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Election manifesto of the *Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance – Reason and Justice* – *Berlin Regional Association* for the elections to the 20th Berlin House of Representatives

Dear residents of Berlin,

On 20 September, Berlin faces a decisive choice about the direction it will take!

The capital finally needs a reliable opposition committed to peace, justice and reason. I promise you this: with a BSW parliamentary group in the Berlin House of Representatives, there will be no more politics that is out of touch with the public; instead, with us, the focus will once again be on your very specific problems and hopes.

The stronger the BSW becomes on 20 September, the more we can achieve for you. The stronger the BSW's presence in the House of Representatives, the louder the voice for peace and justice in politics will be. A new BSW parliamentary group in Berlin would also send a clear signal to the federal government, which is already as unpopular as the dismal 'traffic light' coalition after just three years.

Friedrich Merz is probably the worst Chancellor in the history of the Federal Republic. Merz began his term with a major electoral fraud and a colossal, debt-financed rearmament programme. Since then, the Chancellor has broken almost every one of his election promises. The economy continues to slide in the face of high energy prices and bureaucratic meddling. Industry is suffering under the government's economic policy, the spectre of bankruptcy looms over many companies, and the state of our infrastructure is a disgrace. Germany's status as an industrial hub and hundreds of thousands of jobs are at risk. Purchasing power and prosperity are being eroded by inflation. People on low incomes or meagre pensions are struggling to make ends meet. To finance the arms race, drastic cuts to social security, healthcare and care services are looming, including in Berlin.

Unfortunately, the Berlin Senate is not standing up to this madness; on the contrary, it is even supporting the most important decisions in the Bundesrat. The fact that the defence budget is set to rise from 52 to 153 billion euros is only possible thanks to the approval of Kai Wegner and other state leaders. Whilst The Left also voted in favour in the Bundesrat, the BSW rejected the war credits.

Germany is experiencing its largest rearmament programme since 1945. Instead of making our country 'fit for war' through conscription and militarisation extending right into our schools, we need a return to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and disarmament. The BSW was founded to oppose policies that endanger our country's future and increase the direct threat of war to Germany. These are the principles that guide our actions:

Common sense must once again prevail in economic and energy policy, rather than forcing electric cars and heat pumps on citizens, which most simply cannot afford.

Wages and pensions in Germany are too low for far too many people, whilst taxes and social security contributions are too high for ordinary earners and average pensioners! Instead of respecting freedom and the views of others, an authoritarian style of politics is spreading, seeking to dictate to citizens how they should live and speak. Meanwhile, fewer and fewer children in our schools are even learning to read, write and do arithmetic properly. All of this jeopardises community spirit and social cohesion – and thus the future of our country. Economic prudence, a fair meritocracy, a peaceful foreign policy, genuine freedom of expression and a halt to uncontrolled migration are key priorities for our party.

In Berlin, seven key demands guide our actions:

1. Your vote for the BSW in Berlin is a vote against ‘business as usual’ for the old parties. We will campaign uncompromisingly for peace. We will work to ensure that the insane arms race is halted, that the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East come to an end, and that the threat of a Third World War is averted – and that we once again have good relations with all our European neighbours, including Russia. We reject compulsory military service!
2. Your vote for the BSW in Berlin is a vote to ensure that, in future, the interests of families, workers, businesses and pensioners are at the heart of politics. We are committed to protecting our industry. The ban on internal combustion engines, which remains in place, is poison! The economy needs affordable energy and must be freed from senseless bureaucracy. No worker should earn less than 15 euros an hour, and no pensioner with a pension of up to 2,000 euros should have to pay tax. This requires Bundesrat initiatives from the next Senate!
3. Your vote for the BSW in Berlin is a vote to stop the skyrocketing rents. We want to strengthen the existing rent control measures and finally enforce them consistently, whilst also introducing a rent cap via a Bundesrat initiative. Berlin needs more publicly owned and non-profit-run flats.
4. Your vote for the BSW in Berlin is a vote for good schools, where every child receives the best educational opportunities, regardless of their parents’ financial circumstances. We are committed to ending the shortage of teachers and ensuring that primary schools once again prioritise the teaching of the core skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. We want to ban smartphones and tablets – which have been shown to hinder learning – from primary school classrooms.
5. Your vote for the BSW in Berlin is a vote against uncontrolled immigration, which continues to overwhelm the city. With us, there will be control and limits without discrimination or racism. We will tackle rising crime with a community-focused police force and an effective and swift justice system. Anyone who abuses the right of hospitality and fails to abide by the law must leave the country.
6. Your vote for the BSW in Berlin is a vote for freedom of expression and against ‘cancel culture’, a vote for a thorough review of the Covid-19 period by a Covid-19 inquiry committee in the Berlin House of Representatives, which will summon those responsible to appear. The

BSW Berlin Election Manifesto: AGH Election 2026

The BSW has already set up committees of inquiry in several state parliaments. Berlin, too, needs a COVID-19 inquiry! Months-long closures of nurseries and schools, the appalling treatment of care homes and the marginalisation of those with differing views must be investigated. Anyone who has been fined for failing to comply with absurd rules or who is suffering from the side effects of the vaccine must be compensated.

7. Your vote for the BSW in Berlin is a vote for a state election manifesto that sets out very specific measures to improve everyday life in Berlin. Our Berlin programme has been developed by members from all districts and by experts with detailed knowledge of local issues. We want a Berlin where transport and public administration function properly and where the misguided decisions of recent state governments are reversed. We want a Berlin where people feel safe on the streets and where culture is no longer being ruined by budget cuts. We will campaign for this in the House of Representatives.

These are our goals. We are asking for your trust.

Yours,

Sahra Wagenknecht

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Common sense in peace policy

Our country urgently needs a party that stands up for peace and diplomacy. The other parties talk of rearmament, of conscription, of a willingness to make military sacrifices, as if they were seeking to provoke a new world war. Government politicians and the mainstream media use terms such as 'war readiness' in their speeches. Neither to the left nor to the right of the war-mongering centre is there an alternative for a peace-loving Germany.

The BSW aims to give a voice once again to the vast majority of Germans who want a life of peace and prosperity and a Germany based on international understanding. In contrast, all parties – from the Left Party to the AfD – want even more money for the NATO military alliance and even more military and political confrontation, whatever the cost to us.

But without a policy of détente towards the outside world, social peace at home is not possible. Wasteful budgets for rearmament mean less money for education, infrastructure, healthcare, pensions, culture and social security. Anyone who cuts more and more billions in tax revenue from the social budget and funnels it to US arms manufacturers is jeopardising social cohesion. We will not tolerate plans to deploy our young people to the Eastern Front, nor campaigns against the welfare state. The BSW stands for a sensible approach to peace policy and social justice. This is what we are campaigning for in Berlin.

For a peace-loving Berlin

Decisions on war and peace are made in Washington, at NATO headquarters in Brussels and in the German Bundestag, not in the Berlin House of Representatives. Nevertheless, the BSW Berlin will use all means available within state politics to campaign for peace and disarmament.

During the Cold War, the divided city was a place for diplomatic exchange, for official and unofficial understanding across the borders, and for measures to ease tensions against the military confrontation between East and West. The BSW Berlin wants our city to once again become a forum for encounters that help to defuse tensions.

Preserving meeting places, expanding partnerships

We oppose the current efforts to close the Russian House in Berlin-Mitte, as it has proven its worth as a venue for cultural and personal exchanges between German and Russian civil society. We advocate the revival of the suspended town twinning between the two European metropolises, Berlin and Moscow, as the residents of both capitals cannot be equated with their national governments and their foreign policy decisions. We are in favour of reintroducing the suspended direct flight connections from Berlin to Russian cities.

BSW Berlin advocates the development of further partnerships with cities in the Global South. Furthermore, we wish to complement Berlin's partnership with Tel Aviv with new partnerships with Palestinian cities in Gaza, even though these cities are currently only recognisable by their outlines following the Israeli Air Force's bombing raids. We are committed to establishing partnerships with

Palestinian localities in the West Bank that are under threat of colonisation. In doing so, we are acknowledging the fact that Berlin is home to the largest community of Palestinian origin in Europe.

Civil clause for education and research

We call for the introduction of a binding civilian clause for all educational institutions in Berlin. Universities, colleges and schools must not be misused for military or arms-promoting purposes. The civilian clause excludes cooperation with NATO and the Bundeswehr and ensures that research and teaching are geared exclusively towards civilian, peace-promoting objectives.

No militarisation of public spaces

We reject all plans to militarise Berlin's infrastructure. Investment in transport infrastructure (e.g. bridges, roads) and in healthcare (e.g. hospitals) must be guided solely by the needs and well-being of Berlin's population. Investments in our city's physical and healthcare infrastructure are urgently needed. Precisely for this reason, they must not pander to the deployment fantasies of NATO and Bundeswehr generals or be subordinated to the so-called 'Operation Plan Germany'. We want our tax money to serve us and the needs of our city, not the profits of the military-industrial complex.

Wherever possible, we will ban Bundeswehr advertising in schools, on BVG vehicles, at bus stops and in public spaces. We will investigate whether and how taxpayers' money is being spent on such advertising, and call for a ban on it. BSW district councillors have already launched awareness-raising initiatives on this issue. We will continue these initiatives at state level.

Conscientious objection and peace education

We support young Berliners in their fundamental right to refuse military service and assist them with online resources and face-to-face counselling when submitting their applications. We are also setting up counselling services for reservists.

We call for the introduction of peace education as a compulsory part of the curriculum in Berlin's schools. These peace education modules cover topics such as peace policy, conflict resolution, the history and current state of international law, and the legal framework surrounding military service and conscientious objection. Peace education modules will become a compulsory component of teacher training at Berlin's universities and in the Senate Administration's professional development programmes.

Promoting new opportunities for international exchange

In Berlin, we support international dialogue events and youth exchange programmes. We explore opportunities for economic cooperation between local businesses in Berlin and those in the Global South, placing particular emphasis on the social impact of such economic cooperation.

Housing in Berlin

Affordable housing is a prerequisite for social cohesion in Berlin. When housing is in short supply, rents rise and displacement increases, this affects not only individual tenants but also the development of the city as a whole. It raises the question of whether Berlin will remain a liveable and socially diverse city for broad sections of the population.

For the BSW, this results in a clear political mandate. Housing is a public service and must not be left solely to market forces. Berlin needs greater influence over land policy, more social housing with long-term tenancy guarantees, and stronger support for non-profit and co-operative forms of housing. Our aim is a housing policy that secures affordable housing and protects the interests of Berlin's tenants.

Berlin's politicians must respect the will of the city's residents and implement the referendum result 'Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Co.'. We also need to make a fresh push for a rent cap. Through an initiative in the Bundesrat, we aim to ensure that either a nationwide rent cap is introduced – or at least made possible – for tight housing markets such as Berlin, and that the federal states can decide independently on the introduction of such a rent cap.

So-called micro-flats are increasingly springing up in Berlin at exorbitant rents. At the same time, many families are living in cramped conditions. The city's hands have so far been tied by the law in this regard. We will campaign via the Bundesrat to restrict the construction of such flats under federal law, so that more housing tailored to people's needs can be built.

The State of Berlin must resume and permanently secure its cooperation with tenants' associations to cover membership fees for recipients of transfer payments (recipients of Bürgergeld, social assistance and basic income support).

Membership of tenants' associations is a key resource for protection under tenancy law, coverage of legal costs, legal advice and collective representation of interests – particularly for people on low incomes and in precarious housing situations. Without state support for these fees, these people are excluded from vital legal protection and opportunities for participation.

Ensuring affordable housing

Berlin's housing crisis is also the result of a market in which scarcity has become a business model. High profits are being made from housing, whilst for many Berliners, the search for an affordable flat has become an ordeal. Rent caps are circumvented through furnished lettings and similar arrangements; tax loopholes encourage speculative property deals; and affordable housing is gradually disappearing from the city.

The consequences have been evident for years: rising rents, the displacement of lower-income households from inner-city areas, and the increasing

gentrification of entire neighbourhoods. This development is not inevitable. It is the result of political decisions and political failures. Berlin must therefore take more decisive action to counteract this trend. Furnished flats must no longer be let at inflated prices. Business models that drive up the cost of housing, create shortages or remove housing from the regular market must be effectively restricted.

Expand and secure social housing in the long term

Berlin has far too few social housing units. Given the city's population and income levels, this is a serious failure. The Senate's target of creating 5,000 new social housing units each year has not been met for years. At the same time, the stock continues to shrink as flats repeatedly fall out of the social housing scheme. This affects, above all, people on low and middle incomes, for whom affordable housing is becoming increasingly difficult to find.

The BSW is therefore calling for significantly higher public investment in social housing construction. In new-build projects, the proportion of flats subject to price and occupancy controls must increase substantially, particularly in municipal housing construction carried out by the state-owned housing associations. We are campaigning for a binding target of at least 6,000 new social housing flats per year.

At the same time, we adhere to a clear principle: social housing must remain social housing in the long term. It is unacceptable for flats to be subsidised with public funds and then returned to the free market after a few years. Public funding must be permanently linked to rent and occupancy controls. Similarly, we must prevent subsidised flats from being converted into owner-occupied properties or removed from the social housing stock through sharp rent increases.

Reforming land policy

Anyone wishing to build affordable housing must start with land policy. High land prices drive up the costs of housing construction and ultimately push up rents as well. That is why Berlin needs a clear change of direction: land owned by the state must, as a matter of principle, not be resold.

Instead, public land should only be allocated on a long-term basis under hereditary building rights, primarily to state-owned housing associations and non-profit co-operatives. This limits land speculation, reduces construction costs and strengthens the public sector's influence on urban development. Land is not just any commodity, but the foundation of responsible urban policy.

Berlin must secure land at an early stage, rather than always waiting until the pressure has already become too great before discussing housing construction. Forward-looking provision of building land and reliable urban development planning are essential to ensure that sufficient land is available for housing construction in the coming years.

We call for the extension of the right of first refusal with price caps, as well as the provision of adequate funding for the boroughs.

Protecting and making better use of existing housing

New-build housing alone will not solve the housing crisis. Berlin must also better protect existing housing stock and make more sensible use of it. It is unacceptable that many people search in vain for an affordable flat, whilst at the same time flats stand empty, are barely used or are misused as holiday lets.

The BSW opposes the demolition of buildings that are still usable, unnecessary compulsory modernisation, overpriced furnished lettings and any form of misuse of property. Housing is meant for living in. Therefore, the conversion of flats into holiday accommodation or similar uses must be effectively prevented. To this end, the relevant staff resources in the district offices must be reorganised accordingly.

The displacement of long-standing tenants through flat modernisation must be stopped. The passing on of modernisation costs to the rent must be limited to the verifiable investment expenditure and structured over time in such a way that it ends once the investment has been fully amortised.

Berlin must also take more decisive action against speculative vacancy. In cases of prolonged vacancy without valid reason, it must be examined whether the district can let the property on a fiduciary basis. Where property is permanently deprived of its social responsibility, the state must not remain inactive. As a last resort, nationalisation remains an option.

