

WORKING GROUP Development Policies

For a Social-Democratic Development Policy

Goals and Perspectives

We fight for a good life for all

As Social Democrats we stand for a solidarity-based life together in peace and across national borders. We strive for a world of social justice where every human being can lead a **gratifying and self-determined life**, where his/her basic needs are satisfied, and where he/she will act with respect for his/her fellow human beings and the environment. Our goal is global prosperity which means an ecologically sustainable and humane life for all.

As we can see, the capitalist system of growth, as it has been pursued to date, did not bring us closer to this goal. The discrepancies between rich and poor are shameful and continue to grow. Suppression and exploitation, hunger and malnutrition, lack of access to clean water, medical care and educational facilities, as well as deficits in democracy – these are but a few characteristics of the inhumane living conditions which so many people have to put up with. We refuse to accept the widely held notion that “development” serves the objective of creating a global copy of the Western lifestyle. Social democracy respects a multitude of life patterns and shows its solidarity with them, provided they recognize human rights.

We face global challenges

Global challenges such as climate change, population growth, migration, pandemics, economic crises, food speculation, conflicts and weak government structures need global responses that offer an ecological perspective of the future. In this context we need a sustainable and fair distribution of our resources, agricultural regimes that form the basis for providing sufficient food to all people, and environmental protection. Worldwide observance of women’s rights as well as all human rights, promoting democracy and implementing the rule of law, together with responsible government leadership must play a central role in every political approach.

Today, any political action must take account of substantially **changed global framework conditions**. A growing group of politically and economically emerging countries and alliances is playing an increasingly significant role. At the same time, the century-long predominance of Europe and the West is waning. “Global governance” must therefore change, with the new actors assuming their own responsibilities. Europe must acknowledge the fact that it is but one among many global players. Austria, too, must adjust its strategies to this new situation.

We want to create global justice

We need to create a new and fair world order where the gap between poor and rich is lastingly narrowed, and which thereby also contributes substantially to international security. This gap not only exists between north and south but also within countries. We stand for more social **justice in distribution** among all, the elimination of differences in income and the fight against abuse of power and corruption. Full guarantees for all fundamental and human rights are an indispensable prerequisite for this goal. Nobody must be discriminated

against because of his/her gender, origin, ideology, sexual orientation, age, colour of skin or other status.

Development policy can therefore be not just an insignificant and marginal area of political activity. Development policy must be a **central element** of political action on the national and global level. In Austria, too, it is necessary to shift its development policy from its position on the fringe of political processes and make it the object of domestic and foreign-policy priorities, in full awareness that development policy also creates positive impulses for Austria.

We act in international structures

Austria's active involvement in a new global order can take place only within and together with the **EU** as well as the relevant international and regional organisations. It must therefore be a central concern of social-democratic politicians to ensure their proper functioning, taking account of **democratic decision-making processes** and acting **on the basis of human rights**.

As development policy is a cross-sectoral issue, and because many political areas such as, for example, economic and trade policies, energy and agricultural policies, are of the highest relevance for it on the global level, we must ensure that it is effectively coordinated at the different levels (EU, federal and regional level) and thus promotes the objectives of development policy.

In our opinion the colonial patterns of behaviour must cease to be applied. A comprehensive understanding of history and culture is an essential requirement in this context. Austria's development policy attaches high priority to the proper functioning of international institutions and to participation in shaping their political approach. This requires **active involvement in content development** and **adequate financial means**. The goal is to contribute towards developing the policy of the EU, the UN and international financial institutions (such as, for example, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) in as many areas as possible and pertinent to Austria. Regional and global players (such as the movement of the non-aligned states, G77 or ALBA) may be important cooperation partners. This requires that all relevant capacities from NGOs, parliament and government be bundled.

