



**PAM's priority action  
programme 2020-2024**

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# Contents

Introduction ..... 5

The best service comes from professionalism and well-being  
at the workplace .....7

Reforms to the agreement system .....11

Social responsibility as a success factor for companies .....15

Developing an educational basis and lifelong learning .....19

A humane social model ..... 23

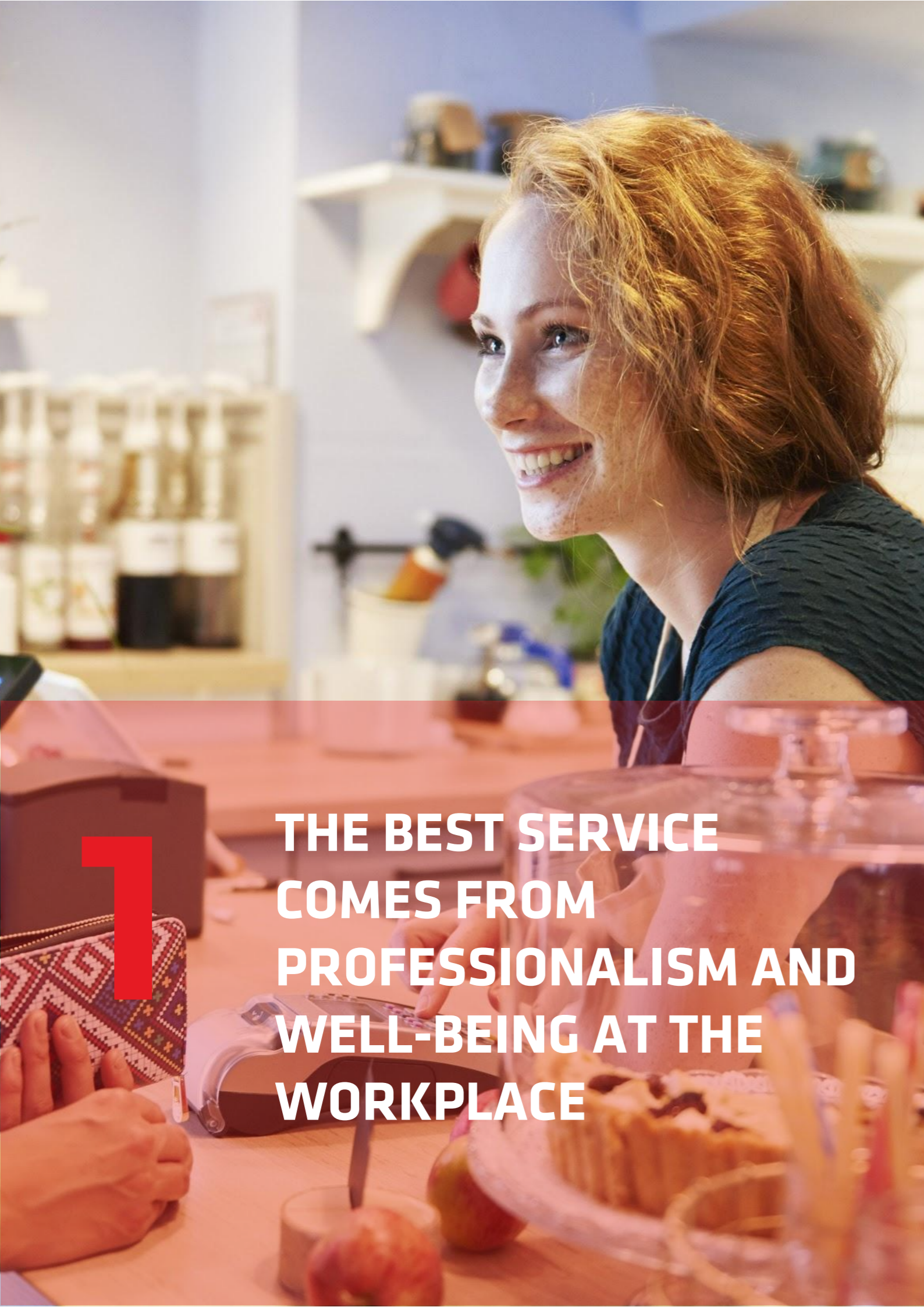
A diverse membership and an evolving representative  
organisation ..... 27

# Introduction

Service Union United PAM is a trade union for people working in private service sectors. As a specialist in working life, the union improves their income, job security and quality of life.