At the same time, we want to make it easier to use the housing stock in a way that better meets people's needs. Many older people, once their children have moved out, live in flats that are too large for their current needs. However, moving house often fails because a smaller flat would be more expensive to rent than their current one. We therefore want to create incentives to make moving to a suitable flat attractive again. This includes promoting flat swaps tailored to people's needs.

Due to the housing shortage, it is practically impossible for adult children without financial means to move out of their parents' home. When allocating publicly subsidised flats, the length of time a person has had their main residence in Berlin should be taken into account alongside the existing criteria. Priority should be given to young adults of legal age who are setting up their own household for the first time, families living in cramped conditions, and people who need to move house for work or educational reasons.

Strengthening non-profit organisations and housing cooperatives

Affordable housing can only be secured in the long term if the housing market is not left solely in the hands of profit-driven players. The BSW therefore aims to specifically strengthen non-profit housing and co-operative involvement in the housing sector. A Berlin-wide co-operative initiative and the expansion of non-profit housing schemes can help to create permanently affordable housing and ensure stable neighbourhoods.

BSW Berlin AGH Election 2026 Election Manifesto

We are committed to providing targeted support to co-operatives in terms of access to building land, funding and project development. Due to their business model, co-operatives help to keep rents in check. We therefore call for an end to the political blockade against co-operatives and for land to be offered to them on a priority basis, or for land to be made available to them under a 99-year leasehold.

In housing construction projects undertaken by the state and its companies, a significantly higher proportion of non-profit and co-operative housing should be provided for. In this way, Berlin can gradually build up a stronger, non-profit-driven housing sector and restore a greater social balance to the market.

Work and Social Affairs, Family

The BSW is fighting alongside workers in the city and the state, across all sectors of the economy and public administration, in industry and the service sector, for a state with fair wages, secure jobs and good working conditions. To prevent wage suppression, collective bargaining coverage must be strengthened once again and the process of making collective agreements universally binding must be simplified.

The State of Berlin must take the lead in this. In particular, precarious work falling under the state's responsibility must be abolished. Collective agreements in the public sector must finally be given full effect once again.

We support workers, their trade unions and works councils or staff councils in their efforts to defend workers' rights and decent work.

The welfare state and the rights of the working population, won through long trade union struggles, must not be further eroded. Defending and renewing them is a core concern of the BSW.

Public services are a principle of the welfare state enshrined in the Basic Law and must not be subject to the rules of a market in which profit and returns take precedence over the common good. The public sector must set an example with employment relationships secured by collective agreements and reliable standards, and have a positive influence on the private sector, rather than increasingly adopting the dictates of so-called 'market-standard' wages and conditions itself.

We advocate policies that put social justice back at the centre. For us, social justice does not mean egalitarianism, but fair living conditions, genuine participation and protection against social decline.

Collective bargaining and equal pay

We demand equal pay for equal work with the same employer in our city. This applies both to employees at subsidiaries (e.g. Vivantes, Charité, BVG and BT Berlin Transport GmbH) who carry out the same work, and to public sector employees who, more than 30 years after reunification, are still divided into 'East' and 'West' categories when it comes to salary and Christmas bonus.

We will abolish fixed-term contracts without objective grounds in the public sector and campaign for secure employment relationships. We will consistently reverse the spin-offs and new ventures from public enterprises that have led to poorer working conditions and lower pay.

We take an uncompromising stance against wage dumping and advocate for the return of outsourced sectors, such as cleaning services and logistics, to public ownership.

We want collective agreements in force in Berlin to be declared universally binding in significantly more sectors, and we are working within the House of Representatives to make it easier to declare collective agreements universally binding across the country.

Tackling poverty

Poverty is a reality in many neighbourhoods across Berlin. It hits children, the elderly, the unemployed, single parents and those in precarious employment particularly hard. Around one in four children lives in a family that relies on basic income support. Poverty has long-term effects on educational opportunities, health and the social and cultural participation of those affected, because just like wealth, poverty is passed on to the next generation.

This is where we are taking action with social support measures. We are setting up additional advice centres for child-related benefits from the Family Benefits Office. It must be possible to apply for benefits directly on site. Alternatively, advice and support with applications should also be available online.

No austerity measures for social services and institutions

The Senate's current austerity measures are affecting welfare organisations and educational providers in particular. However, these are needed now more than ever to advise and support the growing number of people affected by poverty and unemployment with concrete measures. We support direct assistance schemes such as financial aid, food, clothing or help with finding accommodation, and ensure legal and psychological support whilst reducing bureaucratic hurdles. These services should be used in particular to prevent addiction and homelessness.

Overcoming homelessness

Homelessness is a manifestation of structural failings and not a personal failure. In a prosperous city like Berlin, it must not be accepted as the norm. We are committed to early prevention of rent arrears and loss of housing, to the consistent implementation of 'Housing First' approaches, to the expansion of emergency and temporary accommodation meeting decent standards, and to reliable social support and counselling, including psychosocial support services. We want to prevent homelessness, not merely manage it.

It is estimated that there are currently over 55,000 homeless people living in Berlin, including at least

6,000 people living on the streets. Without decisive action, this figure threatens to rise to as many as 100,000 by the end of the decade. First and foremost, everyone affected needs a home of their own. Instead of starting with extensive social work – as has been the case to date – and only then offering accommodation, the 'Housing First' approach puts housing first – combined with voluntary, needs-based social support. In Finland, this model has significantly reduced homelessness and saves the public purse around 15,000 euros per person annually.

Pilot projects are also proving successful in German local authorities. However, individual pilot projects are not enough. We want to make 'Housing First' a permanent and comprehensive standard measure in Berlin. To achieve this, the public sector must utilise all available tools: identifying and addressing vacant properties, preventing misuse of housing, combating rent gouging and extending occupancy rights. Homelessness is not a matter of fate. With 'Housing First', we are prioritising greater human dignity and lower follow-on costs.

Drug policy and addiction prevention

In addition to the harm caused to individuals, drug addiction also has social consequences that no responsible political party should ignore or deny. Damage to health, high healthcare costs, incapacity to work, prostitution, 'baby trafficking' and human trafficking, drug-related crime, and organised crime linked to the sale of illegal drugs always place a burden on the community.

We are committed to expanding measures for drug prevention. Given the rising number of people suffering from drug addiction, support services such as safe drug consumption rooms, medical care facilities and support for substitution therapies should be expanded. Drug addiction often leads to the loss of one's social and professional network, as well as one's accommodation. If drug addiction results in homelessness, the physical and psychological strain on those suffering from addiction is exacerbated. We therefore call for an expansion of accommodation specifically intended for people suffering from addiction.

Introduce an independent monitoring and oversight body for youth welfare offices

We advocate for the introduction of an independent monitoring and oversight body for youth welfare offices. The aim of this body should be to identify at an early stage and publicly address cases of abuse, the misallocation of resources, delays in the provision of support, and breaches of the law. It should be a body with clearly defined powers, areas of responsibility and accountability reports. Such an independent body fosters trust among families, professionals and service providers alike, strengthens the enforcement of the law at all levels and thereby ensures the continuous improvement of youth welfare services in Berlin.

Tackling loneliness, strengthening social spaces

Loneliness is also a growing social problem in Berlin. It affects not only older people or those with health impairments, but increasingly young adults as well. Unemployed, homeless and socially disadvantaged people are particularly affected. Loneliness can exacerbate mental health issues, impair health and weaken social cohesion.

We therefore view loneliness as a political challenge. Berlin needs more places where people can meet and reliable services that promote social participation. This includes expanding and ensuring the long-term future of community centres, supporting neighbourhood and social interaction projects, and implementing targeted measures to combat loneliness amongst young people, older people and the socially disadvantaged. A sense of community does not

BSW Berlin Election Manifesto for the 2026 AGH Election

does not happen by itself. It requires spaces for people to meet and political support, as well as the promotion of collaborative thinking between nurseries, primary schools and care homes for the elderly.

Education

The German education system is increasingly losing ground in terms of educational quality, equality of opportunity and cultural depth. The BSW aims to reverse this trend. Our goal is an educational transformation that focuses on raising our children to become mature, independent-minded and responsible individuals.

For us, education means demanding and encouraging achievement, strengthening social behaviour and preparing young people for a self-determined, professionally viable life. We want a return to compulsory curriculum content, clear performance standards and verifiable outcomes. Pupils should know what they are capable of – and what is expected of them.

Early childhood support as the foundation for integration and equal opportunities

Early childhood education is crucial for integration, language development and future educational success. The BSW Berlin therefore calls for compulsory attendance at nursery from the age of four at the latest. This will enable linguistic, social and cognitive skills to be nurtured from an early age.

To ensure the quality of education in nursery schools, regular language assessments should be introduced from the age of three. In addition, neighbourhood mothers and integration guides should act as intermediaries between families, nursery schools and schools, and involve parents more closely in early childhood support.

Furthermore, we advocate the reintroduction of a compulsory pre-school phase that specifically promotes language development, numeracy and social learning. Early childhood education must not be viewed merely as a childcare service, but as a fundamental building block for equality of opportunity and social participation.

Intertwining educational equity and urban development

Education must not depend on one's postcode. In socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods, schools require special support. The BSW Berlin calls for a multi-year support programme for schools in priority areas, providing additional funding, professional development and fully qualified staff.

Furthermore, allocation quotas for the transition to primary schools should ensure a better mix of pupils with varying levels of German language proficiency within the boroughs. The aim is to prevent segregation and encourage interaction. This measure is intended to ensure that pupils of non-German origin are distributed more evenly across classes within the district. We aim to improve the integration of schools into their neighbourhoods in order to link schools, culture, the local community and social services, thereby creating anchor points for local communities.

We view education as a driving force for social urban development. Every school and every nursery is part of the local community and should become a place of social cohesion. This requires clear structures, reliability in day-to-day school life and an administration that supports educational work rather than hindering it.

An effective means of improving educational equity is to extend the period of joint learning. This reduces social segregation and allows more time to assess the educational potential of individual children. International comparative studies show that comprehensive school models do not, on the whole, lead to a reduction in educational quality. Alongside grammar schools, there should be a wide range of comprehensive schools offering high-quality education across Berlin's districts.

Tackling curriculum reforms

The Berlin school system requires a far-reaching reform of its content. The existing framework curricula are overloaded and often incomprehensible. The BSW Berlin calls for a clear structuring of the curricula according to knowledge, skills and competences. The focus must be on verifiable learning objectives that provide guidance for all those involved.

We want a significant streamlining of the curricula to create time for revision, consolidation and individual support. The acquisition of basic skills – reading, writing and arithmetic – must once again be given top priority in primary school. Exercises such as dictations, mental arithmetic and reading comprehension naturally belong in the classroom.

Error rates and school marks should be retained as transparent tools for assessing performance, as they provide motivation and guidance. Performance assessment should not be a means of selection, but a tool for support, and should be used as such.

Expand career-oriented work placements for pupils

Fewer and fewer young people are opting for specialist vocational training in the skilled trades. The current shortage of skilled workers also stems from the fact that pupils lack an understanding of the skilled trades. To date, for most secondary school pupils, only one or two work placements are compulsory throughout their entire school career.

We are increasing the scope of work experience placements at Berlin's general education schools to three block placements in different organisations, each lasting two weeks. This brings the scope of the placements into line with the 'Day in the Workplace' scheme in Thuringia (36 to 39 school days within a school year). Pupils' performance during these placements must be given greater weight in their end-of-year school reports than has been the case to date.

By expanding work experience placements, young people will gain a better, more in-depth insight into the world of work and will be better equipped to make informed decisions about vocational training later on.

Safeguarding special educational needs centres

Not all children with special educational needs can be adequately supported in mainstream schools. Small learning groups, specialised teaching methods and targeted therapeutic support are essential, particularly for pupils with intellectual disabilities. We therefore call for the long-term preservation of special educational support centres as

independent and high-quality educational institutions. They stand on an equal footing with inclusive mainstream schools and ensure that families have a genuine choice and receive the best possible support. At the same time, we want to trial new inclusion models in new mainstream schools. We also call for the widespread deployment of school psychologists.

The current division of responsibilities for school support between youth welfare offices and special educational support centres leads to delays, overlapping structures and unclear lines of responsibility. We advocate consolidating all responsibilities for school support within a single regional structure that operates transparently, makes decisions swiftly and manages resources efficiently. The aim is a simple, fair and predictable process.

Strengthening multi-professional collaboration

The quality of Berlin's schools depends crucially on collaboration between different professional groups. We therefore call for the widespread deployment of multi-professional teams comprising teachers, nursery staff, social workers, psychologists and specialists in IT, prevention and administration.

To ease the burden on schools and ensure greater transparency, a central IT system should be established for all Berlin schools, which reduces administrative workload and facilitates communication between teachers, parents and the school administration. Every school should have its own IT specialists who are available on a daily basis.

A Berlin-wide quality management system is to regularly evaluate the work of teachers, pupils and school management. Standardised tests in key year groups are to be used as a tool for self-assessment and quality assurance.

Adapting digitalisation and media literacy

Digitalisation is a tool for learning, not a substitute for education. Digital skills should be taught across all subjects, but always embedded within critical reflection and ethical education. At the same time, schools must remain places where concentration, hands-on learning and social interaction are possible. Digital devices must not dominate.

In primary schools, so-called 'detox classes' without screens should be established to promote attention, memory and reading skills. Smartphones should generally not be used during lessons and must be locked away before lessons begin.

We call for all pupils to obtain a compulsory digital licence at the end of Year 10, which demonstrates their knowledge of media use, data protection and information evaluation.

Upgrading infrastructure and the learning environment

More and more schools in Berlin are in a state of disrepair. We see this as a socially alarming expression of the ruling class's contempt for our children and our teachers. We therefore call for a central programme for the repair and aesthetic enhancement of schools, which combines sustainability,

energy efficiency and a learner-friendly environment. Every school should have modern technical equipment, comprehensive Wi-Fi coverage and dedicated workspaces for teachers. Refurbishments should be carried out within clear timeframes, and a functioning caretaker service must ensure on-site maintenance.

We reject the termination of cleaning services in schools, such as daily cleaning. In the long term, we want to bring school cleaning back under local authority control. The boroughs must be provided with the necessary funding accordingly.

Provide adequate funding for universities

Higher education institutions must live up to the social significance of research, teaching and knowledge transfer. Their structural underfunding threatens this commitment. We call for state funding for Berlin's higher education institutions to be increased to at least **two** per cent of Berlin's gross domestic product (GDP). This will help reduce dependence on third-party funding and promote academic freedom. Furthermore, the proportion of university graduates tends to be too high. There is a shortage of skilled workers, particularly in vocational training programmes. Funding should therefore be channelled more specifically into the so-called STEM subjects, where there is a need for graduates, whilst access to other fields of study should be restricted. An overall reduction in the number of students will increase the funding per student place. We advocate the abolition of fixed-term chain contracts in research and teaching.

