political majorities. All members of state and federal parliaments should be obliged to make details public concerning the amount of their revenues. It should also be transparent who the revenues are received from.

■ social protest, development of alternatives and entitlement to shape policy: DIE LINKE will bring together social protest, the struggle for social improvements and the development of reform alternatives under the given capitalist conditions and the shaping of development paths that lead beyond the present society. None of those three aspects can be neglected in favour of the others.

■ participation in government: This is for DIE LINKE a means of political action and shaping of society if the prerequisites are given and if DIE LINKE distinguishes itself publicly in a recognisable manner with alternative left projects. The yardsticks for participation in governments are the improvement of the situation of disadvantaged persons and reinforcement of political co-determination and the implementation of alternative projects and reform plans. It must promote a shift in the balance of forces to the left and the start of a change in policy. However, DIE LINKE will enter into coalitions with other political parties only if it can do so without compromising its principles. Public welfare services must not be privatised. DIE LINKE will take a stand in governments to

ensure that public services for citizens are not worsened as a result of staffing cuts and to prevent the curtailment of social benefits. DIE LINKE – whether in government or not – is strong only to the extent that it is anchored in the society and receives the support of the society. Left policy requires driving criticism, public pressure and extra-parliamentary mobilisation.

■ parliamentary alliances with other political forces: We enter into such alliances only when it furthers the shift in political direction that we aspire to. At the same time we stand for a new political style of transparency, social dialogue and direct participation of the citizenry. In our policy we shall take into account the different possibilities of political action at the municipal, state, federal and European levels. Decisive for having a shift in policy implemented, however, is the federal level. It is there that most of the requisite competences lie and the course is set in most cases.

■ activity in the Party of the European Left: The Party of the European Left is a new factor in the political life of Europe. Like our party in Germany, it is a step towards the unification of the left and offers an opportunity to get together and shift the balance of power towards a social, democratic and peaceful Europe.

We want to create a world in which the dignity of each and every person is really inviolable, in which social justice, freedom and self-determination, democracy and peace are united, in which human beings live in harmony with nature. We work for that goal in a broad reform alliance. Together we fight to ensure that capitalism is not the last word in the history books.

## V. Postscript

The »Key Programmatic Points« presented here emerged from an intensive process of discussion in the Joint Programme Group of the Linkspartei. PDS and the WASG. A diversity of remarks, pointers and suggestions from both Parties were included in the draft. It is apparent that the »Key Points« rest on a solid foundation of common programmatic views. At the same time we can see that a number of issues and questions still need to be discussed and answers need to be found. Here are a few questions to stimulate subsequent debate on the programme of the new Left party:

■ What possibilities and instruments are there for democratising the economy and subjecting the power of disposal over property to social criteria? To what extent must capitalist property relationships be abolished for that purpose? How should

democratic control of the main lines of economic development be realised?

■ What does the new Left party consider to be a desirable relationship between civil society engagement, market regulation, the national welfare state and international institutions?

■ Can the demand for full employment still be a realist goal of alternative politics? Are our political concepts sufficient to achieve that goal?

■ To what extent can the process of globalisation be organised democratically and socially, and what possibilities are left for nation-state politics?

■ Is it enough to demand a need-oriented basic social income for people in social need or must one demand an unconditional basic individual income as a legal entitlement for all citizens?

- What does it mean and what needs to be done if female autonomy is to be moved to the centre of feminist socialist politics and a political economy of oppression of women is to be overcome in which women work more than men but are judged to be less productive?
- With what real contradictions and conflicts will we be confronted in the future when we advocate the preservation and expansion of public ownership and what should be our attitude towards them?
- What is the stand of the Left in the human rights question on the relationship between social and individual civil rights?
- Do we justify left politics primarily with reference to the concerns and hardships, needs and interests of the majority of the population, especially wage and salary earners and the socially disadvantaged, or primarily from value orientations and political objectives? What is the importance of the reference to class interests and class struggle for our politics?
- What are the specific tasks of a party as opposed to social movements? How must we shape the relationship between extra-parliamentary and parliamentary work? Under what conditions can a Left party participate in government at the state or federal level?

## **Impressum**

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