



The SPD's programme for the future

What we stand for. What drives us. What we are striving to achieve.

1.0. Future. Respect. Europe.

We are facing enormous tasks in Germany, Europe and the rest of the world at the beginning of this second decade of the 21st century. To some extent, the Covid-19 pandemic has overshadowed some of the pressing issues of our time and has brought others into sharper focus:

- Will we manage to secure jobs and prosperity in the future and ensure full employment, or will we accept that some people remain without a job?
- Will we overcome increasing social inequality, or will we accept that only a few people are able to secure the highest incomes and the best prospects for themselves, whilst the burden and risk fall on the shoulders of those who cannot defend themselves?
- Will we be able to change our lives and economies to halt man-made climate change?
- Will we take control of the digital transition as a democratic society, or will the development of the digital world continue to be dictated by a handful of technology companies?
- Will we ensure equal participation and more social cohesion, or will we accept that our society is drifting further and further apart, thus making things easy for populists and nationalists?

The new decade has been marked by the challenge presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, a crisis that has resulted in harsh restrictions for many citizens and businesses. The general willingness of people to practice solidarity to protect us all and to accept restrictions in personal freedoms is all the more remarkable.

The next few months will give us the chance to return to a new normality, which will overcome the restrictions of public and private life step-by-step. But even then, we will still have to live with Covid-19 and many things will be different. The experience of this crisis will be inscribed in the collective memory.

What we have all discovered is that nothing can replace personal interaction in the long run. But we have also learned how to collaborate and communicate online. Another thing we have by now all come to realise is how critical the work is that many people do for our daily lives and survival, but which up to now has not received the recognition and certainly not the financial rewards and job security it deserves. The fact that families depend on a crisis-proof and reliable educational, care, child and youth work infrastructure has been urgently demonstrated.

To overcome the crisis, joint efforts are required which can generate a new sense of courage allowing us to confidently tackle the great tasks of our time. We wish to consolidate and build upon everything we have achieved up to now. We want to tackle climate change, create jobs for the future, distribute

opportunities and burdens fairly, maintain social cohesion and counteract the risk of social division. We Social Democrats are determined to tackle these challenges. Most of the citizens of our country are united by the need for respect, cohesion and confidence to forge a good, secure future in Germany and Europe.

This confidence is born of the belief that we can influence the course of our lives and society. Ever more members of the public want to have a say in the direction in which we are heading. This has become evident with the increasing awareness of ecological responsibility, the heartfelt concern about decreasing social cohesion, and in the mounting criticism of the inequalities within our society.

What the Covid-19 pandemic has once again shown is that profit maximisation and cost minimisation must not be considered as the be all and end all of things. Too many measures in the health and education systems, the judiciary and other important areas have been tightly calculated and with too little room for manoeuvre. Yet our society remains stable even under adverse circumstances and in situations of crisis. We need to do all we can to keep it that way. This stability is the result of the impressive solidarity and fundamental democratic values of our society. New acceptance and enthusiasm as well as a new respect for democratic institutions will be reached by greater transparency and public participation.

Respect for the diversity of people and lifestyles is one of the main foundations of social cohesion. This diversity is an invaluable asset, and we will ensure that it is properly reflected in all areas of our society, both in our parliaments and in other participation forums.

Many people in Germany are doing well economically, also in comparison with other countries. Yet this is not true for everybody and many people lack the certainty that this situation will continue. Our policies will help to overcome inequality, guarantee security in the face of social change, and instil a new sense of confidence.

1.1 Securing the future

A brief look into the future: we will have a climate-neutral economy by 2050 at the latest. Our energy sources will be wind and solar power, supported by a clean hydrogen economy. Public buildings, schools, and supermarkets will be solar powered, and there will be financial incentives in place for climate-friendly businesses. We see a massive potential for good and secure jobs in the course of meeting this challenge of the century. Germany is a successful exporter of environmentally friendly technologies because it has been able to introduce sustainable production processes and to make the 2020s a decade of renewable energies.

By gauging future economic success not only in terms of gross domestic product, but also in terms of the well-being of society and nature as a whole, we will master the socio-ecological economic transformation, provided that the state creates the right incentives by setting down clever rules that result in social and technical innovations, by promoting science and research, by investing heavily and continuously in a modern infrastructure, by providing active support for regions in transition and through general public and specific employee participation. This will make jobs sustainable and create decent new jobs. In this way, we will secure incomes and prospects for everybody. We want to see a new socio-ecological contract that will ensure that nobody is left behind during the transition process.

1.2 Renewing respect

What the Covid-19 pandemic has shown all of us in Germany is the extent to which we depend in our everyday lives on the work of those whose incomes have often been barely enough to earn a living. Supermarket cashiers, bus drivers, cleaners, care workers, and educators all deserve greater recognition, which should also be reflected in good incomes and working conditions.

During the Covid-19 pandemic we saw the value of a functioning welfare state. Unlike some other countries we were able to mitigate the consequences of the crisis. But the effort that we as a society still have to perform also became clear. The continued incomplete equality between men and women is a case in point, shown especially by the fact that many people suddenly saw themselves cast back into old role models. The lack of protection for artists and the self-employed, overpriced housing – not only in major cities –, and the lack of infrastructure in rural areas all need to be addressed.

In our view, respect for the dignity of all citizens should mean that everyone has the right to equal opportunities and a secure existence. Among the things we regard to be basic rights and prerequisites for familial and social stability are a place to live, childcare facilities, access to free education, mobility, culture, sports, a fast Internet connection, the means to access knowledge, reliable digital services for an active civil society, healthcare, co-determination at work, a reliable pension, and good old-age care.

We advocate a society based on mutual respect; one which is free from prejudice and in which all citizens experience equal respect. We all owe each other respect, whether someone has gone to university or not, was born in Germany or elsewhere, in the East or West, whether female, male or diverse, whether young or old, rich or poor, with or without disabilities. None of these things should make any difference to the personal dignity and esteem in which each and every person is held. We want a cohesive society and resolutely oppose hatred and agitation, any form of exclusion or discrimination, and the strengthening of extreme right-wing forces.

We wish to create equal living conditions throughout Germany. This includes completion of German unity and reduction of the imbalance between major cities and their peripheries, between traditional industrial regions and new booming zones, and between urban and rural areas. These are precisely the areas in which the challenges of major social transformation processes and structural change become most apparent. Respect for and recognition of specifically “East German” life experiences and achievements are central to boosting trust in democracy. One of our objectives is to increase the visibility of East Germans in all walks of life.

1.3 Strengthening Europe

Travelling, working, studying, or simply living without borders and boundaries: the European Union (EU) has shaped the lives of millions of people, opened up new opportunities and freedoms, and enabled many to experience how immeasurably valuable cultural diversity is for our societies. It has shown that we can achieve more together, and this will be particularly important in the future.

We will only be able to assert our European values and interests in a competitive global environment if Europe is united internally and capable of taking external action. We wish to safeguard liberty and the rule of law in Europe and make the EU the most modern democracy in the world. We also want

Europe to take the lead in climate protection. We want a digitally sovereign Europe based on a value-based digital economy. By investing in our shared economic and innovative strengths, we are strengthening Europe and making it the most modern, socially responsible, sustainable and competitive economic area in the world, thus securing the foundations of our prosperity. In this way we are creating the conditions for a sovereign Europe that stands for social justice, prosperity and human rights and is united in the struggle for a fairer, more peaceful, and sustainable world.

Only by standing together will we ensure a humanitarian and solidarity-based refugee policy. Our community is rooted in democracy, liberty, and the rule of law. We will not allow Europe to be divided by nationalist hatred and populist agitation.

We are serious about European solidarity. We took strong action at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic to launch the largest recovery fund in the history of the EU, a solidarity effort that mitigates the social impacts of the pandemic whilst furthering socio-ecological change and promoting innovation. Europe is getting worldwide recognition for this effort. We want to build on this to renew trust in Europe and prevent economic and political divisions within the EU.

1.4 Opting for social cohesion

We have achieved a lot as part of the governing coalition and our successes have a recognisable social democratic character. They include the extension and increase of the short-time work compensation scheme, the Covid-19 child bonus, a higher family allowance as well as more money for the expansion of day-care centres, shaping of the Covid-19 economic stimulus package with a focus on economic stabilisation, social security, and ecological transformation, in addition to significant restriction of contract and temporary work in the meat processing industry. We forced through the basic pension, minimum training allowance, fixed part-time work contracts, and the abolition of the solidarity surcharge for low- and middle-income earners.

The upcoming federal election is about where we go from here. Some wish to dismantle the welfare state and cut social benefits. Our counterproposal is a welfare state that will enable everyone to cope with change and deal with future crises. Our response to all those in favour of countering the crisis through austerity measures and subjecting all areas of life to the laws of the market, consists of central missions for the future and concrete investment priorities.

This is our programme for the promotion of our objective – greater mutual respect in Germany, Europe and the rest of the world.

II. A future that is worth living for

We can see a lot of positive things, but we also see many things that could be done better. We also see developments that need to be changed or stopped to allow a prosperous future, and which is why we intend to secure, maintain, and expand our prosperity while at the same time protecting the climate and the environment. We will ensure that all citizens can live their lives and pursue their personal development objectives in a safe and secure manner.

Many members of the public view state action as a repair shop: sometimes a screw is turned one way, sometimes another. We want to do away with this political nit picking. We are interested in tackling the tasks of the future.

This is why we have outlined four future missions that are of central importance to us: combating climate change, the future of mobility, digitalisation, and the healthcare system. We will tackle these four future missions with a view to modernising the economy, promoting cutting-edge technology in key industries, safeguarding our livelihoods, and creating jobs for the future.

These missions will require a high level of public investment as well as a socio-ecologically oriented economic and financial policy. We intend to pursue these objectives in collaboration with science, business, trade unions and the public and to shape the development of a climate-friendly infrastructure on the basis of a new infrastructure concept supported by of all sectors of society. This demonstrates our ambition of modern and collaborative governance.

2.1 Mission for the future I. A climate-neutral Germany

Our objective is to have a completely climate-neutral Germany by 2050 at the latest, without nuclear power. But dates are merely symbolic to start with. With the climate protection law, the SPD has pushed through an effective control mechanism for reaching Germany's climate targets. The phase-out of nuclear energy has already been agreed upon. We will also have phased out coal as an energy source at the latest by 2038. These are decisions of historic significance.

By 2050 at the latest, living, working and doing business will no longer have any negative consequences for our climate. Germany's energy supply will be based entirely on renewable energy sources, and our buildings will be heated efficiently using renewable energy. German industry will still be a leader on the global markets, precisely because its production will be CO₂-neutral, and will be exporting the technologies required for the climate-neutral world of the future. This will enable us to secure jobs for the future while at the same time enabling us to achieve our ecological objectives.

In order to guarantee that we will be able to live, work and do business in Germany by 2050 without producing greenhouse gases, we intend to ensure that all our electricity is obtained from renewable sources at the latest by 2040. To realise this plan, the right decisions have to be taken now, namely expanding the use of renewable energies and digitalisation of our electric grids, increasing energy efficiency, developing storage technologies and hydrogen production facilities as well as a suitable transportation network, investing in climate-friendly industrial production processes, and by modernising residential buildings, factories and schools.

Renewable electricity will be used in all sectors. Wherever direct electrification does not make sense, we will need large quantities of hydrogen from renewable energy sources. The combustion of hydrogen does not emit any greenhouse gases and hydrogen is easy to store. It is abundant and can be produced by breaking water down into oxygen and hydrogen. It will not be possible to achieve climate neutrality without producing clean hydrogen on a large industrial scale.

We need to expedite the expansion of electricity grids and increase the number of hydrogen pipelines and charging points for electric cars. Development of these infrastructures must anticipate demand. Our plans for the construction of sustainable infrastructures have to extend beyond 2025.

We will forge a pact for the future between the federal government, the states, local authorities, and various umbrella organisations in which binding expansion targets for renewable energies will be agreed upon. To ensure that the energy transition becomes a win-win situation for everybody, we will invite citizens and communities to participate by encouraging landlord-to-tenant electricity supply and

community self-sufficiency models, expanding community participation schemes, and introducing sustainable electricity bond systems. During the implementation of the coal phase-out, we will make sure that the coal-mining regions get reliable support to create new value-added products and sustainable jobs.

We want to ensure that solar systems are fitted on the roofs of all public buildings and any new commercial buildings that are suitable for this purpose. Our objective is to install a solar system on every supermarket, school and town hall. We will provide specific support for innovative forms of renewable power generation, such as integrating photovoltaic systems in building envelopes and on agricultural land and will launch new strategic energy partnerships.

We will also need to use energy more efficiently when we switch to renewable energy sources. We will further develop energy efficiency targets and standards.

A carbon price has been applied for national emissions trading since the beginning of 2021, which in combination with other measures, such as the environmental bonus for purchasing an electric car, and subsidy programmes for replacing heating systems, serves as an incentive for the purchase of climate-friendly alternatives. We will abolish the apportionment of costs under the Renewable Energy Act in its existing form by 2025 and pay for it from the federal budget to promote the use of renewable energies in the transportation and building heating sectors (sector coupling). The revenues from the carbon price will be used for this purpose as well.

This will also contribute to the socially fair financing of the energy transition because it will significantly reduce the overall cost of electricity. We will ensure that low-income earners will not be left behind. We will also look into whether the increased carbon price might enable additional compensatory measures such as a per capita bonus.

The building sector also has to gradually become carbon-neutral. Our objective in imposing a carbon price is to direct investments and give landlords an incentive to modernise. We still have much to do, especially in the current rental housing market. We have set ourselves a target of five million homes that use innovative heating and energy systems (e. g. heat pumps) by 2030. We will create legal regulations to ensure that the cost of CO₂ is borne by landlords, because our goal is to ensure that the cost of housing, including heating, is carbon neutral. We will also provide state support for investments in heating networks and neighbourhood heating schemes.

We will introduce a long-term industrial strategy to provide planning security for the socio-ecological transformation of our economy. In conjunction with the Green New Deal, this industrial strategy will be embedded in a pan-European solution.

We will provide state support for the transition to climate-friendly production processes by providing investment support and compensating for the costs of climate-friendly technologies, these being currently higher. We will eliminate all climate and environmentally harmful subsidies. We will create a market for environmentally friendly raw materials. The public sector, as a major builder of roads and buildings, will start to increasingly procure climate-neutral raw materials for buildings, and as of 2030 will exclusively procure such materials. We will use said measures to secure our industries and make the offshoring of production and emissions less attractive. We will also ensure that the cost of electricity for industry is competitive for companies that have to compete at an international level.

We will no longer waste resources. We will transform our economy into a circular economy. We need to significantly reduce the amount of waste produced in Germany. Apart from recycling, we will develop a concept to secure the supply of raw materials needed for environmentally friendly production.

We will support key industries in their transition to climate neutrality and develop and promote specific transition targets. We shall transform Germany into the leading market for hydrogen technologies by 2030 to promote climate-neutral production of steel, low-carbon cars, trucks, shipping and aviation.