Introduction of a new student accommodation fund

Studying must not depend on parents' income. The BSW Berlin wants academic education to be open to everyone, regardless of social background. To this end, we are calling for a state-wide social pact on higher education.

A Berlin student accommodation fund is to be established, which will provide for the construction of new affordable halls of residence within five years, in order to protect students from being socially displaced from Berlin's increasingly unaffordable housing market.

We also want to explore options for introducing a state scholarship for students from low-income families. In this way, we will create fair conditions for studying and ensure social mobility, thereby preventing financial barriers from obstructing educational opportunities.

Enforcing the civil clause

Research and teaching must serve peace and civil society. In line with the BSW's peace policy, we will enforce a mandatory civil clause for all Berlin universities. Research, teaching and study must be geared exclusively towards civil and peaceful purposes. We rule out any cooperation with military institutions, in particular the Bundeswehr, its subordinate and superior organisations, and the arms industry.

Berlin as Capital of Culture

Principles

Art must be free: free from discipline imposed by politically influenced award ceremonies and funding decisions that reward positions conforming to government policy and marginalise those critical of the government. Taking into account decisions of the Constitutional Court, we therefore reject state-imposed ideological vetting of academics, artists and cultural practitioners as an anti-democratic encroachment.

Art must be open: open to everyone, regardless of their status or financial circumstances. The BSW advocates for the lowest possible barriers to access to high culture. Encountering art, understanding art and discovering one's own artistic abilities as early as possible must not be hindered by financial or social barriers.

An appreciative approach to art, the liberal tolerance of the challenges art presents, free access to art and the promotion of artistic talent are hallmarks of a culturally developed society. This conviction underpins the BSW's cultural policy. We apply this conviction with particular emphasis to our policy measures for Berlin, the cultural metropolis.

For a binding and transparent law on cultural funding

Berlin's cultural scene is one of Germany's most famous attractions. It enriches our own lives in Berlin with its creative diversity and boosts the city's budget through its appeal to tourists. We therefore call for a Berlin Cultural Funding Act that establishes a framework for long-term, reliable cultural funding.

The Cultural Funding Act establishes binding structures for cooperation between politicians, the administration and the cultural scene, in order to guarantee transparency, planning certainty and democratic participation. Berlin must follow the example of federal states such as Lower Saxony, Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt, where such laws have long been in place.

Reversal of the drastic cuts to the culture budget

In 2025, the Berlin coalition government of the CDU and SPD pushed through radical cuts in the cultural sector. The culture budget was slashed by 12 per cent and bore a disproportionately heavy burden of savings compared to other sectors, even though it accounts for just 2 per cent of the total budget. The CDU and SPD have imposed a programme of cultural impoverishment on our city.

In addition to the austerity measures affecting many major cultural institutions, the cuts also impact youth cultural projects, funding for the independent arts scene and innovative neighbourhood-based initiatives. The cuts relate not only to funding but often to entire funding structures that have hitherto enabled broad cultural participation and diversity in Berlin. We therefore call for the cuts to be completely reversed and for a significant increase in the culture budget.

We are campaigning for the reintroduction of free admission on Museum Sundays. We oppose the cuts to funding that have affected the Cultural Education Project Fund, the Youth Culture Initiative, the Fund for Exhibition Remuneration for Visual Artists, the Berlin Urban Practice Project Fund, the Workspace Programme for Artists' Studios, and the 'Outdoors & Free' programmes (Draußenstadt Initiative).

We support the preservation and refurbishment of the Berlin City Library and the Amerika-Gedenkbibliothek, as well as the swift refurbishment of the Komische Oper without placing a burden on its artistic budget.

Cultural allocation of the accommodation tax (CityTax)

Revenue from the CityTax currently disappears into the general state budget. We are putting an end to this practice. The revenue must be reinvested directly into cultural provision – particularly as over 50 per cent of all visitors to Berlin make use of cultural offerings. Cities such as Hamburg, Cologne and Erfurt allocate all revenue from the 'overnight stay tax' to cultural initiatives. We are adopting this rule for Berlin, the city of culture.

Culture Pass for Young People

Studies on cultural participation show that young people from low-income families are significantly less likely to go to the theatre, museums or concerts. This makes culture a matter of social class. Those with less money participate less frequently – regardless of individual interest.

The nationwide Culture Pass for those born in 2005 and 2006 has shown how easily and successfully cultural participation can be promoted. Today, whilst models of compulsory military service for young people are being discussed, the federal government is unfortunately setting different priorities: military rather than cultural opportunities for young people. We therefore want Berlin to take responsibility itself. All young people aged between 15 and 18 should receive a fixed allowance per school term, which they can use for cultural activities, ranging from theatre visits and books to music or art courses. In this way, we create genuine access, strengthen diversity and better engage young people.

Fair and democratic allocation of funding

The allocation of public funding for culture must be transparent, ensure equal opportunities and be democratic. Non-transparent decision-making processes undermine the trust of cultural practitioners and the people of Berlin and prevent fair access. We will therefore establish transparent criteria and procedures for the allocation of cultural funding to make it clear why certain institutions and projects are funded – and others are not.

We will appoint public, equally represented juries (comprising representatives from the cultural sector, politics and the general public) to help decide on the allocation of funding. This will create fairer access, including for new and independent cultural actors who are not tied into established political and administrative networks.

New impetus for Berlin's cultural policy

We will appoint a city curator who will make specific locations and spaces within the urban environment available to independent artists and artist groups for a limited period of time for their creative projects. Cities such as Leipzig and Hamburg have already successfully employed such city curators. The City of Berlin opens up an even broader scope for curatorial use in this role.

In our funding of cultural projects, we will focus on digital developments and, in particular, support projects that explore the constructive or destructive influence of artificial intelligence on art and society.

We propose that opera houses, concert halls and exhibition venues make their foyers and entrance areas accessible to the public even outside event times, as spaces for creative use, dialogue and communal gathering without any pressure to consume.

We are fundamentally committed to securing as many of the remaining non-commercial spaces as possible for artistic activities and the experience of art in Berlin.

Healthcare

We want to strengthen the solidarity-based healthcare system rather than continuing to run it into the ground through cutbacks. The two-tier healthcare system must be abolished. Everyone should have equal access to high-quality medical care, regardless of income, background or insurance status.

That is why the BSW is calling for a citizens' insurance scheme as a unified health insurance system, into which all citizens contribute, including civil servants and higher earners. We want to raise the contribution assessment ceiling and the thresholds for compulsory insurance. This will ease the burden on citizens on low and middle incomes.

In future, we want to pay newly appointed civil servants of the state a fixed amount as an employer's contribution towards statutory health insurance, rather than a health allowance. The eligibility criteria for private health insurance for civil servants will be brought into line with those for employees and the self-employed.

The healthcare system must be geared towards people's needs, not profit motives. We will campaign for this in the Berlin House of Representatives.

Using hospitals in a planned manner

Hospital care is part of public services and belongs in public or charitable hands. Hospitals are not businesses, but places of healing and care. BSW Berlin calls for hospital planning that prioritises the public good, with the involvement of citizens. The aim is to provide high-quality inpatient care close to home and accessible by public transport. State funding should specifically support hospitals that strengthen social support, transition management and the integration of outpatient and inpatient care. The investment backlog of several hundred million euros must be resolved – the State of Berlin must fulfil its statutory obligation to finance investment.

We will campaign to ensure that the State of Berlin plays its part at federal level to ensure that hospital reform leads to an improvement in local healthcare provision, rather than to haphazard and politically motivated closures of essential hospitals in order to plug funding gaps. The focus must be on ensuring the availability of care for all and on patient-centred improvements in quality. Structural adjustments must go hand in hand with safeguarding jobs. The loss of medical professionals must be counteracted.

We advocate a restructuring of hospital funding, as the current DRG funding system (based on diagnosis-related groups) has not proved effective. Berlin still needs the flexibility to shape its hospital planning in order to take regional characteristics and healthcare needs into account. Berlin should remain a healthcare hub and continue to set standards through the close integration of care, training and research.

Local GPs and prompt appointments

Healthcare must not depend on your postcode. In some Berlin boroughs, primary care provided by GPs and paediatricians is in an extremely critical state. We are committed to ensuring there are sufficient numbers of GPs and paediatricians in every neighbourhood. Medical practices must be redistributed in a targeted manner, and new municipal or public primary care centres must be established, particularly in underserved boroughs. To meet future demand, we are calling for a quota for GP training places. Anyone studying general practice or paediatrics should be able to enter the healthcare system with confidence. In addition, we are committed to establishing new, state-run primary care centres in socially deprived areas and in regions at risk of undersupply.

We are committed to ensuring that appointments are booked via the patient service number 116117, rather than through commercial platforms. It must be ensured that doctors' surgeries can be reached by telephone. Flexible surgery opening hours, particularly to enable swift access to specialist care, should also help relieve the pressure on overburdened hospital A&E departments.

For new patients, and particularly in acute cases, the Berlin Association of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians must establish a scheme to prevent patients from being turned away by a GP practice.

Building strong practice teams

The GP practice of the future is a team effort. We are committed to multi-professional structures that take the pressure off GPs and free up more time for patients. This includes qualified non-medical staff who can carry out home visits independently or support people with chronic conditions and the very elderly.

We need a career development initiative for medical assistants. Only through better pay, clear career progression opportunities, greater responsibility and a reliable legal framework will these professions become attractive. Professional case management with designated points of contact for the very elderly, chronically ill or care-dependent patients is also crucial. We want to roll out existing successful pilot projects across Berlin. Other European countries demonstrate just how well such teams work. Berlin must not lag behind in this area any longer.

Relieving the pressure on emergency services

Last winter showed just how quickly Berlin's A&E departments reach their capacity limits. We want to expand emergency clinics such as the Integrated Emergency Centres (INZ) with extended opening hours and advocate for alternative solutions for the employment of self-employed pool doctors. Paramedics and staff in A&E departments need greater protection whilst on duty and sufficient training places. In addition, we are campaigning for a Berlin emergency directive that clearly and unambiguously documents the patient's wishes in an emergency. Berlin also needs defibrillators across the board and wide-ranging training programmes on how to use them. Teaching first aid as early as primary school also serves this purpose.

Promoting children's health and prevention

We call for welcome centres for families in socially deprived areas, offering low-threshold support, advice and guidance. Every newborn child should receive a starter pack ('Babybox'). Through a 'family nurse' programme, we aim to provide better support for young families, children with disabilities and those with chronic illnesses. A State Working Group on Child Health is also to be established to create closer links between prevention, pregnancy, childbirth and child health. The referral of midwives will be coordinated across Berlin and supported by incentive schemes. Furthermore, we want to improve the coordination of the U8 and U9 check-ups between paediatricians, the Child and Youth Health Service and childcare centres, so that support services can begin in good time before children start school. Social paediatric centres must be expanded in line with demand.

Securing care

We call for a fundamental reform of long-term care insurance. Long-term care must not become a poverty trap. We advocate clearly capped personal contributions to long-term care insurance. Instead of a confusing jumble of benefits that nobody understands, those in need of care and their relatives should be given a budget and be able to decide for themselves how to use it. Care staff need less bureaucracy and fewer regulations; instead, they need sufficient time and resources for their actual work, namely the professional care and loving support of the people entrusted to them. Quality is not achieved through constant monitoring, but through trust and good working conditions. Providing good care for our fellow citizens in need is an integral part of essential public services and must therefore once again be the responsibility of society as a whole!

Ensuring good care in old age

In Berlin, the very elderly and seriously ill often face significant gaps in care, both at home due to a lack of home-visiting medical care and in hospitals lacking age-appropriate care models. Misplaced priorities and staff shortages exacerbate the situation.

We believe that people, particularly in old age and at the end of life, are entitled to dignity and care. We want to strengthen home-visiting medical care by expanding mobile practice support and teams qualified in geriatrics. Supplementary home nursing care and psychosocial support must be guaranteed. Hospitals need dementia-sensitive structures, accessibility and effective discharge management.

It is particularly important to expand general outpatient palliative care so that people can be well looked after and die pain-free in their familiar surroundings. To achieve this, GP practices need better training and sufficient financial resources. This will help avoid unnecessary hospital stays at the end of life and enable people to be supported with dignity.

Supporting people with severe disabilities

There should be coordination and advice centres for people with severe disabilities and those at risk of disability in all Berlin boroughs. The process of assessing and recognising a severe disability in Berlin is complicated and protracted; streamlining and simplifying the procedure is absolutely essential. In care homes, as well as in residential homes for people with disabilities, working conditions and pay must be structured in such a way that this work also becomes attractive to young people.

Better support for people with chronic illnesses

People with severe chronic illnesses and mental health issues often face gaps in care provision in Berlin. We want to ensure comprehensive medical, psychotherapeutic and social welfare support, including for those affected by Long Covid (CFS) or patients suffering from vaccine-related injuries. A systematic case management system for children and adults with severe chronic illnesses should be established across Berlin so that existing structures can be utilised effectively. In particular, people living in substandard accommodation and the homeless must have adequate access to outreach medical and mental health care. This is intended to prevent these people from regularly finding themselves in emergency situations – particularly at railway stations or on public transport – and will also help relieve the burden on the ambulance service.

Improving staff conditions and collaboration

Good healthcare is only possible with qualified, well-paid and satisfied staff. We call for uniform, binding staffing standards across the country for all professional groups within the healthcare sector. Working conditions must become more family-friendly, and collectively agreed salaries must be financially sustainable. Outsourced operations of the Charité and Vivantes must be brought back in-house. The abuse of temporary employment agencies must be curbed. A training initiative should help alleviate the shortage of skilled workers. Nursing staff should be given greater authority, be able to act independently and work on an equal footing with doctors. Multi-professional collaboration is the foundation of a modern healthcare system.

Public Health Service

The Public Health Service (ÖGD) must be significantly strengthened: in terms of staffing, funding and organisation. Only in this way can it reliably fulfil its responsibilities, for example in the areas of health protection, counselling, information, health promotion and prevention. We take a comprehensive view of prevention: from vaccination and addiction prevention through to exercise programmes and digital educational tools.

Digitalisation

Digitalisation can improve healthcare provision, but it must not become yet another gateway for multinational corporations that have discovered the healthcare market as a business model. Data and patient safety take precedence over profit motives. We support digital services where they improve day-to-day care, for example through better digital

BSW Berlin Election Manifesto for the 2026 AGH Election

Linking inpatient and outpatient care. Digital appointment booking and documentation should ease the burden on medical practices, not create new dependencies on private platforms.

Healthcare, not militarisation

Hospitals are places of healing, not of military build-up. We firmly reject any militarisation of the healthcare system. Bundeswehr exercises in hospitals, military-style civil defence or additional Bundeswehr university places have no place in Berlin. Instead, we invest in civilian healthcare, disaster preparedness and social infrastructure. Wars are prevented through diplomacy, not through rearmament. A strong, solidarity-based healthcare system is part of a genuine peace policy.

