

Equal opportunities for all.

Green basic income guarantees participation in society

Poverty is not just a matter of empty wallets – poverty also means not having any opportunities, not being able to develop your abilities, a sense of not belonging. Green policies aim to guarantee self-determined participation in society and to secure people's livelihoods. Our concepts are targeted at precisely those who are easily forgotten – disadvantaged children and young people, people looking for work and low earners, people living with disabilities or who need to be cared for.

We believe that anyone unable to look after themselves should receive a basic income actually sufficient to secure their livelihood. What's more, we need fair minimum wages and must promote employment. We have called upon the Federal Government to recalculate unemployment benefit rates and to adjust them to the rise in prices. We propose replacing the existing standard rate of Euro 351 for an adult without dependants with a new rate of Euro 420. The requirements of children and young people should also be determined separately and increased.

Focusing on children

Our concept for a Green basic child allowance consistently makes the child the focus of support. A basic allowance amounting to the minimum socio-cultural requirement should be paid for each child. We have so far assumed a monthly amount of Euro 330. Since all children are equally valuable, but have different opportunities at the beginning of their lives, parents will have to tax part of the basic child allowance depending on their incomes.

Protecting old people against poverty

We aim to protect the elderly against poverty by offering a guaranteed minimum pension. This should be paid to all those who do not qualify for an adequate pension due to having raised children, cared for relatives, periods of unemployment or low income. We intend to finance the guaranteed minimum pension from taxes, so that higher earners also have to contribute – a matter of fairness. This basic pension must also allow people to participate in society in riper years. We propose introducing a retirement savings account open to all, whether self-employed, employed or trainees. A contribution of Euro 3,000 per year and all revenues should be exempt from tax.

Securing future opportunities for children and young people

Anyone serious about combating unequal opportunities and educational deprivation must promote children's development at an early age and on an individual basis, i.e. must invest in education. We have long called for a legal right to all-day childcare and education for all children aged one and upwards. A quality offensive, with better trained specialists and uniform quality standards, is urgently required.

Putting the right to vocational training into action

Tens of thousands of young people on the lookout for training positions end up being put on hold each year – a tremendous waste. We want to use the sum of almost four billion euros that costs each year to establish inter-company training centres. These should supplement companies and vocational colleges – the "plus" in our "DualPlus" concept. This system would then offer new training positions regardless of economic developments.

A pact for students

Thanks to years with high birth rates and the rising proportion of young people qualifying for university study, we have the opportunity of educating significantly more young people at our universities. With this in mind, we have pushed for the University Pact concluded between federal and state governments to be turned into a genuine "pact for students". This will require creating and providing proper financing for additional university places. The OECD average amounts to Euro 10,600 per year, two thirds more than the federal and state governments have so far budgeted. By working on the "cash follows students" principle, we intend to ensure that all federal states participate fairly in financing this move.

Funding education is our priority: the education surcharge

Just over one third of all school leavers in Germany aim to study at university, an astonishingly low figure for such a highly developed country. The reason for this lies in a school system which selects and separates children rather than promoting them. In no other country is a child's educational performance so dependent on its parents' social status as it is here – with negative effects both for individuals and for society as a whole.

That's why we Greens see education funding as a top priority. We aim to gradually reallocate part of those revenues from the "solidarity surcharge" for the Reconstruction of Eastern Germany not required by 2019 into a so-called education solidarity surcharge. Not only that, we are pressing for the ban on cooperation between federal and state governments from the first round of federalism reform to be lifted. This would enable the first all-day school programme already introduced by the SPD-Green government to be further enhanced and upheld.

Making study affordable

Green student financing puts an end to the current system's absolute dependency on parents' incomes and pays all students a minimum of Euro 200 per month. Students from lower-income households would also receive a non-repayable grant. This way, we aim to remove these young people's fear of taking on debt and convince them to study.

Education grants for adults

We have designed an adult education grant which really does facilitate lifelong learning. Living costs are financed by an individual mix of grants and loans during periods of initial and further training. Anyone wishing to sit their school qualifications later in life should receive money to live from during this period – and that in the form of a full grant. This way, we can support all those who did not move consistently from one educational stage to the next in younger years. Not only that, the Federal Employment Agency should dedicate half of its training funds to supporting people with low skills.

Fair healthcare – solidarity for all: universal health insurance

Access to healthcare is also distributed unjustly. Socially disadvantaged people are ill more often and die at an earlier age. That is due in part to the fact that the preventative measures offered by health insurance companies often do not reach them. That's why we want to support preventative measures which reach people in their everyday lives. We aim to promote every child's right to healthy development from the very start. All these factors are accounted for in our draft preventative care bill. This provides for a sum of Euro 500 million to be made available for preventative care in a first stage by federal and state governments, social insurance agencies and private health insurance companies. On federal level, we must set clear prevention targets and define quality standards.

The way in which state health insurance is currently financed is unjust. Those with high incomes and the best health on average are able to escape from their duty towards society by taking up private health insurance cover. Not only that, contributions to state health insurance are only levied on wages, salaries, pensions and unemployment benefits. Income from investments and profits, on the other hand, are exempted from contributions. In view of this, we have spoken out in favour of universal insurance for healthcare and nursing care, one which expects solidarity from all members of society and accounts for all types of income. That will finally put an end to the two-tier treatment in our healthcare system.

