

Green successes since the 2002 elections

Green successes!

The Swedish Green Party makes a difference in Swedish politics. We use our 18 seats in the Swedish parliament to carry through green politics – from the mid-life sabbatical leave to increased investments in railroad traffic. In the following, we present a few of all our green successes since the 2002 elections.

New opportunities in life

On 1 January 2005, the mid-life sabbatical leave was introduced in Sweden with all in all 12,000 places. The reform means that an employee can take up to a year off from work while, during the same period, someone who is unemployed replaces him or her temporarily. A lot of people want to try something new and different after having been in the same profession for a long time. Those who have had a sabbatical leave have taken the opportunity to start their own businesses, spend time with their grandchildren, travel or study. Almost half of those who have replaced the employee had previously been unemployed for a long time. Through the reform, they have regained a foothold in the working life.

It must be possible to study, regardless of age. To make it easier for parents with small children, we have introduced a child supplement in the study allowances. We have also raised the upper age limit for the right to obtain study allowances, from 50 to 54 years.

We have carried through an increase of the lowest remuneration from 60 to 180 SEK/day for parental leave, which is beneficial to those who have not been previously employed or have recently finished studying.

For those who want a more practically oriented education, we have achieved a completely new apprenticeship training within the framework of the upper secondary school.

Anti-discrimination

Discrimination is a waste of people's ability and creativity. We have carried through the creation of more local anti-discrimination agencies and have increased their grants, from 4 million SEK to 13 million SEK annually. At the national level, the Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination and the Ombudsman against Discrimination on grounds of Sexual Orientation contribute to the work against discrimination, and we have therefore brought about larger grants from the state to their work.

On our initiative, several local municipalities have introduced a rule making it possible to cancel agreements with companies that discriminate, with so called anti-discrimination clauses in public procurement. We have also carried through that The Swedish Agency for Public Management and a number of authorities will use such clauses as well.

A precondition for not being entirely left out of society is the ability to understand and make oneself understood in Swedish. Therefore, the introduction for newly arrived immigrants should be improved, among other things through an improvement of the quality of the teaching of Swedish. Special attention needs to be given to immigrated university graduates in order for them to be able to supplement their education.

Asylum and refugees

Sweden does not live up to the requirements for decent and humanitarian treatment of refugees. For us, it is therefore a great green success that the Aliens Appeals Board was shut down in March 2006. In the future, the asylum process will be carried out in accordance with the rule of law, since asylum matters will be brought before court instead.

The Swedish Migration Board will now, thanks to us, reassess the cases of children and their families whose rejection or expulsion to their home countries has not been possible to implement. Each case will be assessed separately, but the explicit aim is for most of them to get to stay in Sweden.

The intention in an earlier decision concerning apathetic children will be clarified in order to allow the most seriously affected children to stay.

We have also achieved that those who have been given a decision of rejection or expulsion that cannot be implemented, should be given the opportunity to work, and that children that are kept in hiding should be able to go to school. Furthermore, the county councils have been given increased remuneration for health care to asylum seekers.

The environment

In order to decrease the amount of emissions and to address the crowded traffic situation in Stockholm city, we have carried through the congestion charges trials. The Stockholm trials were carried out in the first half of 2006. At the same time, the greatest investment since 1960 have been made in public transport in the city and county of Stockholm, with among other things 200 new ethanol buses and new

commuter trains, resulting in over 200,000 new seats in public transports, paid for by the congestion charges.

We have achieved lower taxes on fuel-efficient cars and cars driven by renewable fuels, for example ethanol and biogas. At least 35 per cent of the cars purchased by the state should be clean cars.

To make it easier to drive more environment friendly, it is important that renewable fuels are readily available for all. A new law makes it mandatory for the largest filling stations to have pumps with renewable fuels from 1 January 2006. This means that some 25 per cent of the filling stations have pumps with renewable fuels. This number will be gradually increased.

It should be possible to go by train in the whole of Sweden. 107 billion SEK will be invested in railroads up until 2015. This means, among other things, that the Blekinge Coastal Line in the south of Sweden will be electrified, and that the Bothnia Line will be built, making Northern Norrland a more competitive region. More goods, in particular heavy goods, should be transported by rail.