Sport for all

Sport brings people together, keeps us healthy, promotes integration and brings joy to children, young people and adults a zest for life. For the BSW, sport for all Berliners is central and must take priority over elite sport or major international events.

Rebuilding the sports infrastructure

Berlin has neglected its sports infrastructure for decades – and the established parties in power bear full responsibility for this. Massive and utterly irresponsible cuts have severely affected the maintenance of the Olympic Stadium, the school and sports facilities renovation programme, and grassroots sport. The renovation backlog amounts to hundreds of millions of euros – with a current shortfall of 410 million euros, compared to just 24 million euros per year, following years of cuts from a former level of 30 million. Clubs are reaching their limits: thousands of children and young people are waiting in vain for a place.

The current ruling black-red coalition of the CDU and SPD, led by Governing Mayor Kai Wegner, is continuing this extremely damaging austerity drive and prioritising prestige projects instead: it is pushing ahead with the Olympic bid and pouring millions into campaigns and bid budgets – up to 6 million euros are currently earmarked for this – whilst grassroots sport is being bled dry. Wegner and his coalition promise “investments in the future through the Olympics”, but in reality they are diverting money away from dilapidated sports halls and a shortage of places – towards expensive spectacles that, worldwide, invariably result in cost overruns, debt and commercialisation, as has already happened in Paris, Rio, London and Sochi. Bids for major sporting events such as the Olympics must not be pursued at the expense of grassroots sport. And under no circumstances should such bids be made without the public’s input. Instead, we are committed to supporting local clubs, many of which are struggling to survive. Sport must be local, affordable and accessible to everyone.

Promoting grassroots sport

The BSW aims to promote grassroots sport in a targeted and sustainable manner, so that Berlin can once again produce top-class athletes who can hold their own on the international stage. A strong foundation creates a strong elite – with good training conditions, qualified coaches and modern facilities, talent develops naturally and athletes are given genuine opportunities.

It is particularly important to us to get children and young people away from their screens and active again. At a time when many hours are spent in front of smartphones and computers, we need more physical activity outdoors and in sports halls. We are developing low-threshold, fun activities right in the neighbourhood – from football to swimming to athletics. In this way, we promote health, discipline and a sense of community from an early age.

BSW Berlin Election Manifesto for the 2026 AGH Election

It's not too late to save important sports facilities such as the SEZ (Sports and Recreation Centre)! A demolition freeze is currently in place and intense debates are underway about alternatives – right now, we're fighting to ensure these facilities are preserved, refurbished and made fit for the future. It's worth fighting for!

Housing is important – Berlin urgently needs it. However, a city worth living in also absolutely needs leisure activities and sports facilities. We are committed to a balanced approach: housing development, yes, but not at the expense of tried-and-tested sports and recreation venues. These must be refurbished, modernised and continue to be used.

Our specific measures:

A refurbishment drive for sports facilities: We will halt cuts and double the funding for refurbishments. Priority will be given to maintenance, conversion and accessibility upgrades. No demolition without an equivalent replacement – the SEZ, the Jahn-Sportpark and other sports facilities must be made fit for the future. New sports halls and pitches must be built where they are urgently needed.

Strengthening grassroots sport and clubs: Free or heavily subsidised use of local facilities for clubs. Free access for children and young people. Targeted support for coaches, volunteers and inclusion projects.

Expanding school sport: more lessons, better equipment and the complete refurbishment of all school sports facilities. No child should have to miss out on sport because of dilapidated halls. Affordable sport for all: low-cost or free options in every borough – against high fees and commercialisation. Special support for women's and girls' sport, sport for older people and integration projects.

With these steps, we will make Berlin a true city of sport – not through expensive events, but through sport that is part of everyday life. For clubs in every borough. For parents who can finally enrol their children in a club. For everyone who loves sport and wants an affordable, liveable Berlin!

Berlin's COVID-19 policy needs to be reviewed

Three years ago, the pandemic was declared over. For Berlin's politicians, it seems light years away. Yet there is much to be learnt from the trials and tribulations of that time. However, because all the established parties – from Die Linke to the CDU – were involved in Berlin's COVID-19 policy, they collectively have no interest in a thorough review. Over the past two years, our independent MP has done what the other parties and their parliamentary groups were unwilling to do: he has carried out a systematic review. He submitted 50 written questions to the Senate and analysed the responses with the help of medical experts. The findings strongly suggest that the Berlin House of Representatives needs a select committee of inquiry. This will only happen if the BSW enters the AGH.

This is what we want to investigate in a coronavirus inquiry committee:

The construction and dismantling of the 'phantom clinic' at the Berlin Exhibition Centre, at a cost of around 90 million euros. This COVID-19 treatment centre, inaugurated with great fanfare, never saw a single patient; nor would there have been any medical staff, unless they had been withdrawn from other hospitals. This expensive farce must be urgently investigated.

Lessons learnt from the Covid-19 period? Absolutely none. Neither are the necessary investments being made to make Berlin's hospitals pandemic-proof for the future, nor are investment grants being awarded in the required amounts. What lessons have been drawn from the experience of the pandemic? This, too, must be clarified in a select committee.

'Follow the science'? In Berlin, a city that prides itself on its high concentration of universities, Covid-19 policy was conducted blindly. The data basis was flimsy. Who was in hospital with Covid-19 and who was in hospital because of it? The Senate cannot say. Who died with Covid-19 and who died from it? No information available. What, specifically, do people die of when they die from Covid-19? Unknown. Post-mortem examinations were not carried out. Key data was neither collected nor made available. That must change.

The approach was: propaganda instead of facts. Hospitals were said to be at risk of 'filling up'. This was used to justify far-reaching restrictions on fundamental rights. Yet bed occupancy rates during the Covid years were no higher than before or since. At the Charité, a significant amount of overtime was worked off.

For many business owners, the measures threatened their very livelihoods. Some took advantage of the aid handed out without proper scrutiny. Others are still struggling to repay the aid and are at risk of going bankrupt. What lessons can be learnt from these experiences to ensure targeted support in the future?

In Berlin, fines totalling over 4 million euros were imposed in 75,000 cases for breaches of the overbearing and nonsensical Covid regulations. No amnesty has been planned to date. Formally, the proceedings are still ongoing. In other countries, fines are

are being refunded. In Berlin, nothing is happening. Politicians are proving uncooperative. A parliamentary committee of inquiry must be set up to investigate this as well.

People suffering from vaccine-related injuries ('PostVac') as well as those affected by Long Covid and Post-Covid are still too often left to fend for themselves. We want to establish Berlin-wide support centres, ensure medical care and expand research into health consequences, vaccine safety and the effects of measures such as school closures, lockdowns and 2G/3G rules. It is particularly serious that existing data sources have still not been systematically collated. A statutory cross-check of health insurance data against reports of vaccine side effects has not taken place. A committee of inquiry must finally analyse this data in order to transparently clarify risks and possible correlations – for example, in the case of severe side effects.

The process for recognising and compensating for vaccine-related injuries must be significantly simplified and made less bureaucratic. Outstanding safety issues must be fully clarified; for us, this also includes the debate on a moratorium on mRNA vaccines until these issues have been resolved and all vaccines have undergone and passed all the strictest safety procedures currently in force. The scandalous exemption from liability enjoyed by vaccine manufacturers must be revoked, and they must be made to contribute to the resulting costs, rather than passing these costs on to the general public via the statutory health insurance system, which is already in serious financial difficulty.

The BSW stands for coming to terms with the past rather than a cover-up, for rehabilitation rather than continued punishment, and for reason rather than panic-driven politics.

Freedom of expression, public service broadcasting, gender-neutral language

Make the public service broadcaster democratic, transparent and leaner!

Public service broadcasting is in the midst of a crisis of confidence. Nowhere is this more evident than in Berlin and Brandenburg. In 2022, our rbb was at the epicentre of this crisis, triggered by the scandals surrounding the then Director-General Schlesinger, the Chairman of the Board of Directors Wolf and other senior figures. Behind the scandals involving these individuals, structural problems came to light: the squandering of licence fee money, exorbitant salaries at the top of the broadcaster, crushing pension liabilities, close ties to political decision-makers, and dysfunctional supervisory bodies. The debate quickly expanded to include issues such as a lack of diversity of opinion and precarious working conditions.

We only need a public service broadcaster if it sees itself as a platform for diversity of opinion. Every household pays a licence fee, so every household has a right to see their views reflected in broadcasting. The rbb often fails to meet this requirement. The BSW demands: reform rather than a licence fee increase

Even higher licence fees? That is out of the question for us. Financial leeway can be increased through more cost-effective management rather than through higher licence fees.

We want a licence fee reform aimed at providing genuine relief for lower and middle-income households. For them, the licence fee should be reduced swiftly to 10 euros.

We urgently need a genuine streamlining of the organisational structure of ARD and ZDF. This must be discussed, with the involvement of licence fee payers.

At the very least, however, the bloated and expensive administration of the broadcasters must be drastically scaled back. Do we really need a director-general for every single broadcaster, along with all those directors and other top earners? Or could the broadcasters' administrative structures not be merged, at least in part?

As a first step, it would be appropriate to cut salaries at the management level of the broadcasters. All highly paid positions must be scrutinised: which of them are really necessary? Fundamentally, the salary structure within the broadcasters must be brought into line with the TVÖD (Public Sector Collective Agreement).

Programming: balanced and regional

Regional reporting is the core competence of public service broadcasting. It should be strengthened. The rbb has fought this tooth and nail, most recently even in court – fortunately without success. Now the provisions from the latest rbb State Treaty must be implemented swiftly.

Access to public service journalism must be broadened, for example by strengthening the EMS (Electronic Media School) journalism training programme. Guarantees of permanent employment for rbb apprentices, social scholarships for traineeships and paid work

BSW Berlin Election Manifesto for the 2026 AGH Election

placements could help to ensure access for underprivileged people too. In general, the range of training opportunities must be expanded. This will ensure greater social diversity in newsrooms

and thus ensure better representation of the population and reduce ‘bubble effects’ within editorial teams.

For a democratic public service broadcaster

There must be freelance work to ensure a certain degree of flexibility within the broadcaster, but also to facilitate the personal development of staff. A broadcaster is not a civil service apparatus and should not become one. However, freelance work should be voluntary and, above all, should not be the norm. We want to strengthen the rights of freelancers and, with that, their political independence.

The structures of public service broadcasting must be made more democratic. We want genuine co-determination by licence fee payers. The rbb Broadcasting Council comprises representatives of political parties and associations – in other words, the political mainstream. It would be better if, instead, members were selected by a representative random draw or elected by licence fee payers, so as to reflect the breadth of the population.

Complaints about programmes must be given greater weight. Furthermore, there should be opportunities for programme initiatives from the general public. We need a binding, regular and wide-ranging feedback mechanism within the rbb.

The revolving door between politics and broadcasting must finally be closed. Key management positions in public service broadcasting are incompatible with (past or future) roles in government, in either direction. The next reform of the rbb State Treaty must absolutely include this.

We need genuine transparency regarding editors-in-chief and managing editors: who are these people who ultimately decide what we get to see (and what we don’t), and why are they in these posts?

Public service broadcasting should promote international understanding, not foster hostile stereotypes. This must be included in the preamble to the next rbb State Treaty.

Protecting freedom of expression

We are in favour of abolishing reporting portals for expressions of opinion that are not relevant under criminal law (the Berlin Register, etc.). They stigmatise unwelcome expressions of opinion.

We reject the idea of a ‘loyalty test’ by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution for public sector employees, as for example, as called for by the Greens, is something we reject.

EU sanctions such as those imposed on the Berlin-based journalist and German citizen Hüseyin Dogru, who was punished with measures that destroyed his livelihood (freezing of bank accounts, professional ban, travel ban) due to his reporting on Gaza and on protests in Berlin in solidarity with Palestine, are a violation of human rights and must be revoked.

The BSW condemns the anti-democratic discussions amongst the other parties regarding a ban on the AfD and advocates competing for voters' trust on a democratic basis, using more convincing arguments and better policies.

Direct democracy – all Berliners should have a say

Democratic participation, which is always held up as a high ideal in many speeches in Berlin politics, is in reality accessible to very few people. We want to change that and introduce more direct democracy in Berlin.

All Berliners should have a say and a role in decision-making in our city. We want to expand and simplify democratic participation. To this end, we want to create the constitutional framework to enable regular referendums to be held by the Senate or on the initiative of the House of Representatives.

Any amendments to the state constitution must be put to a public vote.

All laws passed by the House of Representatives must be put to a public vote if 20,000 signatures in favour of such a vote are collected within 100 days.

Laws that have come into being as a result of a referendum cannot be amended by the House of Representatives alone, but must be put to the public for a fresh vote (e.g. development on the edge of Tempelhofer Feld).

The Senate and the House of Representatives should be given the opportunity to consult the public on important current issues (e.g. Berlin's bid to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games).

The German language is not an easy language to learn. The vast majority of Germans, including Berliners, reject the idea of adding further obstacles through overly complicated gender-neutral language. We agree with this view. It also makes it more difficult for people with a different mother tongue who have become German citizens or wish to do so to integrate. Anyone who wishes to use gender-neutral language should be free to do so, but we reject making it compulsory. We also reject the de facto compulsion to use gender-neutral language at universities and within student bodies. We want public administrations and authorities, in particular, to use language that is accessible and understandable to everyone.

Genuine protection against discrimination instead of quotas

Recruitment and promotion in the civil service must be based solely on suitability, never on gender, origin or other characteristics.

We want genuine protection for sexual minorities against violence and discrimination. This includes specifically identifying the groups of people from whom this violence originates and tailoring violence prevention measures accordingly.

BSW Berlin Election Manifesto for the 2026 AGH Election

The role of the 'Berlin State Government's Contact Person for the Acceptance of Sexual and Gender Diversity' has not proved effective. The funding should be redirected towards projects combating homophobic violence.

Immigration and Integration

The BSW advocates a fair and sensible immigration policy. It is fair to give all German citizens, regardless of their ethnic origin or religious affiliation, the same educational and career opportunities, and to strengthen our country's cultural diversity. It is sensible to strictly regulate immigration to Germany and to require legitimate asylum seekers to undertake integration measures that enable them to learn the linguistic and social skills necessary for a successful life in their new home.

The BSW embodies, particularly through its Berlin-based membership, the social and political coexistence of East and West Germans with German family histories, and of Germans with Southern and Eastern European, Turkish, Persian, Arab, Jewish, African and Latin American family histories. We Germans, from a wide variety of backgrounds, have come together in the BSW to ensure that immigration to Germany and integration within the country are managed fairly and sensibly, for the benefit of our country and all its inhabitants.

