

**Basic Program of the
Ecological Democratic Party (ödp)**

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In the Ecological Democratic Party (ödp), people unite in their work to face the crucial challenge of our time: the global crisis with its ecological, economic, social, cultural, and ethical aspects.

Neither resignation nor superficial optimism is appropriate in this situation. Instead, we see in the crisis our opportunity to create a new and positive way of dealing with nature and our fellow creatures, and to restructure the rules of human social life. In this process we take the problems by their roots. With integral thinking and joint action we implement responsible solutions and develop visions for a long-term "life-friendly" world.

1. How we live today

We are living in an era of unlimited delusions about our abilities. Everything seems possible, every-thing justifiable. It is frequently economical reasons rather than ethical principles that decide our ac-tions. But the principle of "always farther, always higher, always faster" is increasingly backfiring on us.

Fast consumption of non-renewable resources, over-exertion and damage of the global eco-systems, disturbance and destruction of important plant and animal habitats with a consequent loss of species, emission of huge amounts of pollutants into soil, water, and atmosphere – all these are the results of the current prosperity model, which is biased towards material consumption. Starting from the rich, industrialized countries, this model is becoming a dangerous role model for an increasing number of people.

This seeming prosperity in the industrialized countries is accompanied by a growing destitution and misery of many people in the so-called Third World. Social and economical injustice, a lack of educa-tional opportunities, and structurally undesirable developments further exacerbate the vicious circle of poverty, hunger, and increase in population, and force many to destroy their natural living environ-ment or to flee from their homeland.

But also in the economically strong countries, grave social crises are developing. More and more peo-ple live in fear of loosing their jobs, or their social security. Many are already living under the bread-line. History teaches us that social insecurity can lead to support for authoritarian political tendencies, and thus endanger tolerance, democracy, and respect for human rights.

In addition, there are growing signs of an extensive civilization crisis. Many people feel uneasy in view of the increasingly accelerating and far-reaching developments. They feel they are at the mercy of a strong process of concentration in economy, administrations, educational establishments, etc. Ever more complex structures promote a sense of anonymity, and a feeling of no longer being able to par-ticipate in and organize the course of events. Moreover, in the presence of multiple problems, dangers, and overload in a society going through a rapid change of moral values, a sense of crisis and disorien-tation develops: The flight into superficial distractions, questionable leisure-time amusements, and consumption of drugs increases. The search for orientation frequently leads to religious sects con-temptuous of mankind and false messages of salvation, and to extreme nationalism. In addition to that, a loss in public spirit and the increasing spread of the principle of elbowing others out are clearly recognizable.

2. Our image of the world and the people in it: "I and we", responsibility, vision

The ödp stands for an image of mankind which respects the concept of "I and we" as a unit: just as the rights and the dignity of the individual human being have to be respected, his/her responsibility for the whole society and his/her dependence on the various communities of life should also be accentuated. Only those who respect the individualism and the communal ability of man does justice to character, and can exploit all related positive potentialities.

Above all, the realization that we are integrated into the overall context of life on earth is part of our view of mankind and the world. People can only be regarded as "homo sapiens" (rational man), if they realize and accept their dependence and responsibility in addition to their special abilities. Today, without giving up the essence of traditional ethics which relate to the dignity, rights, and well-being of mankind, we need to extend our perception and our thinking: the integral nature of the ecological system must be recognized and appreciated; animals and plants should be respected as autonomous manifestations of life with their own specific value.

We formulate the goal for human rights as follows:

All human beings have a right to the protection of their basic means of survival (clean water, clean air, intact soil, intact atmosphere, variety of species, clean habitat without pollution, beauty of nature). These must remain ecological human rights in themselves and as the basic prerequisite for the life of the generations living today and of those to come, as far as possible relieving the damage which has already occurred.

This goal can only be achieved with a new kind of extensive public spirit which overcomes the elbow-ing-out and consumption principle within human communities as well as the world-wide egoistic attitude of mankind towards fellow creatures and nature as a whole. We must prepare for a new social contract: what we plan, decide and do has to be in everyone's interest – of the people living today, the generations to come, and our non-human fellow creatures.