When it comes to protecting, enforcing and restoring the **principles of international law**, the international community of states, especially the UN and the UN Security Council, have a decisive role to play. Colonial and big-power interests must be restrained. Moreover, Austria promotes – on the European as well as on the international level – the incorporation (in all relevant national and international laws) of economic, social and cultural rights (together with the Optional Protocol to the Covenant on ESC Rights) on an equal footing as civic and political human rights. They are an important basis for a self-determined, emancipatory and free development of people currently deprived of their rights. In addition, we lobby for the ratification of the conventions adopted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

As Social Democrats we **clearly renounce all wars** and advocate that Austria pursue an active policy of peace and neutrality. Austria and Austria's army may only take part in actions that the Security Council has approved. We also stand for a re-allocation of the world's armament expenditure in favour of obtaining sufficient funding to meet the global challenges.

We have noticed increasingly that little progress is being achieved in multilateral processes. In addition to efforts to reform multinational institutions, we call upon Austria to continue to

take the initiative, time and again, and to work – together with like-minded countries – for the protection of human rights.

Austria is a neutral and prosperous country and can offer its expertise to international cooperation projects in several fields. We can see our strengths especially in the following areas: the rule of law on all levels (justice sector, administration, ...), protection of human rights, promoting and empowering women, integration of civil society, as well as in the areas of water management, renewable energies, modernised landscapes adapted to local situations, and sustainable forest management.

We follow the clear principles of international solidarity

A coherent policy for the benefit of development

Political coherence, in the interest of development, unites all policies of a country. It is cross-sectoral in its nature and follows the guidelines for development policy. It must therefore be avoided that development-policy efforts made by one government department are thwarted by activities of another department. It is thus indispensable to have close coordination among all actors, as well as to be prepared for political coherence.

Valuable proposals for improving Austria's development cooperation activities have been made in numerous studies and evaluations, showing how, on the one hand, the structures of Austrian Development Cooperation can be improved and, on the other hand, how Austria's course of action can be improved.

Important steps to take, in order to reach political coherence, are to set up a strong inter-ministerial working group with capacity to act, to engage in an open dialogue about development policy, as well as to bundle all forces of civil society in a joint campaign to strengthen Austria's development policy, which should also lead to more funding for development activities.

We therefore advocate a comprehensive and ongoing **dialogue on development policy** in Austria on all levels. Nominations for an advisory council on development policy should come from government, parliament, civil society, industry and academia; it should be government financed, should act independently, capable of developing its own proposals and of contributing them directly to the decision-making process. The proposals and/or the criticism of the advisory council concerning government proposals and programmes must be taken into account.

Moreover, the legislative stipulation must be put into practice, namely that the federal authorities must take account of development policy goals and principles when pursuing policy areas that are of relevance to development. To this end, an assessment should be made of every new legislative project concerning its impact on development policy, and the objectives should be aligned to the orientations on budgetary impact. Furthermore, we call for establishing an effective method so that inter-ministerial coherence can actually become a living reality. It should be elaborated under the leadership of experts in development policy.

Civil society and the state as equal players

Both in the north and the south, civil society and the state must cooperate with responsibility and on an equal footing. In **Austria**, NGOs and parliament should become involved in the

long-term planning and programming of bilateral and multilateral development cooperation. The work of NGOs must be underpinned by multi-year financing programmes which must be shown in a separate budget line. Their self-determined public presence and their freely voiced opinions are essential components of the democratic decision-making process.

We support promoting a progressive civil society (NGOs, trade-unions, and other institutions) and strong parliaments in the **global south**. This strengthens democratic awareness and supports the realization of individual rights (right to work, freedom of expression, participation in decision-making, and many others). This empowers people to solve the problems affecting them on their own initiative. The struggle for a fair land reform, for example, cannot be waged through development cooperation; yet, it should support it in financial and logistic terms. The struggle for fair working conditions, too, must be pursued by local trade unions; nevertheless, it should be supported through development cooperation.

