

# The Greens of Finland's Statement of Principles

# **Responsibility, Freedom, Caring**

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#### **1. Introduction**

The Greens of Finland exist to safeguard the future. We want to save the environment: biodiversity, the beauty of nature, the cleanness of air and water. We want to save people: to put an end to misery, to achieve equality, to give everyone the freedom to lead a life in which they are true to themselves. We want to save politics: to let people make decisions themselves, to end corruption, to enable a wide variety of opinions to be heard.

This statement of principles provides a more detailed picture of how we want to safeguard the future. The statement brings together the Greens' key values and principles as well as details of how we promote these. With this statement we explain what kind of world we want to build.

The values and principles that guide us are:

- Responsibility for the environment and the future. Human action must be tailored to the carrying capacity of the environment. Our quality of life has to be based on an economy of moderation. We cannot live at the expense of future generations.
- Freedom for all. People must have the right to live as they wish, as long as this does not prevent another person from enjoying the same right or cause animals or the environment harm. Freedom increases happiness and participation by enhancing the conditions under which people make decisions about their own life and get involved in improving society in different ways.

- Caring about other people. All action must be just, both on the local level and across the globe. The institutions of government must look after those things that are fundamental to people's lives, well-being and equality. In addition to goals, the question of how these goals are to be achieved is an important one for the Greens. We want to make politics more open, participatory and fair. Building the future requires us all.

## **2. Responsibility**

### **2.1 The Environment**

Human beings are a part of nature, so they are completely dependent on nature. We cannot survive without nature – photosynthesis, clean water, pollination and the nutrient cycle, for example. By protecting nature we are protecting ourselves. Nature also has intrinsic value, independent of the needs of humans. The Saimaa ringed seal, the Narrow-leaved Marsh orchid and millions of other species have the inalienable right to live on this planet. An old grove with its impressive oak trees, a minerotrophic mire dotted with Hare's-tail Cotton-grass, and a free-flowing rapid are valuable not only to us humans but in and of themselves.

The environment puts limits on our actions. We can either improve our quality of life with respect for these limits or ignore them and in time watch the foundation of our well-being crumble away as a result of environmental deterioration. Only by preserving the environment can we ultimately safeguard health and safe living conditions, a flourishing economy and jobs. Overconsumption and placing too much strain on the environment leads to a quality of life that is merely specious and temporary.

Taking responsibility for the environment is a matter of justice because it is often those in the very weakest of positions who are the first to suffer and who suffer the most from environmental degradation. The Greens emphasise the principle of climate justice and its central tenet, namely, that rich countries have a greater responsibility to find a solution to the climate crisis with which we are faced. The Greens want to improve the well-being of today's generations without diminishing the options of future generations.

Decisions are urgently needed. Differences of opinion over details should not prevent us from coming up with and implementing solutions, as climate change is quickly becoming uncontrollable and species extinction is running away from us. The day after tomorrow could be too late.

Responsibility for the environment transcends national borders. Neither birds nor pollutants acknowledge borders. Regardless of nationality and where we live, we are responsible for conserving nature and its diversity both for ourselves and for all humankind. Finns put clearly more strain on the environment than is sustainable. We cannot hide behind the cloak of Finland's "special circumstances". A cold climate does not oblige us to build badly insulated homes, while long distances do not force us to choose gas-guzzling cars. We are responsible for our own choices: it is us who run the country's coal-fired power plants, it is us who chop down Finland's virgin forests.

Finland has in its hand the trump cards for taking responsibility in the matter. We have the wealth, know-how and advanced technology. We have a well-working society, renewable natural resources and a culture with its roots in nature. Therefore, Finland must work as a forerunner in environmental protection and show others the way.

For the Greens, animals are not merely factors of production but, rather, sentient beings. All animals, including farmed animals, have the right to a good life, in which their species-specific needs are respected, without human-induced suffering. This means, for example, that fur farming should be banned.

The Greens strongly support organic production because it offers animals a more ethical fate, guarantees the pureness of products and does not harm the environment. Production based on genetic modification should not be permitted in Finland without thorough research and a proper assessment of its impact.