2.2 Mission for the future II. Europe's most modern mobility system

All people must be able to get from A to B quickly, reliably and in a climate-friendly manner. To achieve this, we are rethinking the concept of mobility, which should be sustainable, affordable, barrier-free, and reliable. Increasing numbers of people are switching to buses, trains, or bikes, yet cars are still important for many. Pollutant emissions from cars, however, will be reduced to zero. Our mission is to provide climate-friendly mobility for everybody.

We will bring the transport transition forward, and by 2030 we will have Europe's most modern and climate-friendly mobility system in place. This is a task for the country as a whole, to which the Federal government will contribute, but which also entails obligations on the part of the federal states and local authorities. Our objective is a mobility guarantee: everybody – whether they live in cities or the countryside – should have access to local public transport. To this end, we will use the benefits of digitalisation, putting in place new mobility services that give access to networked mobility systems which can be accessed via online platforms. We are in favour of models such as the 365-Euro-Ticket and projects aimed at free local transport services.

We plan to launch a so-called Mobility Plan 2030, which will raise local public transport and rail services to a new level. The federal government will contribute to this through replacement programmes ensuring that all new buses and trams in urban areas are climate-neutral by 2030 and that existing fleets are upgraded. Funding programmes and amendments to road traffic legislation will assist towns and cities in creating more space for public transport, pedestrians and cyclists. We will improve road safety in line with "Vision Zero", especially for the many cyclists.

We will promote the establishment of barrier-free mobility stations at intersections to support sustainable urban mobility to ensure that as many people as possible start using environmentally friendly forms of transport rather than cars. We will establish a national control centre to support the development of regional mobility concepts and ensure local participation at an early stage.

One of the priorities of our transport policy agenda is train travel, which we feel should be a cheaper and more attractive option than flying within Europe. We want to quickly implement synchronised travel schedules in Germany (the so-called Deutschlandtakt) and a similar scheme for the whole of Europe (the Europatakt). We will invest in expansion of the rail network, in noise protection, and the development and improvement of railway stations to make them more attractive. We plan to reconnect all major cities to the long-distance rail network and to establish new rapid 24-hour rail connections to neighbouring countries. As a priority, we will make local transport more enticing by investing in the service and quality of trains and buses and by reactivating old railway lines. We will

enable more frequent, reliable schedules, more comfortable trains with Wi-Fi coverage, and seat reservation options.

We want to electrify at least 75 per cent of the rail network by 2030, as well as continuing to digitalise railway services, and promoting mandatory ways of using non-electrified railways such as the use of hydrogen-powered trains. We consider Deutsche Bahn AG to be a guarantor of reliable mobility and will manage it as an integrated public enterprise. We will prevent any price cutting by low-cost providers by obliging all providers to comply with collective tariff agreements, legislating for the transfer of all employees in the event of a change of operator, and guaranteeing good working conditions in public procurement legislation.

We want Deutsche Bahn AG to focus on its core business of transporting passengers and goods by rail, and to pursue public policy objectives. We want to expand and modernise rail freight transport. We will invest in the renewal and digitalisation of trains and waggons and reduce the cost disadvantages of rail compared with road transportation whilst increasing the capacity of rail freight transport. We will exploit the potential of our inland waterways better so that more freight can be shifted from trucks to our environmentally friendly inland waterways.

The future is all about electric drive systems. We want to play an active role in shaping this development to ensure that the automotive industry continues to be the leading industry and the future of numerous small and medium-sized suppliers, and the jobs these provide remain secure. We want to see a massive increase in the electrification of transport: at least 15 million cars in Germany should be fully electric by 2030.

We will make Germany a centre for the production of batteries and the recycling of used batteries. The hydrogen fuel cell will also play an important role in heavy-duty transport. We will support further research on this technology. We support the automotive supply sector's desire to transform production processes and develop new business sectors. Together with our social partners and local stakeholders, we will build up regional transformation clusters to create new, skilled and well-paid regional employment opportunities.

We will make it as easy to recharge a car battery as it is to fill up a tank with petrol or diesel oil. We plan to carry out quarterly evaluations of progress in the increase of recharging points for electric cars and, where necessary, to use coverage obligations and state interventions to ensure reliable accessibility of recharging points.

We will introduce a speed limit of 130 km/h on federal motorways. This will protect the environment and significantly reduce the road accident quota. We will also provide support for research, development and pilot projects aimed at reducing harmful CO₂ emissions from ships, aircraft and trucks. We will combine these efforts with projects aimed at building an environmentally friendly hydrogen-based economy.

2.3 Mission for the future III. Digital sovereignty in Germany and Europe

By 2030, Germany shall have a world-class digital infrastructure, a fully effective digitalised administration and an education system which provides all the necessary learning opportunities and skills to live in a digitalised world. Our guiding principle is the self-determination of all citizens to ensure that everyone benefits from digitalisation.

Fast, secure, and affordable Internet access is an essential commodity in the 21st century. Germany must become a “gigabit society” in the 2020s. Especially rural-based small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which often operate on a global scale, depend on fast Internet connections to remain competitive. In order to keep this promise, we will guarantee that every household and business will be provided with an Internet speed of at least one gigabit per second, and will achieve this through legally binding expansion and coverage obligations and corresponding interim targets. Network operators must also fulfil their responsibilities in this context.

Our objective is to create a modern, citizen-centred state that provides all members of the public with easy digital access to its services. To this end, we will extend federal, regional and local obligations to provide digital administrative services and provide online access to these services as quickly as possible. All members of the public should be able to access these services using a digital identity, on a voluntary basis and in compliance with data protection laws, with no additional costs or devices. Anyone who is entitled to a benefit should receive it automatically without having to apply for it. Wherever possible, publicly funded software should be developed in a clear and straightforward manner using open-source codes and should then be made available to the public.

One of our objectives is to ensure that all schools in Germany are equipped with first-class facilities. All pupils and students should have access to a digital device and the Internet. The federal government and the states have already taken a big step towards the free provision of online teaching materials with the Digital Pact for Schools (*DigitalPakt Schule*) and an economic stimulus package. We will continue to invest in this sector and will establish a federal modernisation programme covering both the provision of digital devices and renovation requirements for school buildings. In particular we will focus on the provision of all-day schools.

In addition to improved infrastructure, we also need to improve coordination of the actual teaching process. We need appropriate teaching and learning materials for inclusive, holistic education: using an open-source platform, which has already been commissioned and funded under the Digital Pact scheme, teaching and learning materials as well as teaching concepts will be accessible to everyone in all the German states. These will be open, decentralised, secure and networked with each other. One of the central objectives in this context is to improve the media competence of children and young people.

Another requirement is a system that can check and ensure the quality of the media posted on this type of open platform. We will provide support for the development of privacy-compliant intelligent teaching and learning software. Our objective is to individualise teaching and learning processes, to provide the best possible support for pupils, to train teachers and lessen their work burden, and to improve internal differentiation in (digital) learning groups. One of the key elements of the digital school concept is teacher training, which is why we intend to launch and support nationwide networked competence centres for digital teaching and learning.

In our view, digital learning also includes personality development and the promotion of social skills, so we will include not only the pedagogical, talent-oriented approach to child and youth welfare but also early education and will implement a digital pact for child and youth welfare.

We should not allow society to be divided by digitalisation: Internet access must be affordable to low-income earners, school children and students, to which end we will create a social tariff for Internet access. Digital participation includes accessibility: all members of the public should be empowered

with the right to digital self-determination. We need to ensure the legal right to digital education and training for all generations. Adult education centres in particular are ideal for providing digital education for all citizens in an inexpensive, barrier-free and inclusive manner. We will support the development of adult education centres by way of a federal funding programme.

We welcome suggestions for a European media platform which will make the quality content of Europe's public service media accessible to all members of the public throughout Europe. At a later stage, this platform will also be accessible to partnerships with museums and other cultural institutions. We also welcome the increased publication of content under open and free licences, which makes it easier to use the content via free knowledge projects (such as Wikipedia) or in school lessons.

We stand for the digital sovereignty of citizens and consumers. When global Internet enterprises gain a monopoly, this poses a threat to digital diversity. Such enterprises often attempt to circumvent national rules and regulations, which is why we and the other EU member states intend to put robust and precise legislation in place to ensure competition and promote alternative services. We need more services with high levels of data sovereignty.

We need alternatives to the major Internet service providers and real opportunities for local providers. User data must be protected, and users must be able to decide how their data is used.

When individuals accrue too much market power, it harms competition and ultimately the consumer. We want to stay ahead of market developments and introduce preventive and proactive competition and antitrust legislation. We will integrate an increasing number of preventive controls into our anti-trust legislation. We will also develop new EU instruments to tame or, if necessary, unbundle Internet operators which become too powerful.

It must be possible to communicate between or switch to different messenger services, social media networks, digital services and platforms. We will make this interoperability a legal requirement.

We need EU-based development and production of the necessary components to prevent US and Chinese manufacturers from having an exclusive power to decide about the success and network security of digital infrastructures in Europe. To achieve this, we are calling for a strategic and long-term joint European effort to build a common European development and production infrastructure for such components.

We are in favour of a targeted and coordinated support effort for the German and European digital economy at all levels of technology and throughout the entire value chain – from semiconductor manufacturing and quantum technology to the cloud and artificial intelligence, and from edge computing to online security, secure and trustworthy hardware and software as well as network technology and data-based business models.

Models based on open-source code are immensely important to European companies. We are committed to creating a European cloud infrastructure.

Data should be made available for digital services and innovations oriented towards the public good rather than only being available to a few major data monopolists. We will implement data legislation that puts the focus on the common good, and to this end we will promote a trustworthy data-sharing

infrastructure and establish public data trustees whilst simultaneously ensuring that major corporations are required to share their data for the benefit of the general public. Whenever the public sector awards contracts, it must have the right to insist that the data collected under the contract are returned to their source. We are in favour of the development of anonymisation technologies and advocate punitive bans on de-anonymisation. The state should set a good example in terms of data sharing and should enable broad open data access. We will support the authorities in implementing this technology.

Online trading and the Internet economy are having a dramatic effect on commerce. We will promote Internet sites for regional trade and services to ensure that not only the major Internet corporations reap all the benefits. Local trade must not fall behind online trade in terms of taxation, which is why we have ensured that online trading platforms are held liable when traders who carry out transactions via their platforms fail to pay VAT. We will continue to take forceful steps to prevent tax fraud in online trade.

Algorithms send us new suggestions every day: song proposals, new trainers, routes from A to B. Self-learning systems and algorithms make decisions for many people and can help to make our lives and everyday decisions easier. But they must operate in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner. The purpose of an algorithmic decision must be defined in a clear and verifiable manner, and for this reason we need stringent regulation and supervision.

The basic requirement for successful digitalisation is online security. We will strengthen the German Federal Office for Information Security as a central, independent and exclusively preventive online security authority and will promote research into encryption technologies. We want to put manufacturers under the obligation to design software products, digital services, and technical devices so that they are secure (security by design) and select the most secure options in their default settings (security by default).

We will protect the right to data self-determination. The General Data Protection Regulation is an important milestone, and its practical enforcement needs to be improved, and so we need well-equipped and effective supervisory authorities for data protection. Privacy and data protection create trust and secure individual and collective decision-making freedom. The German Federal Constitutional Court has ruled that “the public pursuit of freedom” must not be “entirely recorded and registered” by the collective state surveillance measures. We will create a permanent, regular and independent system for monitoring security sector legislation.

Numerous journalists and freedom fighters around the world are protected by the possibility of remaining anonymous and using pseudonyms on the Internet. We oppose the compulsory use of legal names on the Internet and continue to advocate the use of anonymous protocols and pseudonyms, as this is an important prerequisite for freedom of expression and providing the best protection against discrimination.

We also need consistent action against hate crime, fraud, and other Internet crimes to protect our democracy and individual security. Law enforcement agencies need sufficient technical and personnel resources to detect and prosecute crime committed on or with the aid of the Internet. The means to identify suspects when there are sufficient factual indications of a criminal offence must be available. We will continue to work on the national protection provisions set out in the German Criminal Law

Code and German Network Enforcement Act and we support the introduction of binding regulations at EU level (Digital Services Act).

However, it will require not only legislation but considerable public effort as well, to restore respect between citizens in online communications. We assure our support to organisations actively opposing hate crimes and incitement on the Internet.

2.4 Mission for the future IV. Updating the healthcare system

More political attention has to be paid to the health sector and the necessary reforms. We need a clear vision on this issue for the coming decades.

Germany had been considered the “pharmacy of the world” for decades. The smartest scientists worked in German institutes, where they raked in Nobel Prizes, and the undisputed best medical industry in the world was created here. Patients all around the world were supplied with every conceivable remedy, from aspirin to vaccines against tuberculosis, all made in Germany. What the Covid-19 pandemic has now shown is that the outsourcing of pharmaceutical production to foreign countries and the consequent increase in dependency can result in supply shortages or even bottlenecks.

Germany needs to fall back on its innovative strength to fight disease once again. BioNtech is a good example of how the targeted promotion of innovations and new methods can be successful, that the health economy is not about pure market forces, and that lives can be saved through the active intervention of the state. We view it as our duty to ensure that medicines developed in Germany are not overpriced and/or in short supply in poorer countries.

One of our objectives is to standardise development methods for personalised medical care to make it accessible to everyone at affordable prices. Customised products rather than “off the shelf” medicines signal the beginning of a new health economy and a new era of the adaptive approval of medical products. Personalised medicine heralds a change in the relationship between treatment and diagnostics. In the future, there will be more single-service products involving a diagnostic test in combination with an appropriate drug. Such services must be made available to all members of the public and we also need an availability guarantee for pharmaceutical products.

Men, women and children – each group has particular health requirements that have to be taken into account when it comes to healthcare and prevention, yet most medical research data is collected from adult males. This is something we are going to change.

The best way to achieve high-quality healthcare is by reorganising the distribution of roles between the outpatient and inpatient sectors and by overcoming the boundaries between different sectors, which is why hospitals ought to provide more outpatient and team-based care services. This would allow private practice teams and hospitals to provide joint services.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown that better framework conditions are needed for the public health sector along with better equipment, including digital infrastructure, hardware and software, as well as competitive remuneration for services.

We want to improve diagnostics and comprehensive healthcare by increasing our focus on the potential of digitalisation. Data is also becoming increasingly important within the healthcare sector. Digitalisation has the ability to improve the quality and efficiency of care and relieve health professionals of various tasks.

We want to ensure data security and appropriate framework conditions to prevent the major Internet platforms from dominating the healthcare industry as well. However, we are convinced that digitalisation will not replace our excellent and dedicated medical staff. Good medical care and nursing always involves people. Training and support services are essential to ensure that everyone – from nurses to established doctors – is able to cope with the digital transformation.

An efficient healthcare system needs stable and solidarity-based funding: tax subsidies and investment funds will have to be combined with well-defined targets to reform the system. We intend to introduce a citizens' insurance scheme. This will ensure equal access to healthcare for all, providing solidarity-based funding and high service quality. Health is not a commodity, which is why the public must be placed at the centre of our healthcare system. The state has to ensure that healthcare services meet the requirements of the people who need them. Good working conditions and reasonable wages in the healthcare sector are an important foundation for this.