Government setting a good example: Public procurement based on social and ecological criteria

Every year Austria's public sector spends about EUR 35 billion on goods and services. It may be clothing, foodstuffs, computers or toys – to an increasing extent they come from low-wage countries and are often produced under contemptuous working conditions. **Public procurement** by the federal, regional and local authorities should demonstrate that social and ecological criteria are observed. They thus set an example for companies and consumers and contribute actively to environmental protection, better working conditions worldwide and to reducing poverty.

Private players and big public projects must also respect human rights

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) must not be used as a marketing gimmick and to fake a “clean record”. It is only when all sub-contracted manufacturers – irrespective of where they are located – are exposed to independent controls, when compliance with the core working standards of the International Labour Organisation can be guaranteed, such as the right to establish trade unions and to protect human rights and the environment, that a quality seal can be awarded that consumers can rely upon. Independent controls must be applied, involving NGOs and trade unions, in order establish a credible case for CSR.

We propose a comprehensive development policy concept that should be applied to all Austrian relations with developing countries. Programmes and projects by private entrepreneurs and the public sector in the global south should therefore be subjected to a **compatibility test from a development policy perspective**, applying human rights and ecological criteria. Such tests should be made binding for projects financed with (bilateral and multilateral) public funding (e.g. ADA economic partnerships).

Focusing public awareness on development policy: Educational and public relations activities contribute to a better understanding of global interactions

From a Social-Democratic perspective it is the state's task to inform people in Austria about global development, the conditions in the countries of the south, and the effects of individual actions on these countries. This is achieved by public relations activities and the campaigns conducted by NGOs and the public sector. The “global learning” concept is indispensable in educational activities. It defines global topics as an educational cross-sectoral task and fosters the acquisition of skills for living in this world's society.

Asylum and migration on the basis of human rights

Natural disasters, climate change, economic and political developments as well as persecution induce people to flee or migrate. While, in our view, people on the run must be offered protection against persecution at all costs, it is also the task of a development policy to cope with the challenges listed above, to provide all human beings with a perspective for life in their home countries, as well as to guarantee them good living conditions there.

There must be legally binding framework conditions applicable to migrants in Austria as well as in all other countries. These must be based on human rights and facilitate a self-determined life. In our understanding there must be possibilities to earn income and engage in continuous education, as well as to participate in the social, cultural and political activities of the receiving countries. We therefore advocate that migrants should be able to better use and apply their potential, for their own and for society's sake, and that they not be seen as a threat but as an asset.

To a large extent migration takes place among – but primarily also within – the countries of the south. As migrants mostly tend to move to metropolitan areas, one consideration of development policy is that urban structures must be strengthened. At the same time, there must also be satisfactory opportunities for people living in rural areas. The need for coherence is of special significance in the field of migration and development. It must therefore be ensured that there is coherent alignment of development and migration policies.

The equal status of men and women is a central task of development policy. It must contribute towards empowering women so that they can assume active roles in shaping their own lives.

From a Social-Democratic perspective, the economic independence of women is the key to their equal status. They must have the possibility to engage in gainful work; young men and women must have access to decision-making processes as well as to resources and equal education opportunities.

Cooperation with experienced and active womens' NGOs in Austria and the partner countries must be supported at all costs. Care must be taken that the equal status of men and women and the protection and/or promotion of women and children are in the foreground when evaluating projects that merit support. Projects and proposals must comprise a clear gender dimension and must be drawn up on the basis of gender budgeting. All efforts undertaken by foreign and development policies must particularly address the needs of women, and they must be accompanied by measures that will help men to find their bearings in their new roles.

Humanitarian aid in case of natural or man-made disasters must be part of a global political approach. This means primarily swift and efficient assistance, for which the relevant public structures or those of civil society must be used. However, humanitarian aid must not be provided without paying attention to the circumstances of the affected region and only on a one-off basis. In our opinion long-term crisis prevention is indispensable and can help avoid or mitigate the impact of crises. Moreover, humanitarian aid must be aligned to the goals and measures of development policy.