Support with nursing care

Anyone looking after relatives or friends in need of care alongside their daily work requires assistance. We have proposed a three-month care period for all employees needing to organise nursing care for relatives or friends or to offer terminal care. During that three-month period, employees should be protected against dismissal and entitled to return to the same job.

New approaches in drug policy

All forms of addiction deserve our attention, whether they involve dependence on legal or illegal drugs, or on gambling. We have therefore developed a comprehensive drug policy approach which is rational and based on people's needs. The parliamentary group's proposals include alcohol and cannabis prevention, as well as prevention of medication addiction, improved protection against passive smoking, and the use of cannabis for medicinal purposes.

A level playing field for integration

One key area of social justice is the integration of immigrants and refugees. In a society characterised by diversity, it is a matter of promoting equal rights of participation for all. In 2006 we presented "Prospective Citizens", our Green integration concept. Everyone should be able to contribute towards the development of our country. Rather than an integration policy based on recriminations, we want to be able to discuss on equal terms what society has to do and what immigrants should contribute to achieve equal participation in society.

Strengthening immigrants' rights

The integration policies of the Grand Coalition, by contrast, disregard immigrants' rights on a regular basis. We introduced integration courses in 2004, but the Grand Coalition has drastically cut back spending on these. We brought in draft legislation to liberalise naturalisation law to enable these people to identify rapidly with our state and society, but the government tightened up the legal requirements even further. As a result, the number of immigrants acquiring citizenship has plummeted. We proposed granting voting rights to immigrants for local government elections, improving the Antidiscrimination Act and granting residence rights in the case of forced marriages – all of these initiatives were blocked by the Grand Coalition.

Consumer rights – a new generation of civil rights

Green consumer policies aim to achieve transparency, self-determination and the protection of weaker players in the retail and service sectors. Consumers should enjoy freedom of choice. If you are not well-informed, you can easily be conned – at the bank, on the telephone or in the waiting room.

Opposition parties can exert pressure, as was demonstrated by our draft bill to introduce passengers' rights. Our resolutions on genetic engineering, pesticides and obesity showed the Federal Government the way forward in the field of nutrition policy. With the Green's Consumer Information Act we pushed the

Grand Coalition into introducing information rights following the rotten meat scandals. We successfully called for fines for unfair advertising and cold calling. Here as well, however, the Grand Coalition blocked adequate solutions and innovative progress.

In the Committee for Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection we campaigned again and again for better financing for consumer advice centres. Our motions on citizen-friendly healthcare policies, digital consumer rights and greater consumer protection on the financial markets reflect our ideas concerning a modernised, socio-ecological economic model. Our initiatives make both consumers and companies aware of their responsibilities in terms of environmental and climate protection, social welfare standards and sustainable consumption.

Practical policies for modern consumers

We have developed practical models for today's consumers. We want to set up independent market watchdogs for the financial and energy markets in order to monitor developments, provide information and arbitrate in disputes. Class actions should enable consumers to join forces when contesting issues in court. For foodstuffs, we want to make the fat, sugar and salt content visible in the form of a traffic light label. A sustainability seal should show the implications of a given product both for people and for the environment.

We call for social welfare rights to be granted without people having to go to court to obtain them. Patients and those in need of nursing care should be able to find their rights set out in a separate law. As neutral arbitrators, we want to deploy ombudswomen and ombudsmen to enable disputes to be settled at an early stage.

Further information about this topic -->

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On www.gruene-bundestag.de >> Plenum >> Initiativen (<http://www.gruene-bundestag.de/cms/initiativen/rubrik/4/4544.html>) you can find the following green motions (in german):

- BT-Drs. 16/7113 Means-tested adjustments to standard rates (*Regelsätze bedarfsgerecht anpassen*)
- BT-Drs. 16/9028 No child should be left behind – launch programme to combat child poverty (motion) (*Kein Kind zurücklassen – Programm gegen Kinderarmut auf den Weg bringen*)
- BT-Drs. 16/12687 Building the future, boosting education (motion) (*Zukunft schaffen, Bildung stärken*)
- BT-Drs. 16/7136 Financial sustainability and boosting consumers rights – for a nursing care insurance consistently based on users' needs (motion) (*Finanzielle Nachhaltigkeit und Stärkung der Verbraucher – Für eine konsequent nutzerorientierte Pflegeversicherung*)
- BT-Drs. 16/11202 Promote support of lifelong learning (motion) (*Förderung des lebenslangen Lernens voranbringen*)

On www.gruene-bundestag.de >> Fraktion >> Beschlüsse (<http://www.gruene-bundestag.de/cms/beschluesse/rubrik/3/3814.html>) you can find the parliamentary group resolutions (in german):

- Cornerstones of study financing (*Eckpunkte Studienfinanzierung*)
- Patients in focus (*PatientInnen in den Mittelpunkt*)

- Prospective citizens – for a new deal on integration into society (*Perspektive Staatsbürgerin und Staatsbürger – Für einen gesellschaftlichen Integrationsvertrag*)
- Green consumer policy (*Grüne Verbraucherpolitik*)

Further topics

Climate (<http://www.gruene-bundestag.de/cms/english/dok/306/306448@de.html>)

Jobs (<http://www.gruene-bundestag.de/cms/english/dok/306/306468@de.html>)

Freedom (<http://www.gruene-bundestag.de/cms/english/dok/306/306475@de.html>)

Green Global (<http://www.gruene-bundestag.de/cms/english/dok/306/306507@de.html>)

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