



Christian Social Values in European Trade Unions and Workers' Organisations

36 'Building Blocks' to better integrate Christian
Social values into the work of trade unions –
Lessons from the pandemic



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BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has – more than any single event since World War II – turned the entire world upside down and completely changed our lives in Europe in ways that most of us would never have imagined, not even as science fiction.

As European citizens, we have felt the social and economic impact, despite all the support measures. In many instances, policies have been criticised as being unfair and ineffective. The pandemic has had a significant impact on the psychological well-being of all age groups. Trust in institutions declined dramatically. At the same time, however, many have raised the warranted question of whether the pandemic holds the opportunity for profound changes in our social and economic system.

Andreas Gjecaj, General Secretary of the Christian Trade Unionists' Group (FCG) in the Austrian Trade Union Confederation (ÖGB) has examined our age from the perspective of a trade unionist and through the lens of the principles of Christliche Soziallehre (that is, the doctrine of Christian Social teaching) and suggests thirty-six 'building blocks', in an endeavour to demonstrate how Christian Social values might also provide orientation today, so that we do not miss the opportunity to actually create a 'new normal'. On behalf of EZA, he deserves our sincere thanks.

Sigrid Schraml

EZA Secretary General

FOREWORD

The time is out of joint

- William Shakespeare, Hamlet

It seems to be dawning on more and more people in Europe and around the globe that the world of the 21st century is not what it was when we were children. And worse, nor will it ever be the same. The increasingly rampant crises appear to be becoming not exceptions, but almost our 'new normal'.

There are ever increasing attempts to characterise our present and, most importantly, our future. There is talk of the digital age, of globalisation rendering the world a village, and of artificial intelligence or virtual realities... What remains is the realisation that every description creates only a new confusion.

And yet our lives go on. Even at the beginning of the third millennium, trade unions and other workers' organisations persevere in representing the interests of their members, fighting for the rights of workers and creating a balance through negotiations in social dialogue, secured by collective agreement.

The European Centre for Workers' Questions (EZA) conducts numerous seminars throughout Europe every year, strengthening social dialogue as a fundamental component of the European Pillar of Social Rights as well as the capacity of member organisations to act. A network has been established across Europe over the past 35 years.

All the member organisations of EZA share their self description as being independent of political parties and oriented around values. The common 'cornerstone of values' on which trade unions and other workers' organisations stand as members of EZA is their orientation towards the Christ-

liche Soziallehre (Christian Social teaching) – although the articulation and expression of this differs widely in the individual countries.

During an EZA seminar in Spain in spring 2022, it was noted that Christian Social values sounds old-fashioned, in two respects. Firstly, international competition – now affecting us all due to the globalisation of the economy – is primarily about competition and competitiveness. It seems that the credo of the 21st century is that anyone invoking values has already lost. Secondly, trade unions are only supposed to represent the interests of their members, and Weltanschauungen or religions, such as Christianity, are deemed a ‘private matter’ that has no role in the modern workplace.

Many EZA affiliates, including Krifa (Kristelig Fagbevægelse) and WOW (World Organisation of Workers), have spoken out decisively against such a view of the world, stating: “Trade unions are motivated and inspired by their values. These form the basic framework of their structures. Having specific values is motivating and reinforces their activities. It has become increasingly clear in recent decades that it is very challenging for trade unions to adapt their activities and strategies to these values.” (Valencia, 2022)

The intention of this EZA pamphlet is to describe our Christian Social values not only in theory, but also to encourage trade union practice in which actions coincide with values, and are truly acted upon. The text follows the ‘SEE – JUDGE – ACT’ method as developed and practised by Joseph Cardijn, Belgian priest of the workers and later Cardinal in the 20th century.

The focus here has consciously been on short texts which, as ‘building blocks’, form a continual invitation to take part, to understand one element or other as a ‘tool’ and to assist in its construction. In a dossier on the subject of Baustelle: Soziallehre (Social Doctrine as a work in progress) the then director of the Catholic Social Academy of Austria, Father Alois

Riedlsperger, wrote: “More than ever, we are becoming aware that our one world is our site of the future – and the question therein is whether we can succeed in building a world habitable for all”.

Section 1: SEE

In line with Joseph Cardijn's three-step approach, SEE suggests that humanity is facing huge challenges at the beginning of the third millennium. Before Christian Social teaching provides a – perhaps hasty – answer to the pressing questions of the present and the future, we need to examine these more closely. We need to make explicit those situations of injustice, those social conditions and those structures that are in contradiction of the biblical message of the resolute will to justice. Where, for example, there are violations of human dignity and human rights, and where social and political conditions restrict or even destroy human life, that is where we need to start taking action.

BUILDING BLOCK 1: An Old Fresco

The southern outer wall of Graz Cathedral, the capital of the German States of Styria in Austria, bears a fresco by Thomas von Villach from 1485, integrated into the exterior plaster of the church – the Landplagenbild (Plague Image). It depicts the dire hardships the province of Styria was suffering at that time, showing us the three catastrophes of pestilence, locusts and war with the Turks. In other words, an epidemic, the environment and war. In March 2022, Associate Professor Dr. Manfred Prisching, sociologist at the University of Graz, and member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, pondered this picture in an essay headed Real, Important and Ephemeral; his thoughts on epidemics, the environment and war.

Half a millennium later, the existential experience is the same. There are three fundamental threats facing human existence; threats to life that had somewhat slipped our awareness.

The first of his contemplations: “To be human is to inhabit a body. Humans too, are simply one species struggling for its survival. For the most part we manage to suppress the banal physicalities of being human – such as death; bodies are the concern of health spas and beauty care, for doctors and pills. Our society is, after all, one of progress and knowledge. Extension of life. Successes fighting cancer. Human enhancement. Eternal life is nigh. The transience of life, of which the ash on the forehead on Ash Wednesday (the first day of Lent) is supposed to be a reminder, is no longer much concern of ours. But then, along comes a tiny virus and we struggle to control it, resorting for a while to mediaeval methods. Epidemics had been remote (at least physically), such as Ebola in Africa. That stuff doesn’t happen here. Until it does. We have not yet come to terms with the threat of an epidemic. The transition from epidemic to endemic is not a minimisation, but it is a declaration of defeat: we are giving up the fight. The virus abides; for the moment it is comparatively placid, but it could at any point mutate into a mass killer. There is no escaping evolution. Most people have become aware of it; the nightly news was full of suffering and death. Many, however, try to forget it as quickly as possible.”

BUILDING BLOCK 2: Climate Crisis and War

Professor Prisching describes the two other fundamental threats to our existence as follows:

His second contemplation: “The environment is the basis of existence. We have also long suppressed our banal dependence on habitat; the world and its resources felt infinite. It is true that studies have predicted scarcities for decades, but even that was felt to be far off, to happen only some distant day. Apocalypses of the future. But then we start to notice the climate getting warmer, the extreme weather events, the polluted oceans – the complete catalogue. Recently, and it is very recently, everyone has been talking about sustainability. The snap decision to make the century

green deploying solar, wind, and wave power, and electrical hardware. (The absence of Russian gas limits our options, anyhow.) Our grasp of reality is still weak, nonetheless. Because electric vehicles currently run on further fossil electricity essentially; the storage problem for wind and solar power remains unsolved; numerous high-voltage power lines do not yet exist; and worldwide, global consumption of fossil fuels is set to at least double in the next few decades. The century will in fact be a black one. But efforts are at least underway, and they are (for the most part) going in the right direction. The sole unreal remnant of the better times is the proclamation that the overhaul will be a win-win for everyone, leading to illusory temptations in the detail. Climate policy only works if it imposes no burden on anyone.”

His third contemplation: “War is the norm. Europe as it is today presents a historical anomaly. Three quarters of a century of peace and prosperity (Balkan wars excepted) is, when considering our history, an absurdity, a historical aberration incapable of lasting another decade. The simple disintegration of empires, as we are currently undergoing, increases the likelihood of war. Europe has steadfastly believed its ‘never again’ rhetoric, while at the same time being afforded the luxury of fragmentation and disintegration. The USA has become a damaged democracy, undermining the position of the West as a whole. European states’ perception of the outside world was that it was questionable, uncertain of action, moralising, unable to make decisions. And militarily, they have nothing to show for it. In calculations of realpolitik, this is a situation that is being exploited.

And so the normality of war has returned. Putin’s war came faster than expected. Putin combines historical thinking in a contradictory fashion with the thinking of power (the ‘empire’), metaphysics (the ‘sanctity’ of Russia) and secret service logic (lies, repression, and murder are ‘instruments’). The West struggles with this kind of Weltanschauung, but the more apparent it becomes, the easier it is to distance oneself from it. Nor is it the thinking of the ‘East’. We admire the heroism of those taking up arms in their homeland and of those protesting to the aggressor, fully

aware they face immediate arrest. In the West, at least for the moment, rather than disunity and wavering, there is an unexpected unity and strength among Western states. Crisis can also give strength. The historical dialectic is that ‘hit man’ Putin may be unwittingly contributing to the salvation of the Western world.”

BUILDING BLOCK 3: Suppression of Reality

Professor Prisching invites us with his summary of the three images depicted in the fresco to devote a few minutes to a meditation on what is real, important and ephemeral: “Suppression of reality makes us weak. The Arab world, and that of the Russians and the Chinese have become convinced that the West is decadent. In some respects they are right. Decadence – if we liberate the term entirely from all the lifestyle-cultural hoo-ha – can signify a state in which our prerequisites for life are no longer recognised and preserved as such, and in which a social order can no longer mobilise sufficient resilience to cope with crises.

In our case, these are the real challenges of pestilence, the environment and war. We can run away from these realities – the pandemic is over; sustainability is as good as attained; it is not really our war.

The denialist tendencies are fuelled by success. Accustomed to a life of prosperity and security, people feel they have escaped the hardships of life. So they lose themselves in trivialities and things of no consequence, burrow themselves into antagonistic milieux. They allow structures of relevance – the ability to distinguish between the important and the unimportant – to become blurred. Generalised uncertainty increases the attractiveness of closed systems of thought. Ultimately, the only things that collide are dogmas (and non-reconcilable things). People drift from reality.