Professional nursing is a highly demanding profession. Good working conditions and reasonable wages are an important starting point. Measures taken to overcome staff shortages must not result in the devaluation of nursing jobs. We want to restrict profit-seeking within the healthcare sector, because it has a negative effect on patient care and the working conditions of employees. Any profits gained from the means of a solidarity community, or at least the major share of them, must flow back into the healthcare system. We will review the flat-rate-per-case system and revise or abolish the flat rates where necessary. Public hospitals have a key role to play in strengthening the common good.

Flat rates per case do not meet the individual needs of children and adolescents and result in children's hospitals outside the large urban centres being unable to operate on a financially sound basis and having to be closed. Therefore, we will restructure funding for paediatric and adolescent medical services.

We will ensure that the entire basic funding structure for hospitals is in line with demand and that care services are upheld. This includes expansion of integrated care centres in rural regions.

2.5 Our plans for promoting a sustainable economy

Many ground-breaking developments of the past few decades would never have happened if it had not been for our active and forward-looking policies. Politicians need to set out the long-term goals, determine the overall direction and think of themselves as the drivers of innovation. It is they who have to formulate the essential objectives on which to put the focus on to ensure competitiveness and sustainable jobs. To meet the challenges of our era, we need the state to act as a strategic investor, a regulatory authority and a creative force. The state and the civil service must become drivers of innovation and use their purchasing power for such purpose.

Public sector investment in major future areas of development is of central importance. We will continue the high level of federal government investment of at least 50 billion euros per annum that we pushed through during the current legislative period and we will also help to ensure that all levels of government with a high capacity of investment participate. The towns and cities are key stakeholders in the investment process, and we must maintain and boost their investment capacity. We will need strong and functioning towns and cities throughout the country to achieve this. We have already taken further steps to reduce the social expenditure of towns and cities in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Relieving the particularly highly indebted towns and cities of their existing debt loads will be an important one-off step we will have to take. We will also solve the problem of existing debt particularly for East German housing associations.

Over 300 billion euros per annum are currently spent on public procurement in Germany. As a major purchaser of products and services, the public sector in particular has to assume responsibility. We will reshape public procurement procedures so that they will encourage innovation and contribute towards social-ecological change. To achieve this aim, the award criteria for public contracts will focus more strongly on innovation, collective bargaining, gender equality and climate-friendly sustainability. Product developers must be able to rely on the state as a buyer.

We need to do more to turn ideas into products and services and support start-up companies. In this respect we will promote the faster and broader translation of research findings into innovations and investments.

The German Credit Institute for Reconstruction (KfW), which together with the federal business development banks raises funds on the money markets and forwards them to sectors of future strategic importance, supports the socio-ecological transformation of the economy and provides support for start-ups, has an important role to play in this regard. We will transform the KfW into a modern innovation and investment agency.

We stand in solidarity with the many companies that take their social, corporate, and environmental responsibilities seriously. The key partner for dealing with climate change at a local level is the trade and craft sector. We will support this sector by abolishing fees for the training of technicians and master craftsmen and by supporting collective bargaining rights within the sector. We support the trade and craft sector in their efforts to counteract the shortage of skilled workers by introducing novel training schemes and creating practical links between vocational training and schools and universities. We support and acknowledge the important role of the trade and craft sector in the education and integration of young people from all parts of the world.

Start-ups are important economic growth engines, and we want to make Germany a leading start-up location within Europe, thus creating quality jobs throughout the regions. We are focussing on three key components to encouraging more business start-ups and enabling SMEs to put effective successor planning in place: 1) organisational support, including one-stop agencies for entrepreneurs; 2) easier access to capital through project funding schemes and public venture capital funds and 3) promoting a “culture of second chances” including revised insolvency legislation. We will launch separate programmes to promote business start-ups by women and all over the country.

We want to provide support for businesses that place more importance on the purpose of their economic activities and on the long-term existence of their companies than on short-term profit. To do this, we will develop a national strategy to promote public-welfare-oriented enterprises and social innovations. We will improve the legal framework for businesses that contribute towards public welfare, such as cooperatives, social enterprises, integration enterprises and companies under steward ownership. We already have decentralised structures in place for promoting the socio-ecological and digital transformation of our economy; we want to bundle these structures and turn them into transformation centres acting as workshops of change catering for established companies, social enterprises and non-exit-oriented start-ups, as well as employees, trade unions, and civil society.

We will continue to stand in solidarity with those sectors of the economy, e. g. the culture, tourism and hospitality sectors, that have suffered particularly badly for the benefit of public health during the Covid-19 pandemic. Their situation will be a different one when the pandemic is over. We will place more focus on domestic tourism than we have done in the past. This offers an opportunity to make this central sector of the economy more sustainable, climate-conscious, and modern.

2.6. How we plan to ensure that science and research remain innovative and sustainable

To ensure that we continue to be innovative, we will continue to maintain and build upon the strengths of all aspects of the German research system in terms of its broadness and diversity as well as its international orientation. To this end, we will promote technologies of the future, such as quantum technology, artificial intelligence, alternatives to animal testing, and hydrogen technology in many locations around the country.

We will support universities and colleges in their efforts to advance digitalisation and will promote innovations in teaching whilst also strengthening their importance in research policy, this having a significant effect on the regions where they are located. We are continuing to pursue the “Strategy of Excellence” and supplementing it by providing support for regional collaborations between universities and research institutions. This will also help to ensure that the excellent research community created in the eastern German states over the past few decades will be able to further develop its potential for excellence, particularly in terms of research into innovative technologies.

We want to do more to ensure the equality of women and to reform the Law on fixed-term work contracts in the scientific field in order to safeguard decent jobs in the scientific sector.

In recent years, we have already exceeded our target of putting three percent of state and private GDP into research and development, and we aim to increase this to at least 3.5 percent. To achieve this, we will increase funding for innovation, promote research in SMEs through funding for partnerships and collaborations, and increase funding and credit programmes for SMEs working in the

environmental, climate, and resource protection sectors. SMEs will be given low-threshold access to funding.

The transfer of scientific knowledge to the general public is of particular importance, which is why we will provide more funding for open science and scientific communications.

We will continue to move forward in solidarity with other members of the EU to ensure that Europe is able to compete and maintain its sovereignty in the international technology markets. We advocate the reorganisation of competition and state aid legislation to reduce competitive disadvantages vis-à-vis other major economic zones. The socio-ecological transformation will require vast investments in the climate-neutral restructuring of industrial value chains. Legislation concerning state aid must enable the state to use public funds to provide the capital input that companies need, thus preserving jobs.

2.7 How we plan to fund our policies

The Covid-19 pandemic is having serious consequences, also for public budgets. Government spending has increased whilst tax revenues are shrinking. Adopting a policy of austerity following the crisis would be the completely wrong course of action. Those who are advocating this measure are putting our future at risk or are calling for significantly cutbacks in welfare-state services. We stand for a financial and budgetary policy that will provide funding for the major investments of tomorrow, thereby creating sustainable jobs, enabling climate-neutral growth, and promoting social cohesion.

We shall therefore ensure that adequate funding is made available for the priority areas set out in this governmental programme. To do so, we will use all credit instruments permitted under the constitution. The fair distribution of income and wealth is a basic prerequisite for our social cohesion. Not only is the current extremely unequal distribution of wealth and income critical from the socio-political perspective, it does not make any economic sense, either. The high and increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of a few wealthy individuals is preventing sustainable growth and squandering valuable potential.

We will enforce taxation fairness by taking forceful action against tax evasion, tax avoidance and tax fraud. We have introduced the obligation to disclose cross-border tax structuring models and plan to introduce a regulation on the national disclosure obligation. We will end land transfer tax evasion (share deals). VAT fraud in connection with 'carousel transactions' at European level must be stopped. One good way to hold companies accountable is through public transparency. We will curb tax avoidance by major international enterprises through a public reporting system (public country-by-country reporting).

We will make income taxation fairer: the current tax system places far too great a strain on middle income earners in particular. The financial costs of overcoming the Covid-19 crisis must not result in an additional tax burden for the vast majority of citizens, who are already struggling. On the contrary, we advocate lower taxes for the majority of the population. We will undertake an income tax reform that will improve small and medium incomes, boost purchasing power and at the same time increase the contribution of the wealthiest five percent of the population in funding important public tasks.

We also advocate maintaining the three percent income tax surcharge for the highest income earners. This will be applied to taxable income in excess of 500,000 euro per year for married couples and 250,000 euro per year for singles.

We have abolished the solidarity tax for most people. We still need the revenue from the remaining solidarity tax, which is only paid by the highest earners. This is their fair contribution towards a stable community that benefits everyone.

Current tax law encourages the traditional division of labour between men and women. We will change this situation and gear tax legislation more strongly towards a partnership model. Tax splitting between married couples no longer reflects our social reality and excludes many households with children from tax benefits, whilst the primary beneficiaries are single-earner couples with high incomes, regardless of the number of children they have. We will change the marital splitting system for newly-married couples to ensure that the vast majority of households with children benefit financially from a basic child allowance, and that earners of a normal income will suffer no losses even if they do not have children. We will also introduce a right for existing married couples to choose between the various models.

We will limit the deductibility of the salary tax for managers to 15 times the average income of employees in the company where the manager is employed.

Until now, eligible expenses, such as donations, have been handled according to the concept: the higher the income, the higher the tax refund. In future, everyone should receive the same tax reduction, regardless of income.

We want to reinstate the net wealth tax, partly to boost the financial strength of the states for important future tasks. The extremely wealthy must make a greater contribution towards financing our community, which is why, among other things, we will introduce a moderate, uniform tax rate of one percent for extremely high assets. At the same time, high personal allowances will be granted to ensure that the tax burden is concentrated on the particularly wealthy sections of the population. We will ensure that the net wealth tax will not endanger any jobs or affect the operational basis of businesses.

Inheritance taxation needs to be reformed, as, in its current form, it unfairly favours wealthy corporate heirs. We will abolish the excessive privileges for large business assets by introducing effective minimum taxation measures. We will also introduce minimum taxation for asset-holding family trusts.

We will introduce a financial transaction tax, if possible, in unison with our European partners. At the same time, we will conclude the ongoing international negotiations on introduction of an effective minimum taxation rate and fair taxation for so-called digital companies, a measure which we have been instrumental in supporting, and we shall continue to work towards this objective in Germany and throughout Europe. Google, Amazon, Facebook and other major digital companies must make an appropriate contribution to public funding.

To finance the transition to a digital and sustainable economy, we need an efficient, secure and fair financial market, one which must be properly regulated and monitored. We will ensure that financial services are offered to consumers at an affordable price and will encourage investment in sustainable, climate-friendly products and production processes.

It is important for small investors in particular to have confidence in the proper functioning and security of financial market operators and financial products, and to have access to independent advice services designed to safeguard their interests. We will provide more help to over-indebted private individuals to rescue them from their financial difficulties if they are unable to overcome these by themselves. We will put more resources into debt counselling: ideally, the debt spiral should be avoided from the outset through a greater range of preventive advisory services.

To transform Germany in its role as a centre of finance, and as a driver for sustainable transformation of the financial and real economy in accordance with the objectives of the Paris Agreement, we will issue even more sustainable government bonds and will work on the development of more certifiable sustainable financial products. Our goal is to channel private capital flows into the development and expansion of sustainable economic structures.

Competition within the financial sector should be upheld and the objective of banking regulations must be to avoid the need for state bailouts. We support the EU Commission in controlling this situation as part of a European merger control system.

We made sure that the German Federal Financial Supervisory Authority (BaFin) was given stronger supervisory powers. We enabled direct audits of company annual accounts by BaFin, which now has the power to carry out sovereign audits, since annual accounts are the most important source of information for investors and consumers. We have also tightened and regulated the supervision of auditors, ensuring that they have to be exchanged more frequently than before. We advocate giving BaFin more competencies in supervising money laundering activities. These powers should reach beyond its current supervisory responsibilities, including those for major corporations. Dirty money must not be allowed to find a home in Germany.

Along with the police, the customs service is an important institution in the fight against money laundering and crime. We will expand the powers of this service and provide effective support for the staffing and equipment it needs to handle tasks relating to illegal employment and undeclared work, organised crime, and money laundering.

We reject the notion of privatising currencies. The same applies to private digital currencies, whose value is kept artificially stable (stablecoins).

2.8 Our governance model

We want to take a more pro-active, effective, agile and sustainable approach to governance, daring to be more transparent, more participatory, and more democratic.

One of the strengths of our democracy is its federal structure. The future is currently being discussed at the federal, state, city, district, and municipal levels. At the same time, the great challenge is for us to pursue common objectives for our future. Therefore, when it comes to implementing our major objectives, we will involve all those in positions of responsibility.

We want to overcome silo mentality at the various levels and in the various departments and organise innovative government projects on various platforms. We need to start thinking outside of traditional patterns. We need to make a concerted effort to modernise the civil service and to improve collaboration at administrative level. We want to draw upon scientific and economic expertise and involve associations and civil society in the development, implementation, and evaluation of projects and to strengthen the control function of parliament.

Democratic shaping of the digital transformation, which encompasses all areas of life and all social, economic and political fields and levels, is one example of how conventional forms of organisation are being overwhelmed by the tasks we are currently facing.

Sustainable governance involves communicating government plans, projects and legislation during their implementation as well as providing sufficient personnel and the appropriate training to ensure that the responsible ministries are able to go ahead with them.

Our actions are guided by the principles of open government, namely transparency, participation, and collaboration. We will implement and continue to develop the National Action Plans within the framework of Germany's Open Government Partnership.

We will evaluate the relevant experiences in collaboration with citizen councils and make it our business to explore new ways of direct participation in government decision-making. Legal channels can be shortened, and procedures expedited through the systematic and early participation of the public in government projects.

We will continue to develop and expand existing legislation of the freedom of information and transform it into an effective transparency law. We will provide public data and information free of charge and without discrimination. We will make the influence of lobbyists on draft legislation visible by instating a legislative and executive “footprint” model, which will make decision-making processes comprehensible.

We will ensure that MPs will be obliged to declare their incomes in euros and cents in future. We will tighten the duty of disclosure rules for members of parliament for any corporate participation activities and shareholdings and will produce clear regulations about what constitutes a conflict of interest between parliamentary and economic activity and how this is to be resolved.

III. A society of respect

We stand for a society based on respect, one in which people appreciate each other, despite their differences. A society in which no one looks down on others and in which differences of opinion are dealt with in a fair and civil manner and on the basis of our democratic principles.

If this respect is lacking, society falls apart. Hate speech on the Internet is eroding our society, providing a breeding ground for right-wing extremists. Our policies are aimed at restoring respect.

- We respect the dignity of every job and every life achievement.
- We stand for equal participation and equal opportunities in life for all. Our policies are designed to ensure equal living conditions in urban and rural areas.
- We are opposed to any form of discrimination, whether this is based on social origin, gender, migration biography, religion, disability or sexual orientation.
- Our policies stand for political and social civil rights, but also for civic duty. This includes abiding by the rule of law.

3.1 Valuing work

Our goal is to achieve full employment with fair wages. Our response to changes in the employment market is a “right to work”. What this means to us is that the solidarity community is obliged to take care of everyone and to make employment and participation possible for all. The nature of work changes over time, and so everyone should have the opportunity to develop their professional skills accordingly.