We view possibilities for new technologies positively, but their impact on humans and the environment

must be investigated. To ensure that today's generations and tomorrow's can continue living on this planet, we have to avoid taking undue risks. For the economy to adapt to the limits placed on it by the carrying capacity of the environment, a radical transformation in the ways we produce and consume is required. To find a solution to the climate crisis, society must be promptly rebuilt, making it low-emission initially, with emission neutrality coming in stages.

The energy economy must be based on maximum efficiency and environmentally friendly renewable energy. We recommend abandoning nuclear power as soon as possible. At the same time, abandoning nuclear power should not mean permitting an increase in carbon dioxide emissions.

The burden placed on the environment can be regulated efficiently and economically with pricing mechanisms and the dissemination of good information. In many cases, market-based means can be used to achieve the same benefit for the environment but with smaller costs than those generated by bans and standards – or more benefit for the environment at the same price. However, standards are still needed.

An actor who is responsible for environmental destruction must pay the full costs, which have to show in the prices of all products. Extra costs incurred for environmental reasons should be distributed equitably among different groups of people.

We need to make strides in the efficient use of natural resources. In place of disposable products and pollution we need closed-loop processing cycles for raw materials and emissions. We need to consider nature in all our decision-making. Above all, however, we need to display moderation in our choices.

## **2.2 An Economy of Moderation**

The Greens want to construct an economic system that is able to satisfy the basic needs of all people, not the greed of a few, and function within ecological limits. The economy must help put an end to poverty, help narrow income disparities and give everyone the same chance to prosper.

At present, we are living on the back of debt, which is excessive in economic, human and also environmental terms. Our economic growth is based on overconsumption of natural resources and generating pollution past a sustainable level. Inequality and marginalisation increase our social debt, which will have to be paid back in the coming decades.

For a market economy to function fairly and sustainably, it requires strong rules. At its best, however, it satisfies people's needs effectively and efficiently. An economy of moderation functions sustainably from one generation to the next. We do not want to live in a society where the first to arrive enjoy a feast of consumption, leaving others in the future to foot the bill. For instance, the issue of an ageing population has to be dealt with in a way that is not unfair to any age group.

The economy can grow but only on the condition that it is not based on living beyond our means. The economy can also be helped to grow by replacing coal-fired power plants with power plants fuelled by woodchips, by selling online newspapers instead of printed newspapers and by going to the theatre or the hairdresser's.

Outdated indicators like that of gross domestic product are not sufficient. In an economy of moderation, indicators that acknowledge the importance of the well-being of the environment and humans are needed alongside traditional indicators.

States have to be strong actors capable of steering the economy. Legislators should erect strict perimeters to safeguard the well-being of humans, the environment and animals. Within these limits, the economy, work and entrepreneurship should be as free as possible. Businesses and people must have the right to choose, based on their own needs and circumstances, the best means with which to achieve common goals related to the environment and quality of life.

Our prosperity is based on global markets and the trust on which they depend. We need rules for international trade that guarantee fair wages, good working conditions and a high standard of environmental protection everywhere. Through international and democratic cooperation, states must guarantee that no one gains an unfair competitive advantage by exploiting workers or destroying the environment. The economy can only properly be free when it does not restrict the freedom of others – when a mine does not deny local residents the right to clean water or a clothes factory the right of workers to lead a healthy life.

In practice, an ecologically and socially sustainable economy requires open financial markets. There is, however, a need for the active prevention of the excesses of markets and for taxing financial markets. A stable economy is beneficial to the whole of society. Public finances should not be allowed to accumulate unsustainable levels of debt and fall on the mercy of the creditors. In practice, state and municipal indebtedness means deferring tax increases or cuts in services to the future. Taking on debt is only just if it benefits those people who will ultimately have to pay the debt off. For example, public indebtedness can make sense when investing in the future: training people, preventing social inclusion or getting the economy out of a deep recession or depression.

### **3 Freedom**

Respecting and promoting people's freedom is a central facet of green thought. We defend basic freedoms – also when we disagree with others. Everyone is equally entitled to such freedoms.

Each person must have the right to live as they wish, as long as this does not prevent another person from enjoying the same right. Genuine freedom needs to be augmented by, for example, information about alternatives, education that helps us make informed choices, and economic security that fends off poverty and the limiting effect this has on our ability to choose. Freedom also exists within, for example freedom from convention and one's own prejudices. A person does not have to be the same as his or her neighbour or community; everyone has the right to choose their own path in life.