Are crises the only thing that can help? When the normal learning capacity of a system falters, crises may become the final phenomena through which problems enter the realms of perception, understanding and processing. It may be the case that in the manifestations today of the three fundamental threats imaged by Thomas von Villach – plague, environment and war – we are dealing with impetus strong enough to inspire more seriousness in Europe. Elements of hope, cooperation and willingness to learn exist in all three threats, at least in the social mainstream. There is an old saying that no crisis should be allowed to go to waste, and it applies here. Some upsurges of unity and awareness should be sustainable beyond the coming weeks and months.”

The dominant theme of 2020 and 2021 has been the global Covid-19 pandemic. The following points should help to increase focus and scrutinise what the pandemic has done to our society.

BUILDING BLOCK 4: Easter 2.0

The dawn of the 21st century was seemingly the dawn of the information age. The social bonds of families, associations, churches and states dwindled, and in their place the internet teemed with throngs. Citizens converted to Followers. But along came the coronavirus, and suddenly all the validation of our previous lives seemed to be gone in a flash.

A viral infection, for which in the spring of 2020 there was neither medicine nor vaccination, changed everything. As in most parts of the world, public life in Austria was paralysed. Formerly busy streets and squares swept suddenly empty; citizens waited in their homes and watched the government’s press conferences with bated breath.

Has human history ever seen anything the like? The Bible describes in the book of Exodus the people of Israel, having with God’s help escaped slavery in Egypt by fleeing through the sea, wandering for months through

the desert. Nothing was still valid; everything needed organising anew. Moses climbed Mount Sinai; he would descend with the ten Commandments. The people waiting below grumbled, not knowing if and when he would return, and called on his brother Aaron to do something. Aaron had their ornaments collected and melted down. Behold The Golden Calf!

This time there is no Moses to be seen clutching the 'Ten Commandments for the Information Age'. At the same time, the confidence of the stock markets is melting away and the price of gold is rising worldwide. Lent and Easter were completely different in 2020. On Ash Wednesday, the cross of ash on our foreheads reminds us that we are transient. But Christianity celebrates in the Easter Vigil that it is not death that has the last word, but life. Vaclav Havel expressed this as "Hope is not the conviction that something will go well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out." Most people in Austria have had to celebrate Easter alone – with only modern media connecting them. That's Easter 2.0.

BUILDING BLOCK 5: The New Normal

The Austrian cabaret artist of the 1950s Helmut Qualtinger had a routine alluding to Marlon Brando's motorcyclist in *The Wild One*; singing "I hob zwoar ka ohnung wo i hinfoahr, Aber dafür bin i gschwinder duat". The dialect might be rendered as "Dunno where we're headed, but we're sure gonna get there fast!" Europe at the time lay after two world wars in ruins; Austria was busy rebuilding and the cabaret scene was having a heyday. A direct comparison makes it starkly clear how unlike the situation in the spring of 2020 was – and how misplaced are the 'war' metaphors and the indignation on display. The actions taken by the government to protect the health of the Austrian population were extremely successful, and the doubters and conspiracy theorists need only look at the figures.

There is no doubt that following the Covid lockdown, we will have to overcome the biggest global economic crisis since World War II. And the temptation is great to rush out with eyes downcast in order to restore 'pre-pandemic conditions' as quickly as possible. Humans are creatures of habit, and it is no coincidence that medicine sees change of lifestyle as the hardest therapy of all. Viennese theologian Paul M. Zulehner has a sharp eye, on the fundamental mood throughout Europe of recent decades: "We work ourselves to death, we amuse ourselves to death, and love dies more and more often from excessive demands. It is the attempt to reach heaven on earth. The first characteristic of such a life is that it becomes faster and faster because we want to catch the excessive in the moderate. Such a life, however, becomes increasingly exhausting, demanding, even overstraining. It is not surprising that such a life is characterised by an underlying fear of ultimately not making it, of falling short in one's pursuit of happiness for oneself."

"Another world is possible" was a slogan some 20 years back, which has since been expanded by the School Strike for Climate movement known in the German-speaking region as "Fridays for Future" to include the aspect that There is no Planet B. So – unlike Helmut Qualtinger's Wild Biker – we will first have to decide where we're headed. There has never been a greater opportunity to reach a 'new normal'.

BUILDING BLOCK 6: Exit Strategies

In spring 2020, there was no clarity whatsoever on how long the Covid-19 pandemic would last and how quickly medicine and research would be able to develop a vaccine. All the stronger then were people moved – taking as their basis the values of Christian Social Teaching – to search for potential ways to achieve a new normal.

If we orientate ourselves on the values of Christian Social Teaching, it very quickly becomes clear that our former lifestyle has brought us into an im-

balance imperilling the entire planet. A globalised market free of rules understands solely the laws of supply and demand. If we do not tame it, people and entire societies will be lost. In addition to reigning in the market through social and ecological framework conditions, we must find a new balance between an economy capable of competition, a social state based on solidarity and the protection of the environment. At its root, this speaks to our view of humanity and the world. The Czech economist and university lecturer Tomas Sedlacek states in his book: *Economics of Good and Evil*, “I can’t get no satiation – still haven’t found what I’m greeding for.” He describes our society as ignorant not only of how to achieve satisfaction, but of even where that might be particularly desirable. When the economy loses sight of its objective, we are left solely with growth – a growth that knows nothing but itself, since it lacks any goal as a yardstick. Such aimless growth is linked to rootlessness and futility. Sedlacek demands that the question, What do we think a human being is? be rethought not just by philosophers and theologians, but by economists too.

Ways out of the crisis must clearly move away from our previous styles of conducting life and business, which not only affects individuals but also massively threatens the future of humanity, and they are inextricably linked to questions of meaning. In his polemic *Anders denken* (Thinking Differently) on the crisis Austrian author Reinhard P. Gruber writes: “The alternatives are ahead of us, they are never behind us!”

BUILDING BLOCK 7: The Post-Factual Age

Some of the oldest jokes are still the best. Some graffiti seen on the walls of an American university 30 years ago went, “My mind is made up. Don’t confuse me with the facts.”

Distinguishing distinguish fact from opinion seems harder than ever in the 21st century, which might explain the vehemence of the discussion on the pandemic, not to mention the irreconcilability of views! A further

factor is the suddenly fashionable metaphor of war. Conversation, whereby parties conduct an appreciative dialogue after hearing the arguments of the other side and thus learning from each other seems to be an ever diminishing activity. In its place there is only systematic effort to denounce, ridicule and devalue any other opinion. This obstructs any exchange of views.

When facts and opinion are puréed indiscriminately in a vast 'linguistic blender', it demolishes the function of language to bridge us as people. Asking witnesses following a traffic accident can often be tedious: some saw a blue car; others maintain the car was red and silver. Indispensable then, in such cases to have a photo to hand establishing facts such as the colour of the car. Even if there is a growing belief in our 'post-factual age' that the only thing that matters is telling a narrative that is as credible as possible, it is still meaningful to return to facts. What makes respectful dialogue possible is a shared recognition of reality.

In 1952, the then German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer said: "I have always – as one must – been ready to learn from the opposition too; everyone has the right to increase their wisdom."

BUILDING BLOCK 8: Closer Scrutiny

The global state of emergency the pandemic brought was like taking a magnifying glass to our society, making strengths and weaknesses clearly visible. "The amount of trust or mistrust inherent in a relationship; the degree life in a confined space is determined by violence or tenderness, is but starkly marked by this crisis," writes Austrian philosopher Konrad Paul Liessmann.

The Austrian sociologist Manfred Prisching goes one step further, describing the current potential of aggression thus: "Not anger at one particular event – simply indiscriminate anger at everything. It's due to powerless-

ness, to excessive demands, to our experience of ineffectiveness and inadequacy. Rage attaches itself to issues and across Europe becomes a 'movement of anti-'. Against high and low, against virus and corporations, against elites and science, against intellectuals and journalists, against truth and the bad weather!" Unfortunately, this mood appears even to permeate to Parliament, where some speeches are so freighted with anger that the damage to politics overall utterly dwarfs the usual attempts to make political capital.

Fortunately, a magnifying glass does not select; it magnifies everything. Perhaps we just need to look more closely. We have all – and this seems to be true worldwide – learned an incredible amount in a very short time. Not just vocabulary new to Austrians such as Lockdown and pandemic, but also how to develop a vaccination and function in a digital world. All of us will benefit from this in future. The pandemic was an occasion to take stock all round. New forms of work will continue to develop, for example working remotely. As Christian-Social trade unionists, we will be involved in actively developing these areas. For example, the first legal regulations for working from home have already been passed in Austria and other countries. Let us take the first year after the pandemic outbreak as an opportunity to look to the future with confidence. Fear and anger have never provided wise counsel; standing together in solidarity does.

BUILDING BLOCK 9: Fit for the Future

Covid measures affected the whole of Europe. There is increasingly heated debate about which is the more important, the personal freedom of the individual or coexisting in a functional society?

In an interview in the Kepler Tribune, a publication of the University of Linz, the German historian and philosopher Philipp Blom says: "I once spoke to a group of very rich Swiss, all patrons of the Swiss National Mu-

seum. I asked them who among them believed that this economic system, as it is now, could still exist in 50 years. Not one piped up.” Hence his call to create a society that is fit for the future. He describes the present as “Living in societies without future, somewhat like being in a department store having a grand sale. Everyone knows the business is bust, but we still grab what we can. A society without plausible hope, without an image of a future, disintegrates from within.”