The principle of the "I and we" commits us to the preservation and constant renewal of the welfare state, and also to the development of a just world-wide distribution of wealth. A policy like this be-comes the more necessary, the smaller the room for distribution becomes, and a "less" of material ownership may become inevitable. On a limited earth with a continuous increase in population it can-not be the goal to raise the luxury and the comfort of a small part of mankind ad absurdum. Instead, the basic means of survival of mankind must be protected and nurtured on a long-term basis. This also implies the preservation of dignity, respect for human rights, access to education and medical care, and humane and healthy family planning on a world-wide basis for all people.

Above all, it must be ensured that all people find work which is socially and ecologically responsible. Enforced unemployment is a grave handicap to human dignity. Conversely, it is also degrading for human beings to work destructively. Therefore, work must be created which makes sense, work which has been suppressed should be rediscovered and responsible work should be distributed fairly. Considering the technological development and the saturation of consumption in the industrialized countries, the total amount of necessary work will continue to shrink. We reject a policy of a persisting artificial increase in demands at the cost of the basic means of survival. However, there is no reason for resignation, because the reorientation of our way of life following sustainable procedures is a great challenge which also produces employment.

A policy which orientates itself along the lines of "I and we", will eventually strive for increased solidarity between different groups of society, e. g. between the older generation, and youth. In the same way, existing patriarchal structures must give way to a togetherness between men and women with equal rights. The achievements of other people should be just as much appreciated as the enrichment of society resulting from a diversity of opinions. Neither impairment nor age, illness, individual life crises, nor where people come from may lead to exclusion or discrimination. The unborn must be protected by society and law from the very beginning. The integration of foreign fellow citizens and help for refugees and the persecuted are a matter of course for us.

The **ödp** commits itself to vision and sustainability. All political concepts have to be globally compatible on a long term basis (principle of globality and perpetuity). Today's policy does not comply with these requirements: It still one-sidedly accentuates national interests or fulfills the demands of the people living today at the cost of coming generations. Transferring ecological, social, and financial burdens into the future is extremely irresponsible towards our children and grandchildren.

Policy has to support and to make use of every justifiable, constitutional, and successful means of solutions to problems.

The democratic civil society has developed various possibilities of political solutions to problems: full information, open discussion of the different moral orientations, opinions, and points of affectedness, active participation of citizens, voluntary change of behaviour based on reason, regulating law (prohibitions and mandatory regulations enacted by the state), incentives, taxes, and charges. All constitutional and humane means are to be applied in stages, in order to solve the various problems. Here, the **ödp** sets the point of emphasis on reason, sharpening the awareness of moral values, voluntary change of behaviour because of reason, incentives, and control by an intelligent, ecological, and socially effective tax reform, which is neutral to total tax yield and social contributions.

In democracy, the open exchange of views of people who are informed as well and as fully as possible remains the most important requirement for an effective solution to problems. Therefore, the formation of huge power cartels in the world of media and the danger of an extensive manipulation of opinions which is connected with this must be prevented. It is equally important to respect the classical separation of powers, to preserve the federal structure of the state, and to effectively prevent and disentangle the connection between economic power, parliamentary decision, and executive. In order to preserve a really open and free society, the communication of all participants must be demanded, but the conglomeration of power at some few points and single persons or groups has to be prevented.

3. Issues and solutions

Economy must recognize ecological foundations

The present economic concept, which is solely oriented towards material consumption, will fail. It is contemptuous of essential scientific-ecological, but also central economic principles. In particular, it simply ignores the fact that the planet's resources are limited. Economics which do not pay attention to ecological foundations, is neither sustainable nor rational. That is why we, like many specialized scientists, commit ourselves to the basic principle of sustainability as the foundation of every human activity: Only what can be realized and justified for a long time and world-wide may be planned and translated into action today.