For a change in immigration policy

We fundamentally reject the current practice of unregulated immigration. Unregulated immigration is unjust and unreasonable. It places an excessive burden on local authorities. It overburdens the welfare state and the judicial authorities. It exacerbates the crisis in the housing market. It encourages crime and illegal exploitation. It leads to the emergence of parallel societies that jeopardise social cohesion. The practice of unregulated immigration is anything but humane, based on solidarity or welcoming to foreigners. It betrays contempt and indifference towards immigrants. 'Come as you please, and fend for yourselves': that is the attitude of privileged German political elites and ideologues out of touch with reality, who, in their own lives, never come into contact with the real problems of unregulated immigration.

At the beginning of 2026, the BSW MEPs therefore used their votes to help ensure that the long-standing deadlock caused by political rivals could be resolved. This now makes it possible to conduct all asylum procedures in safe third countries outside the European Union. Anyone who is not entitled to asylum must not be allowed to enter the European Union in the first place, and this means that difficulties with deportation can no longer arise.

We call for the necessary regulations to be implemented swiftly in Germany so that immigration takes place in accordance with the rules in future, and so that the inhumane deaths on the refugee routes across the Mediterranean and the criminal activities of people-smugglers come to an end.

Tackling the root causes of flight and displacement

As a consistent peace party, we focus on the geopolitical causes of refugee flows to Europe and Germany. All people are attached to the homeland into which they were born. War is a major cause of flight. Through devastating military operations, provocations aimed at regime change and economic blockades, the USA and

their European allies have driven millions of people, particularly in the Near and Middle East and in Africa, to flee war and hardship. With the many trillions wasted on armaments, it would be possible to eradicate poverty in Germany and around the world, thereby effectively eliminating the causes of flight.

This is one of the reasons why the BSW was founded: to politically organise resistance against this cynical imperialism, in which the German governing parties are currently more involved than ever. We see through why right-wing demagogues peddling anti-immigrant rhetoric and left-liberal advocates of unregulated immigration never name the true causes of the refugee flows to Europe and Germany. That is why we combine our call for regulated immigration with an equally emphatic demand for German and European foreign policy to be decoupled from US foreign policy.

The fuelling of wars in other countries – which is the primary cause of displacement – must be brought to an immediate end. Germany must actively commit to tackling the root causes of displacement. This includes halting German arms exports, putting a stop to regime-change wars and economic wars, and ending the destruction and plundering of economic and livelihood resources in the Global South. Instead, the BSW advocates active development aid to tackle the root causes of displacement and prevent refugee flows.

Improving regulations on immigration to Berlin

The BSW will campaign in the Berlin House of Representatives for immigration to be strictly regulated. In our view, anyone entering from a safe third country has no right to an asylum procedure or to social benefits. We support border controls at all German borders and the refusal of entry at the border, as long as there is no EU-wide return agreement and as long as the individuals concerned are not particularly vulnerable.

Berlin, as the main city of arrival, must no longer be left to cope with the influx of migrants on its own. Asylum seekers must also be distributed to accommodation in neighbouring federal states, which have far greater capacity.

When it comes to accommodating asylum seekers within Berlin, the districts that have borne the greatest burden to date must have the pressure eased. The distribution of asylum seekers must not continue to take place without due regard for the socio-spatial and demographic characteristics of the districts and the existing infrastructure. We support the idea of linking the resettlement of asylum seekers to an infrastructure grant for the district concerned.

Facilitating integration into society and the labour market

At the same time, we are committed to improving the integration of those who have the right to reside in Germany into our society and the labour market. The massive failings in integration policy over the past decades must be urgently addressed. We consider both the acquisition of the German language and the opportunity to

to take up employment are, in our view, essential prerequisites for successful integration.

We advocate that recognised refugees should be granted a work permit linked to their right of residence, which offers them career prospects at an early stage and enables their integration into our society. We also advocate the simplified recognition of foreign school and vocational qualifications, provided they meet German requirements. For systemically important professions where there is an acute labour shortage, an accelerated procedure should be made possible.

We wish to simplify the admission of qualified skilled workers and make it more attractive, provided that there is no shortage of skilled workers in the countries from which they immigrate, or that such a shortage is not caused by emigration. We reject the poaching of skilled workers without regard for the shortages this may cause in their countries of origin, as this is counterproductive and creates causes of flight. Our top priority is the implementation of a training initiative in Germany to train people with and without a migrant background to become skilled workers and to integrate them into the labour market.

We want immigrants to be familiarised more comprehensively than before with all aspects of living together in Germany through integration courses. Rights and obligations must be clearly outlined and communicated in a binding manner.

Improving pre-school and school-based integration measures

We are committed to ensuring that children from migrant backgrounds are distributed as evenly as possible across nurseries and primary schools within a catchment area or immediately neighbouring catchment areas. Language acquisition in childhood is the key to academic and professional success and to participation in society. Only when children without knowledge of German come into daily contact with local children can language be learnt and integration promoted.

We firmly uphold the principle of the separation of state and religion. Religion and belief are a private matter and, as such, enjoy the protection of the Basic Law (Article 4 of the Basic Law). The active dissemination of religious or ideological teachings must be organised by the respective communities independently and using their own resources, outside the core remit of the state school system.

The entire school system is subject to state supervision (Article 7(1) of the Basic Law). In Berlin, this means that the State of Berlin exercises full supervision over all state schools. Any denominational religious or ideological instruction – regardless of the community concerned – may therefore only take place under strict state supervision and must be delivered by staff who are state-qualified and certified, whose qualifications have been obtained in Germany or have been verified and recognised through a transparent state procedure. This effectively protects children and young people from one-sided indoctrination and from individuals whose professional suitability is questionable.

Teaching must be strictly in accordance with the Basic Law, the Berlin Constitution and the values of an open, democratic and secular society. We reject any form of

indoctrination, fundamentalism or anti-democratic influences in Berlin's schools – regardless of religious or ideological orientation.

The core exploration of ethical issues, values, world views and religions takes place in the compulsory subject of Ethics/Life Skills. This subject must be significantly strengthened in terms of staffing and given a distinct intercultural and values-based focus. It teaches all pupils – regardless of their parents' background or faith – critical thinking, tolerance and the foundations of a free society.

Breaking down prejudices, promoting social cohesion

We oppose racist and xenophobic propaganda with all our might. That is why we want to promote cultural exchanges and inclusive community work in Berlin's local authorities. We are committed to funding neighbourhood projects, intercultural festivals and sports clubs in order to bring people with and without a migrant background together and break down cultural barriers.

Internal security

One person's freedom ends where another's begins. We want a state that protects without overstepping its bounds. Measures that significantly encroach on fundamental rights must be proportionate, time-limited and subject to judicial review. The aim is a noticeably greater sense of security in everyday life – on buses and trains, on streets and in squares, in parks and neighbourhoods.

Many Berliners report feeling increasingly uneasy in public spaces. Violence by groups of young people, as well as a lack of cleanliness and order, contribute to this. We want to change this – through a greater police presence and better equipment, as well as through sensible prevention, but not through blanket surveillance or prejudgement. Alongside increasing police numbers and improving the training, equipment and working conditions of officers, we are focusing on de-escalation measures, more and better youth work, and deradicalisation programmes.

Social security as a prerequisite for internal security

Social security is a key factor in ensuring a stable social order. Where it is lacking, public safety cannot be maintained either. Stability does not arise solely through state measures involving a well-staffed and well-equipped police force and judiciary, but also when people have a reliable social foundation that offers them prospects, opportunities for advancement and a sense of inclusion. Those who have access to decent work, fair wages, social protection and a good education experience less insecurity and fewer existential fears.

At the same time, solid social security fosters a greater willingness to get involved and contribute to social cohesion.

Public safety is therefore also the result of social security and solidarity: where people have confidence that their life circumstances are recognised and that they are protected, mistrust, frustration and the potential for social tensions and radicalisation are significantly reduced.

To achieve this, urgent changes are also needed within the police force. The Berlin police must be depoliticised and their duty of neutrality guaranteed in accordance with the Basic Law. The misuse of the Berlin police, the State Security Service and the Office for the Protection of the Constitution for political purposes must be stopped. This is the only way to build trust.

The police's remit must be reduced to traditional policing duties and relieved of tasks outside the scope of policing, so that they are actually able to tackle the rising levels of violent crime.

A strong and community-focused police force and fire service

Berlin urgently needs more emergency services personnel. The fire service regularly fails to meet response times, the investment backlog remains in the hundreds of millions of euros, and the ambulance service is chronically overburdened. In the police force, around a third of

officers will retire – whilst at the same time there are high turnover rates and concerns about the next generation of recruits.

We call for a recruitment drive for the police and fire service – with a focus on high-quality selection based on language skills, physical fitness and character, rather than on quotas. We advocate selecting the best candidates in accordance with Article 33(2) of the Basic Law.

Better equipment and pay

We will bring pay in line with federal levels to halt the exodus of staff. Furthermore, we will significantly improve equipment (protective clothing, armoured vehicles, modern IT, sufficient tablets and laptops for mobile working). We will clear the backlog of investment. Our priority lies with operational resources, not additional administrative posts.

Additional staff must be deployed primarily to frontline operations (patrols, investigations, prevention).

We are improving working conditions in the police force and the fire service: this includes higher allowances for particularly stressful duties (e.g. death investigations, combating child pornography), compulsory and effective psychosocial aftercare, and flexible working arrangements (working from home where possible, e.g. for administrative and analytical tasks).

We are driving forward digitalisation to enable faster case processing, reduce bureaucracy and streamline tendering procedures.

To show our appreciation for police and fire service officers, we are introducing free entry to swimming pools and sports facilities, workplace sports programmes, and better catering during operations.

De-escalation training

At the same time, emergency services personnel must be trained even more thoroughly and encouraged to act in a de-escalating manner. A violent police force provokes counter-violence. Existing de-escalation strategies during demonstrations – entirely regardless of their political orientation – must be consistently applied and evaluated. The fundamental right to freedom of expression and assembly must be respected.

Naturally, we do not place the many police officers who carry out their duties without reproach under general suspicion. At the same time, however, we will implement immediate and consistent disciplinary measures in cases where disproportionate force is used. In the event of breaches of the prohibition on de-escalation and the prohibition on the use of disproportionate force, an investigation must be carried out into the officers concerned, which may result in their removal from the force in the case of serious and, in particular, repeated misconduct.

Preventing and tackling violence in schools

Several police operations take place every day in Berlin's schools. Serious physical assaults involving minors are on the rise. We prioritise prevention over repression. Schools need more social workers. Prevention and anti-violence programmes must be introduced across the board.

We want to expand successful local programmes in the areas of networking, anti-violence training, parental engagement and school social work.

Schools must be safe places: where there is proven high risk, temporary security guards (exclusively in plain clothes and with financial safeguards) may be deployed in schools.

We are declaring war on cyberbullying and online crime among young people. To this end, we are expanding and improving training programmes for teachers, social workers and the police.

In cases of violence in schools, intervention must take place at an earlier stage. We are aiming for intensive social support, particularly for repeat offenders. We do not consider purely repressive measures to be effective.

Combating violence in public spaces effectively and sustainably

To prevent violence in public spaces, we will increase the police patrol presence at hotspots such as railway stations and parks and squares with particularly high crime rates.

Berlin is one of the darkest major cities in the world. We want to expand street lighting and urban design measures to prevent crime, and eliminate dark corners in parks and station forecourts.

Combating knife attacks effectively and sustainably

Knife attacks and serious violence remain a serious problem. A shift in domestic policy must include ensuring that offenders in the asylum process are not granted the right to remain and are consistently deported and expelled.

However, a fundamental shift in domestic policy must also involve strengthening the social infrastructure so that young migrants receive solid support to help them integrate here.

Targeted prevention projects will be set up in heavily affected communities. Language courses, integration programmes and youth work initiatives will be expanded.

Taking a firm stand against domestic violence and violence against women

In cases where there is a threat to life and limb, we support the Spanish model (electronic tagging in conjunction with a restraining order and a warning system for those affected) – ordered by a court and proportionate. We are expanding the provision of women's refuges, including multilingual information on support services (doctors, government offices, schools).

For a functioning justice system and the fight against organised crime

For us, it is clear: we need significantly more judges and prosecutors. We will also ensure faster proceedings for everyday and youth crime.

In cases of organised crime, there must be consistent asset recovery. The proceeds from this will be used to fund the work of the police and the fire service.

There must be no lawless areas. We are expanding the joint investigation teams (GERen).

Targeted and proportionate surveillance

Crime and violence must be effectively combated so that all citizens of our city can feel safe.

To this end, we are deploying video surveillance in locations with a proven high incidence of crime – with parliamentary authorisation and real-time analysis by sufficient staff. For BVG and DB cameras, we are allowing a longer storage period of 96 hours. We uphold data protection. At the same time, this must not serve to protect offenders.

We use telecommunications interception and AI exclusively to combat organised crime and offences linked to extremism or terrorism.

A cleaner city and fewer drugs

To ensure a clean city and combat drug abuse, we are introducing additional joint checks by the Public Order Office, the police and the customs authorities. Such checks will be carried out both indoors, for example in pubs, and in public spaces.

We will consistently penalise public drug use in the vicinity of schools and nurseries. To this end, in addition to issuing orders to leave the premises, we will also establish safety zones.

Safety through reason and justice

The BSW stands for reason and justice: anyone living in Berlin who abides by the rules should feel safe – regardless of their background. Anyone who commits a criminal offence must be held consistently to account – naturally, in strict accordance with the principles of the rule of law. In this way, we create genuine safety without sacrificing freedom.

At the same time, we are committed to social justice and social security, as these are essential for establishing and maintaining public safety.

Economy

The economic policy of the Berlin BSW focuses on family businesses, the self-employed and freelancers (hereinafter referred to as 'small businesses'). We concentrate on reducing over-regulation, expanding digital administrative services and promoting apprenticeships. We also advocate for maternity protection for the self-employed.

Reducing over-regulation

Through a reform of Berlin's tendering and procurement law, we aim to make it easier for small businesses in Berlin to access public sector contracts by allowing contracts worth up to €50,000 to be awarded by direct award.

By introducing the 'once-only' principle within the Berlin administration, businesses will only need to provide the data requested of them to the authorities once; the authorities will then exchange this data amongst themselves in accordance with applicable law. This will also allow the State of Berlin's transparency database – which has hitherto been maintained on a voluntary basis – to be abolished, and the staff freed up to be deployed in more meaningful roles.

Applications for permits are often not processed promptly by the relevant authorities. The Berlin BSW advocates greater use of the 'deemed approval' mechanism: an application for a permit is deemed to have been granted once a specified deadline has passed, provided the authority has not raised any objections by that point. Ultimately, the digitisation of public administration should not result in any additional burden, either for the administration or for small businesses.

Promoting apprenticeships, securing the next generation

The BSW generally supports the introduction of an apprenticeship levy in Berlin for companies with 20 or more employees. Small businesses that are not permitted to provide apprenticeships at all should not be penalised by having to pay an apprenticeship levy. Instead, they should receive special support as they work towards becoming training organisations.