It was only in the first few weeks that the coronavirus provoked a brief flash of solidarity, though. After just one year the language had coined “mütend” from the German words Müdigkeit and Wut to describe the mélange of fatigue and anger. German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies calls this scenario the ascendancy of the “whining egotists.” People, he says, are oriented primarily towards their own advantage and consumption, which is why they seek any and all possible means of justifying their irresponsibility. German journalist and publicist Cathrin Kahlweit writes: “When Covid deniers parade through the streets in self-righteous posture, encouraging the radical right, endangering strangers, creating super-spreader events – and of course having themselves treated in hospital at public expense, voluntary commitment and goodwill are not enough.” Every trade union wants to help build a sustainable society. Partnership and dialogue are indispensable building blocks. Because we do not want a society of egotists, social cohesion is the key to future viability for Christian-Social trade unions.

BUILDING BLOCK 10: Claudia

“That does it. I’ve had enough. Enough of you and your fear and your obedience to authority, your denunciations and ‘I protect others’ (Aren’t I awesome?...). No. I am a responsible person, yes, but only for myself (and clearer still for underage children), for my feelings, my thoughts, my words and my actions. For my viewpoints AND for my BEING. Enough.” These words were from a member of a choir that, like presumably many

groups during the pandemic, was struggling to find ways of coping together. What appeared after this message in the choir's WhatsApp group was, Claudia has left the group.

As though he too had joined that choir, the German philosopher Richard David Precht looked in his book *Von der Pflicht* (On Duty) at how wide is the variety in people's sense of duty and responsibility, and at what a great deal of ambiguity there is among many of them. How do people see themselves as citizens? What do they think they are entitled to, and what do they see as their civic duty? And what does the pandemic tell us about the state of society in this regard? The word *Pflicht* (duty), in its origin in Old and Middle High German meaning care and custody, participation and service to the community, denotes an asset of high value within society. Duty is, as Friedrich Nietzsche says, "the rights of others over us". Having duties and being obliged to others is no relic of the middle ages. With regard to the relationship to duty, the Covid pandemic shines a spotlight. Thrown back on biological vulnerability and the medical context of fate, our behaviour becomes existential. Every attitude we adopt in dealing with the virus is thus no longer a purely private matter. It is part not only of an ethic of life, but also of living together – and in this respect a question of duty and obligation. How can we strengthen our sense of duty and responsibility? Attitudes that our democracy so urgently needs.

Intriguing questions, including for those 'sceptics' railing against the public policies protecting the health of all citizens. Will the Claudias of this world read Precht, though?

BUILDING BLOCK 11: Society Divided

The Austrian federal government's announcement of compulsory vaccination apparently tore off the one remaining veil shrouding the depth of the rifts. The irreconcilability of viewpoints and the polarisation of society, cutting across families and circles of friends, resembles, as the headline

put, it “a bitter religious war” between the vaccinated and the unvaccinated.

Letters to the editor and the like are full of things such as, “just because some people find the policies enacted by a democratically-elected government irksome does not even begin to make us a dictatorship!”

Paul M. Zulehner writes: “Again, those defending freedom are confronting those defending justice. Those in solidarity with those fighting for their lives in intensive care units are opposed by those who do not want to give up freedom of life, work and education. The economy chafes against ecology, truth against bogus.” The irreconcilability of viewpoints and each suspecting the other of being to blame for the situation swiftly leads to violence – in word or fact – or to cutting contact. But in doing so, we are wrecking our own foundations. In this respect, the Covid pandemic is much more than a health crisis. It is an existential crisis and threat to our life together. As Christian-Social trade unionists, we can contribute our experience of negotiation. Every dialogue requires an equal footing for the parties and mutual respect. Dialogue does not seek to destroy the other. If we dial the emotions down, together we can put the facts beyond contention. Austrian psychiatrist Heidi Kastner says: “Everyone has the right to their own opinion. But there is no right to your own facts!” And compromise is not a defeat, it is a sound solution to a problem.

But in order to do that we would have to be willing to change our minds, or as Austrian cabaret artist Klaus Eckel put it, “allowing yourself to rearrange your mental furniture. People get all surprised when you don’t go repeating the same wrong impression of something. Me, I’d sooner be a flip-flopping research scientist than a consistent dimwit.”

BUILDING BLOCK 12: Christkindl¹

“Gloria in excelsis Deo!” proclaims the angel above the manger; it has been the joy of Christmas all over the world for some 2,000 years. Is the call still valid today?

German cultural scientist and publicist Peter Sloterdijk has written a book in which he wants to “make heaven speak” from the perspective of a critical philosopher. He describes the confusion of religions current in our times. The mid-19th century, he argues, saw two themes prevail – the twilight of religion and the post-revolutionary twilight of social cohesion. These prove the gateway to understanding the present. Whereas Christianity was until the Enlightenment the formative element of European culture, nowadays for the first time it manifests as released from nation and politics. In a word, free. “The sure sign of the young freedom for religion is its surprising, uplifting, scandalous uselessness; it is as superfluous as music. Still, without music, life would be erroneous,” writes Sloterdijk. It is for each person to decide for themselves whether they are to experience their 30,000 or so days on planet Earth at random and then vanish into oblivion, or whether they know themselves safe in God’s hands. The Covid pandemic also seems almost to reveal how much the cohesion of solidarity has started to unravel; that cohesion understanding the Ten Commandments of the Judaeo-Christian tradition as one of the foundations of European culture. And yet as Pope Francis urges us, “No one can save himself alone!” We must therefore ask not only “who or what is System-relevant [the German term for a key worker], but also what is relevant to people, relevant to life and relevant to existence”, as Paul M. Zulehner explained in a lecture at the EZA Start Seminar 2021 in Vienna.

Although EU Commissioner Helena Dalli suggested we say *Ferienzeit* (holiday-time) in place of *Weihnachtszeit* (Christmastime), we as Chris-

1 Translator’s note: Christkindl, or The Christkind is the traditional Christmas gift-bringer in Austria and other parts of central Europe.

tian-Social trade unionists want to use Christmas as an opportunity to engage our values. Although the Covid pandemic has plunged Europe into serious turmoil, we want to look forward to the coming year with hope and confidence. May the call of the angels accompany us: "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth!"

Section 2: JUDGE

JUDGE, in Joseph Cardijn's three-step approach, means that it is not enough for Christian-Social trade unionists and workers' representatives merely to denounce and interpret the deplorable conditions of the poor and disadvantaged. They must also form a judgement on prevailing injustice. There is a saying in German *Grau ist alle Theorie* (all theory is grey), which is used to decry the monotony of textbooks, but we might counter that practise without theory is *gräulich* (gruesome). That is why it calls for steadfast guidance. After our first section describing some of the challenges of the 21st century and calling on us to re-examine them, this second section addresses orientation, such as is afforded by compass or lighthouse. The church monopoly over morals and values has long since evaporated, but in an age when almost everything is in flux, compasses and lighthouses can be very helpful devices, sometimes even life-saving. The building blocks that follow describe as it were the seven orientations to Christian Social teaching as a 'roadmap of social honour' of the global pandemic.

BUILDING BLOCK 13:

What Do We Mean By Christian Social teaching?

World history is steeped in the struggle for human dignity and freedom. It was at the heart of the workers' battle for freedom at the start of the Industrial Revolution. Time and again in the 21st century, in a post-industrial society, it needs reiterating that against a dangerous all-encompassing commodification of all areas of life "We are human beings imbued with inalienable rights, we are not human capital disposable at will!" For Christian-Social trade unionists, Christian Social teaching provides a solid foundation of values. According to the highest principle of Christian Social teaching, "the human being must be bearer, creator and

goal of all social institutions”. The seven principles of social teaching below provide a clear compass in our trade union work, for today and for the changing world of the future:

- **PEOPLE A PRIORITY:** A world in which every human being is perceived as a “Gesamtkunstwerk” with personal dignity and inalienable rights.
- **COMMON GOOD:** A society built on the common good and enabling all to fulfil their humanity.
- **FAIR DISTRIBUTION:** Striving for the fairest distribution possible since the Earth is for all humanity.
- **SUBSIDIARITY:** More subsidiary strengthening of small units, such as families and communities, and less centralism.
- **DEMOCRACY AND PARTICIPATION:** A flourishing of democracy where citizens actively participate.
- **SOLIDARITY:** Practised solidarity whereby people work together in ‘mutual responsibility’.
- **SUSTAINABILITY:** A sustainable civilisation, in balance between economic competition, social protection and preservation of livelihoods.

Christian-Social trade unionists do not want to see people as mere workers or consumers of labour. Counter to the notion of the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’, we place human dignity in the foreground of our Weltanschauung. Our Christian Social values are the best foundation for a fair policy of trade unions.

BUILDING BLOCK 14: The 'Social Question'

Christianity is unimaginable without brotherly love, and many Christian religious congregations have dedicated themselves from their foundation to particular support of the poor, the weak and the sick. This social commitment of the Christian churches was manifest for centuries in numerous hospitals, and schools, and notably in Austria in the Klostersuppe broth brewed from kitchen scraps to be doled out to the needy at monastery doors. When the upheavals of the industrial revolution made the lot of the workers in the factories become the most pressing social issue, Pope Leo XIII published in May 1891 *Rerum Novarum*, the first social encyclical. The Christian-Social doctrine that this laid down remains the foundation of values for Christian-Social trade unions and workers' organisations to this day.

For the German-speaking regions, the Industrial Revolution began in the 19th century with the application of the steam engine and the first factories. The dramatic change from a society of peasants and artisans to an industrial society created millions of impoverished and exploited factory workers, causing injustice and dislocation. Hunger, poverty and exploitation of workers as the most critical issue facing the region raised what came to be called the 'Social Question'. It provoked a variety of answers:

- **Socialism:** In line with the ideas of Karl Marx, class struggle appeared as the most important method for fighting the prevailing injustices. The aim of socialism was revolution to prevent further exploitation and to fight for more equality.
- **Liberalism:** The liberal response to the challenge of social misery was to underline the freedom of the individual and to brook no interference in economic or social matters. Adam Smith said that the market would be regulated by an 'invisible hand'.

- Christian-Social response: The Christian-Social response can be seen in the first social encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of 1891. While socialism called for revolutionary control of everything and liberalism called for letting everything run its own course, Christian-Social teaching wants to eliminate social imbalance through commitment to values.