This priority action programme sets out objectives and means for the union’s future actions. A key element is decent income for people working in private service sectors. What conditions and actions will it take to make that work? That question, along with better job security and quality of life, are addressed from various angles in this programme. It is all about appreciation of the work and workers in our sectors, working conditions and the ways to agree these, the values guiding companies’ activities, education and training, the ground rules in society as a whole and, naturally, the course take in our own union.

The Congress at Helsinki Messukeskus on 4 – 6 June 2019 decided on PAM’s priority action programme for the years 2020-2024.



# 1 THE BEST SERVICE COMES FROM PROFESSIONALISM AND WELL-BEING AT THE WORKPLACE

*The success of service sector companies depends very much on how well they manage to serve their customers. Service sector professionals know customers' expectations, and companies should make more use of this expertise. In future the skills required of service sector professionals will increase as work changes, with quality service expected round the clock, every day of the year. Good service comes from satisfied employees. For them to be satisfied they must have adequate income, a supportive work environment and decent working conditions. We have a shared objective with employers to have successful businesses, but not at any cost.*

Good service requires a high degree of professionalism from workers, which comes from training, experience and a will to do service work. Having highly professional workers does not by itself guarantee a good service experience for the customer - companies must also develop their activities together with their employees, provide them with decent working conditions, offer ongoing support throughout the employment relationship and adequate income as well as good employment terms. Employees also expect appreciation and respect from their employer if they are to put in their own professionalism and commit to the company.

As work changes, service work will evolve, but not disappear. Companies cannot exist without service, and not everyone has service skills. Quality service will be more important in giving a competitive edge since in future technology by itself won't be a particular competitive factor. Skills requirements in service sectors will increase and a strong service identity will be built both at work and in training in the sector. In future service professionals will be better at using technology to help give customers the best possible service experience.

Service professionals are experts with the ability to identify the customer's expectations and needs. A company's employees are its resource in providing and developing services, and they enable companies to improve their productivity and financial results. Therefore, employees' well-being must be ensured and constructive feedback given on their work. Wise employers make better use of PAM members' professionalism in developing their companies and in decision-making.

Involving employees in making and implementing the company's decisions as well as in developing their own work and the company's operating practices, therefore, improves companies' productivity. Work will then also be more varied and meaningful. Involving employees also commits them to the companies' choices.

**PAM's priority is to enhance the ability of service sector professionals to influence their own work as well as decisions and developments at their workplace. The priority is also to increase understanding and appreciation of service work and the value of those who do it, while showing that new technologies and quality service belong together.**

Good service also requires a supportive environment where employees can work in conditions where they have proper and ergonomic equipment, working possibilities and methods, their overall well-being is looked after and they do not need to feel insecure. In future improved productivity will require more investment in employees' working conditions and employment benefits that promote well-being at work.

Service workers must receive a larger share of a company's productivity and financial results than at present. The demands of service work and the changes in work must be better reflected in pay and working conditions. Raising the attractiveness of service sectors requires improved income for employees. Service sectors must also find means to improve employees' ability to plan their lives outside of work. Employees must be able to have more influence on their working hours, for example.

**PAM's priority is to improve working conditions for people working in service sectors. We help employees to upgrade their skills and to cope in a world of changing job descriptions, tasks and equipment as well as changes in the way work is done and made available. We also influence regulations so as to safeguard workers' rights and living conditions as working life changes.**

Companies are entitled to expect from society fair legislation and rules that enable business activity and provide a level competitive playing field also in terms of pay and working conditions. Companies are also entitled to expect society to contribute to developing service industries, for example through more public investment in research and development.

PAM's priority is success and development of service industries, which we do by influencing policy making and regulation in society.



## 2 REFORMS TO THE AGREEMENT SYSTEM

*As work diversifies, or is even being redefined, employment relationships are taking on a different nature and are partly being replaced with other structures, and job descriptions are becoming blurred. So the agreement system also has to be reformed, and PAM is active in developing it and seeking agreement. PAM's basic premise is that regardless of the type of employment, workers must be ensured minimum working conditions, a decent working environment and well-being at work also in future.*

Digitalisation and the global competition that it enables are having a greater impact on collective regulation and are changing the conditions under which work is performed. With automation some traditional work will disappear. Flexible ways of using labour will spread: for example the number of part-time wage earners has increased throughout the 2000s. The platform economy is creating completely new types of employment relationships that threaten to pass the entrepreneurial risk and responsibility for well-being at work and wage-related social security on to employees themselves.