Small businesses should receive a research grant if they undertake applied research projects in collaboration with Berlin's universities. We want to boost career guidance in schools by doubling the number of work placements for pupils in businesses. Universities should open up to orientation courses. We want to attract university dropouts to vocational training through career transition fairs. People changing careers with professional experience should be supported across all departments of publicly funded training and research institutions.

Affordable energy for our economy

Instead of hampering our own economy through sanctions or CO₂ price surcharges, we need a sensible energy policy once again; federal funds from the Special Fund for Infrastructure and Climate Neutrality (SVIK) should be used accordingly.

Our tax money should not be squandered on wars in foreign countries, but invested in expanding our own infrastructure.

Sustainable management

Our sustainability approach is both social and environmental: in Berlin, we are committed to public services, an integrated transport system, the circular economy, the 'sponge city' concept and sustainable forestry.

In the construction sector, we wish to establish a municipal construction company which, through its own production capacities, will build social housing cost-effectively and in an environmentally friendly manner. Construction will be carried out using a serial and modular approach, which will not only enable rapid building but also allow floor plans to be adapted retrospectively to tenants' changing living circumstances.

Infrastructure as a key issue for Berlin's future

The dilapidated infrastructure is a key issue for the future of Berlin's economic and social development. In the short and medium term, the necessary investment funds must be made available to sustainably repair and renew roads, bridges, sports facilities, schools and other public amenities. The special funds provided by the federal government must be used consistently to clear the backlog of renovation work in Berlin's infrastructure. Expenditure on unrelated purposes must be avoided in order to effectively resolve the structural problems of Berlin's infrastructure. Berlin should be provided with a binding Renovation Plan 2040 featuring clear priorities, realistic timetables and reliable funding. At the same time, high priority must be given to ensuring a stable, affordable and crisis-proof supply of electricity, water and district heating.

Innovation policy for a strong centre of science and technology

The future of the city of Berlin will be shaped to a large extent by a smart and independent innovation policy. As part of a Bundesrat initiative, Berlin is campaigning for improved tax incentives for research and development, whilst at the same time strengthening its position as a centre of science and technology through its own funding programmes, whilst safeguarding academic freedom.

Knowledge transfer and support for small and medium-sized enterprises

The BSW advocates for a systematic transfer of knowledge between Berlin's universities and higher education institutions, the Adlershof technology hub and the city's numerous small and medium-sized enterprises. The transfer of knowledge between higher education institutions, research organisations and small and medium-sized enterprises must be systematically expanded. Appropriate framework conditions should be established for start-ups and access to the necessary venture capital should be facilitated, so that new ideas can emerge and grow in Berlin and jobs can be created.

No war economy in Berlin

The Berlin BSW is vehemently opposed to the establishment of defence industry firms in the German capital and wishes to prevent employees from the civilian economy from switching to the war economy.

Civilian production instead of a war economy

In Berlin, a partial shift from civilian production to defence equipment is currently taking place, driven largely by Rheinmetall. The Pierburg plant in Wedding (Gesundbrunnen) is switching production from automotive parts to military components, including cartridge cases, by 2026, in order to secure around 350 jobs. Other Berlin-based firms and start-ups, for example in the drone sector, are also transforming themselves into defence suppliers. The heavily subsidised games industry is offering its services to politicians to strengthen 'defence capabilities'. Just under 50 businesses in Berlin and Brandenburg are switching to so-called 'dual-use' production (suitable for both military and civilian use). One example is companies that are now developing systems suitable for military use instead of civilian drones, as is the case with the manufacturer Germandrones.

However, increasing arms production is not a remedy for deindustrialisation – quite the opposite. Arms do not boost prosperity or economic productivity; instead, they senselessly gobble up billions that could be put to far better use in investments for the future. Our country needs civilian production – for example, of bridges and railways, and the expansion of infrastructure, schools and hospitals.

War readiness in public enterprises and the civil service

As part of the 'Operations Plan Germany', public enterprises are being integrated into war preparations. A dedicated hospital plan is intended to further dismantle civilian healthcare whilst strengthening military healthcare. In future, Berlin's hospitals are to treat war casualties from, for example, NATO countries – around 100 wounded per day.

This applies to all public sectors. Military considerations are taking precedence over civilian needs as the deciding factor. We reject this and demand complete transparency regarding all measures in state-owned enterprises that are linked to the 'Operations Plan Germany', the 'Framework Plan for Civil Defence Hospitals' and similar war preparations.

Energy

A key cause of the rising cost of living has been, and continues to be, the Federal Government's sanctions policy against Russia. The sanctions have massively increased energy prices for energy-intensive companies. This has significantly worsened competitive conditions. Although the sanctions have hit Germany harder than Russia, the sanctions policy is being further tightened. This is a purely political decision in the context of the war and an expression of double standards. Wars waged by the USA or Israel in breach of international law are never sanctioned; these states continue to be supported as allies.

The Merz/Klingbeil government responded to the mounting problems and pressure from both businesses and trade unions by introducing an electricity price scheme for industry. This is an expensive subsidy, limited to three years, which will cost taxpayers – and thus all workers – 30 billion euros on its own, without solving the problem.

As a city in eastern Germany, Berlin has been particularly hard hit by the sanctions. PCK Raffinerie GmbH in Schwedt is one of the most modern oil refineries in Europe and supplies around 95 per cent of the fuel (petrol, diesel, aviation fuel) and heating oil needed in the Berlin and Brandenburg regions. Due to the sanctions policy, the continued operation of the refinery is repeatedly called into question. We reject this sanctions policy.

Energy policy with a sense of proportion

A secure, competitive, technology-neutral and environmentally sustainable energy supply is fundamental to sound economic and social development. Economic prudence and social justice are our guiding principles in this regard. We wish to shape the forthcoming transition of the energy supply towards sustainability in such a way that security of supply and affordability are guaranteed for all energy consumers at all times. We reject unrealistic targets for the transition to renewable energies, as they result in extremely high marginal costs whilst achieving only a minor reduction in CO₂ emissions within the context of the net-zero emissions target. We also reject the idea of ruining German industry through excessively high energy prices and relocating jobs to countries where the same products are manufactured with a higher environmental impact.

Energy must be affordable

No citizen should be deprived of their electricity or heating supply through disconnection for any reason whatsoever.

We are striving to bring energy prices under control. This could be achieved, for example, by ending the boycott of Russian gas and oil and by reducing imports of expensive and polluting fracking gas from the US.

This also includes finally taking effective action against price gouging at the petrol pumps.

We want to see the CO₂ levy abolished. This has a direct impact on the cost of fossil fuels. It places a burden on both the economy and the public.

The costs of financing the restructuring of the energy infrastructure must be distributed fairly. Less energy-intensive industries also need relief from electricity prices. To achieve a sustainable reduction in electricity prices for all consumers, we call for investment in, amongst other things, electricity grids, electricity storage and digitalisation, thereby reducing the structural costs of the energy system.

For a secure energy supply

The PCK refinery in Schwedt, which supplies Berlin with fuels, must be given a long-term future.

We are campaigning for the reactivation of the still-operational section of the Nord Stream pipeline.

We need investment in energy infrastructure that minimises, as far as possible, the need to shut down photovoltaic systems in summer and wind turbines during widespread strong winds, and that compensates for the often insufficient electrical reserve capacity in winter. These investments relate, for example, to electricity and district heating networks, substations, energy storage facilities, electrolyzers, power-to-heat plants and reserve power stations.

The expansion of photovoltaic systems, which are of great importance to Berlin, must take place in conjunction with the expansion of the energy infrastructure.

The BSW calls for the consistent expansion of district heating systems. Municipal heating planning should play a key role in steering this process. The BSW calls for such projects to be given priority. To this end, the legal framework must also be adapted to simplify and speed up the approval procedures.

We will only decommission energy plants, such as coal-fired power stations, once sufficiently competitive and secure alternatives are available. We also oppose the dismantling of the current natural gas network.

We support the remunicipalisation of GASAG AG.

The expansion of the hydrogen network must be in line with the demand for green hydrogen in order to avoid costly misinvestments. The BSW sees energy-intensive industry, high-temperature industrial processes and gas-fired power stations as the key areas for the use of hydrogen in the energy sector.

The BSW opposes the relocation of the production of energy-related components abroad.

Ensuring the transition to renewable energy is socially acceptable and technology-neutral

New heating systems must be designed, installed and operated in accordance with economic principles.

BSW Berlin Election Manifesto for the 2026 AGH Election

We want to create conditions under which the use of heat pumps makes economic and technical sense, i.e. integration into a district heating system with heat storage facilities.

Investments in emission-reducing energy systems should be made where they achieve the greatest possible impact. We do not regard activism aimed at achieving specific targets as a primary objective.

The BSW is committed to technological research and an open approach to technology. This applies, for example, to the production of hydrogen and synthetic fuels. Both energy carriers have their respective advantages and disadvantages in terms of production and distribution.

The BSW supports technologies for the capture, storage and utilisation of carbon dioxide from power station and industrial combustion processes.

The development and further advancement of electricity and heat storage systems are central to the transition to renewable energy and must be supported even more strongly.

Berlin has exploitable geothermal potential that can make the city's building heating systems more environmentally friendly. We support the construction of demonstration plants and the associated research.

Tree planting, greening of façades and roofs, open water features, drinking water fountains and cooling chambers are sensible investments in the city centre.

We call for a halt to the construction of wind turbines in Berlin and for an initiative to amend the Onshore Wind Energy Act in order to abolish the land-use requirements for wind turbines. We advocate the repowering of old wind turbines. This involves replacing older wind turbines with newer, more efficient models. This delivers more green electricity and improved efficiency at the existing site.

Transport

Transport policy must not divide people. Berlin does not need an ideological conflict between cars, bicycles and public transport, but rather a sensible coexistence. Safe routes for pedestrians, a robust public transport system, a reliable cycle path network and good conditions for private motorised transport all go hand in hand. Particularly in the outskirts, for shift workers, in the skilled trades, for families and for people with reduced mobility, the car often remains indispensable.

The slow expansion of roads, railways and transport hubs is increasingly leading to traffic jams, congestion, unreliability and conflicts over usage. An effective transport policy must therefore take all modes of transport into account and organise the available space in such a way that mobility remains safe, reliable and suitable for everyday use.

Targeted expansion of local public transport

A key focus of our transport policy is strengthening public transport, particularly in Berlin's outlying districts. There, service frequency, accessibility and reliability are often insufficient to offer a genuine alternative to the car. We are therefore committed to the targeted expansion of the underground, suburban rail, trams and buses. We are also campaigning for the construction of two cable car lines in Treptow-Köpenick and Pankow Nord. These, and if possible the existing 'Gärten der Welt' cable car in Marzahn-Hellersdorf, should be integrated into Berlin's public transport network. Underground extensions and the filling of gaps in the network should be prioritised where they bring clear benefits and improve connections to both new and existing neighbourhoods. The tram network should also be expanded where it improves access and closes gaps in service provision.

For buses and trams, we want to organise timetables, routes and interchange connections in such a way that journeys are made easier and duplicate infrastructure is avoided. Flexible additions to traditional local transport can play an important role here. On-demand buses and similar services are particularly useful in areas where neighbourhoods have so far been inadequately served. Such models should be safeguarded and further developed. Trolleybuses can also be considered where they enable low-emission mobility without requiring the expense of rail expansion. For us, it is not symbolic politics that counts, but improved accessibility.

Improving connections between Berlin and Brandenburg

To make public transport more attractive, Berlin and Brandenburg must work more closely together. The metropolitan region has long been a shared living and working space. That is why we want to reorganise the fare structure between Berlin and Brandenburg, take greater account of commuter traffic, and campaign for a free school travel pass across the entire region. Park-and-ride facilities on the outskirts of towns can help reduce inner-city car traffic without restricting commuters' mobility.

Safe routes for pedestrians

Greater consideration must be given to pedestrian traffic. Safe pavements, lowered kerbs, zebra crossings, crossing aids and well-timed traffic lights are part of a functioning public service. Safe routes must be a top priority, particularly in the vicinity of schools, nurseries, care homes, hospitals and doctors' surgeries.

Accessibility must be consistently taken into account in refurbishments, new builds and the ongoing maintenance of public spaces. Tangible improvements are needed, particularly in the outskirts, where journeys are often longer and transport stops are less accessible.

Making cycling safe and seamless

Berlin needs a safe, connected cycle path network that is suitable for everyday use. Cycle paths must not simply start and end in the middle of nowhere. In outlying areas in particular, there is often a lack of safe connections between neighbourhoods, schools, residential areas and railway stations. We want to expand these connections in a targeted manner.

Where cycle paths are created, they must be safely routed, either physically separated from the carriageway and designed in such a way as to minimise conflicts with pedestrians and motor traffic. Clear solutions are needed, particularly at junctions, such as separate traffic light phases for motor vehicles turning off and cyclists travelling straight ahead.

The car remains indispensable for many

Private motorised transport also remains an integral part of mobility in Berlin. Many Berliners rely on their cars and simply cannot afford expensive alternatives. We therefore reject new financial burdens such as city tax schemes for combustion-engine vehicles. Climate-friendly powertrains should be promoted without placing an additional burden on people on low and middle incomes.

For us, this also involves taking targeted action to alleviate existing bottlenecks in Berlin's road network. We support the continuation of the 17th construction phase of the A100 to Storkower Straße. In doing so, the legitimate concerns of local residents and binding public participation must be given due consideration. At the same time, we see this project as an opportunity to improve the flow of traffic on heavily congested routes and to relieve pressure on inner-city neighbourhoods.

We are just as critical of the unnecessary loss of parking spaces as we are of transport schemes that merely shift traffic rather than organising it sensibly. We oppose 'Kiezblocks' if they force traffic onto already congested main roads, hinder delivery traffic and reduce acceptance within the neighbourhood. Instead, we advocate balanced solutions involving parking space management, neighbourhood car parks, loading bays and better organisation of stationary traffic.

With a freight volume of 76.5 million tonnes, road freight transport accounts for an unacceptably high 90.6 per cent of the total volume. Even if this proportion

includes inner-city dispatch and receipt volumes – such as the transport of building materials – this high dominance of road freight transport is no longer acceptable.

We support the federal government in the expansion and maintenance of our inland waterways and advocate strengthening BEHALA. All goods, particularly bulk goods, fuels, etc., that can be transported by water relieve the burden on road traffic. The ‘The Last Mile’ project (The Last Mile) uses artistic means to demonstrate how, by revitalising the former railway freight transshipment facilities within Berlin – whilst also taking the historical past into account – the necessary freight transport can be made more urban and environmentally friendly. We support the establishment of freight distribution centres on the outskirts of the city or in Brandenburg and wish to cooperate more closely with our neighbours in this regard.

We recall the debate on the cable car at the ‘Gardens of the World’ site, which, as a cross-town link, still represents a noticeable improvement in Marzahn-Hellersdorf today. We advocate connecting Friedrichshagen, Müggelheim, the Müggelberge, Wendenschloss and Grünau station.