As Christian-Social trade unions, we design policy oriented towards values. We seek to build a society based on solidarity and we stand for partnership and dialogue.

BUILDING BLOCK 15: Dialogue

The preferred – though not the only – method of our work is ‘social dialogue’. This is now enshrined in the EU Treaties and underlined again in the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Unfortunately, given the spring of 2022, there is a basic prerequisite for any dialogue that we yet again need to explicitly mention – Peace!

And so we strongly condemn all war. The use of armed force and exertion of military might lead only to death and misery. Only together can we solve the global problems of the day. This requires European and world-wide cooperation of the peoples in all trouble spots. War is not the answer.

In order to counteract the trend towards separation, we must cultivate dialogue. This includes rules, briefly stated:

- Willingness to talk: Where people talk to each other, there is life. Those not seeking or even refusing discussion are evading dialogue and contributing to conflict escalation.

- Perception of misperception: Where two negotiating parties see one thing, they do not necessarily see it the same way: it may have been perceived quite differently or simply misunderstood.
- Dialogue as the appropriate tool: Conflicts manifest divergent interests and opinions. What is at stake is the manner in which conflicts are conducted.
- Dialogue reveals things: The concern is always meeting as equals and accepting differences of viewpoint.
- Dialogue entails conciliation: All but forgotten as a concept, this is more than compromise or reconciliation of interests. Nor does it imply adopting the opinion of the other. The point is simply to live and let live.

Christian Social teaching as a whole is impossible to implement unless premised on human beings. Unless we insist on a human being's inalienable dignity, rejecting the term 'human capital'. Unless we remember that in dialogue people make eye contact, take each other seriously, and not just seek but consistently practise non-violent means of conflict resolution. Among the tools available to Christian Social teaching, the preferential one is therefore social dialogue.

BUILDING BLOCK 16:

Social Doctrine Roadmap – Introduction

It seems pretty certain that the spring of 2020 will have a special place in the history books. The Covid-19 virus, there being neither medicine or vaccination immediately after its appearance, brought public life in large parts of the world to a standstill. Thousands of people died in individual European countries. The Austrian federal government reacted in spring

2020 with a lockdown, and because the populace – with the exemplary involvement of the social partners – backed all the closures and measures, worse was prevented. But for weeks, businesses stood still, schools were closed and people suffered from restrictions on their freedom of movement and bans on visiting others. Of Austria's about 8.9 million inhabitants, more than one million people were on short-time work and about 600,000 were unemployed. In rare unanimity, all economic researchers called it the biggest crisis since the Second World War. And so perhaps everyone's most fervent wish is to restore everything as fast as humanly possible in order that the economy recover, the students catch up on the material they have missed and everything is back to normal.

But hold on a minute! Is that really what we want? Life that is loud and fast? Or more accurately: ever faster, ever louder? And thus back to the lifestyle we used to deem normal? Or do we risk of starting over with a 'roadmap' with stopovers inviting us to ponder? Let us find those wholesome things that only become apparent in times of difficulty. And find at the same time that there are some hitherto seemingly indispensable things that we miss not at all.

There were fish swimming once again in Venetian canals during the first lockdown in 2020; there were dolphins seen on the Bosphorus instead of oil tankers, and no aircraft scored across the blue sky – all indications of potential change. So if we are not to automatically return to the patterns of old, it will take a collective deliberation on – as the song by German a cappella group Maybebop has it *Das, was besser bleibt* (What ought to remain). If we reflect on the essentials, then the values that we as Christian-Social trade unionists draw from the Christian Social teaching can be helpful milestones on the journey to the new normal. Values that actually count!

BUILDING BLOCK 17: People a Priority

A world in which every human being is perceived as a Gesamtkunstwerk with personal dignity and inalienable rights.

Some one hundred years ago, Joseph Cardijn began to encourage apprentices and factory workers by founding the Young Christian Workers (YCW) and appealing to them: "Every young worker is worth more than all the gold in the world!" Unfortunately, the record of European history in the last century includes two terrible world wars followed by the division of the continent by the Iron Curtain, which fell only in 1989. This had split Europe into those lucky enough to live in the free West and those in the Eastern Bloc; denied decades long their opportunities in life by the communist dictatorships. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, however, there have been ever more voices claiming that without "really existing socialism" what would have prevailed worldwide would be a capitalism concerned only with maximising profits, also encompassing Europe. But behold how under Covid things proved quite otherwise! Many governments in the EU slammed the brakes on the hitherto prevailing austerity programmes in national budgets – granting 'priority' to the people!

Of course, this is not a suspension of all the economic rules and we will again need regulated state finances and balanced budgets in the future, but when finance ministers in the EU literally say: "Whatever it takes" – because people's health, lives, and survival take priority, then this first milestone of social teaching has been not only reached, but also implemented. And to those who are already beginning to again criticise the costs arising from this resolute stance, let me say there are areas that we must exempt from the ubiquitous totting-up of costs and benefits in the economy, these must be removed from the calculation.

Sunday is a prime example: it is a weekly reminder that the question of what it costs to have a day free from work is not admissible. If in the new normal we can restore Sunday as a day that stands for values other than

those of the cash register, we will then have succeeded in something decisive for the “human Gesamtkunstwerk.”

BUILDING BLOCK 18: Common Good

A society that builds on the common good and enables everyone to realise their humanity.

“Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country” is the familiar quote from the inaugural address of American President John F. Kennedy in 1961. The Covid pandemic threw us abruptly into the tension between the exercise of personal freedoms and self-interest and those of our fellow citizens and the country as a whole. Of course, included in the dignity, unity and equality of all people is their health. In the EU states, we have decided to temporarily waive personal liberties in order to protect health, especially of those extremely vulnerable high risk groups, the elderly or those with a pre-existing condition.

Many governments set this course in spring 2020; the public to a great extent gave it their support, thus taking responsibility for the common good. This is all the more remarkable because the 21st century and the digital age are marked in many countries by a danger of losing our sense of reality and sense of purpose. Digitalisation appears to have tended to reinforce a lifestyle that, out of convenience, indifference and negligence, refuses to acknowledge responsibility. But in the face of the global challenges posed by globalisation, digitalisation, climate change and demographic change, a button labelled “click here to save the world” is hardly adequate. The pandemic has reminded us that taking responsibility is uncomfortable and that leaving our comfort zone often feels risky.

The coronavirus spread worldwide at breakneck speed; the common good must also be considered and propagated worldwide and a decent form of globalisation must be striven for. In order to create a universal

common good, affording the respect and preservation of the historical and cultural characteristics of each country, we will again need a higher degree of international order and more stable relations between states in a new normal. The underlying rationale could be another sentence from Kennedy's inaugural address. "If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich."

BUILDING BLOCK 19: Fair Distribution

Striving for the fairest possible distribution because the Earth is for everyone.

The pandemic has validated the eternal truth of Mahatma Gandhi's famous dictum "The world has enough for everyone's needs, but not for everyone's greed". In fact, the 'universal destination of goods' of our earth that is known as the characteristic tenet of the social doctrine. Every human being must have the opportunity to make use of the goods necessary for his or her development. Examples are the natural environment and human habitation, clean air and water, but access too to knowledge, education and information.

We in Europe have on at least two levels sacrificed the fair distribution of goods in favour of fear and greed during the pandemic: through panic buying on the part of the many and the export bans on the part of individual governments. Those states, such as France and Germany, that imposed an export ban on PPE (protective suits, masks, etc.) cannot evade the question of their justification of this. Should – in the 21st century – the health and life of Germans really be more worthy of protection among other EU member states than lives across the border, i.e. Polish, Czech or Austrian lives? And at the thought of the shelves emptied because tins, flour and toilet roll were piled high into trolleys to be hoarded through fear mixed with greed, there remains only shame at this flagrant deportment.

Social doctrine calls on us to do the reverse, that is, not to forget our fellow human beings – and here above all, the poor. In the words of Saint Gregory the Great, “Not to enable the poor to share in our goods is to steal from them and deprive them of life. The goods we possess are not ours, but theirs”. Even in the greatest crisis, fear is not a good advisor. A new normal necessitates that we should practise behaviour based on mutual trust. This includes honouring agreements, relying on each other and not losing sight of those with the least means. The Austrian Bishop emeritus Johann Weber from the diocese of Graz-Seckau, who died in May 2020, provided an example with the closing words of his sermon: “Trust has greater stamina than fear!”

BUILDING BLOCK 20: Subsidiarity

More subsidiary strengthening of small units such as families and parishes and less centralism.

In the spring of 2020, in the pandemic both sides came to the fore. There emerged in many families qualities almost hitherto forgotten. Home schooling the children became an energetic creative invention on a daily basis, alongside working from home and keeping up with all the housework. Neighbours also became closer, taking responsibility for each other and showing more caring for isolated people. Surprising and positive as these developments may have been, the pandemic at the same time unsparingly revealed the weaknesses of the EU. The virus spread not as a steamroller across the whole of Europe, instead it affected some individual regions massively – causing thousands of deaths – while touching others only very lightly. What this called for would have been an immediate joint effort ‘fire brigade’ of doctors, nurses and medical supplies from less affected regions to arrive at the hotspots with “flashing blue lights” in order to combat the crisis. Instead, the member states of the EU seem to have deleted the word ‘Union’ from their vocabulary, implementing their own programmes within national borders.

What this experience tells us that we must do differently and better in a 'new normal' is obvious. After Covid, our neighbours will still be lonely, our precious families need love to live, and the EU is in need of reform!

BUILDING BLOCK 21: Living Democracy

A blossoming of democracy in which citizens actively participate.