Work is also about securing livelihoods, which is a fundamental requirement both for the individual and for families. This security is only possible if people are able to make long-term plans – find decent accommodation, pay the rent, give their children a good education and secure a decent standard of living in old age.

That is why we campaign for fair wages. We will simplify the procedures for declaring collective agreements to be universally binding so that they apply to all workers and employers within a given sector. Collective agreements must continue to apply even when companies are split up and outsourced.

We want as many companies as possible to participate in collective agreements. Membership in employers' associations not bound by collective agreements is without common decency and we will discourage this practice. Public contracts should only be awarded to companies that remunerate their workers in line with the applicable collective agreement. To this end, we will create a Federal Collective Bargaining Act. More generally binding collective agreements are also an important prerequisite for equalising wages between the East and West of Germany.

People in full-time employment must be able to live from their work without additional support. This is also a question of respect. We will initially increase the statutory minimum wage to at least twelve

euros and expand the scope of the Minimum Wage Commission to negotiate further increases in future.

We will abolish fixed-term employment where there is no factual justification for this and will critically review the justifications for fixed-term employment accepted by current legislation. From the very first day, temporary workers will receive the same pay as permanent staff.

The Covid-19 crisis has once again demonstrated that the social security provided by so-called “mini-jobs” is inadequate. Our goal is to include all employment relationships in the social security system. This will involve transition periods for existing employment relationships and exceptions for certain groups such as pensioners. We will raise the flexible amount for social security contributions for “midi-jobs” to 1600 euros in order to increase the net income of low earners. Workers subject to this contribution scale will pay lower contributions without lowering their pension entitlement.

We will make it easier for employees to reduce their working hours for a fixed period of time.

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the enormous gap between value and pay in certain professions, including the social service professions. The fact that more and more young people can imagine taking up social professions, girls as well as boys, deserves our admiration and recognition: these are meaningful professions with a future. This is where the majority of jobs are being created.

A tremendous amount of socially valuable work is performed in the care sector. We want to rapidly improve pay and working conditions in the sector of care for the elderly and disabled. We will seek an additional increase in minimum wages through the Minimum Wage Commission for the Care Sector. Our objective is to introduce universally binding collective agreements for the entire sector. We want to collaborate with church employers and their employees to work out a way of bringing their labour laws into line with general labour and collective bargaining legislation and the German labour management regulation. We have ensured that care service providers who pay their staff in accordance with agreed tariff scales will be accordingly remunerated via the nursing care insurance scheme. Conversely, we will now also make the remuneration for care services dependent on compliance with collective agreements.

There is a huge shortage of staff both in hospitals and in care facilities. When we talk about revaluating social work, we also mean reducing workload and stress, which is why we will advance the proposal for a new, nationwide and uniform staffing level framework. Caregivers must be given the opportunity to develop and advance their professional skills.

Well-trained professionals are also needed for social services for children and adolescents. Educators, teachers, social pedagogues and youth workers perform their work with great commitment and perseverance, but there is a staff shortage in this sector, too. With targeted actions to recruit skilled labour we will support the federal states in their further expansion of day-care centres, all-day care services in schools, and youth facilities. We aim to double the number of young people working in educational professions throughout Germany by 2030. To this end, we will create attractive, properly remunerated and tuition-fee-free training opportunities, ensure greater training capacity at vocational schools and create more places in the degree programmes for social work and children’s education, introduce more career options for professionals, and strive for employment relationships that support independent livelihoods.

The Covid-19 crisis has shown how indispensable and important efficient postal and parcel delivery services are for the provision of public services in Germany. Working conditions in this sector are often poor, however. Bogus self-employment schemes and subcontracting have led to many precarious employment relationships. We shall restructure this sector in both social and ecological terms.

Companies owe their success to their employees, which is why we intend to improve co-determination rights. We shall extend their applicability to companies that have a foreign legal status and will extend the scope of co-determination by lowering the thresholds of the size of companies obliged to implement co-determination. Decisions to relocate or close plants should not be taken without employees having a say, which is why we intend to increase workers' leverage by introducing true parity on supervisory boards.

New technologies offer opportunities for further improving working conditions in companies and businesses, thus reducing stress and expanding the scope for employee action. The workforce must be involved on a level playing field when companies go digital.

The last major reform of the German labour management regulation was carried out 20 years ago and it needs to be updated. Our goals are to ensure more genuine co-determination rights relating to employee security and operational changes, to the deployment of temporary workers and contracts for work and services, to the use of new technologies and working methods, such as the use of artificial intelligence (AI), to staffing levels in order to eliminate overwork, and to in-house training as a key prerequisite for successful change. We will extend existing dismissal protection legislation for works council members and tighten the regulations against obstruction of works council activities.

With the advent of digitalisation, work is becoming less and less dependent on specific locations and ever more work is being organised using online platforms. In this context too, workers' rights must remain effective and still apply in full. Trade unions should be given digital access rights to the "virtual" workplace. Employees who work via online platforms should have the right to join forces and negotiate the basic terms and conditions of the work carried out on these platforms. We want to make it easier to define the status of employees. We will introduce trade union rights to file class action suits and a data protection law for employees.

The Covid-19 pandemic has turned some aspects of the employment world upside down, and the home office has gained in importance. Working at the desk at home and video conference participation instead of face-to-face meetings initially felt strange but has now become an everyday routine experience for many.

We will introduce a legal right to mobile work. As a matter of principle and depending on the job, employees should be entitled to work remotely or from home on a five-day working week basis and at least on 24 days a year. Obviously, this must not degenerate into round-the-clock work: normal work and rest periods must apply in the home office just like anywhere else, working times must be recorded daily and in full and employees must be entitled to be "not available" at certain times and be provided with adequate technical equipment and a good accident insurance. To support corporate mobile work regulations, we shall create co-determination rights relating to the introduction and arrangements of mobile work. We consider it essential that employees remain free to choose whether they want to engage in mobile work or not.

We will ensure that everyone can benefit from the transformation of the world of work. This will include creating a better work-life balance and giving people more self-determined time for family life, social commitments and further education, for instance. We will ensure that the Working Time Act retains its protective function. We are resolutely opposed to any extension of daily working hours. Wherever productivity gains reduce labour requirements, everyone must benefit. We support trade unions in their struggle to reduce working times in order to give people more self-determined time or to protect jobs.

Self-employment is an attractive option for many people. Entrepreneurship fosters much-needed innovation. We will create a climate that positively welcomes and supports self-employment. This involves eliminating obvious social security gaps relating to self-run small businesses and to the creative community and improving social security in that field. What the Covid-19 pandemic has shown more clearly than ever is how quickly one can get into difficulties through no fault of one's own and how quickly financial reserves are exhausted. We shall therefore provide better protection for self-employed individuals, including many artists, authors, painters, translators, and developers. To achieve this, we will improve social insurance coverage as well as pension, health, and unemployment insurance for artists. Repeatedly moving between self-employment and jobs subject to compulsory insurance contributions is no longer an unusual way of life.

Anyone who risks trying something new needs some form of security. The existing voluntary continued unemployment insurance contribution scheme provides a suitable safety net. We will improve accessibility to this and provide more security when needed. We will greatly simplify the regulations for persons with permanent jobs and those with temporary employment, for example in the film industry and theatres, and will expand the employment categories subject to mandatory social security contributions. We will introduce a basic obligation to make provisions for old age and gradually integrate the self-employed into the statutory pension insurance system. We have already lowered the minimum health insurance contributions for the self-employed by more than half. Our goal is to introduce income-based contributions like those which already exist for people in dependent employment.

We will also provide better social security for self-employed individuals whose business model essentially provides them with a living income, but for whom unforeseeable significant income losses, for example due to a sudden lack of clients, can mean financial distress. We will create a security allowance programme to provide a new and voluntary solidarity-based insurance scheme for emergency situations beyond the usual seasonal and sector-related fluctuations. The money paid out under the scheme should be comparable to unemployment benefits and would be paid out by the German Federal Employment Agency. Here, the social security allowance financed by the contributions of the self-employed would take precedence over benefits to be paid under the guaranteed minimum pension and job seekers' social-security allowance.

3.2 Improving career opportunities

We advocate an education and training guarantee. Young people need the opportunity to find their first job and start a career. Both they and those who are brave enough to try a new and different profession deserve our respect. Our highest priority still lies in finding company-based apprenticeship and training schemes for young people, because the dual training scheme is a successful model which we want to uphold and encourage. We feel, however, that all companies, especially larger corporations, should take more responsibility in creating sufficient apprenticeships and trainee placements. We are in favour of sector-specific levies on companies which do not provide enough training opportunities. We want to offer vocational school courses or extracurricular training, closely reflecting commercial or industrial practice, to everyone who fails to secure an in-house apprenticeship. The possibility of transition to an in-house training course remains our priority goal.

We will also continue on our course of offering full-time school-based dual training in the healthcare, care-giving and education sectors. This means that the schools would remain free of charge and trainees would receive payment. We will also promote dual academic training schemes and thus increase the importance of professionalism in these fields, while ensuring quality and opening up new career opportunities for employees.

We will strengthen the educational role of vocational schools, especially in rural areas and structurally weak regions. To this end, we will create a pact for vocational schools between the federal government, the states and the school authorities in collaboration with the social partners. The focus here will be on modernising technical equipment and facilities and ensuring the availability of a new generation of teachers. We will do more to promote dual courses of study at colleges and universities with a view to improving the interweaving of vocational and academic education. We will continue to advocate the waiver of fees for advanced further training in the vocational sector.

The working world is currently experiencing a period of change: due to technological developments, certain job profiles no longer exist or will disappear or change in the near future. At the same time, new job profiles with great promise for the future are emerging. We are currently directing our focus to the field of continuing education to ensure that everyone is able to take advantage of the opportunities this offers.

We want to modify unemployment insurance and transform it into a solidarity-based employment insurance scheme. This should not simply come into play whenever a person loses her or his job, it should also help to prevent unemployment in the first place. We will therefore transform the German Federal Employment Agency into the Federal Agency for Employment and Qualification. This agency will guarantee a high-quality and individual counselling service. We will introduce an entitlement to qualification courses that will take immediate effect if the unemployed person is unable to find new gainful employment (unemployment benefit Q) within three months. This should give the respective individuals some leeway so that they can focus on the essential task of finding a new job and getting back on their feet.

We will create a right to further education and to a “new career start” in all phases of life. The proposed changes will provide support to everyone. We will give workers over the age of 40 the right to learn a totally new profession.

Our subsidised educational leave and part-time educational leave model will make it possible for every member of the working population to continue his or her education or retrain for another field in the course of their working life - at their own initiative and with state support, irrespective of where they work. Anyone who applies for educational leave or part-time educational leave will have the right to be released from their job or to reduce their working hours. We will provide sufficient financial support during the training periods to compensate for wage losses during further training or retraining, and this support will be afforded long enough for the person to acquire a recognised qualification. With regard to the costs of the further training measure, we will provide financial support for those unable or only partly able to raise the required fees themselves.

We will provide a transformation furlough allowance to support qualification measures for employees of companies forced to realign their business concept.

In addition to supporting the further training of individuals, we want to do more to promote the option of transferring employees to other jobs or locations when companies are forced to restructure or close down.

More young adults should be given access to educational training assistance (BAföG) again in the future, and to this end, we aim to lower eligibility requirements and gradually reintroduce full grant funding. The new child benefit provides basic security for everyone up to the age of 25 and makes the entitlement to BAföG more independent of parental income. At the same time, we will coordinate BAföG (student grants) and Aufstiegs-BAföG (further training grants for tradesmen and other skilled workers) and eventually merge them. As a first step, we will abolish the age limits for BAföG. We also need a grants system for people embarking on a new career. This would also open up new career paths for adults and help them secure an adequate livelihood.

Workers already have the possibility of “saving up” their working hours in long-term accounts, but currently there is no legal entitlement to do so, and only a handful of companies and employees make use of such long-term accounts. With a view to creating additional individual options for employees to shape their careers throughout their working life we will continue to develop this instrument, allowing employees to create personal time accounts. This form of time account is based on the concept of employees paying in “time contributions”. This would prevent them from losing any overtime they may have performed, and allow them to transform the overtime into a “time credit”, which can then be augmented as part of collective agreements or by the state.

3.3 Strengthening solidarity

Our welfare state provides a guarantee for social cohesion and everyone should be able to rely on it. This welfare state is based on social rights and obligations. Citizens should not have to beg for their rights. We will make it easier to access unemployment benefits, and place a special focus on new forms of employment and interrupted employment biographies.

We want to pay more credit to lifetime achievements. In future, those who have paid into the system for longer should be entitled to unemployment benefits for a longer period. We introduced the social employment market for those people who, despite receiving the best support, have no chance of finding a job on the primary employment market. The social employment market paves the way for the long-term unemployed to return to regular employment.

The creation of meaningful and socially secure jobs has proven to be a success. We will continue and enhance the concept of a social employment market. We will continue to provide wage subsidies to employers who offer a regular job to long-term unemployed persons.

We will revise the regulations concerning the current basic income support scheme and transform this into a citizens' income scheme which reflects the new concept of a citizen-oriented welfare state providing support to the population. The aim is to provide uncomplicated online access to this scheme. Notices and correspondence should be written in an understandable language. The standard rates under the new citizens' income scheme must be adequate to allow a dignified existence and social participation. This form of basic income must ensure that contingencies such as a broken washing machine or the need for a new winter coat do not constitute an intolerable financial burden. We will continue to develop the criteria for calculating standard rates and will call upon those affected as well as special interest groups to advise us.

The objective must be to combine forces in order to overcome situations in which help is needed and enable everyone to find a job and, if necessary, gain a qualification or undertake further training. We will create the right of people undergoing a vocational qualification measure to apply for a grant and will introduce a continuing education bonus that will appreciably expand the beneficiaries' financial room for manoeuvre.

We have largely suspended means testing due to the Covid-19 pandemic: an unemployed person no longer runs the risk of losing his or her home. This allows the authorities and the unemployed person to focus all their energies on a rapid return to paid employment within the first few months. The favourable experiences gained in the course of these temporary measures have reinforced our intention of ensuring that, in future, assets and accommodation size will no longer be taken in account during the first two years of unemployment, and also of raising the limit for protected assets. The citizens' income scheme would include an obligation to cooperate but would put distinct emphasis on providing help and encouragement. Reintegration agreements will be replaced by a participation agreement drawn up on an equal footing by the applicant and the authorities. We wish to focus on empowerment and encouragement, rather than on demands and coercion in the implementation of these agreements. We will abolish meaningless sanctions that violate the dignity of the person on whom they are imposed. The socio-economic and socio-cultural minimum subsistence level must be secured at all times.

Benefits paid by the welfare state are social rights; anyone who needs them should obtain them without delay. Our objective is to make services accessible - no obstacles, no circuitous procedures. We want a citizen service that gives sound advice befitting the individual's situation and provides access to all services from a single source. This will be a digital service and will include an outreach component if the client has problems using it. A responsive welfare state helps its citizens to assert legal claims and provides advice during every step of the process.

3.4 Making provisions for old age

After a long working life, one can expect to receive a decent and reliable pension. This promise is about respect and the appreciation of hard work. It is also about obtaining an adequate, independent safety net for old age through one's own efforts and being able to maintain one's accustomed standard of living. The foundation for this in our view, is still the statutory pension scheme with its reliable pension benefits and solidarity-based funding.