This would significantly boost Berlin’s appeal to tourists and alleviate the difficult traffic situation across the Dahme for local residents. The space required is very limited, conflicts with other modes of transport are logically ruled out, the operating costs are manageable and the system is low-emission.

Better coordination of roadworks

Major road and rail projects must be implemented more quickly and with better coordination. We are committed to effective coordination of roadworks to ensure that important routes are not closed off whilst alternative routes are also restricted. Roadworks must be organised in such a way that work proceeds swiftly once they have been set up. Where this fails due to the developer’s negligence, the developer must bear the consequences, including towards businesses that suffer losses as a result.

We want to streamline planning and construction processes without excluding public participation. Priority should be given to projects that, at a reasonable cost, deliver the greatest benefits in terms of reducing congestion, improving safety and enhancing traffic flow. This also includes optimising traffic light timings, better adapting to diversions and roadworks, and expanding key links such as the Tangential East Link (TVO). The TVO is the main transport artery for a sustainable and liveable eastern part of the city. A growing city needs efficient east-west and north-south links, as well as better cross-district connections. To relieve the burden on local residents and busy main roads, we are campaigning for the 7.2-kilometre link between the B1/B5 and the road at Wuhlheide. At the same time, it is essential that the concerns of local residents regarding noise protection and particulate matter pollution are taken into account.

Securing Berlin’s position as an aviation hub – maintaining affordable mobility

BSW Berlin Election Manifesto for the 2026 AGH Election

The closure of Ryanair's base at Berlin Brandenburg Airport must be taken seriously at a political level. We call for a comprehensive disclosure and assessment of the reasons behind this decision. High taxes, rising charges and misguided policy frameworks must not lead to companies withdrawing from Germany and Berlin's position as a business location being weakened.

We are committed to restoring Germany's competitiveness as a business location, preventing the decline in flight connections and ensuring affordable mobility for broad sections of the population.

This requires a comprehensive industrial and transport policy strategy that combines economic rationality, good accessibility and social inclusion. Berlin must not continue to be the loser in a policy that makes mobility more expensive and weakens the city as a business location.

Financial and Tax Policy

The State of Berlin is in a financial crisis

It has never been so difficult to find affordable housing in Berlin. The infrastructure is crumbling, trains are not running, swimming pools and sports facilities are being closed, and cuts are being made to culture and education. Berlin has been living off its reserves for years. All of this is exacerbating social tensions in our city. The terrorist attack on the electricity supply in Lichterfelde at the start of the year demonstrates just how urgently Berlin needs to reset its priorities.

Berlin faces major financial challenges: rising living costs, growing social inequality and a significant backlog of investment in public infrastructure. For the BSW in Berlin, one thing is clear: a fair fiscal policy must focus on the needs of the majority, in particular those of working people and their families, as well as socially disadvantaged groups. Public funds are limited, but the allocation of the 45 billion in Berlin's budget is a matter of political priorities.

Investment in key areas for the future, such as infrastructure, digitalisation and education, is essential. It ensures long-term social stability, economic development and social harmony. However, Berlin's financial situation is extremely strained. Rising expenditure is driven in particular by costs relating to staff, refugees and social security benefits. Per capita debt in Berlin is more than double the national average. And by the end of 2027, the Berlin state budget provides for new borrowing of approximately 10 billion euros. At the same time, the rising interest burden is increasingly restricting our city's room for manoeuvre.

The BSW Berlin advocates a fiscal policy guided by social justice, economic prudence and public services. The aim is to use existing resources more efficiently, rather than relying solely on cuts or imposing new burdens on the general public. Public spending must benefit those who are dependent on support to a greater extent. Misguided incentives and inefficient subsidies must be eliminated.

Stop the arms race: a welfare state rather than a military state

The main political priority of the CDU/CSU–SPD government is the massive rearmament of the Bundeswehr to make it the strongest conventional army in Europe, even though NATO is already far superior to Russia in this respect. Meeting NATO's five per cent target would account for almost half of Germany's total federal expenditure. This is considerably more than the federal government, the Länder and local authorities combined spend on education – from nurseries to universities. Furthermore, the massive debt incurred for unproductive military equipment is leading to ever-higher interest charges. Added to this are new, colossal debts incurred by the EU in support of Ukraine, which will ultimately have to be covered by taxpayers. All this money is lacking for the welfare state, for education, and for healthcare in the Länder and local authorities.

Whoever commissions it, pays for it

However, whilst the federal government is transferring more and more statutory responsibilities (including education, social services and refugee aid/integration) to our city, it is not providing sufficient funding to cover the costs. This is forcing Berlin to make cuts to discretionary services (culture, sport, infrastructure) and is undermining the constitutionally guaranteed principle of local self-government.

To restore Berlin's ability to act, we call for clear legal provisions ensuring that the federal government covers the full costs when transferring responsibilities. The costs for migrants and refugees alone amount to two billion euros this year – one billion euros more than budgeted.

We urgently need financial reform to ease the burden on local authorities. The rights of the federal states in the Bundesrat must be strengthened when it comes to draft legislation with financial implications for the federal states and local authorities. Such federal laws must no longer be enacted without compensatory funding and only after financial consultation with the federal states.

Simplification, greater efficiency, and an end to prestige projects

Reducing bureaucracy and introducing flat-rate provisions in tax legislation would free up staff resources for areas of operational importance. In recent years, expenditure on external consultancy services and inefficient administrative structures has risen sharply. The BSW sees considerable potential for savings in this area. Significant additional revenue could also be generated through improved, standardised coordination at federal level in the field of digitalisation, the prioritisation of various specialist areas, and more efficient tax enforcement.

Current economic development schemes often favour large companies without sufficient social benefits in return. In future, funding should be more closely linked to criteria such as collective bargaining coverage, fair wages and regional value creation. At the same time, ineffective subsidies can be scrapped and the funds thus freed up can be invested, for example, in labour market programmes for the low-skilled.

Improving efficiency within Berlin's administration must also be an essential component of a fiscally responsible strategy for our city. Process optimisation and the digitalisation of district services could, for instance, lead to significant savings.

Berlin needs to take consistent action to combat tax avoidance. To this end, Berlin's tax offices must be strengthened and better staffed.

Doing away with unnecessary prestige projects, such as Berlin's bid to host the Olympics, would also significantly ease the strain on Berlin's budget. Ten million euros have been earmarked for the Olympic bid itself, whilst actually hosting the Games could cost around 16 billion euros. Instead, more money should be channelled into renovating existing sports facilities and improving services for Berlin's population. Schools, nurseries, social housing and local public transport are priorities here. A

Redirecting funds towards these areas would immediately improve the quality of life for broad sections of the population.

A fair tax policy for Berlin

The BSW calls for a fairer tax system in which large corporations, major heirs and the super-rich no longer enjoy privileges, but instead contribute appropriately to the financing of our community in line with their ability to pay, so that the majority of taxpayers can finally be relieved of the burden once again.

To create financial scope for the common good, the loopholes in our tax system created by lobbyists must be closed, and tax avoidance and tax evasion must be actively combated. The Federal and State Audit Offices regularly report that we are missing out on significant revenue due to staff shortages in the tax administration and insufficient audits of large companies.

As many types of tax are subject to federal legislation, Berlin can only initiate changes in this area through Bundesrat initiatives. The BSW sees trade tax as the only area where significant additional revenue can be generated through the state's own regulations.

Align trade tax with the levels in other major cities

The trade tax assessment rate, which is set by the local authorities themselves, has remained unchanged at 410 per cent in Berlin since 1999 – that is, for 26 years now – whilst it stands at 470 per cent in Potsdam and Hamburg, 475 per cent in Cologne, and as high as 490 per cent in Munich. And this is despite the fact that, compared with other federal states, Berlin has been experiencing above-average economic growth for several years due to its specific locational advantages.

The BSW is therefore campaigning to bring the trade tax assessment rate in Berlin into line with that of other major cities, though capping it at a maximum of 460 per cent. This could generate additional revenue of around 400 million euros annually, which, if sensibly invested in infrastructure and education, would significantly boost Berlin's appeal to further business relocations.

Taxing wealthy heirs and multimillionaires more heavily

The Basic Law stipulates that inheritance and gift tax, as well as wealth tax, are allocated to the federal states. Through sensible and socially just reforms, enormous additional revenue could be generated for the State of Berlin in this area.

Numerous privileges for heirs to fortunes worth millions or billions have led to a situation where heirs to smaller estates in Germany now pay more inheritance tax than those inheriting large fortunes. Due to exemptions for very large business and property assets and the so-called 'exemption needs test', many inheritances worth millions or billions remain entirely tax-free. The privileges for corporate heirs are Germany's largest tax subsidies, which are harmful in terms of both social and fiscal policy.

We call on Berlin to launch a Bundesrat initiative to ensure that these preferential treatments are brought to an end. We also propose that the tax allowance for inheritances and gifts between first-degree relatives be raised to one million euros and to include a standard owner-occupied residential property, and that these allowances may be claimed once in a lifetime.

The wealth tax has not even been levied since 1997 because the governing parties cannot agree on a fair scheme. It would directly benefit the federal states. We therefore call for a Bundesrat initiative by Berlin to reinstate the wealth tax for multimillionaires and billionaires as soon as possible. We advocate taxing net assets (after deducting debts) above an allowance of five million euros at a rate of 1 per cent, above 100 million euros at 2 per cent, and above one billion euros at 3 per cent.

Closing tax loopholes

We call for a Berlin initiative in the Bundesrat to impose stricter limits on so-called 'share deals'. This allows housing corporations to avoid paying land transfer tax in many cases, whilst other buyers are required to pay it.

We do not want speculation in housing; rather, we want to promote investment in housing construction. Berlin should therefore launch a Bundesrat initiative to ensure that the exemption from trade tax for asset-managing property companies is abolished and replaced by targeted support measures.

Capital gains must no longer be given preferential treatment over earned income; instead, they must be declared in tax returns like all other income and subject to the personal tax rate. Capital gains from securities must continue to be taxed regardless of the holding period, and the existing restrictions on offsetting losses from capital assets must be retained.

We also call for profits from the sale of let, non-owner-occupied properties to be taxed in the same way as all other forms of income. This should also apply to capital gains arising from the sale of bitcoins, cryptocurrencies and gold transactions.

Nature, the environment, cleanliness and animal welfare

Berlin is a city teeming with life. From the people who live here, to the animals that share our city, to the green spaces that cool our air and allow our city to breathe.

Berlin finally needs an environmental policy that is sensible, socially minded and has a heart for the city. Our city is not just made of concrete and roads. It thrives through its trees, its parks, its courtyards and its gardens. Yet it is precisely these lifelines that are coming under pressure: new buildings are sealing off areas, old trees are disappearing, green spaces are falling into disrepair, whilst the heat builds up more and more in summer.

A city that loses its nature also loses its quality of life. Environmental protection must not be a project for the privileged, but must benefit everyone: families living in cramped conditions, older people without a balcony, and children who have to play in sweltering school playgrounds in summer.

Strengthening urban green spaces, trees and biodiversity

Green spaces are not a luxury, but a public service. They protect the environment, lower temperatures, store water and are places for relaxation and socialising. We want Berlin to retain its green soul.

This includes: the permanent protection of green spaces and allotments. Binding greening requirements for new buildings: green roofs, façades and courtyards should be the norm. Unsealing rather than sealing: wherever possible, tarmac surfaces must make way for rainwater, shade and life.

The key demands of the Berlin Tree Petition have now been adopted across party lines. Now Berlin needs more than just good intentions: we want these resolutions to translate into genuine tree-planting campaigns. This includes reliable funding in the budget and a clear priority for new plantings and maintenance. Trees are our best air conditioning. They reduce heat, purify the air, trap particulate matter and provide a sense of security in a city that is often too noisy and too hectic.

The 'sponge city' principle should become the guiding principle for all planning: rainwater should not flow into the sewer system, but should seep away on site, be stored or used for irrigation.

We call for: More drinking water points in public spaces. Green squares and parks that store water and generate evaporative cooling. De-sealing of surfaces and increased rainwater harvesting in the private, public and commercial sectors.

Biodiversity and sustainable use

Berlin is capable of more than just lawns and gravel beds. We want flowering meadows, orchards with scattered trees, urban agriculture and ecological maintenance instead of the upkeep of barren spaces. Species-rich plant areas provide food and habitats for insects and other pollinators, and only when these ecological cycles function properly will our green

spaces remain permanently

healthy, resilient and diverse in the long term. Biodiversity is not just a buzzword; it makes the city resilient and vibrant.

A construction revolution and social environmental protection

Berlin can build affordably, in a climate-neutral and sustainable way. We are campaigning for a fundamental transformation of the construction sector.

We call for: A state funding programme for eco-friendly modular construction, particularly in social and municipal housing. Funding for research into bio-based building materials. Regional production by co-operatives, craft businesses and start-ups – to create local jobs and generate local value.

The construction industry accounts for almost 40 per cent of CO₂ emissions in Germany. A sustainable transformation of the construction sector is therefore key to environmental protection, social housing and independence from global supply chains.

Environmental protection with a sense of proportion and social responsibility

Environmental protection must not lead to social division. Energy-efficiency refurbishments must not result in tenants being forced out. Environmental protection does not require coercion, but rather acceptance and active participation. A clean, green city is the best foundation for quality of life, health and community. When streets are clean, trees are well-maintained and parks are vibrant, trust in politics and the city also grows. Berlin deserves an environmental policy that puts people first before introducing new regulations – one that is sensible, based on solidarity and sustainable.

Environmental education – knowledge that shapes the future

Environmental education fosters mindfulness, health and a sense of responsibility. Those who experience and understand nature – whether in school gardens, at nursery schools, in community centres or through local projects – will also protect it. We support organisations and initiatives such as outdoor laboratories, urban woodland gardens, environmental centres, and learning venues that provide scientific and practical environmental education across generations. This requires reliable structures and long-term funding. Berlin should recognise environmental education as a public responsibility and embed it permanently. We call for: funding with planning certainty for projects, institutions and key advocates that provide environmental education on an ongoing basis; the reintroduction of environmental education into the regular curriculum, starting from Year 1; the strengthening of Berlin's environmental education network through conferences, partnerships and exchanges; and the use and expansion of digital resources such as freely available identification and learning apps.

A clean city – sharing responsibility

Berlin has a problem that everyone can see, but too few are tackling: the city is dirty. Rubbish on the streets, overflowing bins, illegal dumping in parks. This is no longer an isolated incident, but everyday reality. Many Berliners are ashamed of the state of their city. We say: cleanliness is not a luxury, but a sign of respect.

The fragmented waste management system has failed. Private providers, differing areas of responsibility and a lack of oversight mean that rubbish is often left lying around. Only a strong, publicly run city cleaning service can ensure reliability and quality. Berlin needs a one-stop waste management system that is geared towards the common good rather than profit.