"The European dimension of connectedness is of particular concern to us. But rather than celebrating 25 years of membership in the EU and its greater freedom of encounter in the Schengen area, we saw borders closed. The fight against the pandemic shows once more how important our common Europe is and also how fragile," wrote the Austrian bishops in their pastoral word for a "spiritually renewed normality" in the summer of 2020. Democracy stands and falls on the active co-responsibility of citizens, as individuals, but also as social groups such as political parties. Which is why democratic consciousness-raising is one of the major concerns of a free society, responsible for itself, and especially that of a Christian-Social trade union movement. The pandemic brought to light just how unsustainable is the 'common' in the EU – once seemingly secured by treaty, national borders reinstated almost reflexively.

This is all the more astonishing because in the 21st century nation states are increasingly being called into question. Because for one thing global challenges such as the climate crisis cannot be dealt with by individual nation states, requiring continental solutions, if not global, and for another, because digital platforms – likewise acting globally – turn what were citizens of states into users and Followers in creating new dependencies, who, as the German philosopher Christoph Türcke writes, "in their digital allegiance are headed to a new global tribal society". Countless conspiracy theories have also spread at breakneck speed via the Internet.

The task of strengthening democracy in the EU is huge, even 75 years after the end of World War Two, and the demand of former Austrian Chancellor Dr Wolfgang Schäussel is plausible: “We must think Europe on a larger scale!” If we want to ensure a flourishing of democracy in a new normal, then we must not let the EU degenerate into a project of the commissioners, but must engage ourselves as active citizens in passionate cooperation against Kleinstaaterei nationalistic provincialism. The issue is not more EU or less EU, it is a better EU!

BUILDING BLOCK 22: Solidarity

Solidarity where people act for each other in ‘mutual responsibility’.

“It is easy to say ‘Everyone is equal in the face of the virus!’”, said Paul M. Zulehner at the large gathering of the Weizer Pfingstvision in June 2020. He went on, “Everyone is equal in the face of the virus. But the virus does not hit everyone equally!” In the USA, it affects black people more than white people. Wealthy Europe is much better able to help itself than economically depressed Ecuador. And North Korean dictator Kim Jong-Un can get on his private luxury train and go to a sheltered seaside resort. But people crammed together in refugee camps don’t have such options. The Coronavirus bares the injustices that prevail in this ‘Eine Welt’ one world of ours.

What this calls for is solidarity, as a personal attitude with both universal reach and a structural principle of society in which people act for each other in ‘mutual responsibility’. Solidarity that encourages standing up for those who are more affected than others by the virus. Given the fact that globalisation has long since made us neighbours with neither knowledge of nor responsibility for each other, this notion of solidarity is no option of social romanticism, it is a strategy for survival with no alternative. Or is worldwide networking really to confine itself to ‘Youtube and Youporn’?

Solidarity includes decisive interest in and effective commitment to the lives and well-being of others. It stands for justice that creates peace. Psalm 85 says: 'Justice and peace kiss each other!' Thus it is for us and for all politicians. Rather than constantly invoking solidarity in their soapbox oratory, there need to be concrete steps taken to ensure more justice – only this way can solidarity grow. In a new normal we have to leave Covid behind us in order to be infected by a 'pandemic of solidarity', as Paul M. Zulehner urges. This means not a vague feeling of pity or superficial emotion at all the suffering, but a firm and constant determination, a mindset. The former Austrian politician Matthias Strolz writes: "Our final enduring freedom is the attitude that we take on our circumstances."

BUILDING BLOCK 23: Sustainability

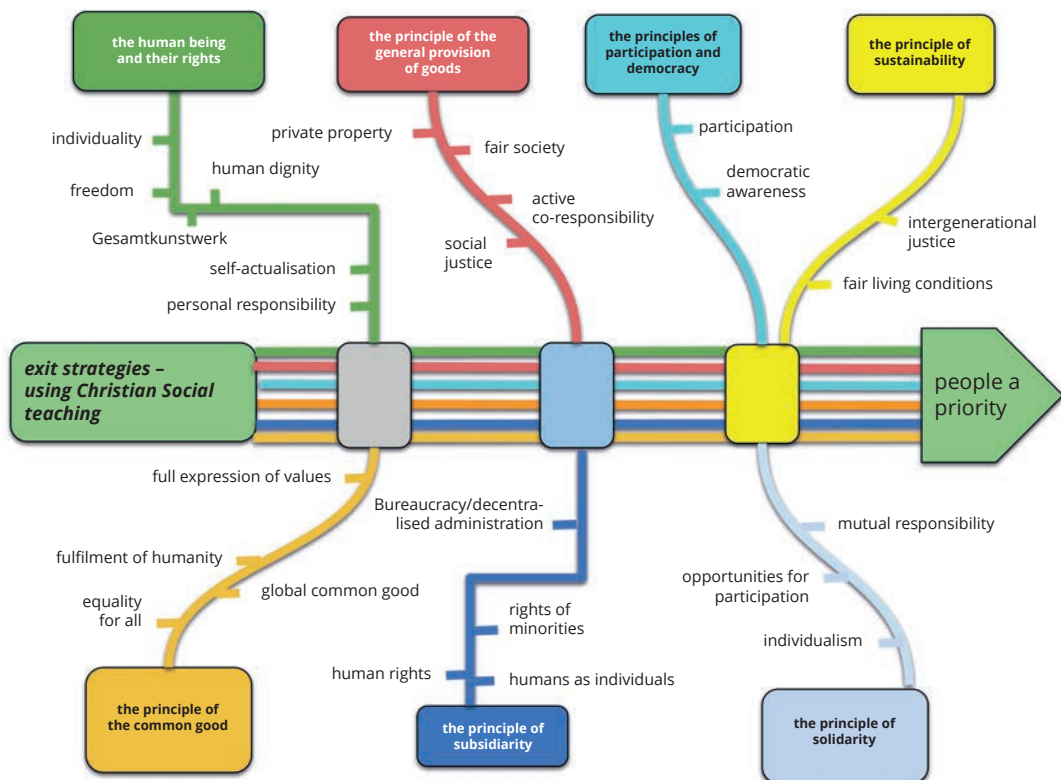
A civilisation of sustainability, in balance with commerce

"The ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion" writes Pope Francis in the encyclical *Laudato Si'*. Even before the global pandemic obliged us all to "take a breather," the lifeless rivers, the deforested Amazon, the devastating pollution of the world's oceans, melting polar ice caps, extreme weather events and all other climate catastrophes were – thanks to the School Strike for Climate movement founded by Greta Thunberg – brought to the centre of attention.

Clearly, the climate crisis poses humanity our greatest challenge in generations. Our habitat, our 'common home' to quote Pope Francis, our biosphere, is poised on the brink. If things continue as they are, our planet will not survive much longer; there will be no future for us. In a book on the consequences of the pandemic, three doctors from Carinthia, a region in the south of Austria – Rudolf Likar, Georg Pinter and Herbert Janig – describe our fork in the road like this – "Humans can decide whether they deserve this world and return, or whether it is better with a gigantic sigh to bid this planet farewell, so that the single-celled organisms can start

anew the great experiment of life.” Should the future of humanity indeed be gravely endangered by how we live and conduct business, then socialisation – an introduction to the social knowledge of life – does not mean becoming human for the individual and a future for society, but precisely the reverse. Paul M. Zulehner once said in view of the acute situation of human society: “What is required is the opening of access to new patterns of life, in the hope of changing society so that it once again has a future.”

In a new normal, we must pick up speed towards a worldwide ‘eco-social market economy’ seeking and finding a new balance between fair competition – which occurs in every market economy – a just regulatory framework in the welfare state, and the vital protection of the environment. Only then will we move from a ‘civilisation of rapacity’ to a ‘civilisation of sustainability’!



BUILDING BLOCK 24: Roadmap of the Social Doctrine – In Conclusion

The values of the Christian Social teaching have invited us to reflect in spring 2020. Even if we are outwardly ‘up to our necks’ in the market system, we can still ask where it is our hearts and minds want to go. Social doctrine offers valuable orientation for a new normal – during and after crises.

PEOPLE A PRIORITY: We need to preserve areas that ought not to be thought of in terms of the cost-benefit calculations of economics, because human dignity is at stake. The gift that is Sunday is an example of this.

COMMUNITY WELFARE: We must not allow globalisation to be guided solely by economic needs, but to create universal community welfare. This requires international regulatory frameworks.

FAIR DISTRIBUTION: Every person must have access to the goods of the earth that are necessary to enjoy life. This requires controlling fear and greed and evolving mutual trust.

SUBSIDIARITY: Great things have been achieved in many families during the pandemic. Economic, social and cultural living space must be ensured for families for the future. It also needs social balance.

LIVING DEMOCRACY: Strengthening democracy in the EU will require that we not let the EU degenerate into a project of the commissioners, engaging instead politically as active citizens.

Every reconsideration and every guidance is an opportunity for a change of direction. The pandemic shone a light on three deficits in particular in our society: a want of justice, a want of community and a want of meaning. However, beyond these dangers, there are new signs of life emerging,

called “traces of heaven” by Paul M. Zulehner. He encourages us to look ahead: “Deepen your lives, leave the narrow prison of your fear and become truly loving people in solidarity!”

The doctrine of Christian Social teaching alongside our values and principles stand as lighthouse and compass of our trade union policy. Building on this foundation, we have to find new answers for the 21st century and to overcome current crises. The modern global challenges are: digitalisation, demographic change, globalisation, climate change and the preservation of peace and democracy. In implementing these, Christian-Social trade unions and workers’ movements rely not on ideologies but on people and their inviolable human dignity. We build on the commitment of small units, not on the action of anonymous institutions. Not wanting a society of the selfish, we are committed to cooperation!

Section 3: ACT

In line with Joseph Cardijn's three-step approach, ACTION implies that the two previous sections (SEE/JUDGE) necessarily lead to action, to standing up for those deprived of their rights and opportunities in life. For Christian-Social trade unions, values should not only serve, indeed must not only serve to decorate, like the gold stars on a blue background on the vaulted ceiling of a baroque church. Only in action is it revealed whether Christian-Social trade unions really live out their values!