We provide development cooperation with the necessary funding

Meaningful international cooperation requires that sufficient funding be available. Austria must comply with binding promises and therefore reach first the EU average and subsequently the 0.7% per cent target during the next legislative period. On a short-term basis the funds for directly allocated bilateral and multilateral cooperation projects (i.e. within the scope of the UN) must be raised to their previous level and must then be increased significantly (by an additional 100%) in order to reach the internationally pledged targets.

ADA (Austrian Development Agency) was set up explicitly for managing higher funding for bilateral cooperation. It is unacceptable that these funds have been cut. It must be shown to the public that international solidarity is not only an ethical obligation but also benefits Austria and Europe. International cooperation must have firm roots in Austria so that a large part of the population will understand it. Development policy is not only a matter for experts and civil servants. We are steadfast in opposing the right-wing populist agitation against international cooperation.

Our perception of development is all-embracing

A financial transaction tax prevents harmful speculation and is a source of income when coping with global challenges.

The negative experience gained from the current crises calls for a new international architecture for financial markets, with effective national and international control and regulatory mechanisms. They should also include the **introduction of a tax on financial transactions**. The money collected with this tax should be earmarked for expenditures that reduce global poverty and build up fair structures. Changes in financial market structures will prevent irresponsible and destructive speculation in foodstuffs and raw materials. “Tax oases” as well as sidestepping to low-tax countries should be stopped so that public households have the necessary funds to fulfil their tasks.

Insupportable debt prevents development. Developing countries must have the possibility to opt for structured insolvency, in order to be able to trigger new economic incentives and to cope with social expenditure.

Social Democrats stand for introducing transparent debt settlement procedures which are effective and independent of the International Monetary Fund. Fair arbitration proceedings should make it possible for states to become insolvent. It should be possible to eliminate “odious debts” (whereby a democratic government is not obliged to pay the debts of a predecessor dictatorial regime) as well as “phantom debts” (incurred by increases in international interest-rate levels and/or compound interest due on interest payments). In addition, an urgent requirement is to cancel – to the greatest possible extent – the debts of developing countries (release from redemption payments), whenever they fall into the debt trap on account of poor overall international economic conditions. In the course of procedures to reduce indebtedness one must ensure that the funds thus made available for public investments are used to create jobs as well as to establish a sound social system in order to achieve a long-term reduction of poverty.

A fair economic order with a fair trade regime is indispensable for implementing the right to development.

In particular, Austria must lobby on the EU level for the development of socially and ecologically sustainable world trade. Europe's agricultural policy should refrain from merely promoting agrarian land and should work towards implementing the right to food. In this context, human rights, the minimum working conditions of ILO and essential environmental standards must be incorporated in trade agreements with binding effect and, if necessary, be enforced by means of arbitration procedures. When reviewing trade agreements for their sustainability all relevant aspects concerning their social and economic effects must be taken into account. Parliaments, trade-union representatives and civil society of the countries concerned must play an active role, in addition to government representatives. Specific measures that are conducive to strengthening the rights and opportunities of women worldwide must also be implemented in connection with trade policy issues. As Social Democrats we want to use fair-trade products at all our own events, and we also want to promote their dissemination.

Good Governance is the basis for democratic, social and economic development.

Austria's development policy advocates the implementation of **Good Governance** and human rights in the countries of the south and therefore only cooperates with those governments which demonstrate that they implement these principles. In all other countries it will only promote programmes and projects in cooperation with civil society groups, especially those that aim at strengthening democratic awareness and free media, organising civil society and self-help against social disadvantages in the interest of empowerment. It is of particular significance to promote inclusive, participatory and transparent planning and decision-making processes on all levels.

Observance of sexual and reproductive rights is the key, based on human rights, to responsible population growth.

Every year roughly 290,000 women die on account of complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Most of these mortalities can be avoided. From a Social-Democratic perspective, one must strictly oppose viewing abortions as crimes. In almost one case in every two, the result is an unsafe medical intervention leading to tens of thousands of avoidable mortalities per year.