Each person has rights over his or her body and the decisions that affect it. However, the state can demand that irreversible decisions or decisions with long-term ramifications only be taken after serious consideration and with appreciation for their consequences for the person making the decision and others. A person's own wishes must be heard and respected to the very end, whether the issue is curing an illness, alleviating its symptoms or ensuring a dignified death. A person has the right to a good life but also to a good death, which may mean top-quality end-of-life care or being helped to end his or her life when they so wish.

Freedoms cannot be demanded at the expense of another person's basic rights. A rich country's resident's freedom to satisfy his or her wants and desires is restricted by, for example, the right of a resident of a developing country to live a dignified life. We are opposed to Fortress Europe, into which it is impossible to come in search of safety.

Restricting freedom is permissible when the benefits of this definitely outweigh the drawbacks and when by imposing restrictions the individual's ability to choose in the future is safeguarded. Moreover, the environment imposes boundaries to our freedoms: we do not have endless freedom to, for instance, consume and squander energy. When limiting freedoms, we should always consider less restrictive means first and out-and-out bans second.

Freedom is closely related to equality, happiness and participation. Genuine freedom for all can be realised only when people have equal rights. The right to decide about one's own life is both a precondition for happiness and an important source of happiness in itself. Furthermore, without freedom there cannot be participation or democracy.

#### **3.1 Equality**

Nobody should be excluded. We want to build an equal society in which everyone can participate, regardless

of their degree of mobility, skin colour, age or where they live.

Equality does not come about all by itself. It requires attitudes to change and work spanning many years. Also, society's structures have to change. No single characteristic should determine an individual's whole person in society's eyes. No one need or should resign themselves to being marginalised.

A person's opportunities are often influenced by the social status of parents and other background factors. In particular, we should strive to support those people whose opportunities are diminished by prejudice, different circumstances or an unfortunate background. Sometimes a society's degree of equality is best improved by giving those belonging to a disadvantaged group temporary reprieve, for instance with the use of quotas. The disabled and partially able-bodied should be guaranteed a better chance to work than before and obstacles to them being employed should be removed.

The institutions of government have to cater to the needs of different people. Families and single people should be treated equally. People's surroundings have to be accessible to all. Everyone should be able to obtain services in Finland's national languages as well as in different minority languages where possible.

The Greens want the world and Finland to be places where all genders are equal. A conscious effort has to be made to locate and tear down structures that prevent different genders from fully participating in working life, family life and social life. The Greens have the goal of building a fairer society with no set gender roles.

Women's lower wages, the marginalisation of men, mandatory sterilisation for people undergoing gender-correction operations and other gendered problems must be fought against. Therefore, parental leave just like military service, to give but two examples, should be reformed in a way that treats genders equally. In law, relationships should be treated exactly the same way regardless of the gender of one partner. Institutions of government must recognise the complex variety of genders and ensure the rights of members of minority groups. The rights of people who do not unambiguously feel themselves to be a man or a woman should also be defended.

Violence targeted at women and domestic violence are serious problems in society that should be prevented and intervened in.

The Greens respect freedom of religion and want all worldviews to be treated equally. Communities with different worldviews should be of equal standing vis-à-vis the state.

### **3.2 Happiness**

The Greens want to enable people to lead a good, happy life. Sources of happiness are individualised, and nobody should determine what makes another person happy. Institutions of government should, however, set preconditions for happiness and make it possible for people to get to choose the keys to their own happiness.

Therefore, the order of priorities in politics must change. The focus should be shifted from the highly emphasised pursuit of economic growth and competitiveness to people's happiness. From the point of view of a politics of happiness, it would make sense to, for instance, improve family leave or narrow income disparities even though economic growth would also slow marginally as a consequence.

The state cannot guarantee anyone's happiness, but it can provide the building blocks for a happy life. For example, a robust society, good health, human relations, enough rest and the chance to influence one's own life are, generally, things that increase a person's happiness. Additionally, people should have the time to do those things that are important for their happiness.

Furthermore, the right to learn new things throughout life and the joy that comes from experiencing different things are sources of happiness. Institutions of government should offer public space for meeting

friends and exercising as well as support culture, which makes self-fulfilment and the enjoyment of art possible. Artists and researchers should be able to devote themselves to searching for new things without fear.