Last winter's chaos caused by icy pavements was characterised by a game of 'ping-pong' over who was responsible. However, the authorities' reference to property owners' responsibilities did not clear a single pavement and failed to prevent numerous accidents. We demand that the BSR assume central responsibility for clearing pavements and cycle paths. We demand that the additional costs incurred by the city be recovered from those property owners who fail to fulfil their duty to clear snow and ice.

Illegal rubbish dumps arise because disposal is often complicated or expensive. We call for a fixed bulky waste collection service in all boroughs, at least twice a year – free of charge, reliable, and available to every household. In addition, mobile recycling stations should regularly tour the neighbourhoods so that no one has to dump their rubbish in parks or backyards.

Neighbourhood cleaners and rapid response teams

Cleanliness must not be left to chance. Anyone who disposes of rubbish illegally must be held to account, but with a sense of proportion. We want clear, transparent rules and consistent monitoring, but also affordable, accessible waste disposal options for everyone. It is not just about punishment, but about prevention, through simple solutions and fair rules. We want permanent neighbourhood cleaning teams assigned to specific areas who carry out regular checks. In the event of illegal dumping or littering, action must be taken within 24 hours. Berlin needs a visible signal: we care.

We want to get people into work whilst keeping the city clean. Cleanliness is also a social responsibility. Cleanliness does not begin with the Public Order Office, but in people's minds. We want to strengthen the 'Berlin Cleans Up' campaign in the long term – working with schools, clubs and neighbourhoods, supported by materials and logistics from the BSR.

Animal welfare

Animal welfare is not a side issue. In Berlin, this responsibility is far too often neglected: animal shelters are working at full capacity, animal welfare organisations are struggling to survive, the right to bring class-action lawsuits is under political threat, and even the post of State Animal Welfare Commissioner has been abolished.

Research without animal suffering – science with responsibility

Animals must not be treated as tools for research. The BSW advocates for science that respects ethical boundaries and takes responsibility. Berlin is one of Germany's largest research hubs – and at the same time one of the places where a particularly high number of animal experiments take place. This cannot continue. We want Berlin to take a leading role in phasing out animal experimentation and to demonstrate that modern research is possible without causing animal suffering. Public funds should be channelled primarily into methods

that do not involve animal testing.

Provide reliable support for animal shelters and animal welfare organisations

Animal shelters and animal welfare organisations carry out indispensable work every day – they care for abandoned, abused and confiscated animals, often pushing themselves to the limits of their capacity. Yet their funding is precarious and usually depends on donations and short-term projects. We call for long-term core funding so that intake, care, prevention and educational work can be planned effectively. Berlin needs multi-year funding instead of a patchwork of projects, and a crisis fund for large-scale operations or seizures.

The issue of who bears the costs following seizures must finally be regulated in a binding manner. It is no longer acceptable for the responsibility to fall on animal welfare organisations whilst the state stands by and watches. Anyone who takes animal welfare seriously must also fund it.

Justice and Consumer Protection

A state that fails to protect its citizens has failed in its duty.

A constitutional state that is too slow, too complicated or accessible only to those who can afford it is not a just state. Nor is consumer protection that leaves people to fend for themselves in their daily lives.

Faster proceedings

Yet this is precisely what many Berliners are experiencing today: anyone who goes to court often needs years to obtain justice – if they can afford it at all. Anyone who signs a contract runs the risk of falling into opaque cost traps. Anyone seeking to stand up to large corporations or public authorities is often fighting a losing battle. At the same time, many staff in the justice system are working to the limit, under poor conditions and without the necessary support.

This is not a situation we can accept.

Berlin is a strong city – but it is governed below its potential. Whilst the cost of living is rising and uncertainty is growing, many people find themselves dealing with a state that is too slow, too bureaucratic and too distant. Trust is lost when justice is no longer tangible.

The BSW stands for a clear break with this trend. We say: the law must apply to everyone – not just those with money, time and the right connections. The state must once again stand on the side of its citizens, not on the side of bureaucracy or economic power interests.

We want a justice system that works: fast, understandable and fair. Enough of overcrowded court offices, endless proceedings and mountains of files from the last century. The era of piles of paper and stagnation must be over. Berlin needs courts that can get the job done – and people who are well paid and respected for doing so.

For strong consumer protection

We want consumer protection that lives up to its name: consistent, assertive and close to the people. No more subscription traps, hidden costs and unfair contracts. Anyone who cheats, deceives or rips people off must finally face serious consequences.

Because the truth is: it's always the most vulnerable who are hit first. Rising prices, complicated contracts and digital scams are not just a nuisance – they are a social problem.

That is why, for us, consumer protection is not a side issue, but a matter of justice.

Justice for all

BSW Berlin Election Manifesto for the 2026 AGH Election

And justice begins with access to the law. It is unacceptable for people to give up before they can even assert their rights. We will ensure that advice and legal protection are easily accessible – without barriers, without fear of costs, without bureaucratic deterrents.

At the same time, a strong state must also be able to enforce the law. Anyone who breaks the rules, harms others or exploits the system must expect to be held to account. But punishment alone is not enough. Our aim is for people to become part of society again – not to be permanently excluded from it.

For us, justice and consumer protection are two sides of the same coin: it is about fairness, balance and trust.

And it is precisely this trust that has been damaged in recent years.

When elections are organised in a way that leaves room for error, when proceedings drag on endlessly, when citizens feel they are not being listened to – then a dangerous impression arises: that the state is no longer functioning properly.

We will not accept that.

For a functioning justice system

We stand for a state that acts decisively once more, that takes responsibility and that is guided by the interests of the majority. A state that protects rather than looking the other way. One that takes firm action where necessary – and provides support where people need help.

This also includes strengthening those who uphold our rule of law: lay judges and lay assessors. They deserve respect, fair conditions and appropriate remuneration.

Our aim is clear: we want the people of Berlin to be able to say once again – this state works. It is fair. And it is on our side.

Justice is not a luxury for the few. Justice is
everyone's right.

And that is precisely what we are standing for.

Administration

The administration is the backbone that enables political plans for this city to be implemented in the first place. The policy of massive cutbacks under the Red-Red Senate, spearheaded by the then Finance Senator Sarrazin, continues to have repercussions on staffing levels in the public administration to this day.

The district administrations in particular are suffering from staff shortages, which can only be resolved through coordinated action by the Senate and the districts. Added to this is a tangible shortage of skilled workers: town planners, gardeners, engineers – all these professions are in short supply in the public administration. The BSW's guiding principle is to make the civil service more attractive to these professional groups, to promote apprenticeships and to reduce competition from the private sector and the armed forces.

Faster recruitment

Filling vacancies in the public service of the State of Berlin is a marathon. Whilst an employment contract can be signed quickly in the private sector, it often takes months in the civil service. Rent and other living costs do not pay for themselves during this waiting period. The reason for the lengthy recruitment procedures is bureaucratic regulations and consultation requirements. We want to reduce these to a minimum by law. The aim must be to ensure that, within one month, a recruitment process is completed and an employment contract can be signed. To streamline the processes, greater use should be made of artificial intelligence in certain areas (e.g. as described in the working group's report).

Increasing the attractiveness of the civil service

One advantage of the civil service is the security it offers under employment law. This is reinforced by staff councils. The BSW intends to grant them stronger statutory rights of co-determination vis-à-vis the departments. We want to promote health programmes within government departments to reduce absenteeism due to illness. This also includes mental health: psychotherapy should not be a blanket ground for exclusion from recruitment.

Hard work must be rewarded

One problem in the civil service is the often difficult path to promotion. Whilst performance is valued, it does not translate into a higher salary. We want to change this. To provide incentives for more and better work, performance-related bonuses should be paid more frequently within government departments. Furthermore, promotions for consistent performance should become the norm rather than the exception.

Modernising the civil service

Administration also means providing a service. To speed this up, more consistent digitalisation is needed: paper files should be a thing of the past and replaced by digital records. The era of the fax machine in government departments should also

come to an end. Nevertheless, digitalisation is not an end in itself, nor is it unproblematic: we reject problematic software from US tech companies such as Palantir.

Attracting staff

The public sector is suffering from a shortage of skilled workers. To remedy this, the public sector should step up its efforts to approach all relevant training organisations to find suitable candidates. Dual study programmes in the public sector should also be expanded further. With regard to remuneration, care must be taken to ensure that it is commensurate with the current cost of living in the city. Another source of staff is the long-term unemployed. To offer them new career prospects, career change programmes should be tailored specifically to the needs of this target group.

Communicating with citizens on an equal footing

The administration – and in particular the city councillors and mayors with political responsibility – urgently need to improve their communication with the citizens of our city. All too often, people's direct concerns are dismissed as a nuisance and go unanswered simply because they are unwelcome. We want to enshrine in law, within the District Administration Act, an obligation for politically responsible department heads to respond to citizens.

Putting an end to the 'ping-pong' between authorities

One reason why many projects in Berlin fail to get off the ground is disputes over jurisdiction between different authorities. The new State Organisation Act has laid a sound foundation, but in cases of dispute, the city's overriding interests must take precedence. Regular monitoring should identify potential further areas for action in this regard. On the other hand, the powers of the boroughs must not be restricted without parliamentary scrutiny: for instance, we want a binding vote by the House of Representatives whenever the Senate takes over construction projects from the boroughs.

Better structuring of tax revenue for the city

Although customs is a federal authority, the pressure to enforce regulations in the areas of illegal employment, the vehicle trade and the commercial import of cheap goods should be stepped up. We want to examine the possibility of greater involvement by large property owners and high-yield companies in the financing of public services. State-owned assets should be utilised more cost-effectively, whilst we reject privatisation.

A modern fiscal policy also requires trust. Whilst the budget is publicly available, it must be clear exactly what the funds are being spent on. The Investment Bank's funding database urgently needs to be made clearer and equipped with simpler search functions. Participatory models at district level can help align priorities more closely with actual needs.

Digitalisation that really delivers

Digital sovereignty and independence

We are shaping a digital future for the people and to strengthen Berlin's economy. The state should regain its technical independence through the use of open and standardised interfaces and formats, and free and open-source software (FOSS). Open systems not only enable self-determination and transparency, but also fair competition and greater innovation. Public funds are channelled into systems with open source code, so that the administration and citizens can benefit from progress together.

Privacy protection and secure communication

Data protection and data security are fundamental rights and, at the same time, economic opportunities. Companies that protect and encrypt data responsibly gain trust and can develop innovative products. We promote strong encryption, public-domain research and transparent systems that empower citizens and the economy alike. We reject unwarranted surveillance – freedom and security go hand in hand.

Transparency and free access to knowledge

Data held by the public sector must benefit everyone. Through open data, we create transparency and promote research and entrepreneurial innovation. Businesses can draw on standardised, open data to develop new services, whilst citizens remain informed and in control. We only support public funding for digital infrastructure if access is open to all – this fosters both competition and participation.

Technology that lasts – the right to repair

Sustainability, reparability and control over technology are crucial for citizens and the economy. Devices should remain usable even after support has ended, to prevent electronic waste. Manufacturer information, security updates and open systems promote innovative business models centred on maintenance and repair. Public funds are channelled into systems that are secure, maintainable and economically efficient in the long term.

No exclusion through digitalisation

Digitalisation must be inclusive and fair. Those who do not own a smartphone or a computer must be included. Through local authority offices and public services, targeted opportunities should be created to enable people without access to a smartphone or computer to participate in the digital world. Analogue services must remain equally accessible. This not only safeguards citizens' rights but also creates a level playing field for businesses offering services in both digital and analogue formats.

Democracy and free access to information

Free access to information strengthens both democracy and the economy. Citizens should be free to decide for themselves which sources they use. Open networks and transparent content foster trust and innovation, and enable businesses to develop new ideas on a solid foundation. Censorship, upload filters and blanket blocking measures run counter to these principles.

The protection of privacy on public transport is a fundamental right of our citizens. The current practice whereby recipients of social security benefits are required, during ticket inspections, to present their Jobcentre notices alongside their identity cards in addition to their social security travel passes, contravenes the right to informational self-determination and reinforces social stigmatisation. The abolition of the Berlinpass and the associated requirement to present jobcentre or social security notices on public transport means that people are forced to expose their social status in public spaces.

Opportunities and Responsibility in Artificial Intelligence

AI can simplify processes, make knowledge usable and unlock economic potential. We promote AI under clear rules: transparent, traceable and fair. Decisions made by automated systems (ADMT – Automated Decision-Making Technologies) must be verifiable; citizens must not be disadvantaged. This gives rise to innovative, data-protection-friendly business models that benefit both people and the economy in equal measure.

Environmentally Conscious Digitalisation

Digitalisation aims to combine efficiency with sustainability. Energy consumption and radiation exposure are minimised, public systems and devices are operated in an environmentally conscious manner, and electronic waste is prevented. Efficient technology reduces costs, boosts competitiveness and, at the same time, protects the environment and resources – a win-win for citizens, businesses and nature.

Economic opportunities through data sovereignty

Data protection, open standards and control over data are competitive advantages. Businesses that handle data responsibly foster trust and innovation. Government policy frameworks should combine security, openness and fairness, so that start-ups, SMEs and large companies benefit equally.

The common good rather than the pursuit of profit

Digitalisation should serve the common good, promote innovation and capitalise on economic opportunities. Government funding creates the framework for fair markets, transparency and sustainable participation. We are committed to a human-centred, sovereign and economically sustainable form of digitalisation that combines freedom, responsibility and innovation for all.

IT expertise in the public sector

In order to attract excellent IT staff for the successful implementation of digitalisation in public administration, the current pay grading criteria should be relaxed so that competitive salaries can also be paid in the public sector.

The BSW supports:

To optimise traffic flow, the BSW intends to introduce a pilot project using digital technologies or artificial intelligence to control traffic lights in the city.

The city's roadworks management is to be made more efficient with the help of digital technologies or artificial intelligence, in order to improve traffic flow.

A pilot project is to be set up in collaboration with the BVG, utilising artificial intelligence to ensure buses are deployed according to demand.

The BSW is launching a Bundesrat initiative to clarify Section 202c of the German Criminal Code (StGB) – the 'hacker clause' – to enable the decriminalisation of whistleblowers who provide useful information.

The BSW is also launching a Bundesrat initiative for a state quality mark for the results of human creative work.

As digitalisation is often associated with high costs, we propose a pilot project at a Berlin court, inspired by the Vienna Administrative Court. There, for years, all submissions in writing have also been possible via simple email, without any attempts at manipulation having occurred to date.

Dear residents of Berlin,

Germany is set to spend 225 billion euros a year on rearmament very soon in order to meet the NATO target of 5 per cent of GDP for the defence budget (i.e. almost half the federal budget). Tanks, drones and other weapons serve to escalate the war in Ukraine – yet in our towns and local communities, problems are piling up; billions are lacking for social infrastructure.

The BSW is the only party that is highlighting the link between preparations for war and empty state and local government coffers, and will make this a key issue in the campaign for the House of Representatives.