The three areas listed below are where our EZA affiliates will become more involved in the social dialogue in their countries:

- GOING MORE DIGITAL: The future of work in the digital age
- GOING MORE GREEN: the eco-social market economy as a model for the future
- GOING MORE SOCIAL: Family; reconciling work and family life

“Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come” (Victor Hugo). If – after overcoming the current pandemic – we do not want to fall back into the old patterns of our ways of life and doing business, because this endangers the future of our planet Earth, then we must begin a process of change. The digital labour market of the future will include completely new occupations requiring general conditions accordingly. The steps to achieve the climate goals already initiated by the EU Commission must be vigorously pursued as well as distributing the associated burdens and costs as fairly as possible. And it is probably no coincidence that the US government's recovery plan also provides for strengthening families as a third pillar, because a social imbalance has become increasingly apparent here. Europe will continue to follow its own path in the future, which will clearly distinguish us from other economic areas, such as the

USA or China. The direction in which this path is to lead will also be shaped by EZA member organisations. They will engage in the social dialogue in their countries and mutually reinforce each other in the EZA network.

GOING MORE DIGITAL: The Future of Work in the Digital Age

The world of labour is changing fundamentally. Industrial production is no longer the only area that is being massively changed by digitalisation: digitalisation now permeates all areas of work and life.

The pace of digital penetration of all areas of life is rapid and the challenges are immense. Many forms of work are no longer bound to a specific place and time. The vast scope of this potential flexibilisation harbours not only great opportunities but also many risks. Many more jobs will be performed by machines in the future; activities that were previously the preserve of the highly skilled. In the near future, sophisticated software products will be able to handle many decision-making processes by evaluating (the ever increasing) amounts of existing and readily available digital data. Robots will learn to simulate cognitive abilities and show empathy.

BUILDING Block 25: The Digital Revolution

The amount of data available is constantly growing at an ever-increasing rate. Data is the raw material of the 21st century. Big Data is the buzzword we keep hearing here. Digitalisation of all aspects of life facilitates an entirely new perspective on issues. This development is only the beginning: the beginning of the digital revolution!

A few figures will illustrate the rapid change we are currently undergoing. Every five years, available knowledge worldwide doubles, in some areas taking as little as nine months. Half of this acquired knowledge remains current for only four years at most. The EU Commission predicts that in just ten years, around 80% of the technologies used today will have been replaced by new ones. Job profiles will change or could disappear altogether.

Impact on the labour market

In industrial production and in the production of material goods, computer-controlled machines and robots are increasingly and more comprehensively taking over production processes that were previously fulfilled by hand. Job profiles will continue to change fundamentally, or disappear altogether. For example: Toolmaker, mechanic, lathe operator, printer, etc.

This implies on the one hand that production might be brought back from low-wage countries, and on the other hand that the new jobs that are created do not compensate for the ones that are lost; the increase in productivity benefits only a few.

An ever increasing number of work processes are being carried out using software. Decisions formerly made by skilled workers are now undertaken by software drawing on a wealth of digitally available information. Work can be separated from time and place in almost all sectors and industries. This results in more flexibility (hours, etc.), which can ideally benefit both employees and employers.

Two major issues are gaining in importance:

Remote Working: There are now very good regulations in many collective agreements and in the public sector on a statutory basis, essentially predicated on the principle that remote working can only be introduced by mutual agreement. Detailed rules are to be respected.

Crowdsourcing: The term crowdsourcing is a portmanteau from crowd and outsourcing. That in itself speaks volumes – it is a way for companies to outsource to external labour any activities that can be carried out on computers. There are no sectoral boundaries to this practise. Essentially, any labour that can be achieved on a computer is ‘crowd-sourceable’. Small and medium-sized enterprises are making increasing use of this, optimising costs – at the expense of salaried jobs. Worldwide competition is creating a completely unregulated price war, threatening to transform jobs into precarious work. Work performance has now become the sole consideration. The individual carrying out the work hardly given a thought.

Comprehensive means of control require comprehensive protective regulations. There must be a prohibition of means of control that impact human dignity. As a result of the developments described above, jobs will be lost on a large scale. It can be assumed that significantly fewer new jobs will be created.

BUILDING BLOCK 26: Key Issues of Digitalisation

Konrad Paul Liessmann noted in a much acclaimed lecture on the subject: “One thing can be said with certainty, we are heading – and I’d say this is a great advantage – into a society in which we should actually be able to enjoy more freedom, more generosity, more leisure, since so many activities can be done by machine. And I ask you the question: Why don’t we notice any of it? Why don’t we notice anything about the fact that we have automated our industrial production processes, that we have allowed an infinite amount of creativity to flow into our economy, the goal of all automation. And that was also an idea of the bourgeoisie, the economic bourgeoisie. From the very beginning, the idea was to relieve people of the burden of work. So why isn’t there a great sigh of relief in our society that, thanks to our technical productivity, we now have more opportunities to turn to the real things in our lives, in our existence?”

Key Questions:

Where is the VALUE ADDED, and where does the money go?

In place of the previous rigid value chain, a dynamic creation of value networks will emerge in the future as a result of digitalisation. Service provider platforms generate added value in almost every country in the world. We must ensure that the corresponding taxes are also paid and that the money is not siphoned away into tax havens. In addition, there must be a level playing field with domestic providers (social security contributions, etc.).

How is the PROFIT from the use of labour and resources fairly distributed? If the profit from labour decreases and the profit from inputs increases, new approaches have to be found for the fair distribution of this profit. This question of distribution must be clarified for the good of all. There must be no taboos.

How can the FINANCING of social security systems be guaranteed for the future?

Even if there is less work in the future, the financing of social security systems must be guaranteed. This means generating new sources of funding. The current financing linked to gainful employment is too narrow.

BUILDING BLOCK 27: **Avenues of Action for Digitalisation**

Our social safety net in Europe has for about 150 years been linked to the employment contract. Both in individual contracts and in collective agreements, employers and employees undertake to pay taxes and social security contributions to the state in addition to the wages for the work

performed. Thus, life risks such as illness, old age, unemployment, and accident are in many European countries borne jointly and in solidarity in a system of social security, often autonomously. If the forecasts of the high loss of jobs through robots and software are proven correct, this social system would find itself at great risk.

The digital era facilitates work in many cases to be conducted anytime and anywhere; the sole requisite is Internet access. However, this raises many new questions:

Who in the future is to be the employer or the employee? Will every Internet assignment constitute a contractual employment relationship? Which nation states will be due taxes and pay the social security contributions of the future if labour is distributed worldwide via the Internet?

Protection of privacy must also be seen in a completely new perspective due to the enormous amount of available data. Every person has the right to decide for themselves how their data is used. The protection of this right should remain under state supervision and be a feature of the rule of law. Trade unions must make greater use of new technologies (Internet, digitalisation, etc.) and develop radically new methods of organisation. For one thing, they could provide high-quality information (such as all current collective agreements) to combat targeted misinformation (such as fake news). For another, online channels could be better used for campaigns or protests. In addition, the Internet offers affiliates completely new opportunities in participation (such as changing the form of organisation, surveys, voting, etc.). The fact that different sectors are seeing their progress in digitalisation at totally different rates also needs to be taken into account.

Providing free access to the Internet for all citizens is an important remit for all democracies. States must also invest in the further expansion of infrastructure (fibre optic cables, 5G network, etc.) along with completely new forms of education. Forecasts say that over 50% of children starting

school today will be working in 12 years' time at the end of their schooling in jobs that do not yet exist.

Despite its repeatedly being called into question in the digital era, we reaffirm the importance of the social dialogue that has grown throughout Europe for more than 100 years. We are encouraged by the European Pillar of Social Rights proclaimed by the European Union in November 2017.

Courses of action

- Digitalisation must improve the lives of all, and not be a money-making programme for the few accumulating immense wealth.
- Robots and software notwithstanding their sophistications are no substitute for questions of ethics and values in the economic system. In other words, human beings must remain at the centre of all these developments.
- There is a key role for education and training. Opportunities here are to be expanded. This includes comprehensive expansion of broadband as well as equipping schools with the best technical aids or creating age-appropriate digital workplaces.
- As more and more labour is performed by computers, computer-controlled machines, robots, and software, there is to be a fair distribution of what remains of labour hours. Hence a reopening of discussion on work hours is needed.
- Financing of the social security systems must be placed on a broader basis. Financing based exclusively on salaried employment, as is currently the case, is too narrow. We must also ensure that companies producing outside Europe contribute to the financing of social security systems for sales in Europe.

The essential courses of action outlined above must be discussed in a debate at the European level involving society as a whole. Time is of the essence and we need satisfactory solutions that improve matters for everyone as soon as possible. The European Social Model must be safeguarded and expanded with the help of the opportunities arising from digitalisation. Against this background, the further development of the European model of the 'social market economy' into an 'eco-social market economy' is becoming enormously important.

GOING MORE GREEN: The Eco-Social Market Economy as a Model for the Future

As early as 1997, at the 2nd European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz, it was stated that "We happen to be the first generation in the long history of humanity to be granted the privilege of seeing this earth from outside. We are beginning to learn that this planet is small, finite and vulnerable, whereas we were used to thinking of it as a 'boundless world'."

We must therefore begin to develop global governance capable of overcoming global market fundamentalism and leading to the implementation of a global eco-social market economy. This requires the gradual attainment of the UN's globally agreed Sustainable Development Goals. Eradicating misery in the world is not a handout, it is a humanitarian imperative. Development policy interpreted thus encompasses the dismantling of global political obstacles to development alongside the development of partnership-based cooperation to solve global challenges. As such, it may prove to be the most effective peacebuilding and economic development programme possible today for decades to come.

BUILDING BLOCK 28: Crises Looming

It is not yet clear in the 21st century whether we belong to a generation of people who just happened to experience the turn of the millennium, or whether this also represents a watershed moment, comparable to the transition from the Middle Ages to the modern era.

Futurology lists a number of human crises. One of the founders of futurology, Ossip Flechtheim, lists seven existential challenges in his publications. These are: the arms race and war; population explosion and hunger; environmental destruction and threat; economic crisis and global development planning; political repression and deficit of democracy; the crisis of culture; the crisis of the family and the loss of identity of the individual.