### **3.3 Participation**

The Greens want to create a society where power is shared more fairly than it is at present. It must be possible to freely criticise and oust those in power.

Defining what the future should look like is something we have to do together. Society should not be constructed in such a way as to exclude any section of it. Participation in society must not be difficult or feel futile.

The rights of citizens are best safeguarded when current decision-makers can be replaced with better ones in fair elections. At the same time, participation should more than filling in a ballot paper every four years. Direct democracy, in the form of such things as referenda and citizen-initiated motions, is a necessary element underpinning representative democracy and is needed for citizens' faith in politics to return. The Greens believe that power in a democracy belongs to everyone, also in between elections.

Politics is a matter of values and ideals. As such, it is not just trained professionals who should have the chance to express their views. We do not believe in autocratic rulers; instead, we believe in trying to come up with solutions together. We need more forms of participatory democracy. Alongside a strong parliament we want a president who knows the limits of his or her power, alongside citizens who understand their value for society civil servants who know their place. Freedom of speech guarantees our right to freely criticise holders of power. In a society that respects freedom, there is the freedom to speak out and to be offended, not a culture that silences people. Maintaining many-sided citizen debate is the duty of everyone.

Transparency and openness should be increased at all levels of decision-making. People must be able to access information on public decisions where they are: on the street, at the marketplace, on the internet, in schools and in the workplace.

Information and communications technology enables the realisation of novel forms of radical openness, in which publically produced information is made easily available to all. Information sharing offers people a means of participating while offering companies new possibilities for doing business. Therefore, information produced by the state and municipalities should be freely accessible to citizens.

Democracy should be a principle that permeates decision-making at all levels. Organisations, municipalities, inter-municipal bodies, states, inter-state organisations and unions of states must be democratised. Decisions about issues that affect everyone, such as pensions and social security, should not be something about which only interest groups get to decide. Decisions should be made as close to the people whose lives they affect.

In addition to a more democratic Finland, we want a more democratic world. We seek global decision-making organs with teeth.

Global problems like climate change are impossible to solve alone. Close global cooperation is also an effective means of intervening in intra-state and international conflicts, hence an effective means of promoting peace around the world.

## **4 Caring**

### **4.1 Justice**

A good indicator of justice is how well those members of a society who are in the weakest of positions are treated. A just state safeguards the necessary conditions that enable everyone to live a good life regardless

of their circumstances. Each one of us can sometimes find ourselves in a weak position.

Justice means ensuring income disparities remain moderate, the possibility of social mobility and a decent livelihood for everyone. For the Greens, it is fair for taxation to be based on the ability to pay and harm to e.g. the environment. More than others, high earners have both the opportunity and the duty to help build society.

Reducing differences in levels of wealth, in the end, benefits everyone. The rich do not have to put up barbed wire around themselves and it is safe to move about freely. In societies with small income disparities, people are generally happier.

Today, poverty and many other problems are being passed from one generation to another. Correspondingly, money has the habit of begetting more money, and people with a high level of education have often followed in their parents' footsteps. So everyone does not begin from the same starting point. Conditions have to be evened out with the help of education, social security and taxation.

In just states, unemployment and disaffection are not concentrated in specific areas, and basic services are always of a high quality regardless of where they are provided. We do not want a Finland divided into slums for the poor and fenced-off areas for the rich, nor do we want our country to have a geographic make-up where welfare disparities are great.

Caring for others need not stop at state borders. People everywhere in the world have the right to freedom from misery and want. Wealthy countries like Finland have a duty to help others enjoy this right through development cooperation and other policies.

Trade policy, per se, should not prevent poor countries from developing. Trade and trade restrictions can, however, be used to steer dictators towards respecting universally recognised human rights. In a world of competition and cooperation, all actors should play by the commonly agreed rules of the game. The international community has a responsibility to intervene in the affairs of a state when that state shows itself incapable or unwilling to protect the lives of its citizens.

Humankind is our international family. For the Greens, people are first and foremost citizens of a shared world. In place of armament we want to see human security. We want to promote human rights, peace and democracy in the world, utilising foreign policy tools as well. The long-term vision of the Greens is a freedom of movement that knows no limits.

