

# Elections and candidates



The Simultaneous Policy

Simultaneous Policy (SP) Adopters pledge to vote for any candidate at elections, within reason, who pledges to implement SP alongside other governments when all, or sufficient, other governments have made the same pledge, or to encourage their preferred party to make the pledge. To qualify to receive the votes of SP Adopters, candidates are required to sign the candidate's pledge (see *The candidate's pledge form*). To encourage candidates to sign the pledge, and to ensure SP supporting candidates are elected, campaigners need to develop a strategy for before and during elections.

## *Build a relationship with candidates*

At all times SP Adopters and Adopters' Groups (SPAGs) can raise awareness of SP to increase the number of Adopters (see the sheet *Raising awareness of SP*).

It is also important to encourage sitting politicians, political parties and potential election candidates to support SP, even if the next election is a long way off. Remember Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) can sign the candidate's pledge at any time (see *Persuading politicians to sign the pledge to implement SP*).

As an individual SP Adopter you can write to your MP, MEP, political parties and party candidates. Remember, implementing SP will benefit politicians as it frees them from destructive competition with other nations to enable them to address global problems in a cooperative way. It is far better for the campaign if politicians support SP on its merits and it is best to approach them on this basis rather than simply warning them that they will not be elected if they do not sign the SP pledge. However, mention as well that as an SP Adopter you will vote only for politicians who sign the candidate's pledge or, if you are

focusing on your preferred party, explain the voting strategy and encourage the candidate to sign up to be eligible for the votes of other SP Adopters. Check the updates on the Simpol-UK website and if you see they have already signed the pledge, welcome this. If they haven't yet signed, ask them to do so, even if another candidate has already signed. Ideally **all** candidates will support SP, then we are certain that one of them will be elected and the day for SP to be implemented will draw closer.

If your SPAG is organising a policy forum, you can invite politicians to participate. In this way they will learn more about SP and see that there is an active local campaign. Remember, politicians can also become SP Adopters (though they do not have to adopt to sign the candidate's pledge).

Once a politician has signed the candidate's pledge, your SPAG can involve them in local publicity events to demonstrate that the SP strategy is succeeding. Politicians thrive on publicity and will generally be pleased to be involved. However, remember to highlight that candidates from other parties can, and are, also supporting SP so your group is not linked too closely with one particular party.

## *Once an election is called*

Once an election has been called SP really does need to mobilise. Leafleting door-to-door is a great way to raise awareness of SP. There are regulations limiting how much candidates can spend on their election publicity. If you are publicising the names of SP-supporting candidates, this may be counted in their election expenses. It is better, therefore, not to name candidates in your leaflets (Simpol-UK can help with templates for leaflets to adapt for local use). Leave it to candidates to publicise their support for SP in their own materials. You can publicise names of candidates on websites, in press releases and at public meetings. These can be readily updated as more candidates come on board.

Your SPAG will coordinate leafleting. It is a good idea to use a photocopier to blow up a



map of the area covered by your SPAG so that streets can be assigned to teams of volunteers using a code, such as shading in a particular colour. Once leaflets have been delivered, fill in the street with another colour, so you can easily see how much has been done. Your SPAG will receive details of new Adopters from Simpol-UK and can request feedback on how many people are accessing your group website home page to gauge impact.

You can attend question-time events run during the election campaign to ask candidates questions about SP, call phone-in programmes and write letters to the local press. The more the public and candidates hear about SP, the better.

Once you have managed to persuade a candidate to sign the candidate's pledge, your SP campaign will go through a gear change in publicity and support. Those who questioned the SP strategy will see that it is making progress. SP will become an election issue and the media will pay more attention to the stance of all candidates on SP. This will encourage other candidates to sign the pledge.

### *Choosing who to vote for*

Voting is conducted in the secrecy of the voting booth and no-one can dictate how someone votes. The Adoption undertaking is to vote for any candidate, within reason, who has signed the pledge to implement SP, or to encourage your preferred party to support SP. It is for each Adopter to decide whether a candidate is 'within reason' or other factors make it impossible to vote for them.

Given a choice of several SP-supporting candidates, Adopters could vote based on the other policies these candidates have for the more immediate term, policies for the period before SP is implemented. Though politicians are restricted in their action by the present global system, they will still run the country in different ways.

Alternatively, you can choose between SP-supporting candidates based on their support for SP. Your SPAG should pursue this route. A candidate may have signed the candidate's pledge only to gain votes, while another may give SP their whole-hearted support. The SPAG can highlight these differences by questioning the candidates on what they will do in the

shorter term to promote SP and SP values. In European Parliament elections, where people vote for parties rather than the individual candidates, the SPAG can recommend SP Adopters support the party with most SP-supporting candidates on their list. You may also wish to consider how long a candidate has supported SP. If the sitting representative signed up long before the election, this may carry more weight than if they only sign when they see rival candidates doing so.

### *No candidate?*

In the event that no candidate is supporting SP you can still vote for SP by writing 'Simultaneous Policy' on your ballot paper. Spoilt ballot papers are counted. This can have an impact even in the European Parliament election with constituencies of hundreds of thousands of people as results are broken down into smaller regions, where the number of 'rejected' ballot papers is typically about 50 or less. For example, in the 1999 European Parliament election there were just 51 'rejected' ballot papers for the city of Cambridge. A marked increase will bring home how many votes can be picked up by those supporting SP.

### *The candidate's pledge*

When presenting the candidate's pledge to politicians, it is important to make it clear that making the pledge is not the same as Adopting SP. Occasionally politicians have been put off supporting SP in the belief that it means they must vote in line with SP policies and candidates rather than their own party's. Some have suggested, incorrectly, that SP is a political party and they cannot support a party other than their own. To give clarity, the candidate's pledge makes it clear that it is a provisional undertaking to vote, when the time comes, to implement SP and to encourage members of their party to support SP. Candidates can, of course, also become SP Adopters. In both cases, they sign in their own names, not in the name of their party. If the party wishes to support SP as official policy it should discuss this directly with Simpol-UK.

**Remember to send completed candidates' pledges to Simpol-UK!**