The changes in work also offer many possibilities. Platforms offer numerous new work opportunities. At best more varied sets of tasks and combinations of technology and work will enrich work. To use the potential of this change, employment regulations must also be constantly developed so that changes in employment do not mean increased exploitation of workers. The change will be supported by safeguarding decent minimum working conditions and working environments for workers.

**PAM's priority is to update the regulatory framework for working life through ongoing collaboration between employees, employers and government to enable change that is sustainable from the point of view of society as a whole. The regulatory framework for working life should be worker protection, which for PAM members means in particular securing employment that safeguards incomes.**

Minimum employment conditions are defined via labour legislation and the collective agreement system that supplements it. Around 90% of wage earners are covered by collective agreements. The current collective agreement system has been able to reduce the wage gap between men and women and to prevent unhealthy competition on wages and working conditions. This has made it possible to secure a uniform minimum level of working conditions, for example for groups of workers with fewer opportunities to defend their own rights. Decent minimum conditions have also helped create the conditions for improved labour productivity and provide high-quality work.

However, the current agreement system is being challenged by the internationalisation and polarisation of business. On the other hand people's individuality is more pronounced, so that agreeing working conditions should help create meaning for the working community. At best co-operating at the local level can respond to both of these: take into account the needs of different companies while increasing employee participation in developing their own working conditions as organised working communities, where shop stewards and teams of members actively enable agreement.

PAM's priority is that collective agreements define a minimum level of working conditions that safeguards employees' incomes and a decent working environment. Local agreement is used to achieve better packages for employees and companies. Organised workplaces can be given more scope for local agreement.

With the diversification of forms of employment and job descriptions, you cannot always clearly identify whether a workplace is applying the collective agreement or employment legislation more generally. The current agreement system does not fully recognise ways of working that fall between paid employment relationships and self-employment. Needs in terms of employment regulation may differ from traditional agreement models: for example even now workers' earnings may be based on financial results rather than wages being paid based on the time spent to do the work.

**PAM's priority is to define new agreement mechanisms that take account of new forms of working.**



# 3 SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AS A SUCCESS FACTOR FOR COMPANIES

*Can a company be called responsible if its employees cannot manage on the wages they get from their work? No. Responsible companies understand that for good financial results they need employees who are looked after and committed to their employer. In future companies will derive competitive advantage by improving service and developing new offerings. It must always be ensured, however, that the products and services offered to the customer are backed up by decent and fair operating methods that respect human rights.*

Corporate social responsibility means respecting and implementing the principles and objectives of sustainable development in business activity. This is often divided into three dimensions – economic, ecological and social. The public debate is often about profits and taxes in relation to economic re-sponsibility, and ecological responsibility, including sustainable use of natural resources and recycling of materials. Less attention has been paid to social responsibility, however. It has mostly been examined in terms of working conditions in developing countries and international subcontracting chains. However, social responsibility also applies to companies operating in the European Union and Finland. It includes fair operating methods that respect human rights, fair employment practices and good working conditions for employees.

When corporate social responsibility is stressed in Finland too, it often results in well-being and coping at work being seen in a broader perspective. It enables a company's employees and the employer to work together to raise working conditions and terms above the minimum. Responsible companies understand that for good financial results they need employees who are looked after and committed to their employer. For employees, responsibility is reflected in better, motivating pay, equal and fair treatment, good training possibilities, proper reconciliation of work and leisure time, smooth consultation and other voluntary actions that go beyond the requirements of legislation and collective agreements.

Responsible companies do not try to generate financial returns at any cost. Their activity takes account of how their actions affect employees, customers, stakeholders, the environment and society. A re-sponsible company's consultation and communications on corporate responsibility are transparent, they adhere to agreed rules and promote fair competition. They do not aim at a competitive advantage for example by means of irresponsible subcontractor chains, underpaying or tax evasion.

Social responsibility monitoring mechanisms should be developed. If there is no monitoring, social responsibility will remain optional.

Responsible business represents a competitive advantage that positively impacts a company's image, brand and status as an employer as well as strengthening the company's position in the marketplace. A company that operates responsibly is also a more attractive employer.

