

STATEMENT ON INTERNAL POLICY

THE ALTERNATIVE: A FINLAND OPEN AND SAFE FOR ALL

Finland is at a crossroads where we choose the way to the future. Do we continue on the way defined by the Western values of democracy, openness, freedom, internationality, and the indivisibility of human dignity. Or do we choose turning inward, isolation, and the path of decline that follows.

For SDP, the choice is clear. The Finnish society is built on equality, openness, and faith in the future. As a small nation, we need the European community both financially and for security. Democracy and freedom are fulfilled only when we reject racism and build a society that promotes the equality of all people. To work, an open democracy requires freedom for individuals and the media alike. SDP defends these values consistently.

SDP's alternative for the policy of the government is to strengthen the wellbeing, competence and competitiveness of the Finnish society and its members. Only an international and open Finland that invests in the wellbeing of people is competitive and successful. Strong public finances are required so that welfare and skills objectives can be reached.

Finland must keep to its climate objectives

Finland must be a pioneer in preventing climate change and promoting a fair green transition. This is a sensible policy both economically and in principle. By investing in knowledge and leadership in green transition technology, we are an attractive investment environment and generate sustainable economic growth and new jobs.

Orpo's government does not guarantee that Finland would reach the 2035 carbon neutrality goal. The emission reduction targets of the government are too heavily dependent on voluntary actions and rely on future technology solutions. Striving for carbon neutrality cannot rest on wishful thinking, especially when, at the same time, the government programme supports the use of fossil fuels through taxation and makes cuts in environmental protection. Here, too, the government has chosen the wrong, backward-looking way.

Finland must move away from using fossil fuels. Energy self-sufficiency must be built on emissions-free technologies, creating conditions for the generation of new, high-value exports at the same time. Carbon sinks in the land use sector must be strengthened and ecologically sustainable use of forests must be ensured. This also significantly strengthens our security of supply and the conditions for economic growth in a sustainable way.

Investments in a skilled nation are needed

Finland's competitiveness is built on a skilled workforce. Investing in knowledge and offering sufficient general education for all is an investment in the welfare and success of the entire country. The work – started by SDP – to restore the honour of skills and education must be continued. The skill level of our nation has been on the decline for long, and the cutbacks by right-wing governments in education have further worsened the situation. This trend must be reversed.

Under SDP leadership, every young person was guaranteed the opportunity for upper secondary qualification and a better starting point in working life. Funding for higher education institutions was increased so that more and more advanced research would be made in Finland and we would have experts for the labour market of tomorrow.

The next steps in this work should be to increase the resources of comprehensive school and the upper secondary level to improve learning outcomes. This objective is reached by increasing the number of teaching hours and guaranteeing suitable group sizes and the right kind of support during the school pathway.

The wellbeing of children and young people must be invested in throughout the education pathway. Teacher education must be increased for early childhood education and special education teachers as well as teachers in science and technology to ensure high-quality teaching also in the future. A teacher register must be established to help anticipate the teacher shortage. Equality and anti-racism competence must be strengthened in the entire school system.

The government proposal to terminate the adult education allowance is particularly short-sighted. The adult education allowance is a good – some times even the only – option for workers to be reskilled or retrained. On the social level, the adult education allowance responds to the shortage of workers and promotes lifelong learning.

Cutbacks in higher education and liberal adult education chip away at the foundation of Finland as an education society. For a long time, Finland has been a country proud of its training, education and skilled workforce. We must hold on to this also in the future.

Work and prosperity for all

Our welfare state will not advance through cutbacks in services, labour rights, and social security. Instead, Finland must generate confidence in a better tomorrow by offering equal opportunities for all to prosper. In Finland, everyone must be able to participate in society and trust the safety nets in all situations. This is something that we also need to maintain.

To ensure the future of the welfare state, we must raise the employment rate toward 80 percent. Finland must be made interesting for foreign labour. Barriers to

employment must be removed for everyone, and working and accepting work must always be worthwhile.

Employment will not rise by dismantling the labour market agreement system or cutting labour rights. Instead, investments must be made in working conditions, and it must be made sure that workers' voice is heard in the workplace and in decision-making. Instead of restricting the right to strike, Finland should take its cue from Sweden in strengthening workers' status both in cases of disagreement and in company management.

Worker equality must be increased. For example, the accrual of annual leave should be amended so that annual leave accrues in full right from the start of employment. This would help, in particular, those, often young, workers in temporary and odd jobs who now struggle with insecurity and fatigue. The government proposals to weaken unemployment security must be cancelled. Instead, the opportunities of unemployed people to participate in training and receive the personal services they need to promote employment must be strengthened.

People's wellbeing must be seen to also in a broader sense. People living in Finland must have the right to receive care when necessary. Mental health services must be threshold-free and available where they are needed. Particularly services for children and young people must be sufficiently resourced.

The right to sport, culture, and other hobbies belongs to everyone irrespective of where they live, their income level, physical or mental characteristics or language skills.

Sustainable economy safeguards wellbeing

The objective in economic policy must be to increase wellbeing. The foundation for SDP's economic policy is ecologically and socially sustainable, job-creating growth. Sustainable economic growth is a tool that enables social unity, people's inclusion, and sustainability of public finances. Economic policy must create optimism and secure prospects for the future for all.

Only sustainable public finances can ensure the future of the welfare state. Sustainability can be achieved by investing in employment, supporting entrepreneurship, creating conditions for the generation of new jobs and new industries, and investing in people's skills and wellbeing.

Leadership in a fair green transition, new industrial policy thinking, and securing the vitality of the entire country are SDP policy cornerstones. Security of supply and risk preparedness must be improved further. As part of this, the connection between transport and industrial policies must be strengthened in a way that benefits the entire country. Affordable housing production must be increased. Successful regional policy must ensure the vitality of the different regions of the country.