We want to support and improve the statutory pension scheme and advocate stable pensions and a constant pension level of at least 48 percent. The value of work must not be belittled as people get older. We have successfully campaigned both in parliament and the government for the introduction of a basic pension. We have succeeded in realising this demand, and now many people who have worked in low-income jobs for decades are protected from the risk of poverty in old-age.

Employers and conservative forces are continually demanding that people should work even longer if they want a decent pension. We rigorously oppose any further increase in the statutory retirement age, since in reality this means a cut in the pension of many people who are simply unable to work any longer, and is therefore unjust. We will retain the legal entitlement of insured workers who have had a particularly long working life to retire before reaching the statutory retirement age without forfeiting part of their pension. In terms of old-age provision, we feel that solidarity should also involve self-employed persons, civil servants, freelancers and elected government representatives being entitled to a statutory pension. It is time that we included the entire working population in the statutory pension scheme and gradually disposed of special schemes. If the civil servants' pension scheme were to be merged with the statutory pension scheme, they would suffer no reduction in the overall level of their old-age benefits.

Nobody should ever be reduced to poverty due to ill health, which is why we will reduce the risk of poverty for pensioners with reduced earning capacities and improve their situation. We want a gender-equitable pension scheme and will take a fairer approach to different working hours and family-related activities in assessing pension entitlements. Many years spent caring for parents, parents-in-law or other family members must no longer be allowed to have a negative impact on a person's pension and result in the caregiver him or herself suffering poverty in old age. Greater solidarity and respect are needed in tackling this difficult task.

We have made it easier for small and medium-sized enterprises to offer occupational pension schemes to their employees. We aim to ensure that significantly more employees are covered by company pension schemes. Collectively agreed pension schemes should be given preference.

We want to give everyone insured under the statutory pension scheme the option of taking out a reasonable level of supplementary voluntary insurance as part of this scheme.

Supplementary private pensions are no substitute for the statutory pension. Up to now, the *Riester* pension has not provided satisfactory results, which is why we want to eliminate bureaucratic hurdles and reduce the costs for traditional private pension schemes. To provide people with an attractive private pension scheme, we advocate a new standardised scheme that is cost-effective, digitally accessible, internationally applicable and (similar to the Swedish model) is also offered by a public institution. We will limit state subsidies for new contracts to earners of low and medium incomes.

3.5 Caring for each other

The level of respect a society affords can also be measured by the way it treats those citizens who require care and are dependent on others. We have already brought in legislation stipulating that relatives with incomes of under 100,000 euro per annum no longer have to pay for care services, which means that parents no longer need to worry about their children having to pay for them later in life.

We strive to introduce full cover for care needs and benefits in the form of a citizens' insurance scheme. In our view, an initial step in this direction would be to cap the own contribution of low- and medium-income earners to ensure that care remains affordable for them. Future cost increases will be funded on a solidarity basis through a mix of long-term care insurance contributions ensuring only moderate increases and a dynamic federal subsidy.

We also find it important that the federal states, rural districts and municipalities should be given more say in deciding where care homes are to be built and who should operate them. They must be much more closely involved in the relevant decision-making processes in order to guarantee that they are able to fulfil their mandate to provide sufficient facilities.

Many people in need of care want to stay in their own homes and are often dependent on round-the-clock care services. This results in a lot of legal uncertainty about mutual obligations and rights. We will provide clarity in the sector of care and assistance in everyday life.

We will put a particular focus on rural areas. As part of a model federal government project, we will set up service centres in small towns and communities, and these will act as agencies for medical and household-related services. These service centres will also identify where services are lacking and will collaborate with players on the social employment market and existing providers to address these issues.

We will improve life-work balance by promoting household-related services, helping elderly people to live in their own homes for as long as possible, clamping down on undeclared work, and providing corporate accident and health insurance for people who have so far been working in private households with no social insurance cover. This support should be designed in such a way that low-income earners can also benefit from it.

3.6 Affordable housing

The challenge of finding accommodation continues to grow in many areas, even for medium-income earners.

We will safeguard existing and build new affordable housing, and to achieve this aim this we will gather all stakeholders around the table. These should include municipal housing companies and cooperatives, private housing firms, landlords who are committed to socially responsible rents, as well as the building industry and trade unions.

All stakeholders share the same responsibility, especially when it comes to much needed new construction projects, district development and climate protection. We still need to build 100,000 new social housing units per annum. We will also be introducing a new form of non-profit housing, which will add another non-profit segment to the housing sector.

We will also introduce a temporary moratorium on rents in heavily built-up residential areas, which means that, for a certain period of time, rents will only be increased in line with inflation. We will take effective action to prevent exorbitant rents, will remove the time limit on the rent cap and close loopholes, extend the rent index observation period to eight years, and reduce the possibilities of terminating rental agreements for owner occupancy reasons.

Our land policy is oriented towards the common good. To put a stop to land speculation, the federal, state and local governments should secure and increase public ownership of land. To this end, it is important to secure the right of first refusal for municipalities at fair prices.

We will help to prevent municipal housing land from being sold off and ensure that land is reacquired, and public building land will only be made available for housing construction on a leasehold basis. The creation of land funds, including federally owned land, will provide municipalities with an instrument for sustainable urban development and affordable housing construction. We will abolish the tax exemption for capital gains on non-owner-occupied properties after a ten-year period of ownership, as has been applicable up to now. We will introduce a central property register to make ownership structures transparent with a view to curbing housing speculation.

Property ownership not only serves to provide accommodation but is also a means of securing assets and making provisions for retirement. We will facilitate the purchase of cooperative shares in densely built-up residential areas to make it easier for young families in particular to buy their own homes. We will promote hire purchase models and launch a “Young-Buys-Old” programme for the purchase of existing properties, especially in town and village centres with many vacant properties.

The Covid-19 pandemic is intensifying the structural changes taking place in our inner cities and urban centres and is affecting the retail, gastronomy and hotel sectors as well as museums, theatres, libraries, and cinemas. We will support the cities in their efforts to keep the inner-city zones vibrant and help to shape changes in use, namely by introducing a variety of measures including a rent cap, tenant protection in the commercial property sector, concepts for the revitalisation of locations and promoting co-working spaces in the inner cities. We will place a particular focus on developments in rural areas.

3.7 Safety and security for children

Children and adolescents need strong families. They need love, attention and parents who spend a lot of time with them. The sustainability of our society depends on people electing to have children and then giving them the best possible support so that they are able to lead an independent adult life. For many people, trying to reconcile family life and a career is still a constant balancing act and parents need more support in this respect. This is especially true if, in addition to bringing up children, they also have to help or care for elderly relatives.

The fact that women take on most of the responsibility for caregiving has once again been highlighted by the Covid-19 crisis. We want to see families having more time for one another and to make it easier for gainful employment and care work to be shared out more justly between the genders. We also advocate more support for single parents.

We want to introduce a four-pillar model to create more time for family life. The first pillar will provide two weeks of parental leave right after the birth of a child. Every father or partner will be entitled to take this leave at short notice and will obtain the accompanying social security benefits. In this way, we will provide support for families with children during the very first phase of parenthood and will create the conditions for a fairer division of responsibilities in respect of caring for the child.

The second pillar concerns family working time, through which we will expand the current partnership bonus provided under the *ElterngeldPlus* (family allowance plus) scheme to turn it into flexible, subsidised part-time parental leave following the first year of the child's life. In future, if both parents in a two-parent family work shorter hours than regular full-time or a single parent works shorter hours than regular full-time, they will each receive ten months of *ElterngeldPlus* payments of not less than 200 and up to a maximum of 900 euros. This benefit will be provided for the duration of entitlement to parental leave, i.e. up to the child's eighth birthday, since parents also need time for their children beyond the toddler stage, be it when they start school, or because the family intends to move house or simply because some children need more support than others.

The third pillar comprises permanent extension of the additional leave to care for a sick child. This leave was increased during the pandemic and is called the "acute family allowance benefit" (*Elterngeld akut*). If there are more than two children in the family it is granted for 20 days per child per year and parent, up to a maximum of 45 days per parent or 90 days for a single parent. Leave to care for a sick child was often too short even before the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in the case of younger children, who often contact more infections during their first years at day-care facilities. In future, it should also be possible to cover other short-term care needs under the "*Elterngeld akut*" scheme.

The fourth pillar is our "family care time" model. Those who care for relatives should be given support in their efforts to combine caregiving responsibilities and paid employment. In detail, this means: a 15-month entitlement to support (wage replacement benefits) in the event of a reduction in working hours for each close relative classified as requiring "care level 2". This time can be divided among several caregivers who have minimum working hours of 15 to 20 hours. It is also important for companies to specifically encourage men to make use of this model.

We will ensure that all children and adolescents, regardless of their background, have the same opportunities to make the most of their lives. Every child should have a stable and safe childhood and

all adolescents should get a good start on their path to adulthood. There are many forms of support for children and families in Germany, but help is often not delivered where it is needed most.

For this reason, we have developed a concept of child support consisting of two key elements. First of all, we want to develop an infrastructure that will ensure equal educational opportunities and participation for all children. This will include good, free day-care centres, all-day care and supervision for school children, a social infrastructure for adolescents and free travel for children and adolescents on local bus and rail services. The other element of this concept is replacement of the former child allowance by a new form of allowance that is paid automatically in order to secure the family's existence and is scaled in relation to the family income: the greater the need for financial support, the higher the child allowance. This will make life easier for families who are having a particularly hard time financially.

The basic monthly amount of this new child allowance will be around 250 euros and the maximum benefit will be based on how much middle-income families spend on education and social participation and will be at least twice the basic amount. The maximum amount will cover the minimum subsistence level, including education and social participation benefits and a flat-rate housing benefit. In this way, the new family allowance will replace the old model and also bundles previous benefits.

Young people undergoing vocational training will be financially secured through direct, parent-independent payment of the new child allowance in combination with an additional, adequate student loan (BAföG). We want to bundle all benefit payments for children, adolescents and families affected by illness or disability. Children, adolescents, young adults, and parents must all have easy access to support services. Further steps will be needed to achieve this goal. Educational disadvantage must be combatted consistently in all systems. The first educational institution in a contemporary German child's life is the day-care centre, which is why we will continue to promote early childhood education.

Many trainees and students are not able to complete their training or university education successfully because they cannot find affordable accommodation. In future, we will provide more affordable residential facilities for students and champion the concept of assisted housing for young people up to the age of 27 as part of the child and youth welfare services for young people, and also create more rooms and facilities for youth work.

All young people must be given the opportunity to opt for a voluntary youth year after finishing school in order to assist them in their professional orientation and to promote their personal development. This concept also helps to boost the voluntary work sector. We will create a legal entitlement to the funding of all voluntary service agreements for young people under the age of 27, for example a voluntary social year or international voluntary service. We will relaunch the digital voluntary social year scheme (*FSJdigital*). Regardless of their social backgrounds, all young people must have the opportunity to engage in voluntary youth services. To this end, a uniform nationwide volunteer allowance will be introduced, which, together with the new graduated child benefit, will give young people more financial security, and make them more independent of their parents.

We will anchor the rights of children to protection, social participation and advancement in the German Basic Law, and will also mandate the primacy of the child's best interests. We will lower the voting age to 16. Young people must be involved in political processes at all levels and have the right to play a meaningful role in municipal and state youth welfare committees. This right must be legally anchored in the municipal constitutions. We seek to provide permanent and sustainable funding for

youth associations and existing participation structures such as youth councils and youth parliaments and will subject every new law to a “youth review”.

We will improve co-determination opportunities for youth and trainee representations by extending the right of representation to all trainees and making it easier to set up such a representation.

Under the federal “*Gemeindehaus 2.0*” (community centre 2.0) programme we will bundle even more services under a single roof to extend the existing network of multi-generational houses: this includes extracurricular education, sports, culture and youth work, child protection networks, and a barrier-free digital infrastructure for all children and adolescents, giving them access to the content they need for education and social participation. Aside from this, self-determined spaces for youth work must be maintained and expanded. We want to regulate advertising aimed at children: day-care centres and schools must remain advertising-free spaces.

The provision of good all-day care and supervision is crucial in the context of equal opportunities and must be available to all children. Full-day schools are educational and living environments that facilitate and ensure favourable opportunities for all. All children, regardless of their backgrounds, attend school. The legal entitlement to full-day education and care at primary school age is an important contribution to educational equality and, for many parents, it is the urgently awaited next step towards reconciling family and work. Over 70 per cent of all parents would welcome such facilities for their children.

The restrictions imposed on face-to-face teaching during the present pandemic threaten to intensify the connection between educational success and family background and make educational disadvantages more obvious. This is why we will be launching the federal “Equal Opportunities in Education” initiative. In a federal programme for social work at schools we will promote the placing of federally funded “equal opportunity helpers” in every school.

With regard to the further development of federal and state collaborations, we consider the principle of equal living conditions to be vital for ensuring that children and adolescents from economically disadvantaged families are not left behind. Additional social criteria must be introduced to ensure that federal and state funds reach those places where they are most urgently needed.

We want children and adolescents to grow up in safety, and so we will do more to coordinate criminal law and prevention measures to protect children and adolescents effectively. We need protection concepts which include the appointment of child protection officers in day-care centres, schools, and youth welfare organisations, and will support this measure through federally-funded pilot projects. We will also establish independent ombudsman offices.

We will create prevention chains and networks for children and adolescents of all age groups, with youth welfare and health services, educational and health organisations, public and independent service providers, sports clubs and associations, police and family courts collaborating on a mandatory basis at the municipal level.

The standards of protection for children and adolescents must also apply in the digital environment, i.e. they must also apply to personal integrity and sexual harassment and violence, as well as preventing developmental impairment and economic exploitation. We advocate more sensitivity to children in the justice system so as to minimise the stress experienced by children and adolescents in courts, especially in child protection or family cases.

3.8 Making equality a reality

A lot of progress has been made on the key issue of gender equality over the past few decades, but by no means enough. The current pandemic has once more highlighted the continued lack of equal opportunities for women and men. We want this decade to be a decade of gender equality.

Implementing gender equality is a task for the whole of society, covering all areas of politics, including family, labour market, social, education and legal policies, as well as budgetary and fiscal policies. It also requires gender-responsive budgetary control measures. We want to achieve equality between men and women in all areas of society. To accomplish this aim, we will refine the federal government's equality strategy, transforming it into a binding roadmap of detailed and effective measures for all policy areas.

Equality is also a question of political representation. This is why we advocate parity laws for the Bundestag, the *Länder* and local governments to ensure that all genders have an equal say in political decision-making.

The principle of equal pay for equal work and for work of equal value must apply universally. We have introduced legislation entitling employees to demand disclosure of information from their employer so that they can determine whether colleagues are being paid more for the same or equivalent work. This legislation does not go far enough, however. We will extend the Law on the Transparency of Pay Structures to the effect that companies and administrations shall be obliged to review wages and salaries in terms of gender equality and establish procedures to eliminate pay inequality without employees having to settle such matters themselves. We shall also strive to introduce a corresponding regulation at European level.