**PAM's priority is that companies operating in the European Union and Finland understand that profit-able and sustainable business is based on socially responsible activities. These companies facilitate collaborative activities, thereby fostering social responsibility.**

Digitalisation is transforming business. This is contributing to further reducing borders between countries. Work and capital move rapidly from one country to another. Internationalisation has meant that supply chains have become ever longer and the amount of subcontracting and multinational companies has increased, including in Finland. Huge companies have emerged that operate as platforms. It has been difficult to monitor their practices with existing legislation and their power is a challenge to local political policy making. These changes mean that it is increasingly hard for people to find out about the conditions, wages and working conditions with which products and services have been produced.

Many companies operating in Finland already employ international measures and standards of social responsibility in their activities, but this does not represent sufficient responsibility. For some of the companies advertising themselves as responsible, responsibility only amounts to complying with the laws. It is important to make sure that greenwashing, a familiar concept in the environmental area, does not establish itself in the debate on social responsibility and give a false picture of companies' activities. Information related to the production of products and services, including social responsibility, must be available and understandable to anybody interested.

**PAM's priority is that responsibility-related branding by companies in Finland is based on facts.**

With the deregulation of the labour market and the spread of new ways of working, more attention needs to be paid to companies' social responsibility. For example, the rise of globalisation, digitalisation and the platform and sharing economy must not lead to a situation where regulation or collective agreements are non-existent or where the same work is done on different conditions.

Whatever the country, humane working conditions and workers' rights are guaranteed by organised workers who are members of a strong and independent trade union. When trade unions cooperate internationally, they can for example negotiate framework agreements with multinational companies to reinforce basic employment rights, such as freedom of association and the right to negotiate.

PAM strengthens international cooperation in the trade union movement and supports democratic, free trade unions in developing countries so that the benefits of globalisation and technological progress are distributed equally to companies, employees and society. Everybody throughout the world should have the possibility at the very least to work in decent conditions and be paid a living wage.

**PAM actively promotes and develops regulation, national sectoral collective agreements and global framework agreements. The priority is that as many employees as possible have the right and opportunity to organise and negotiate their working conditions.**



# 4

## DEVELOPING AN EDUCATIONAL BASIS AND LIFELONG LEARNING

*Education and basic skills create the basis for continual skills development, lifelong learning and active membership of society. Skills development is a lifelong process, and there must be opportunities for this in working life.*

Education and basic skills create the basis for continual skills development and lifelong learning. Sufficient resources must be guaranteed for early childhood and basic education. Studies show that hundreds of thousands of working-age Finns suffer from poor basic skills (reading, writing and language skills, mathematical skills, ICT skills). Without basic skills individuals cannot develop more advanced skills, without which they are vulnerable as working life changes. There is an unquestionable link between educational levels and employment. The educational pathway must be unbroken from primary to the end of secondary education.

For persons to be active members of a democratic society, they need civic competences and employment skills. These facilitate people's ability to influence the democratic process. This is reflected for example in higher voter turnout among employees and in civic activity, including via union branches and union activity. Superior civic and working life skills permit more democratic working life and empowerment of vulnerable groups.

Skills should be a particular focus in secondary vocational education, which is the route through which half of young people in Finland enter working life. And quality early childhood education is crucial at the start of the education pathway as it teaches children under school age cooperation and empathy skills.

**PAM's priority is to actively enhance and maintain employees' basic skills, so as to be able to develop professional skills. Working life and civic skills are taught comprehensively throughout the education pathway.**

Basic skills are the foundation on which professional skills are built. Educational level is very much inherited based on a family's socio-economic status. The mother's educational level in particular affects a child's future educational attainment. Most opportunities for skills development in working life, for example staff training, are for white-collar employees. Skills development opportunities mean rights, resources, provision and regular assessment of skills development needs. Inequalities in educational opportunities and skills development must be stopped.

Employers need to understand their role in lifelong learning. They must bear more responsibility for maintaining and developing the skills of their blue-collar employees and see staff skills development as an essential investment in the future.

The content must correspond to the needs of today and of the future. A lifelong learning model that supports individuals in all cases through the changes in working life cannot be created without substantial participation by employers.

Lifelong learning should be financed in such a way that all employers are incentivised to train their employees at all levels. The system should also include those working in atypical employment relationships.