In order to move from the short-term wasteful economy practiced at present to a sustainable, ecologically responsible economy, harmful action (e. g. burning of fossil fuels, chlorine chemicals) must be made more expensive, and desirable action (regenerative energies, renewable natural resources, intelligent, effective procedures) be made cheaper by a far-reaching tax reform. Most importantly, the consumption of energy and natural resources and the emission of pollutants which goes with it has to be burdened with taxes. In compensation for this, the economy gets relief by the gradual reduction of taxes on human labour (incidental labour costs) which is customary today. Private households are relieved due to considerably lower value-added tax which is socially and ecologically blind. While the legal situation does not approve this, the consumers are repaid a per capita apportionment ("eco-bonus") in compensation for the ecological taxes paid by them. This rewards all those who consume little energy, and burdens those who act unecologically.

Our goal is a market economy which deals rationally with non-renewable materials, uses and develops renewable sources, organizes itself decentrally, expresses politico-economic damage in prices on energy and natural resources, and which is forced to accept social and ecological responsibility by governmental limitations. The conventional goal "to increase gross domestic product" has to be replaced by the goal "stabilization of the life cycles". In order to achieve this goal, ecological open-mindedness and the willingness for continuous dynamic development in research, technology, and organization are required.

Preserving the diversity of species and natural habitats

We call for a halt in economic activity if the superior goals of the preservation of species and means of survival require this. The last natural landscapes, the remaining diversity of flora and fauna, the streams of ground water, the fertility of the soil, and many other natural resources are of such high value that we can and must take them into consideration. The still remaining natural areas are to be protected against disturbing encroachments, isolated nature reserves must be networked. The consumption of space has to be stopped.

In educational establishments awareness for and knowledge about the network of life have to be promoted.

The German European and foreign policy has to commit to energetic support of these goals of the protection of species and the means of survival, and to the safeguard of preservation of the still remaining natural stock at international conferences and in the EU and UN committees.

The main principle of modern society:

"Total competition", "rebirth of the collective", or "I and we"?

During the last decades, an opinion – coming from a radically liberal school of economics – asserted itself almost dogmatically which allows the self-interest of individuals as the only valid basic presumption. This, together with a misunderstood kind of Darwinism short-circuited onto human society, resulted in a dangerous unculture of selfishness and omnipresent rivalry – the elbowing-out society is imminent.

In contrast to this, there is the danger that ideologies of community which are hostile to freedom (especially race-based nationalism) is gaining in influence again: These false doctrines have, in the history of the 20th century, been the cause of terrible crimes, contempt of human rights and dignity, genocide, and war.

The **ödp** regards the extremely liberal approach to an exaggerated individualism as wrong and dangerous. Even more perilous, however, is collectivism of any colour. The **ödp** stands in the tradition of a view of the human being which recognizes a polarity of "I" and "we" and wants to form the social order according to a "field of tension between individualism and social-mindedness" which can be experienced in many areas. All rules, offers, institutions, and programs are to respect the rights of the individual and make the exercise of them feasible. At the same time, however, the social order has to invite solidarity, to orient itself towards public welfare, and to stimulate responsibility for oneself. State and society have to be organized according to the principle of subsidiarity as a support for coping with the risks of life. They are also to respect and create rights as well a commit burden in a certain way. Thus, as a compensation, overburdened and discriminated members of society can be relieved and promoted.

The cultivation of this idea must advance on all levels: in practical legislation, in the open discussion in society, in journalism, art, education and science, in the composition of curricula, in town planning, in the forming of models of participation, and in many other activities. Public spirit must be experienced, learned, stimulated, and accepted as a central basic attitude of people thinking and acting in a self-confident and responsible way. This is the basic requirement for, and not the opposite of, a free way of living.

The principle of the welfare state remains valid

The welfare state stipulation of article no. 20 of our Constitutional Law may not be undermined. The point is to continually renew this important foundation of modern policy, and to adjust it to the needs of the time. For example, we will very soon have to succeed in reducing the one-sided burdening on the factor of work with social contributions, and also to draw more strongly upon the other factors. In particular, the consumption of resources can and must, in future, bear a part of the financial burdens of an efficient social system by means of taxes. The main issue of a modern social policy will be to put through an employment policy of a new kind: Work which is ignored today (e.g. education, care of family) has to be appreciated, new kinds of work (development and application of ecologically beneficial technologies, revolution in efficiency) have to be initiated, and in general, work has to be redistributed in manifold ways. This is the only way to avoid today's cost explosion resulting from a high level of benefits (as a result of unemployment) with a massive decrease of contributors at the same time.