Gender-parity and culturally diverse work teams are important if businesses are to succeed. It goes without saying that this principle also applies to the top echelons of management. Up to now we have succeeded in introducing a quota for supervisory boards, combined with a regulation that publicly listed companies with a 50/50 co-determined supervisory board must include at least one woman. We want women and men to be represented equally in companies, both at the top and at lower management levels. We will extend this requirement to all publicly listed or co-determined companies and plan to introduce effective sanctions for those who do not comply.

Our future is being programmed, quite literally, by start-ups and big technology corporations, and women should have a relevant share in shaping this future. After all, the first person ever to program a machine was a woman, namely Ada Lovelace.

At the moment, however, IT professions are still very much male-dominated, and in Germany, the proportion of women employed at the top management level of tech companies is even lower than in other sectors. We want girls and young women to discover early on in life that technology and setting up a business are viable personal options, and so we continue our commitment to supporting and encouraging women and girls in the “STEM” fields (*science, technology, engineering and mathematics*). We want to give women better access to start-up

capital, and so we seek to promote a comprehensive and coordinated funding strategy, especially for start-ups in the field of digitalisation, in order to break down gender-related barriers.

When the algorithms used affect decisions on people's lives and opportunities, for instance in the personnel recruitment field, they must never be discriminatory. We want responsible AI-solutions and algorithms that are programmed without prejudice and are based on non-discriminatory data. Adherence to these criteria should be regularly tested and certified.

It is a devastating fact that every third day, a woman dies at the hands of her partner or ex-partner. One in seven women experiences harassment or violence at work. To effectively combat violence against women, we intend to improve cooperation among all responsible parties, both in governmental and non-governmental institutions. In line with our obligations under the Istanbul Convention, we will continue to improve the support network provided by counselling centres, women's shelters and other institutions to protect women against abuse and will implement international agreements on protection against workplace violence. We will introduce the legal right to counselling and protection for women who are victims of violence. We will establish special public prosecution offices focussing on femicide – i.e. the killing of a woman simply because she is a woman.

Couples who decide to have children need to be sure that they have access to prenatal healthcare and mothers should have the freedom to choose where they want to give birth - in a hospital, as an inpatient or an outpatient, at a maternity home or in their own home. In order to provide good obstetric care, a one-to-one midwife-patient ratio in the delivery room is required. For this reason, obstetrics must be excluded from the DRG (*diagnosis-related reimbursement groups*) system that applies standardised base remuneration rates.

People must have the freedom to make self-determined decisions with regard to family planning – whether independently or as partners, and regardless of income. We will therefore ensure free access to contraceptives and actively promote research into contraceptive methods for men.

Women and couples who decide to terminate a pregnancy in a conflict situation need access to information and to good medical care close to home. This applies to both outpatient and inpatient care. Federal states and municipalities must therefore ensure that publicly funded hospitals offer abortions as part of their basic medical services. We acknowledge and respect women's responsibilities and rights of self-determination. With regard to Sections 218 and 219a (*of the German Criminal Code*), we are of the opinion that conflicts arising through pregnancy should not be governed by criminal law.

People living in a family context accept responsibility for each other. Marriage is and remains an attractive framework for this concept. And this is why we have enforced the legal concept of marriage for everyone. Obviously though, responsibility does not solely depend on a marriage certificate. We intend to provide legal protection for a wide range of family models. Our introduction of a 'community of responsibility' is to give all those whose life situation does not fit into the classic marriage template the opportunity to register their commitment to each other, along the lines of the French "Pacte civil de solidarité" (PACS). In supporting the concept

of a 'community of responsibility', we want to give increased support to rainbow families, for example, in caring for each other and taking on the responsibility for children who are cared for by several people, either by the biological parents together with other people or by persons other than the biological parents.

We are in the process of creating a modern parentage law. We advocate equal rights for same-sex partners in a marriage, especially with regard to adoption rights. In future, no court should decide on adjustments to a person's civil status. We intend to abolish the practice of determining gender identity by psychological assessment. Each and every person should have the right to determine his or her own life. We want trans*, inter* and non-binary people to be treated equally under law, which is why we intend to reform the Transgender Law. We want to include the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of gender and sexual identity in Article 3 (3) of the German Basic Law.

Equal participation of all genders and identities benefits the whole of society by helping to break down antiquated role models and revising thought patterns. We are committed to the recognition and equality of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, inter and queer people (LGBTIQ*). Our objective is legal security for LGBTIQ* families and trans* and inter* persons.

We resolutely oppose discrimination and violence. We will introduce a national action plan against homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, interphobia and violence towards members of the LGBTIQ* community. We support the struggle to eliminate hate and violence towards queer people. We will work towards abolishing the discriminatory guideline of the German Medical Association forbidding blood donations by homosexuals.

In today's society, day-to-day coexistence and collaboration of people with and without disabilities should be quite a natural situation. The opportunities of people with disabilities on the labour market should be improved. The right to decent work also applies to them. For this aim, we will strengthen the representative bodies for severely disabled persons and support the further development of compensatory payments for posts reserved for disabled employees that have not been filled. Many people with disabilities are highly trained and educated and in view of the current skilled labour shortage, should be very much in demand. We seek to create a single point of contact for small and medium-sized enterprise employers where advice on special issues such as accessibility and wage subsidies can be obtained.

Social life must be organised at all levels to include people with disabilities, and accessibility is therefore a vital issue. We will support local authorities, in particular, in handling this task. The widespread problem of a lack of accessible housing, gyms and other leisure facilities has to be remedied. We intend to initiate a federal accessibility programme and ensure that it is provided with appropriate resources.

3.9 Living together

The key requirement for living together in a society of respect is the certainty that each individual is part of that society and feels accepted, regardless of any immigrant roots a person might have.

Germany is no stranger to migration. Our country has always welcomed people from other parts of the world – in the same way as many Germans have found a new home in other countries. This enriches our society and fuels its progress. Our aim is to ensure that natural acceptance and a feeling of belonging is visible and tangible in all areas of society. The issue at hand is to guarantee that everyone living in Germany has access to the same opportunities and possibilities – free of any form of discrimination.

To this end, we will support and bolster the work of the Federal Anti-Discrimination Agency and modernise the General Equal Treatment Act. At the same time, we will take firm action against racism, right-wing extremism, anti-Semitism, antiziganism, Islamophobia, sexism and hostility towards the LGBTIQ* community. One important step in this endeavour is improved interaction and a coordinated approach, for example by creating a joint commission of the federal government and the states for this purpose. In addition, crimes in this sector must be recorded more consistently and punished more rigorously.

Integration is a never-ending task, both for society and for the state. We want to guarantee integration opportunities and the right of participation to all who have made Germany their new home. In order to promote the collective spirit, we intend to expand integration and language courses for all newcomers in Germany, and to provide access to these right from the very start – regardless of the participant’s nationality and residence status. All children must be given the opportunity to attend a day-care facility immediately after their arrival in Germany and compulsory schooling must apply at once to all children. Families belong together and integration works best if the entire family is involved. With this in mind, we want to put the family reunification rules for immigrants with subsidiary protection status in line with those for refugees. In doing so, we will also develop regulations for re-uniting those refugees classified as unaccompanied minors with their siblings.

This being said, integration must encompass far more than simply financing language and integration courses. The current problem applies to more than just newcomers to our country. Children and grandchildren of the so-called “guest workers” and “contract workers” who came to work in Germany in the 1960s still experience discrimination as part of everyday life. In this respect, the civil service must take on a role model in terms of integration. In the interest of equal opportunities, care must be taken to ensure that marginalised groups are given equal access to jobs in the public sector and that all employees in this sector are given the opportunity to receive further training and move up the career ladder. Therefore, in addition to job advertisements formulated with specific target groups in mind, the acknowledgment of competency in diversity skills, the acceptance of qualifications acquired in other countries and pay equality, we also need a Participation and Integration Act that obliges state institutions to support the process of “intercultural opening”.

Our society of respect needs modern citizenship legislation. Now that it has been ensured that all children born in Germany automatically become German citizens, we will introduce a statutory basis for multiple citizenship. We want to abolish existing naturalisation barriers and reduce the current qualifying period of eight years of permanent residence in Germany.

The struggle against racism in German society demands a critical debate on our colonial past. We must deal responsibly with our historical guilt.

We welcome the commitment of religious communities and churches. We will continue to promote and strengthen interreligious dialogue. Freedom of religion is firmly anchored in the German Basic Law and we shall continue to protect this freedom.

3.10 Strengthening democracy

Democracy is fragile and needs protection, and so we must make our democracy strong enough to resist all attacks. The differentiated structure of our federal system has served us well up to now in this respect. We intend to improve the situation even further by establishing even more effective cooperation between the federal government and the states.

Democracy is the basis of any society that offers everyone the opportunity to live in freedom and security. Under our envisaged Democracy Promotion Law, associations, projects and initiatives will be given long-term assistance and support for their endeavours to defend our open society against its enemies. We will continue to expand the federal “Live Democracy!” programme and promote prevention projects at federal, state and local levels through this plan of action. Political education is also a crucial component of this effort. We intend to make it easier for employees to use their statutory educational leave for volunteer activities.

Millions of citizens are involved as volunteers in (sports) clubs, the voluntary fire brigade, church and religious communities, food banks, women's emergency hotlines, refugee organisations, the Technical Relief Service (THW) and other organisations. This is their contribution to making our community work. Their voluntary commitment is indispensable to society and so we shall continue to support this commitment.

Sport is of fundamental importance for social cohesion in our society, for the success of inclusion and integration and as part of the fight against discrimination. We shall promote both popular and competitive sports. As Social Democrats, we favour a sporting approach that reflects our constitutional values both at national and international competition levels. Conscientious athletes can also serve as role models in matters of good governance. That is why we will continue to support top-level sports in the years to come. At the same time, we will not lose sight of the concerns and worries of our local clubs. Federal, state and local governments alike are called upon to give special support to grassroots-sport in mastering the problems arising from the current pandemic.

We will ensure that tax-privileged entities such as sports clubs can also be politically active while pursuing their statutory purposes, so that it will be possible for a sports club, e.g., to call for a demonstration against racism and xenophobia, without them losing their tax benefits.

Extremists and terrorists threaten our free society. In order to effectively counteract this significant danger, the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution must fulfil its role as a democratic early warning system. We will ban all anti-constitutional organisations.

Whenever the right to religious freedom is abused and results in religious fanaticism, state security authorities must take resolute action. We will continue to take a tough and consistent stance against terrorism and violence and have already created the relevant legal foundations for this.

We will continue to rigorously combat right-wing extremism in security agencies and in the German armed forces. We are working to prevent and counteract the emergence of racist attitudes in everyday police work and we support the establishment of dedicated prosecutor's offices to deal with anti-Semitic and racist offences.

3.11 Promoting culture

Culture is vital, both as a source of inspiration and as a catalyst for debate. Many of the problems we are currently facing are essentially cultural issues. After all, at the moment we are not only experiencing a threat to social cohesion, but also facing the gradual loss of a common sense of meaning and a common set of values. In a democracy, this is a disturbing development.

In view of the existential significance of art and culture, we as a society must reach an understanding on what we expect cultural policy to accomplish in the 21st century. To this end, we want to extend the ongoing high-level discussions on cultural policy and create a nationwide cultural plenum in which not only municipalities, states and the federal government are represented, but also the producers of culture, their various organisations and civil society. The aim of this plenum will be to find a new cultural consensus on the tasks and procedures of cultural policy and to develop a cultural alliance of diversity and freedom. We want to anchor culture as a national objective in the Basic Law of Germany.

In order to promote and foster culture, existing infrastructures must be maintained and the capacities for the production of artistic and cultural content – even within the independent scene – must be ensured. To this end, we will pay greater attention to artists' living and working conditions. In an attempt to improve the social security of freelance artists, we will firmly establish minimum wages and exhibition royalties.

We want to provide sufficient funds to allow the arts to flourish and to give everyone access to cultural institutions, whether these be theatres, music clubs, museums, socio-cultural centres, libraries, or music schools. One of our key tasks will be to put local authorities in a sustainable position, also from the financial aspect, to promote art and culture with their own means. We shall expand the federal culture fund and launch programmes to secure and develop spaces for cultural freedom. We will create framework conditions for the cultural and creative markets that will help to strengthen their business and revenue models.

We will improve film funding through the German Federal Film Board (FFA), safeguard the revenue base of filmmakers by appropriate amendment of the Film Funding Act and will encourage the international distribution of German films, preserve our film heritage and increase the efficiency of relevant decision-making bodies. We wish to promote the production of audio-visual content in Germany in order to maintain and create sustainable jobs in this field. It is important to provide viable funding to assist cinemas so that they can

look optimistically into the future, and to secure their regional presence as cultural venues. We intend to develop concepts for future film funding in cooperation with the cinematography community.

Games are a cultural asset, an economic factor and a driver for innovation. Despite this, the potential of including games in digital education and of eSports in clubs and schools has not yet been exploited to the full. We therefore wish to promote computer game development on a permanent basis. We will continue to support the development of eSports in Germany, for example by granting clubs the status of non-profit associations. We will provide access to art and culture for all citizens, regardless of their background, education, social situation and financial situation. We will ensure that access to cultural institutions and facilities becomes more readily available in the future. We intend to strengthen diversity in cultural institutions and will also broaden diversity and gender equality in management positions, committees and juries.

Participation in art and culture is a key to the development of self-confidence and personality, as well as to education and integration. We will continue to support art and culture as part of the school curricula and of extracurricular education by encouraging such programmes as "*Kultur macht stark*" (culture makes you strong).

We will forge ahead with the digitisation of media libraries in order to safeguard our cultural heritage and make it more accessible. We will support development of the digital world as an artistic space and promote digital art projects. Last but not least, we will actively support the development of digital cultural events and corresponding revenue models. Cultural exchange is intended to underline not only social and artistic cooperation in Europe, but also European values such as openness, equality, freedom and humanism.

Cultural networks, cultural platforms and cultural actors are partners in governance. Joint activities of institutions, for instance the Goethe-Institute and the Institut Français, show us how we can apply our values to deal with issues that are a challenge in both countries, for example colonialism.

Nationalism, racism, anti-Semitism and antiziganism are now presenting us with new challenges, especially in our attempts to come to terms with Nazi crimes and the Shoah. We are committed to improving support for the scientific and historical-didactic evaluation of eyewitness accounts and source material regarding the Nazi era. We will provide greater support for small initiatives and memorial sites.

We will increase our support for the federal foundation for reappraisal of the SED regime (*Bundesstiftung Aufarbeitung*) in order to increase nationwide support for the foundation's commitment to coming to terms with the SED dictatorship. We also support the proposed establishment of a "Future Centre for European Transformation and German Unity".

In view of the colonial crimes committed by Germans, we will also encourage development of a postcolonial culture of remembrance at federal level. This should include changes in the way museums deal with collections acquired during the colonial era. We wish to support at the

federal level the project on outstanding sites of importance connected with Germany's democratic history.

3.12 Understanding each other better

The modern world is media-based and digital. This is why digital media participation, diversity, equal opportunities and communicative pluralism play such a vital role. We consider media policy at all levels of government to be social policy. It serves to intensify open democratic debate in our society.