Quality vocational training is based on the needs of working life. However, the link between actual workplaces and the education administration does not always function ideally. This results in reforms which economic operators find irrelevant or at worst even harmful. This calls for more active educational networking at the workplace level and support for key workplace actors, such as instructors, assessors of competence-based qualifications, peer activists and shop stewards, and safeguarding resources for their work. Employers must ensure that vocational learning at the workplace is high-quality and that job counselling is properly resourced. The union dialogues with the education administration so that the needs of working life are properly reflected in reforms.

**PAM's priority is that employers offer employees staff training equally, regardless of their educational background or position.**



# 5 A HUMANE SOCIAL MODEL

*The welfare society safety net should be reformed so that people never fall through it. It should function even if the world and people's lives change. The safety net should be reformed comprehensively, and PAM is involved in reforming it. Basic security and labour market regulation must be developed as a whole. Public services increase equality and social inclusion, and they should respond to the challenges posed by the changes in working life.*

As society changes ever more rapidly, isolated solutions are not always enough to fix the broken parts. Reform of the welfare society's safety net should be based on people and securing their opportunities. The various elements of safety nets, for example basic security, unemployment funds and employment services, should function seamlessly, serving people's desire to build their own lives and overall welfare. PAM does not want to create conflict between people doing different types of work. Nor do we want to let the economy and productivity alone define people's ability to prosper.

PAM participates in developing society's safety net by highlighting necessary reforms that are important for service sector employees and lobbying policy makers together with SAK, the trade unions and other stakeholders. PAM actively participates in the debate on the evolving reform of basic security. Advocacy also takes place at the negotiating table: agreement policy, labour market policy and social security should be seen considered as an integral whole. The tripartite system is a key tool in building a humane society.

**PAM's priority is a social safety net that is comprehensive and humane as well as being straightforward and predictable for people. It ensures a livelihood if life changes, allows people to focus on searching for new opportunities and does not humiliate those who need help. PAM creates its own overall vision and participates actively in social security and labour market reforms.**

A comprehensive model of a humane society is made up of many parts. As well a robust safety net, these parts include fair working life, possibilities for development and training and quality of life aspects such as reasonably priced housing and transport, quality leisure time and functioning public services. Public services should be available to everybody so that they can participate in society. Service sectors operate in a 24/7 society, but this is not properly reflected for example in public transport, early childhood education or social and health care services. If care is not available in the public sector, the responsibility for care in families usually falls on women.

Public youth and culture services and support for physical activity for different age groups create a sense of community and prevent exclusion in all age groups. Providing language learning and other services for immigrants promotes integration into Finnish society and working life. It is essential to recognise people's different needs in public services. The greatest source of pride for a human society is how it looks after its most vulnerable groups.

As the population structure changes, a high level of services can only be assured with sufficient taxes. Everybody participates in financing a human society; wage earners, companies and owners must make a fair contribution.

**PAM's priority is high-quality social services that are available to all, that enable equal participation in the labour market, a high quality of life, personal development and a dignified old age.**

Wages earned from work should be sufficient to live on. Working poverty also leads to pension poverty. As the risks increase in working life, a reformed safety net is needed that steps in when working life changes and operates without delay. People can no longer simply be categorised as either unemployed, employed or self-employed. Being between these categories often means falling through the safety net or at least an uncertain livelihood.

As well as functioning basic security, earnings-related unemployment insurance allows working people to secure their income during unemployment. In combination with functioning services it supports people during spells of unemployment and promotes employment.

There is currently inadequate provision of basic security, especially for those on inadequate working hours or in insecure employment relationships like zero-hours contracts or gig work. We do not consider these changes in working life to be a given. We want working life regulation to allow sufficient flexibility in employment contracts for workers who want it without it leading to abuse of different types of employment relationships. Changes to basic security must improve people's confidence in the future and changes should be made in a controlled manner.

**PAM's priority is that all work is done in a way that guarantees people security in unemployment and their pensions. The rights of persons who fall outside the current strict categories of employment and unemployment should be defined.**

The trade union movement has a long tradition of influencing legislation and public services. Through agreement policy we have enabled wage earners to participate in welfare. Promoting equality, such as gender pay equality, still requires a lot of work in our society. A humane society will become all the more important with increased uncertainty in life and working life in coming years. At the same time PAM's membership will also become more diverse, which must be reflected in the recruitment of members and in services.

PAM must bear particular responsibility that no member is excluded from society's safety nets. We want all PAM members to get what is theirs by rights in society. PAM also ensures this itself through its activities, such as career services, skills development and community activities. Comprehensive communications ensure that PAM members are aware of these services. PAM members' own active participation in societal discussion also fosters trade union influence.