Justice for those who raise children and nurse people – protection of the unborn

For us, the family as a source of security during the first years of life is still the proven way of life. These are the years in which people gain the experience which essentially forms their later behaviour as adults. Therefore the **ödp** criticizes the system of injustice towards families and single parents which has been predominant for decades and which gaining strength. We are not interested in population policy: the free choice whether to have children, and how many, is one of the crucial rights of privacy of adult people. However, as long as the social system is constructed as the so-called "Generationenvertrag" (generation contract), the financial burden of children's upbringing has to be justly divided between the parents and society. This is not the case today: Those who devote themselves totally or partially to bringing up children in the family often have to accept a decrease in income, higher costs, and, finally, even a reduced pension. Present family policy does not even come close to ensuring a more just distribution of burdens among men and women, between people who bring up children and the childless. On the contrary, even the subsistence level of families has been taxed.

That's why we clearly commit ourselves to the goal that society, within the scope of a just distribution of burdens for families, contributes to the costs of bringing up children to a much greater extent than at present, that the time taken to bring up a child is taken into account appropriately, and that bringing up children and nursing relatives ("family work") has to be socially appreciated as a productive activity which is liable to taxation and social insurance as well as being remunerated to a greater extent than with the present children's allowance. In addition, where it is desired, the compatibility of family and gainful employment has to be ensured by creating better conditions for part-time employment for men and women and by providing good child care in pre-school and school institutions. Models for financing a just family policy are at hand: By means of remuneration for bringing up children, a kind of salary, other payments such as the ridiculous public assistance for single parents could be replaced. Furthermore, unemployment insurance would be considerably relieved.

A just family policy is also a basic requirement for the ethical protection of the unborn. It enables families, and especially mothers, to adopt and to bring up a child without fear of serious disadvantages.

Redefining work, freeing it from burdens, and dividing it fairly

The term "work" needs to be extended beyond the concept of gainful employment as it is understood today. Socially necessary and valuable activities which have been practically ignored in the past, e.g. family work must also be financially acknowledged.

The continual humanization of work as a very important goal may not be given up. Work which is harmful to mankind and nature must be replaced by socially and ecologically compatible work. This can be achieved by a tax reform, which is basic, ecological, and modelled neutral to total tax yield and social contributions. A model which has been examined and approved by many experts and institutions for the solution of this important problem, was submitted a long time ago; the political determination to implement it is missing.

The **ödp** supports any efforts to promote partnership in economy; the ethical element of market economics has to be updated and strengthened by participation of employees in profits, models of incentive wages and the participation of all members of a company in entrepreneurial responsibility (especially concerning the security of jobs).

We support the market economy – but it must be ecologically and socially compatible!

The currently existing one-sided burdening of work with taxes and social contributions should be drastically reduced for human work to become affordable again. In particular, the absurd disproportion concerning the taxation of the factors work, consumption of resources, burdening of nature, and revenue on capital has to be effectively corrected: today, a large part of total taxes and social contributions is received as a burden on the work done by human beings. The other factors are only burdened with a fraction of this quota.

After an extreme increase of productivity, with a satiation of needs at the same time, the terms "full employment" and "right to work" have to be redefined. Instead of overloading a part of the people within working processes, the existing tasks of human work have to be appropriately and justly distributed among all people. An appropriate distribution of tasks among all people can mean a reduction of income for some people. However, the gain in privacy also means more quality of life.

Agriculture – natural and subsistent

Agriculture, originally the quintessence of an ecological circuit economy for the benefit of mankind, has become ever more industrialized and driven to mass production. The results of this development are disastrous: Soils are leached and contaminated, the situation in mass animal production is indefensible, more and more agricultural enterprises are forced to give up.

The **ödp** supports agriculture which is compatible with nature, with proper care of animals and natural forestry. The ecological-social market economy makes intensified agriculture uneconomical and supports the regionalization of the food-supply including direct marketing. Farmers get additional sales potential via new tasks, e. g. in the field of ecologically sensible production of raw materials and regenerative energy sources.