We are committed to maintaining a strong public radio and television landscape at the national level and support the *Länder* in their efforts to take this mandate forward into a digital media world. Public broadcasting services ensuring comprehensive and in-depth journalistic reporting are especially vital at the present time.

We will improve the framework conditions for private-sector media work and give our particular support where national competition, copyright or telecommunications laws have a major influence on the general conditions governing private media markets. We will help publishers to handle the digital transformation process. We will strengthen the rights of journalists to free and non-impeded access to information and research. We will take journalism into account in any legislation governing non-profit associations in order to allow funding through non-profit foundations, provided that this does not contravene the principles of a market-based economy.

We note with concern that journalists and media companies in many parts of the world are being increasingly attacked and threatened and that their freedom is being progressively restricted by state institutions and officials. We will therefore seek bilateral talks and the cooperation of intergovernmental associations to strengthen initiatives aimed at protecting freedom of the press and the work of journalists and media companies.

It is the joint responsibility of all media and public authorities to enable the media participation of all citizens in Germany. We seek to extend barrier-free options and, in cooperation with media providers, to exploit the opportunities offered by digitalisation and technology.

The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the fact that there is a tremendous demand for digital media and educational and cultural digital content. We shall therefore work to improve networking and cooperation between stakeholders, especially in the media, culture and education sectors.

Media competence is, above all, democratic competence. In our everyday lives, learning, working, identity building, personality development and communication with others are all becoming increasingly linked to social media. We strive, therefore, to unite the creative energy of the network community with the quality and experience of the conventional media field. We want to create spaces and settings in which digital transformation of the media world can succeed and then link these with educational opportunities and services.

3.13 Living in safety

Germany is one of the safest countries in the world, and we want to make sure that it stays that way, because anyone who is or feels threatened is no longer able to act according to his or her own free will.

We want to implement preventive measures to stop citizens becoming the victims of crime. Sound policies in the social, labour market, family, and integration sectors are the foundation for successful crime prevention.

In order to achieve improved safety and security in Germany, we need a motivated, well-trained and well-equipped police force. The way that police officers and emergency services, as well as public employees, are being increasingly attacked and insulted nowadays is wholly unacceptable. These public servants deserve recognition and respect for their work. This credo must also be reflected in a modern public-services law and the payslips of police officers and police employees. If public services are to be attractive, it must be possible for employees to switch between the level of the federal government and the governments of the *Länder* more easily. At the same time, it must be ensured that public services remain competitive in relation to the private economy.

We strive to fight organised crime. We want to make it easier to trace the origins of “dirty” money. It is essential that regional police, federal police and customs authorities cooperate with the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) and Europol in ongoing, extensive investigations into criminal structures.

We are currently engaged in improving our security authority structures and ensuring smoother collaboration with the judiciary. When a crime is committed, proceedings must be initiated immediately. Punishment must be effected promptly in relation to the crime.

Offenders should serve their sentences in prisons, but the prisons should continue to be places of social rehabilitation, too. Together with the federal states, we will promote measures to de-radicalise offenders and avoid the radicalisation of inmates. We need to know more about criminal developments so that we are in a better position to take targeted preventive action. For this reason, we will continue to commission the compilation of a Periodic Security Report.

Germany has an efficient disaster relief system in place. Volunteers play a key role in the existing structures, especially in rural areas. At the same time, we are facing both new and familiar challenges. Cyberattacks, disinformation and terrorism pose significant threats that can quickly spread to affect large sections of the population. We seek to ensure that governments at the federal, regional and local levels are able to cooperate better and faster, hand in hand.

3.14 Health protection, youth protection and decriminalisation define our policy on drugs

Cannabis, like alcohol, is a social reality that our policies need to address in an appropriate manner. Neither prohibition nor criminalisation have succeeded in reducing cannabis consumption; on the contrary, these measures obstruct efforts to implement effective

addiction prevention and youth protection measures and merely bind enormous resources in the police force and the courts. The regulated sale of cannabis to adults should be allowed and tested in model projects introduced by the federal states and local authorities and should be accompanied by prevention, counselling and, in the case of young consumers, therapeutic measures. We will also introduce a nationwide regulation stipulating that the possession of small amounts of cannabis shall no longer be treated as a criminal offence.

3.15 Respect for nature

We want to preserve our natural habitat, and to achieve this, we have to put an end to our “throwaway society”. The future belongs to a circular economy.

Plastics pollution in our oceans, in particular, is an alarming phenomenon. We must take measures to reduce the rising tide of plastic. This can only be achieved if we totally avoid and eliminate unnecessary plastic. In situations where single-use plastic is unavoidable, we demand environmentally-friendly solutions using recyclable materials. As much plastic as possible must be recycled and reused. We want to increase the accountability of manufacturers. Products must be designed in such a way that they can be reused, recycled and repaired.

We are committed to a policy of biodiversity for the protection and restoration of ecosystems, and the conservation of our forests has a special role in this context. A further aim is to reduce the use of fertilizers and pesticides.

Without efficient carbon sinks it is impossible for Germany to become climate-neutral. Here, peatlands and forests are of particular importance. Existing peatlands must be protected and those that have been drained must be rewetted on a large scale. Forests must be adapted to climate change so that they can continue in the future to fulfil their important role in climate protection and biodiversity.

Agriculture plays a central role in combatting climate change and preserving biodiversity. For this reason, we will re-align agricultural subsidies in such a way that environmentally-compatible farming remains economically competitive.

Food is the very basis of our existence and food production should be able to secure the livelihood of farmers. This goal can only be achieved if we pay a fair price for high-quality food. We will put a stop to unfair commercial practices in the food trade, because these practices harm consumers, farmers and fair-trade competitors alike.

Land, being the most important asset in agriculture, should belong to the farmers who actually work it. It must not be the object of speculation. We will prevent agricultural land being sold to investors who have no agricultural connections. Animal suffering can never be justified, not even for economic reasons. In the husbandry field, we are committed to improving animal welfare by introducing an area-based upper limit to livestock numbers. We will restrict the use of antibiotics. We will ensure the introduction of a mandatory state-controlled animal welfare label with comprehensible rules and will limit the duration of live animal transports to eight hours.

The quality of foodstuff production and its effect on the environment and climate is becoming an increasingly relevant issue to more and more consumers. Our goal is to make healthy and sustainable food available to all. The provision of free healthy meals in day-care centres and schools, with food that meets the standards of the German Nutrition Society, is the most important measure to combat food poverty. We will make it easier for consumers to choose healthy and sustainable food, and at the same time, we will also make the business community more accountable.

In order to curb food waste, we will forbid producers and retailers from throwing away edible food. We want to introduce a binding nationwide quality label in order to end the current uncontrolled proliferation of self-created labels used by companies to praise the sustainability of their products.

We will improve food safety by increasing controls and inspections and will introduce a hygiene barometer allowing consumers to check the results of such controls. We still categorically say NO to genetically modified crops.

IV. A sovereign Europe in the global world

The unity of Europe is an achievement of civilisation and gives us the chance to forge a better common future in the 21st century. At the present time, however, the Covid-19 pandemic with its long-term effects is posing the greatest challenge to the European Union (EU) since its foundation.

During the German EU Council Presidency, we have taken a better and more solidary approach than in the EU's last major crisis more than ten years ago. The historic decision to initiate the most extensive recovery programme in the history of the European Union would not have been taken if it had not been for the SPD. This decision has constituted a shift in paradigm with regard to Germany's policy on Europe.

4.1 Strengthening solidarity

We will emerge stronger from this crisis if Europe stands together in solidarity and if we make the EU more resilient and effective in the face of the future challenges facing us. We will work to ensure that the recovery fund and the feeling of European solidarity that has deepened with the crisis will bring lasting progress in terms of integration. We will dismantle the internal obstacles inhibiting European action and continue to promote external autonomy.

We need a solidarity-based and sovereign EU if we are to be in a position to shape tomorrow's world and move closer to our vision of a democratic, just and sustainable future. Our goal is to strengthen Europe in all respects, in a way that allows us to retain our independence and our way of life in a multipolar world.

We will direct our European and global policies towards implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda in which the peoples of the world have committed themselves to a common sustainable future ensuring peace, freedom and social cohesion.

A Europe displaying such qualities can use its influence to protect and strengthen European values and interests, to prove that it is a self-confident "force for peace" and, in doing so, help create a cooperative, multilateral world order.

Investment is essential for a sustainable European future. We will promote development of the Stability and Growth Pact into a sustainability pact. Instead of returning to the austerity policies of the past, we will continue to pursue the common European investment policy launched during the Covid-19 crisis. A crisis-proof EU must be capable of implementing fiscal policy measures and must progress to become a genuine fiscal, economic and social union.

In future, we will effectively protect states and taxpayers from bank failures. In conjunction with the Capital Markets Union, completion of the Banking Union will create a European capital market that ensures competitive financing of European enterprises. Since common expenditures also necessitate common revenues, we have also established a basis for new European capital resources.

We are committed to creating a fairer and more independent long-term EU financing system. In order to achieve this major step towards integration, we intend to tax large digital corporations, introduce a “carbon border tax” and draw on new revenues from emissions trading.

We see economic integration and the establishment of fair taxation as two sides of the same coin. This is why we advocate revoking the principle of unanimity in taxation matters and an end to the fiscal dumping competition between member states, especially in the corporate taxation sector.

4.2 Ecologically and socially responsible management

The EU, as a global technology leader, must also become more independent of third parties in the sectors of tomorrow. We will press ahead with developing common markets and infrastructures, will develop technologies of strategic importance for the future and will protect key industries.

In order to mitigate the effects of climate change, diminish the rate at which species are becoming extinct and reduce excessive raw material consumption, we must make radical changes to the way we live, consume and produce goods in Europe. The energy sector will play a key role if we are to meet the commitments made in the Paris climate agreement. We have to dramatically increase the share of renewable energy and diversify the energy mix even further, while at the same time reducing our existing dependence on fossil energy sources. We seek to make Europe the first sustainable and greenhouse-gas-neutral continent by 2050 at the latest and intend to take a leading role in combatting climate change.

The agricultural sector, as one of Europe’s main producers of greenhouse gas emissions, must also make its fair contribution - by fading out land-related subsidies and introducing subsidies linked to climate, nature conservation, environmental protection and animal welfare instead.

In future, in addition to binding social standards, e. g. the ILO core labour standards and human rights and ecological standards, that already exist, specific complaint and sanction mechanisms will be included in all EU trade, economic partnership and investment agreements. Moreover, the existing private dispute settlement mechanisms will be abolished and such disputes will be settled in future in public courts. We call for a multinational investment court to intervene in cases of discrimination, such as unequal treatment between trading partners. Stricter environmental legislation, implementation of international obligations, e. g. regarding climate protection and the public service sectors, are not discriminatory practices and legal action should not be allowed in such cases.

The agreement reached between the EU and MERCOSUR member states is a significant project aiming to strengthen economic and political ties between Europe and Latin America. Nevertheless, we will not accept any agreement that fails to improve environmental, human rights and social standards through the introduction of mandatory and sanctionable monitoring, implementation and enforcement mechanisms.

Our trade policies will support socio-ecological transformation, and trade in sustainable goods will be given special preference. Trade policy measures based on universal values take into account the interests of all partners, especially those of the less developed countries. For this reason, we also intend to promote smallholder farming concepts and agro-ecological projects in particular. In order to support the development of a more democratic form of trade policy, we will extend the European Parliament's rights of control and decision-making and will involve representatives of trade unions and civil society more widely in the negotiation processes than has been the case up to now.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shown how vulnerable our healthcare system actually is. We intend to create a sovereign European Health Union with a strong and resilient healthcare economy in Europe. This will be achieved by guaranteeing minimum healthcare standards, establishing a strong public emergency services mechanism and promoting joint research on and procurement of essential medical supplies.

We will be consistent in implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights within the next few years with the aim of improving the working and living conditions of all Europeans. Everyone in Europe who has a job must be able to live comfortably from his or her work. We continue to strive for decent living wages throughout Europe, and for this reason we welcome the proposal of a European legal framework governing minimum wages.

In order to shield the Eurozone from economic shockwaves, we advocate a permanent European unemployment reinsurance scheme ensuring that all member states are able to provide basic social security and services even in times of severe economic crises.

To guarantee adequate social safeguards and to combat poverty, we call for the use of European minimum standards in national social protection floors. In our opinion, the fight against child poverty is a particularly urgent issue in Europe and implementation of the European Child Guarantee is essential.

We shall continue to consolidate the rights of employees, in particular by strengthening European works councils, giving them a say in the organisation and decisions of large companies and granting them the right to collective action and bargaining. Stricter enforcement of valid labour legislation and regulations on occupational health and safety for seasonal workers is urgently needed. Since youth unemployment in particular has developed into a structural side-effect of the crisis in many places, we intend to put additional effort into strengthening the European Youth Guarantee and offering a perspective to young people in Europe.

4.3 Expanding democracy

We are committed to strengthening democracy in Europe. We will not simply accept the way that our European community of values is being increasingly put to the test and how populist and nationalist governments are curtailing fundamental rights and the independence of the judiciary. The united future of Europe depends on protecting democracy, the rule of law and freedom. This also calls for full implementation of the rights of co-decision in the European

Parliament, including a genuine right of initiative. We will establish common voting rights in the elections for representatives of the people of Europe.

By creating a special fund for democracy and the rule of law, we will systematically promote civic cooperation. We want the Conference on the Future of Europe to be a success. We are striving to ensure that it triggers a broad debate, both in Germany and throughout the EU, on European democracy and Europe's ability to act, and that the results of this debate will be translated into action.

By introducing the Rule of Law Dialogue and Rule of Law Mechanism, we have improved Europe's ability to defend itself and have introduced precise instruments for reliably verifying compliance with basic European values and for sanctioning serious breaches of the rule of law principles. Disinformation campaigns, fake news and hate speech are a threat to our democracy. We advocate the introduction of European regulations to effectively combat culpable online hate-speech and strive to expand European early warning systems to thwart disinformation campaigns.

We call for a humanitarian and solidarity-based asylum and refugee policy in the European Union. With this in mind, we will strive to promote a functioning European asylum system which achieves the crucial balance between responsibility and solidarity. This includes reformation of the Dublin system and fully preserves and grants the right to asylum. "Europeanisation" of the asylum system should be continued and the European Asylum Support Office should be expanded to become a fully-fledged European Asylum Agency.

We will defend the Geneva Convention on Refugees. The *pushback of migrants and refugees* at Europe's borders is a blatant violation of international law. "Rescue at sea" is an obligation under international maritime law and must not be criminalised. Legal migration channels should be created as part of a comprehensive approach to the problem, and the root causes of flight and migration must be addressed. We will build a bridge to local stakeholders and promote and support the willingness of European communities and cities to take in refugees.

We advocate EU-wide ratification of the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention in all member states and recognition of this as a set of binding legal standards to combat violence against women. We work to ensure that Europe plays a pioneering role in international crisis prevention, promotion of peace and democracy and the protection of human rights. We will strengthen Europe's responsibility in the fields of development cooperation and humanitarian aid by increasing EU funding in these areas.