**PAM's services help its members to participate in working life and provide support and security at different stages of life. PAM's priority is that PAM members are active members of Finnish society.**



6

## A DIVERSE MEMBERSHIP AND AN EVOLVING REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATION

*PAM is a representative organisation that develops working and living conditions for service sector workers, influences decision-making in society and helps its members in matters related to employment, the working community or unemployment. By interacting with its members PAM strengthens a sense of community and makes its organisation more efficient and approachable.*

The diversification of work means job descriptions and the nature of employment relationships are changing, and there are even moves to replace employment relationships with other structures. Immigration and urbanisation are also increasing. These phenomena have far-reaching impacts on employees, working communities, PAM's members and the services they need, the backdrop for interest representation and activities at the workplace. PAM consists of its members, branches, shop stewards, various decision-making bodies and its staff, and these changes and reform needs affect them all in different ways.

PAM's future members may be employees, self-employed persons, freelancers, gig workers or unemployed, with skills acquired in Finland or other countries. They live in different regions of Finland, where the labour markets may differ greatly.

The organisation of immigrants has increased in PAM's sectors, although it is much lower than the rest of the population. The organisation of immigrants should be improved, for example by contacting them at an early stage and interacting in various ways, and local activities should be developed to make these more approachable. It is essential that immigrants participate equally in the union's activities so that they can look after the interests of the working community, speak Finnish and establish networks.

In an age of digital and changing employment relationships, we need to search for new ways to be collective and approach members, and find the means to form communities and channels of influence. PAM's services activate members, thus promoting interest representation and membership engagement. Services need to be comprehensive, effective and give a positive service experience. Services and activities are defined and developed together with the entire community. Digital services and digital means of participation and community-building will be promoted without forgetting the human touch to deliver easily accessible services for different members and improve efficiency and members' relationship with PAM.

**In PAM's own services the priority is a positive service experience that activates the membership. In its activities and services PAM takes better account of the diversity of its membership.**

A high organisation rate and good collaboration at the workplace are essential for effective interest representation. Without a strong and active network of shop stewards PAM cannot improve its members' position in working life. Therefore, it is essential to have organisation activities at more work communities and that all workplaces have a shop steward and occupational safety representative. As local agreement spreads, shop stewards become all the more important. PAM promotes the activity of shop stewards and supports them in their demanding role in a variety of ways. Building a stronger network of shop stewards is one of the union's key tasks in the next decade and strategies in future congress terms must support this priority.

There is a reasonable shop steward network in large and medium-sized companies. Regrettably many smaller workplaces have no shop steward. Also, shop stewards in large

companies have almost unfeasible operating areas, meaning that many individual workplaces have no shop steward presence. The interest representation network must be expanded so that more members have a shop steward close by to look after joint activities, members' interests, development of the working community and organisation. As part of this progress, the union's regional offices and branches conduct organisation activities together. Joint activities at the European level are maintained through EWCs, which enable free flow of information, exchange of opinions and dialogue between management and employees.

**PAM's priority is that more service sector workers have an active shop steward and that shop stewards have better operating conditions than at present.**

The branches are the basis of PAM's solidarity and local influence. The branches must develop their activities to better reflect the changes in working life and the expectations and needs of a diverse membership. The job of a branch is to create a shared platform for its members that helps to defend their interests, increase dialogue between workplaces, recruit members and influence decision-making in society at the local level.

**PAM's priority is that the branches are strong community actors and active local influencers.**

The work of PAM's paid staff is guided by this priority action programme and the strategy based on it. Their work is also organised on the basis of these. Serving a diverse membership and good interest representation work require constant skills development for staff, increased expertise and an inspiring and motivating work environment and competitive terms of employment.

PAM is a union of its members. PAM's statutory decision-making power rests in the Congress, Council, Executive Committee and management team. The Agreement Sector Commissions and committees have a key role in preparing decisions. This ensures democracy for PAM's members. Decision-making must support PAM's priorities and must be responsible, effective and flexible, based on the needs of a diverse membership, recognising the changes in working life and reflecting the development of society at large.

**So as to activate and serve a diverse membership and defend their interests, PAM prioritises continual development and wellbeing at work for its own staff. Administrative decision-making and opportunities for members to participate and influence are developed.**



**Palvelualojen  
ammattiliitto**

*Servicefacket*