The chaos of the agrarian subsidies has to be replaced by a simple system of performance payments. The **ödp** proposes a contract for secure living on a basis of reciprocity, which, on the one hand, provides ecological cultivation, and, on the other hand, ensures a secure income and real prospects for agriculture. Only in this way a stop can be put to the decline of farming businesses. At the same time, the rural, social, and cultural structures will be preserved.

Protecting animals

Animals are our fellow creatures. Thus it may not be tolerated that they are tortured, abused, and destroyed million-fold every day, neither in the name of science nor because of greed for profit or ignorance.

The animal, unmistakably closely connected with man in its emotional life and its capacity for suffering, has a right to a proper life without torture. Thus the protection of animals has to be included as a state objective in the Constitutional Law.

The species-damaging battery animal industry has to be abolished in the same way as harrowing animal transports. At the same time, any import of products manufactured to the detriment of animals has to be prevented. Any physically or psychically torturing experiments on and with animals are to be prohibited.

The commitment against torture and abuse of animals is a part of the ecological movement in its fight against the progressing spoiling and destruction of nature.

Renewing democracy

The **ödp** unconditionally supports the free and democratic order, as the Constitutional Law of the Federal Republic of Germany and the constitutions of the Federal States prescribe it. This order has given to the Germans a measure of freedom, unequivocal administration of the law, and possibilities of development which cannot be held in high enough esteem. Nevertheless, an actualization of the catalogue of State objectives should be done within the scope of a careful constitutional reform. In order to embody the protection of the natural foundations of life in the Constitutional Law as the most important and superior goal, it has to be added to the basic rights as an obligation on any public authority, and to gain the status of immediately applicable law. Similar policy applies to the protection of animals.

However, democracy needs constant commitment of women and men of all generations and levels of society, continual renewal, and the effective correction of undesirable developments. In order to counteract the recognizable aversion of many people to the formation of political will and active participation, but also in order to strengthen the efficiency and the credibility of the democratic institutions, the **ödp** intends to initiate some reforms.

The influence of powerful lobbies must be limited

The highest possible independence has to be secured for the democratic decision committees, so that the state can become the advocate of public welfare again. Thus we support a strict separation between political mandate and representation of economic interests as well as for a prohibition of donations to parties by companies and large organizations. Today, political decision-makers are often indebted to powerful groups and their short-term interests, by consultant agreements, directorships, and gifts. Credibility, objectivity and the continued survival of democratic institutions are suffering as a result. This dangerously strong influence of lobbying as well as an emerging infiltration of corruption into the political system of the Federal Republic is to be consistently fought against, if necessary with the aid of new statutes.

The courage to be honest

The holders of political responsibility have to meet the existing willingness of the citizens to share burdens for the protection of the future, justly distributed in a solid way: they may no longer displace the gravest problems, hide the truth, and palliate hard facts. Nothing contributes more to people's rejection of politics than the experience of not having been taken seriously.

Understanding and peaceful communication

In politics special emphasis has to be put on a language which is understandable, and which respects the dignity of all persons involved. Many people are of the opinion that the issues of policy are too complicated and untransparent for them. In addition, they are afraid that the political debate often leads to insult and to damage of personal dignity.

Implementing democratic civic rights

Policy and administration have to be organized so clearly and close to the people that the citizens are able to participate in plans and decisions. Referenda and plebiscites should be possible on municipal, state, and federal level.

In order to make it possible for the environmental associations to put through their requests we support a general right of associations to bring suit.

Strengthening the parliament, preserving the separation of powers

The creeping loss in importance that the elected parliament has been experiencing for a long time compared with the government, can only be changed by an understanding of roles of the majority parliamentary group: they are also committed to the control of the executive power, and have, as representative of the people, to look after and to act for the rights and the interests of the citizenry. If the representatives of the majority parties unreservedly side with the government, the separation of powers, as one of the basic pillars of democracy, will suffer.

Preventing the accumulation of posts

Since political opportunities for participation and responsibility ought to be divided among as many persons as possible, we support a clear reduction of the accumulation of mandates and posts.

Ensuring inner security

The democratic state has to be in the position to ward off dangers arising from the expansion of organized crime. Increasing criminality is a challenge to society and state, because the citizen's right to security is not fulfilled. In this situation, in addition to an effective police and judicial system, moral courage is also required, which has to supersede the mentality of turning a blind eye.