4.4 Cultivating Europe's relations to its neighbours

The precondition for greater autonomy is increased capacity for action. This is only possible if the current unanimity principle of our foreign policy is replaced by the principle of majority decision. Consequently, in the long term, the office of EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy should be transformed into that of an EU Foreign Minister. We want to define a common course for our global development cooperation and therefore bundle all our efforts in Europe.

A Europe that speaks with one voice can help to revitalise a cooperative multilateralism that really works. We are dependant on international networks of trust such as the Alliance for Multilateralism, which has already provided significant cooperation incentives.

NATO is and remains a mainstay of the transatlantic partnership and is indispensable for Europe's security. At the same time, it is important that the EU becomes more independent in terms of security and defence policies. We will broaden European cooperation. The creation of a European army, as part of a European peace power, remains one of our goals. By bundling European armaments cooperation, we can exploit synergies and avoid unnecessary additional expenditure. Europe must show sovereignty in developing new initiatives for arms control and disarmament on the European continent so that it can provide timely response to the risks involved in new technologies and to dangerous developments in cyberspace or outer space.

Europe's neighbours to the South and to the East are burdened by both crises and the growing influence of other states. The EU must address these challenges by means of a European Neighbourhood Policy founded on a new concept. We plan to integrate the Western Balkan countries. We want to significantly expand the partnership and increase the level of cooperation between Europe and Africa in both political and economic terms.

We are reaching out to the new U.S. administration, which is now renewing its commitment to international cooperation. What we need is no less than a fresh start in our transatlantic relationships. We intend to generally strengthen the partnership between Europe and the United States – a partnership that is based on shared democratic values – and intensify cooperation on issues such as climate protection, global health policy, trade, disarmament and security.

It is in both Germany's and Europe's interest to make joint progress in our relations with Russia, not only on issues of common security, disarmament and arms control, but also on matters of climate change, sustainability, energy and controlling pandemics. We are also aware, however, that Europe's relationship with Russia is characterised by repeated setbacks.

Annexation of Crimea in violation of international law, support for separatists in eastern Ukraine, cyberattacks on the German Bundestag, use of the internationally outlawed chemical agent Novichok to eliminate political opponents - Russia has a bad reputation for breaking international law, and this puts a strain on relations with its neighbours. Despite the necessary criticism that needs to be voiced, we still rely on Russia's willingness to engage in dialogue and cooperation. There can be no peace in Europe without Russia, and peace is only possible in cooperation with Russia. Civil society contacts are of great value in improving relationships with Russia, and so we will continue to support and expand measures to promote such contacts, including visa facilitation for youth exchange programmes.

Basing our course on the values and principles of the OSCE, we are seeking to establish a new European Ostpolitik with a focus is on efforts to reach a common and coherent EU policy towards Russia. Before any attempt can be launched to reduce existing tensions, Russia must be prepared to engage in a constructive dialogue. This process also depends to a large extent on implementation of the Minsk agreements in order to pave the way to a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict and to the lifting of accompanying sanctions.

China's growing importance on the world stage means that it is hardly conceivable that we will find a global answer to the economic, ecological, social and political challenges of our time without the participation of Beijing. Conflicts of interest and values with regard to China are increasing. Europe must be united in its constructive and critical dialogue with China on cooperation and competition issues. We condemn the serious human rights violations against minorities, especially the Uighur Muslims. The internationally guaranteed principle of “one country, two systems” must be upheld in Hong Kong. We observe the growing pressure on Taiwan with great concern.

We support the people of Belarus in their desire for democracy and freedom. Violence and repression by the security forces must cease, all political prisoners must be released and new democratic elections must be held under OSCE supervision.

We are also concerned about the Turkish government's domestic and foreign policy course. Turkey must observe the principles of the rule of law, democracy and international law. Intensification of the EU-Turkey dialogue, including critical discussion of these issues, is urgently needed.

Israel's security and recognition of its right to exist are part of Germany's reason of state. This special responsibility to the State of Israel is one of the reasons why, in cooperation with our European partners and the United States, we will support new initiatives to revive the Middle East peace process. Our goals, based on the Oslo Accords, are and will remain the establishment of peaceful coexistence between two sovereign and viable states as part of a negotiated settlement.

The normalisation of relations between Israel and certain states in the region is an encouraging sign and indicates that progress toward peace is possible. Unilateral steps taken by any party simply complicate peace efforts and must be avoided. We demand that the Palestinian side ends all terrorist activity. Further democratic progress at all levels is required in the Palestinian territories. We categorically refuse to accept any plans to annex land. The construction of new settlements, which constitutes a violation of international law, must be stopped.

Despite the quarrels of Brexit, the United Kingdom still remains a close friend of the EU. The joint agreements now being made have the potential to form the foundation for a wide-reaching partnership between the EU and the UK. In those areas that have not yet been regulated we shall continue to promote cooperation, based on the principles of fairness. However, where environmental standards or the rights of workers and consumers are at stake, a race to the bottom is out of the question.

4.5 Safeguarding peace

More than in any other party, international solidarity, the universal validity of human rights, peace and dialogue have been part of the basic concepts of our political activities, as Social Democrats, right from the very beginning.

Within the context of the Council of Europe, we will protect the essential values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law and strengthen the European Court of Human Rights. Court rulings must be rigorously implemented by all member states. We are in favour of EU accession to the European Convention on Human Rights.

As Germany's "peace party", we are committed to diplomacy and dialogue, to civilian crisis prevention and to peacebuilding, to disarmament, arms control and international cooperation. We will revive and reinforce multilateral action, also in partnership with civilian groups and non-governmental organisations, because pandemics, global crises in economic, financial and development sectors and the consequences of global warming are all challenges that can only be solved together.

The fight against climate change, which not only threatens livelihoods but also social and economic developments in many countries, must be recognised as the starting point for creating fairer and more sustainable societies worldwide. "Leaving no-one behind" is our benchmark with respect to overcoming hunger and poverty, all around the globe.

We must keep the extent of global warming to well below two degrees Celsius, and, if possible, set a limit of 1.5 degrees. To achieve this, we will ensure that Germany meets its climate protection commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement, and even raises its targets. Furthermore, we will support countries of the Global South in their efforts to adapt to climate change in order to achieve sustainable development.

Decent jobs and an intact worldwide environment are core issues of social democratic politics. We intend to achieve these goals by demanding that companies all around the world comply with due diligence requirements relating to human rights and the environment along their global supply chains. It was due to the SPD's efforts that a national supply-chain law was put in place. Now, we also want to anchor a law at European level to ensure the tracing of goods traded on the global market. This will contain binding regulations backed by sanctions, will provide access to European courts and envisages compensation for victims. We support the signing of a UN agreement on business and human rights in order to shape globalisation in the interest of human rights. Work should not make people poor or ill.

This is why both we and the trade unions back the demand that occupational health and safety should be upgraded to a core labour standard of the International Labour Organization (ILO). We shall also ratify the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Social Covenant which determines that complaints procedures should be permitted in order to ensure compliance with the rights set out in the Covenant. In order to combat poverty on a sustainable basis, we also seek the establishment of a global fund for ensuring social protection floors.

Health is a global public commodity. We are focussing our efforts on developing and expanding public health systems, improving access to medicines and vaccines and creating greater transparency. We plan to improve and extend health education, including sexual and reproductive healthcare. We are also working to assist the World Health Organisation (WHO) by introduction of a bold reform process.

We are seeking to keep the proportion of public spending on development cooperation (ODA quota) at a level of at least 0.7 percent of the gross national income, with 0.2 percent of this going to the poorest of the developing countries (LDCs).

People who are in distress as the result of conflicts, epidemics or natural disasters require our help. As a rich industrial country, we shall continue to align our humanitarian aid commitment to increasing humanitarian needs and will endeavour to strengthen and expand the international donor base. Our motto is and remains: “fight the causes of migration and flight, not those who flee”. Together with our partner countries we will work to ensure that the Global Compact for Migration is implemented to the full.

International tax cooperation can prevent assets and corporate profits from evading taxation. For this reason, we need a global register to achieve greater transparency. We can counteract low-tax competition by establishing global minimum corporate taxation rates. We will support the establishment of a global tax coordination office at the UN and also back the OECD in its fight against tax base erosion and profit shifting. Our goal is to drain tax havens and to promote fair systems of taxation with appropriate participation of all, including the elites of the Global South.

More than most other countries Germany is dependent on open markets and an effective rule-based global economy. Our goal is to establish a stable, fair and democratic trade system.

We intend to modernise the instruments of trade and investment policy – especially with a view to sustainability and the enforcement of common multilateral rules – and will work to strengthen the World Trade Organisation (WTO). To this end, we will extend the rulebook, incorporate the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and improve enforcement capabilities. The ability of the WTO dispute settlement mechanism to pass decisions by quorum at all instances should be restored. This is why it is important to have a strong WTO with a modern set of rules that acknowledge and promote in a fair and cooperative manner the sustainable development needs both of the Global South and of the Northern hemisphere.

Many countries were already experiencing a debt crisis before the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, and their situation has now been exacerbated. Key development financing pillars have collapsed and financial flows have run dry. The short-term G20 and IMF debt moratorium measures have brought some relief. We support the initiative for a global sovereign insolvency procedure which also includes public and, in particular, private creditors, and formulates and implements debt relief for particularly vulnerable groups of countries.

The challenges to peace are growing. Health crises, climate change and injustice exacerbate existing conflicts and spark off new ones. Autonomous weapons systems are lowering the threshold for acts of war, nuclear weapons are making a comeback and progress in digital

technology is making us vulnerable to cyberattacks. To deal with these issues, we will establish a mechanism at parliamentary level which can be used to review new programmes, laws and plans and determine whether these are contrary to our peace policy goals.

Germany already plays a leading global role in defusing international crises and mediating for peace. We intend to extend this role by reinforcing the Centre for International Peace Operations (*Zentrum für internationale Friedenseinsätze - ZIF*) and building up a highly professional team of peace emissaries to lead negotiations. Peace processes are only sustainable if the needs and interests of women are given greater consideration and if women are themselves involved in negotiation processes. We therefore demand that UN Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace, Security” be rigorously implemented and improved. The anti-gender movement must be opposed at all levels.

The German *Bundeswehr* makes a responsible contribution to defending our country and securing peace. We stand for the primacy of politics and the guiding principle of soldiers as citizens in uniform. We are firmly convinced that we can only fulfil our tasks as a reliable partner in Europe and NATO if we have a well-equipped and modern army. Our soldiers can rely on us, and this is why we have increased investments in the defence budget after many years of repeated austerity measures.

Our soldiers deserve the best possible equipment and the highest level of training. Committed to the principle of re-equipping instead of re-arming, we have pushed ahead with essential procurement projects and are continuously working to improve personal equipment and provide social protection for our armed forces. Parallel to this, we shall strive to make careers in the armed forces more attractive. We believe that our soldiers deserve the best possible protection. This also includes the deployment of drones. A responsible decision on whether the use of armed drones is permissible or not can only be taken following comprehensive political and social debate and careful consideration of all aspects.

We call for measures to ensure that unmanned armed drones are registered internationally and are embedded in an international rulebook. The aim of this is to counteract the trend towards dissolution of military action boundaries in terms of time and space, as well as to allay the fear that drones might become technologically and functionally autonomous. The need for such rules has been demonstrated, last but not least, by the massive deployment of armed drones as offensive weapons in the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia as well as in the conflicts taking place in Libya. This form of military action has raised new issues that need to be dealt with in a comprehensive and extensive debate.

We call for a conscientious, factual and thorough discussion of technical nuclear sharing before any decision is made on a successor to the Tornado combat aircraft.

A world without nuclear weapons is and remains the goal of social democratic foreign policy. Any disarmament policy offensive must include retaining the existing agreements on arms control and disarmament at all costs as well as implementing the obligations set down in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). We need tangible disarmament steps. Talks must be resumed with the new U.S. administration on how full implementation of the international nuclear agreement (JCPOA) with Iran can be effected.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which was negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations and has since entered into force, lends further momentum to efforts to creating a world without nuclear weapons. As an observer to the *Conference to Negotiate a Legally Binding Instrument to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons*, Germany should constructively support the intentions of the treaty. We also support the start of negotiations between the USA and Russia on verifiable, total disarmament in the sub-strategic sector with the aim of finally withdrawing and destroying nuclear weapons stationed in Germany and the rest of Europe. We will also establish arms control in the fields of biotechnology, cyberspace and artificial intelligence. It is our continued objective to achieve a ban on autonomous lethal weapons systems. China, too, must be included to a wider extent than it has been up to now in all disarmament efforts.

A restrictive arms export policy is a central issue for the SPD. We will make an effort to further restrict the export of German military equipment to countries outside the EU, NATO and equally ranked countries, to extend control over the final destination of the weapons and to only allow absolute exceptions in justified individual cases – these to be documented in a publicly comprehensible manner. These conditions are to be set down in an arms export law. Together with our European partners we will coordinate our efforts to tighten up EU arms export agreements. Ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and its rigorous implementation is a mandatory requirement for any form of arms cooperation with countries that are neither members of the EU nor of NATO.

For us, the indivisibility and universal validity of human rights is not negotiable. The assertion of human rights includes protecting those who stand up for them. We shall resolutely make use of the human rights sanctions regime created in the EU under the German Council Presidency. This includes entry bans and the freezing of accounts. We also encourage the possibility of prosecuting human-rights violators anywhere in the world and will give increased support to the International Criminal Court. By supporting and expanding those institutions of the Bundestag and the German government which deal with human rights issues, we are also strengthening the human rights architecture.

However, our many efforts can only succeed if we assist the United Nations Organisation in fulfilling its mandate to ensure peace, to promote sustainable development and to uphold human rights. We are fully aware that reforms to the United Nations are urgently needed in order to do this and we shall press ahead with implementation of such reforms. Our aim is to obtain a permanent European seat and adequate representation for the Global South in the United Nations Security Council.

V. Future, respect and a Europe of solidarity – guiding principles for a new decade

The 20's of the 21st century will be decisive for the role that Germany and Europe will play in the world. With our missions for the future, we are already starting to shape the future today.

We want to achieve full employment with decent work and fair wages.

We want to remain a centre of industry and innovation, to set global standards with climate-neutral products and technologies and modern forms of mobility, and to exploit the opportunities of digitalisation in line with our values.

We want to ensure that the prosperity we generate makes it possible for all the citizens of our country to live a good and secure life.

We want to turn dreams into reality. We want all people to have the opportunity of making their wishes come true and achieving their goals, both in the early years of their life and when they have already reached their prime. By being given equal assistance and development opportunities throughout their entire life.

We want to move forward together. We want an inclusive society based on solidarity that allows everyone to participate and play their individual role. The foundation for this kind of society is a modern and strong welfare state in which all people are treated with the respect they deserve.

We want to live in mutual respect of each other. Our society thrives on its cultural diversity, creativity and variety. Democracy and social justice are the foundations of a strong society that can combat extremism, political hatred and social agitation and is able to protect its members against crime.

We want to ensure peace. A strong European community gives us the strength to defend a common peace policy that resolves conflicts and unites people across borders.

We want to take on responsibility. Prosperity and fairness should not be irreconcilable. Our standard of living should not be based on the exploitation of human beings and nature – not in Germany, not in Europe, and not in any other regions of the world.

These are the aims we wish to promote with this programme.