#### **4.2 Well-being**

The conditions that make happiness and well-being possible are developed in a welfare state – one of the best things Finns have created. None of us are solely responsible for ourselves. A comprehensive security net, higher-quality health services, the opportunity for each of us to develop and educate ourselves, small income disparities – all these help build a society of happy people.

For most, healthiness and mental well-being are important preconditions for happiness. Everyone should have the same right to receive the best possible care: a right municipalities and the state should safeguard. In addition to this, healthiness has to be promoted. The prevention of illness is not only important in terms of people's quality of life but is also of vital importance economically as the population ages and needs grow. Therefore, physical exercise, for example, should be easily accessible and tempting.

A meaningful job, doing things together and human contact prevents marginalisation. Moreover, a healthy diet, clean drinking water, the absence of noise and unpolluted air are necessary for a healthy life in Finland and throughout the world.

Our environment is formed by nature and the built environment. The built environment is an essential component of the heritage we leave for future generations, and we must make sure that this heritage is

valuable and of high quality.

People who need help have the right to a life of dignity, and those who are capable of helping have the responsibility to help, across state borders. We in Finland can support the efforts of others by making the right choices: by paying young women working in factories in developing countries a decent wage, by using a sustainable share of the world's natural resources, and by helping those in distress both at home and abroad.

Society needs employment and free entrepreneurship to cover the various costs of a welfare state. Everyone must have the opportunity to work. Work should be worthwhile for everyone, and fair compensation has to be offered for doing it. Nobody should be left behind when trying to combine earnings and social security.

Work should also be just. Compliance with working conditions, the same pay for the same and equivalent work, and ending unnecessary temping together with the possibility of easily combining work and life outside of work are the basis of a working life that is fair.

Work, however, is not an end in itself. Rather, it is a tool for actualising a just society as well as a means to self-fulfillment for many. To counterbalance working life, more free time is needed. At the same time, the workload can be shared by a larger number of people.

The jungle that is Finland's system of social security should be replaced with a simple and incentive-generating basic income. It would offer greater security to temps, the partially able-bodied, low earners and entrepreneurs, too.

A basic income gives people the freedom to choose and find meaningful work for themselves. It makes taking a job profitable and enables different forms of work.

Education offers us tools for participating in society and working life. Everyone has the right to high-quality and free education regardless of family background and where they live. Everyone should have the freedom to choose the educational path that suits them best. Being able to make mistakes and to opt to do something different after choosing the wrong route is also an element of what it means to be free.

## **5 How the Greens work**

One of the reasons the Greens came into being was a desire to act as a breath of fresh air for, and in the process challenge, a political culture with tendencies to oligarchy. We do not only think nonconformist but also act according to our convictions. We are committed to openness in all our action. In negotiations, the agreements we make stand up to scrutiny. The Greens work for increased openness in decision-making everywhere we are involved, be that a parliamentary committee, a local council or the European Union.

We are an open and non-hierarchical party where the latest person to get involved may be first in line – it is merely a question of ideas, passion and ability. We have committed ourselves to a tight system of rotating duties. In this way, no one becomes irreplaceable and power is shared among a number of people.

The Greens strive for open debate in which all sides are listened to and no topic is off limits. If we are wrong, we want to know why. If the solution we propose does not work, we are prepared to look for something more workable. We Greens do not lose sight of our goals, but we also understand that they can be achieved in many ways.

We only act in ways that are compatible with our principles. The end does not justify the means. We support good initiatives even when they were not ours to begin with and we will not get the credit once they are put in place. A good outcome is what is most important.

We are constantly trying to improve the quality of the party's internal democracy. We listen to non-Greens,

as we do not want to get trapped in our own little bubble. We do not make people join the party, so it is also possible for people to contribute as an independent, working alongside party members as an equal.

The Greens do not have a dress code nor do we exclude people based on age or gender – everyone is welcome the way they are. The way the Greens work creates space for members of minority groups. In all our work, we recognise gender equality.

Big changes need to have people's support. The Greens pledge themselves to unconditional non-violence in all that we do. Violence begets violence, and a violent society can never be good for anyone. We are only prepared to allow ourselves methods that we would permit those with whom we disagree.

Building society to benefit one group is not something the Greens do. Instead, we aim to build a just society for all. We work together with Greens in other countries in order to further our goals on a global scale.

We stand for democracy, an open society and lively political debate. We do not bow to anyone, while we respect everyone.