We have introduced economic support to those who switch to energy-saving triple glass windows and to those who install a pellet burner when building a new house. Wind power has been given special support. Those who replace their oil burner obtain a tax reduction.

Thanks to us, the fur trade industry will eventually be phased out, through tightened demands in the Swedish Animal Welfare Act. Among other things, minks will be allowed large enough space to be able to vent their natural behaviour. The law will enter into force in 2007.

We have increased the means to rural development within the framework of the new period 2007-2013. This involves a number of environment measures, for example support to pastures and organic farming, promotion of rural development and investments in renewable energy.

To promote the export of ecologically produced food, 2.5 million SEK extra will be granted annually in 2007 and 2008.

Gender equality

Violence in close relationships is often a hidden crime from which first and foremost women and children suffer. Women's and girls' shelters play an important and supporting role. We have therefore carried through a major increase (100 million

SEK annually) in the State subsidies to women's shelters during the coming years. The municipalities are expected to contribute with the same amount.

The work for women's rights is further increased, in that the National Centre for Battered and Raped Women is given more funding.

Development cooperation

We have achieved an increase in Swedish development assistance to 1 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI), which will be achieved in 2006. 1 billion SEK of the development assistance will be set aside for environmentally related assistance.

Within this framework, an information campaign about fair trade labelling is being carried out.

Defence policy

Violence is a bad means of solving conflicts. We want increased civilian efforts. We have managed to carry through a saving on the military defence corresponding to 600 million SEK for 2005, 1.5 billion in 2006 and 3 billion SEK in 2007. A transition from a military to a civil defence has thereby been started, which has made it possible to spend the money saved on more important purposes.

A green tax reform

Those who pollute and destroy the environment should pay for it. Those who, on the other hand, choose to live in an environmentally friendly manner should be rewarded. Therefore, we have carried through decreased taxes on labour and increased the taxes on energy, raw materials and polluting discharges.

Low and medium income earners stand to gain most from the tax reform, through an increased basic deduction on their taxes. In total, the taxes are being decreased by on average 2,000 SEK per tax payer. The reform has resulted in evident environmental effects.

The taxes on polluting activities, such as aviation and waste combustion, have been increased. The payroll taxes have been decreased by more than 2 billion SEK, and income taxes have been decreased by more than 15 billion SEK through increased basic deductions and tax reductions.

Small enterprises

We have brought about the abolition of the gift tax and of the tax on inheritance. This will make it easier for small businessmen to pass on their enterprises to the next generation.

We have achieved a change in the tax rules in order for small businesses not to be more heavily taxed than large ones. Thanks to us, closed companies get to keep a larger share of their profits in order to be able to make investments. This is achieved in that alleviations are introduced in the so called 3:12 rule, regulating how large part of the profit should be taxed as income and how large part should be taxed as profit.

We have achieved a more than ten per cent decrease of the payroll tax for one-man businesses that employ someone. This decrease is valid for one year.

Other

A major investment in dental care is being introduced, with a first step to be taken in October 2007. This involves a so called basic support, which involves the opportunity to visit a dentist for examination every 18 month at a fee of 200 SEK. We will, together with our partners, continue the work with future steps that could lead to the introduction of a high cost insurance.

The study allowances for students have been increased, with 100 SEK extra per month as a grant and 200 extra as a loan.

SUMMARY OF SOME OF THE MAJOR POLITICAL GAINS SINCE THE 2002 ELECTIONS

- The introduction of 12,000 mid-life sabbatical leaves annually, starting 1 January 2005.
- We have decreased the income tax and the payroll tax with 17 billion SEK and increased the tax with the same amount for those who pollute and use natural resources.
- The congestion charge trials in Stockholm have been carried out.
- More filling stations will sell renewable fuels.
- A rapid expansion of the railway net.
- Heavily increased support to the women's shelters.
- The Swedish Development Assistance reached the target of 1 per cent of GNI in 2006.
- The lowest remuneration for parental leave has been increased from 60 to 180 SEK per day.
- The military defence has been heavily cut back.
- Refugee children in hiding have been given a new assessment, with the aim to give most of them the right to stay.

- Better tax rules for small enterprises.