The German author Henrik Müller, whose regular blog is Müllers Welt, also ends up with the biblical number seven in his juxtaposition of scarcities and virtues when he reflects on what threatens our future and what we can do to counter these threat. He describes the “era of great change” as being characterised by three mutually reinforcing and overlapping major trends:

- Globalisation is a threat to political stability because citizens in non-democratic states are demanding more say, and the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth, income and opportunity in highly developed Western countries is undermining confidence in the freedom-based political system.
- The demographic change of falling birth rates and rising life expectancy is leading in large parts of the world to a rapidly ageing society.
- The climate crisis is coming to a head. Rapid increases in both consumption of resources and emissions may outstrip all previous climate change predictions.

What is common to all these assessments is that humanity is facing its greatest challenge in generations. Both habitat and biosphere appear severely impacted; the ecology is in collapse; even irreversibly so, according to some. Keep on going like this and we will not keep on going much longer!

The decades since the Second World War saw the establishment, firstly in Western Europe, of a way of life and of doing business that we generally refer to as a 'social market economy'. The fall of the Iron Curtain which had split Europe into two for decades meant that those Central and Eastern European countries which had suffered under communist dictatorship for decades sought too to develop in this direction. However, many trade unionists from these reform countries refer to the path they have taken in recent years as the 'Columbus mistake'. By this they mean that Christopher Columbus was looking for a sea route to India, but ended up in America. The former communist countries wanted to go to Europe – and they too ended up in America! However, fundamental concerns have been pushed into the background by the global economic crises; many governments' current focus is on 'survival strategies'. If we as a society – facing all the developments and threats mentioned – do not want to end up in some kind of Wild West where lawlessness and the gun prevail, it behooves us to ponder our intended destination. Such navigation calls for scouts. In Austria, Josef Riegler, former Minister of Agriculture and Vice-Chancellor and known throughout Europe as a visionary, is proposing as a direction the "eco-social market economy". A concept standing squarely between those that manifestly failed in the 20th century.

It is almost impossible not to draw a comparison with the taming of fire. Fire can lay entire cities to waste, but – under control – it is the hearth of home and hot food. Markets recognise only supply and demand; untamed, they can drive people and entire societies to rack and ruin – or as Hans Magnus Enzensberger puts it in his essay *Die große Wanderung* (The Great Migration), "Even in affluent societies, any one of us can become superfluous tomorrow. What do we do then?" It is thus an essential

stipulation that we tame the market – and it is found in every publication on the further transformation of the social market economy into an eco-social market economy. The other extreme, where the intent was to replace the market by a planned economy steered from communist party headquarters, was such an abject failure that – outside North Korea – it hardly warrants explanation. But the concept of humanity is addressed here too, because freedom and human rights, or the loss of them, is a key criterion for evaluating every political vision.

BUILDING BLOCK 29: Finding a New Balance

Intriguingly, the number seven is also used by various authors to indicate the religious dimension. The Bible says that seven, being the sum of the divine number three (the Trinity) and the earthly number four (the four points of the compass), always refers to heaven and earth. Or as the Creed states, the visible and the invisible. In *Christen in der Arbeitswelt* (Christians in the World of Work), the collection of speeches and essays by Paul M. Zulehner published by the Christian Trade Unionists of Austria, Zulehner sees the “intensifying situation of human society” as inextricably linked to questions of meaning. If the future of humanity is indeed at grave risk through our ways of conducting life and business, then what is represented by socialisation, that is, introducing the social heritage of knowledge of life, is not an individual becoming human and a future for society, but precisely its reverse. Zulehner expresses it thus: “If our society remains as it is, then not only is the becoming human of the individual in jeopardy, so too is the future of humanity. What needs to be achieved at such a time is not socialisation, but counter-socialisation. The imperative is not for us to be initiated into the outdated modes of life, but to open up access to alternatives (both old and new) in the hope of producing people who are so resilient that – swimming against the tide – they are able to become human beings and, by developing new modes of life, also carry with them the hope that society will change and have a future.” Zulehner sees three deficits as particularly threatening to our future. These

are lack of justice, lack of community and lack of meaning. From a holistic perspective encompassing both image of man and religion, new 'signs of life' nurturing dreams of survival for a life worthy of humanity emerge beyond these threats. We can sense the direction our society needs to evolve in, if is (still) desirous of a future.

As well as the taming of the market through social and ecological general conditions, a recurrent theme of the 'ecosocial market economy' is balance. In the words of the Christian Trade Unionists of Austria manifesto, "the aim of the ecosocial market economy is to strike a balance between an economy that is geared to efficiency, social solidarity and protection of the environment". But besides taming the market and balance, the core address is our view of humanity and of the world. In Tomas Sedlacek's words cited above in *The Economy of Good and Evil*, "I can't get no satiation – still haven't found what I'm greeding for", he characterises our society as being not only ignorant of how to achieve satisfaction, but even where that might be particularly desirable.

In a passage in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*:

VLADIMIR: Say you are, even if it's not true.

ESTRAGON: What am I to say?

VLADIMIR: Say, I am happy.

ESTRAGON: I am happy.

VLADIMIR: So am I.

ESTRAGON: So am I.

VLADIMIR: We are happy.

ESTRAGON: We are happy. (Silence.) What do we do now, now that we are happy?

VLADIMIR: Wait for Godot.

An economy with no goal leaves us with nothing besides growth; growth that has no other yardstick than itself. Such aimless growth is connected to meaninglessness and rootlessness. Sedlacek concludes his book urging economists to rethink the question, 'What, in our opinion, is the human being?' What becomes clear is that the question of being human resonates in every dimension. The 'eco-social market economy' is, therefore, not simply a model of the future to be taken seriously, it is a 'pattern of life,' whereby our former habits must be abandoned to shift us from a 'civilisation of overexploitation' to a 'civilisation of sustainability'. This is our very survival and nothing less.

BUILDING BLOCK 30: Climate Opportunity

If we again want to be a species with a future that is 'fit for purpose', we must to gather momentum towards a global 'eco-social market economy' capable of seeking and finding a new balance between fair competition – in every market economy, a just regulatory framework in the welfare state, and the vital protection of the environment. This is the only way will we move from a 'civilisation of overexploitation' to a 'civilisation of sustainability'.

In order to create a global regulatory framework, we need sustainable development as opposed to 'catch-up' development:

- equitable cooperation in partnership at all levels,
- strengthening of the partner countries' decision-making and design capacities,

- promoting ‘good governance’ and tackling corruption,
- coordinated and grassroots-oriented forms of resource allocation,
- appropriate financing.

The dictum that in every crisis lies the seed of opportunity has probably been overused. But it is important to seize the opportunity now and, rather than protesting in the streets, to at last place a vigorous hand on the tiller of politics. The EU Commission has set an ambitious target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030 and aims for the EU to become carbon neutral by 2050. This feasible if ambitious goal will be achieved not through all-encompassing restrictions and bans, but by the European model of a ‘social market economy’, clearly distinct from that of the USA and China, and which must be further developed into an ‘eco-social market economy’, incorporating at the same time the UN Sustainable Development Goals. A transition to carbon neutrality must encompass all sectors of the economy. Climate-friendly investments will create new areas of economic growth and jobs, such as in renovating buildings.

Reducing emissions for a sustainable future of our planet like this can create a ‘climate opportunity,’ and jobs too.

BECOMING MORE SOCIAL: Family; Reconciling Work and Family Life

“Our challenge is that today’s workplace demands so much flexibility that reconciling work life and family life is now extremely difficult”, states the Christian Trade Unionists of Austria manifesto on the reconciliation of work and family life. And it goes on: “The ever increasing demands for flexibility and mobility in the workplace mean that there is less and less

time for family life. Employment and labour law must be structured to provide enough time for family and its activities”.

BUILDING BLOCK 31: Families in Crisis

Since time immemorial, the family has been the basic pattern of human social coexistence. It provided a ‘roof’ over the generations, under which children, adults and the elderly ate together for a long time. It may not have always been a place of peace and harmony, but it did offer protection. Now, however, the constant increase in flexibility and mobility appears to be destroying that roof.

If the Christian Social teaching describes being human as “living in relationships”, then the pattern of increasing flexibilisation and mobility in the world of work naturally raises the question of how marriage, partnership and family are to succeed in the future.

“Deep longing for successful relationships is counterbalanced by the fear that ties could constrict, limit freedom. In response, people seek to be as independent as possible. Individual independence and self-interest become the guiding values of society, with the dignity of others and the importance of interpersonal relationships and social cohesion taking a back seat. It is often not realised in the ensuing process how much people become isolated and impoverished in human terms.” (Ökumenisches Sozialwort der Kirchen Österreichs, 73).

BUILDING BLOCK 32: Family as a Place of Learning

The family is of central importance for every human being. The family “in which the mutual gift of self by husband and wife creates an environment in which children can be born and develop their potentialities, become

aware of their dignity and prepare to face their unique and individual destiny. "(John Paul II, Centesimus annus, 39).

Upbringing is where the family creates the human being. It is there that decides what languages we speak, what citizenship we have, what religion we belong to, what way of life we consider 'worthy' and aspire to... The family thus has a primary and irreplaceable role in the upbringing of children.

Parents therefore are the first educators of their children, albeit not their sole instructors. Hence the emphasis placed also on the need for close cooperation between all educational institutions, especially between families, kindergarten and school.

BUILDING BLOCK 33: Christian-Social Family Policy

Europe must become more family-friendly. Alongside the tax reforms already in place, labour law needs measures implementing that are better capable of reconciling the needs of work and family life. Furthermore, better subsidised housing at affordable terms must be created for young families. Childcare facilities must be created according to need, allowing for the parents' freedom of choice.

Likewise, there should be policies to increase the use of paternity leave; family benefits must be significantly expanded overall.

We need family-friendly living spaces where children can grow up safe and secure. We view the family as an essential community for children rooted in people's very nature. It is one of the fundamentals of our society.