Lack of knowledge and lack of access to contraceptives, child marriage, female genital mutilation, violence and sexual violence against women, lack of education as well as low social and economic status prevent women from enjoying their rights. Whenever women can determine the time and number of their pregnancies, they will – as a rule – opt for fewer children and for having children at a later stage in life. This avoids the risks of teenage pregnancies, so that more money can be invested in child education. Information instead of coercion is the watchword: from a Social-Democratic perspective protecting sexual and reproductive rights is an important key to sustainable development.

HIV/Aids, tuberculosis, malaria and other diseases can be contained by prevention and access to generic drugs.

Both funding for information and prevention, as well as modern medical treatment using affordable medication are necessary in order to contain HIV/Aids and other diseases. A

Social-Democratic development policy advocates the no-barrier use of generic drugs, which serve the health of people and not to maximize the profits of pharmaceutical companies. Non-discrimination and human-rights protection of persons with HIV/Aids are key concerns.

We regard the fight against other dangerous diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, bilharziosis, Dengue fever and similar epidemic diseases as a challenge to development policy. Since these diseases exclude patients from school attendance and gainful activity, they must be seen as creating a poverty trap.

Inclusive development: Addressing the special needs of persons with disabilities

The 2003 amendment of the Development Cooperation Act stipulates that the special needs of persons with disabilities must be taken into account in the framework of Austria's development cooperation activities. So far, lip service has mainly been paid to this commitment. In our opinion initiatives must be taken by way of pilot projects, the exchange of experience with other donor countries and a best practice catalogue in order to meet the special needs of persons with disabilities. Programmes and projects to fight poverty should be targeted to help the poorest and those deprived of their rights. Their needs must be included in project planning in order to draw up a participatory strategy for strengthening the fundamental human rights – to life, food, health, education, participation, equality, non-discrimination, etc.

Extremism manifests poverty – Strengthening citizens' rights is part of development policy

Since the events of 11 September 2001, the fight against terrorism is often cited as a reason for restrictive policies which restrain citizens' rights and individual freedom. We reject such excessive government measures. From a Social-Democratic perspective, extremism and the inclination to engage in terrorist activities can be prevented only by education and employment opportunities for all, by global prosperity as well as by promoting progressive civil societies. Democratic structures, the separation of powers, freedom of opinion and the press, protection of human rights and of a person's private sphere are indispensable foundations for peace, and thus a legitimate focus of development policies.

Cultural diversity is part of a Social-Democratic development policy.

We define development as an emancipatory process for all persons and societies. It comprises **culture in all its diversity**. A Social-Democratic development policy promotes human beings in their entirety, thus also their cultural activities. Culture is a way to express oneself and thus an important element for developing new life patterns with potential for the future and a life in global responsibility.

Food sovereignty must be ensured on the basis of local, multi-faceted and autonomous agricultural systems.

Land grabbing which is the buying or leasing of farmland by third countries or corporations with the intention of cultivating products for their own needs and to export them from the countries concerned, undermines the food sovereignty of countries. It leads to further hunger and dependency of the population and constitutes a new type of colonialism. Using arable surfaces for **agro fuels** – which is often counter-productive from a climate-policy viewpoint –

leads to human-rights problems since people are driven off their land and expropriated unlawfully. It also results in social problems since they are deprived of their subsistence basis, as well as in hunger problems since food prices rise in competition with fuels. Food sovereignty, which must be ensured, takes priority over land grabbing and agro fuels.

Patent protection of animals, plants, foodstuffs and their genetic substances as well as genetically manipulated seeds combined with fertilizers which are only suited for these seeds make billions of people dependent upon a few corporations. This must be strictly rejected from a Social-Democratic perspective. Rural development must focus on the interests of subsistence farmers and on providing food for the countries of the south.

Moreover, we plead for sustainable **fishery policies** which respect the rights of coastal populations, reduce by-catch and rely on smaller fishing fleets. Austria, a land-locked country, must assume its political responsibility for the protection of the seas and observance of the rights of their coastal populations.

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