The direct fight against crime should not remain the only measure, as frequently only symptoms treated, and the causes lie in our society and its political and economic organization. Thus, the **ödp** supports extensive measures for the prevention of crime. These range from the improvement of social conditions to upbringing and education to mutual respect, right up to the renunciation of the presentation of violence in the media.

Peaceful partnership in Europe and one world

The **ödp** supports the formation of a political union of the European states on the basis of a democratic constitution which, according to the principle of subsidiarity, ensures the necessary rights for the regions and the states with a directly responsible regulation of their concerns. Conversely, the union, with the help of democratically legitimated organs, has to be able and entitled to deal with all those concerns which require supra-national regulation.

The **ödp** supports an active and creative role of the Federal Republic of Germany within the scope of the UN and of many other supra-national organizations. Equal-ranking goals of foreign policy and of partnership in international cooperation are:

- the peaceful solution of conflicts, prevention of conflicts, and finally the establishment of peace, with the least possible military effort in the scope of the UN,
- the effective cooperation for the stabilization of the basic means of survival,
- protection of human rights and the establishment of a high level of welfare and justice in all countries of the world,
- the world-wide proscription of ABC (atomic, biological, and chemical) weapons,
- the step-by-step disarmament of all powers relating to any weapon systems.

Only an active peace and justice policy can stop the destitution of huge parts of mankind and create the basis for an extensively "life-compatible" development. The Federal Republic (of Germany) is, as a part of the industrialized North, jointly responsible for life-preserving international cooperation, because this part of mankind is still to blame for the highest consumption of resources and the worst burdens of the biosphere. In addition, there is still the obligation to remove the historical guilt of colonialism (the exploitation and the destruction of intact communities on the southern hemisphere for many generations). In this sense, we insist upon a policy of cancellation of debts of the poorest countries, so that they can put their development on a realistic basis.

Global Perspectives

International community

Mankind will survive or perish together. This knowledge requires a different approach to international tasks. The world society has to develop its own order, universal peace ensured, economic power politically controlled, resources, technology, and knowledge justly distributed, and our natural means of survival protected in the long term. The United Nations can take us closer to this goal. Therefore, their importance has to grow. They must become an instrument of non-violent world internal policy. Our aim is to strengthen them politically and financially.

We support the strengthening of the International Court for ensuring essential human rights, the reform of the Security Council, and the establishment of international committees on arms control within the scope of the United Nations.

Social and ecological minimum standards

We strongly support the advancement and the Europeanization and gradual globalization of the principle of the welfare state: The goal must be to reduce social and ecological "dumping" by international agreements. With the help of the UN and the World Trade Organization, the world-wide construction of an old-age pension has to be built up, as this, together with improved education, is the most important contribution to dealing with population growth.

Dealing with technology in a responsible way

We have become hugely dependent on technology. Because of negative experiences (nuclear technology) we insist on the basic principle that the introduction of any technology has to be reversible.

An international agreement on research into gene-technology and production is overdue. The minimum goals have to prohibit operations to the human

idioplasm, to achieve a predicative bio-ethical convention, and to stop the use of gene-technological procedures in agriculture and food production. The use of atomic energy must be rapidly reduced. Ethically, it is a sorry situation when even those states which have voluntarily committed themselves to the renunciation of nuclear plants of any kind, in a national solo attempt, are endangered by radioactive catastrophes.

A new key concept – sustainable development

Unfortunately, most of the most powerful nation states and, influenced by them, also a series of inter-national or- ganizations are being led by a false key concept of development: Short-term success in economic growth is being striven for, disregarding the long-term social and ecological costs. Germany has to change the objective in its own sphere of responsibility and at the same time as a partner within Europe.: only the model of sustainable development can be successful in future and deserves any fi-nancial and personal effort. The question of the long-term protection and stabilization of the basic means of survival should be prioritized for discussion in all international agreements and organiza-tions.

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This document was translated from german to english without payment mostly by Volker Reusing (ödp member), translation corrected and completed by Susan Ring (professional translator)