As such, we see an obligation on the part of society to facilitate the family in the fulfilment of its tasks. The term family includes every form of living

together with children, be that married couples, cohabiting partners or single parents. The family gives children space to grow up in security. It is here that attitudes such as trust, love, gratitude and solidarity are established. It is here that crises are overcome, that sharing is practised and that solidarity – including inter-generationally – is lived.

The acceleration of life and the ensuing often excessive demands, the creeping loss of shared moments of social rest and of opportunity for human interaction free of commercial purpose is impairing and endangering human coexistence. So it is vital we create living spaces for family, marriage and community that make it possible to experience the deeper meaning of community beyond work.

Family as the Formative Force of Social Life

There are three demands resulting from this:

- The family needs a guaranteed affordable domicile. The service families provide society is irreplaceable and there must be compensation for those at economic disadvantages – in particular large families and single parents.
- The family needs its social habitat. A family-friendly employment system is to be designed foremost around times re-affording regular contact between parents and children. It is essential in a modern and flexible economy that fathers and mothers are able to reconcile work and family.
- The family requires a cultural environment. It is not just the financial squeeze and the paucity of time spent together that affects marriages and family. Family policy must do its utmost to ensure that families receive every economic, social, educational, political and cultural support they need to fulfil their full responsibilities commensurate with human dignity.

We advocate the protection and promotion of the family, specifically by means of

- a family-friendly environment, through the creation of appropriate housing or homes, sufficient facilities for play and sport, a sufficient quantity of childcare facilities and promotion of all neighbourhood self-help programmes,
- recognition of the primacy of child-rearing within the family, able to offer the growing person a sense of security, a sense of community and an awareness of democratic responsibility,
- guaranteeing the economic capacity of families by increasing benefits, along with appropriate tax concessions for those raising families,
- consideration within employment for the family,
- recognition of managing of a household and raising of children as an activity equivalent to a gainful occupation.

If these demands are implemented by a robust family policy, the family can continue to be a formative force in social life in the future.

BUILDING BLOCK 34: International Network – EZA

Christian-Social trade unions and workers' movements have been linked for over 30 years in a 'network of partnership'. And this network is constantly growing and its future is bright.

Our EZA network is supported by a clear commitment to international solidarity. Our concerns are freedom and democracy, securing human rights and actively striving for peace in the world. Our members campaign

for workers' interests at all levels – using social dialogue above all – and seek to create social justice. In order to be able to do this without hindrance and free from other interests, they strive to be as independent as possible and establish transnational networks throughout Europe.

In 1980, the FCG achieved an outstanding example of international solidarity. The first attempts at freedom and democracy in Europe – in Hungary in 1956 and the 'Prague Spring' in what was then Czechoslovakia in 1968 – had been brutally crushed by tanks of the Soviet army. When Polish workers at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk went on strike in the summer of 1980, Günther Engelmayer, then Federal Secretary of the Christian-Social Trade Union Parliamentary Group from Austria, managed to overcome all barriers and get to the encircled strike committees. Engelmayer was able to meet workers' leader Lech Walesa and hand him solidarity in the form of a substantial amount of cash as support from Austria. While socialist-dominated trade unions in Western Europe were still maintaining good contacts with the communist trade unions of the Eastern Bloc, Christian trade unionists were already active in building up new, free trade unions. This commitment led to constant contacts with the new trade unions in Central and Eastern Europe. For example, the Austrian Centre for Workers' Education (ÖZA), together with EZA and with the support of the EU, organised the first KGZE conference in Vienna in the spring of 1989 – even before the collapse of communism. The Konferenz für die gewerkschaftliche Zusammenarbeit in Europa (Conference on Trade Union Cooperation in Europe) gave a powerful boost to the new trade unions even before the fall of the Iron Curtain.

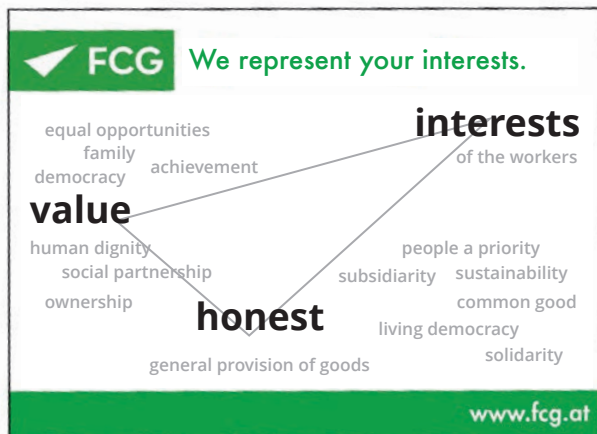
The international federations of European trade unions, such as in the WOW (World Organisation of Workers) and in EUROFEDOP (Europese Federatie van het Overheidspersoneel – European Federation of Employees in Public Services) are further examples of the active role of the EZA network, promoting the development of free and Christian trade unions as exemplarized by their motto "From Sponsorship to Partnership."

BUILDING BLOCK 35: Christian-Social as a Brand

For many decades, GREEN has been the distinctive colour of Christian-Social trade unions in Europe and also in Austria. This is not only because in the colour palette GREEN is the complementary colour of RED, but also because our fight as Christian-Social trade unionists, with our commitment to an 'ecosocial market economy' is not only for the rights of workers, but is also especially for the preservation of the fundamentals for life for future generations. In addition to taming the globalised market in the 21st century through social and ecological general conditions, a new balance is needed in the triangle of interests between a performance-friendly economy, social solidarity and environmental protection.

Our triangle also stands for valuing interests honestly.

- We guarantee "Handsschlagqualität" – quality worth the handshake – because we stand by our values with **honesty**.
- We represent the **interests** of workers because we are independent.
- We stand for partnership and dialogue because we **value** people.



This simple summary is a quick reference guide which merits a place in every pocket to ease initial contact.

Our values are also an expression of the target points we are aiming for:
Our vision is of ...

... people who find fair conditions where they live and work,

... a society in which women and men live with equal rights and equal treatment,

... politics creating the conditions for free, peaceful, fair and democratic coexistence,

... employment in which all people can develop their creative abilities,

... an economy that puts people at the centre.

Join us – unity is strength!

The more members trust Christian-Social trade unions in Europe, the better we can assert ourselves in the social dialogue. The more members of works councils, staff representatives and youth councils declare their support for us, the stronger our voice will be. Even in the digital age, we want decent work, co-operation between young and old, and we see social cohesion as the key to the future viability of a society.

BUILDING BLOCK 36: Peace

One of the most spectacular ‘happenings’ of pop history was when John Lennon and Yoko Ono invited people to their hotel room in Montreal on 1 June 1969 and sang Give Peace a Chance with the guests. Who would have thought that in spring 2022 – after 75 years of peace in the member

states of the European Union – we would be experiencing another war in Europe?

Wars in the long history of mankind have been waged largely with two intentions – either to gain people as labour or to acquire raw materials (including land). German author Gero Jenner writes, “For centuries, it was the first type of war that dominated. The agriculture of Greece, like that of Rome, was based on slave labour – it took on average four slaves to maintain a single free Greek. The same reliance on forced labour applied to the cotton economy of the US South until the mid-19th century. Entire populations were abducted and subjugated so that they could be used as ‘living machines’ on plantations and in mines. Since the early the 19th century those humans have been replaced by actual machines. This appears ultimately to be the decisive factor in ending that form of war. All the more topical then is war to procure raw materials, for these are what ensure the continued existence of machines and their industrial use. Climate change is exacerbating this, in that water shortage is making entire regions of our planet increasingly hostile to life. So wars over the basis of life may be looming! A ‘balance of terror’ – the potential of using nuclear weapons – drew a clear dividing line in recent decades between the time before Hiroshima (1945) and after. Admittedly, the potential reasons for war are just as present today as they were in the past, and humankind’s aggression and willingness to go to war are no less pernicious than in the past. But a war with nuclear weapons would leave neither victors nor vanquished in its wake, only a largely uninhabitable planet. Wars were fought as long as there was a reasonable prospect of winning them, otherwise they are acts of madness.”

Given this context, peace clearly has to be more than the simple absence of war. There is only one alternative to the impending end of human history on planet Earth: a policy of peace!

Only when we experience peace and the renunciation of violence not as some arbitrary policy, but one that here and now includes every individ-

ual; only then can we begin anew – every day. As German journalist Franz Alt writes, “Peace is not a matter of fate; it is our mission. Just as war is our failure.” We must practise non-violence as a Christian Social value. To do this, we must identify violence. That is, we must see through the cunning verbal strategies deployed to justify violence and war. Today we know that war does not solve conflicts. We know that what solves conflicts is negotiation. Nothing more than that, but at the same time, nothing less. What matters here is the permanent reduction of violence in the engagement with the intrinsic rights of people, of genders, of generations, of cultures and of living things. Our promise, our task is the discovery of and adherence to peace, as the ultimate purpose of existence in this lone, finite world of life.

AFTERWORD

Pamphlets are usually printed on fine paper – a very patient medium, frequently leading to a one-way trip. The name of the game seems to be “applaud, then archive”. In other words, pamphlets appear to loud acclaim and then – without detour – land in a drawer until they end up in the bundle for recycling.

When at EZA seminars questions arose ever more frequently on the ‘values’ that our member organisations under the of ‘Christian-Social’ heading have in common, it was soon apparent that in Europe there is only one huge thing in common, which is that we are all utterly different!! So many languages, so many cultures – precisely what makes this continent so attractive and so special. It does however completely preclude a one-size-fits-all pamphlet. And so we came up with the idea of a tool containing ‘building blocks’, in this case thirty-six of them.

The world of today has long been a ‘work in progress’. With our society changing at breakneck speed, Christian Social teaching cannot afford to remain static either, but relating as it does to this very society, it must relate to these changes and disruption.

Joseph Cardijn’s three step method, SEE – JUDGE – ACT, is certainly helpful here. And yet Cardijn said, “Your life is the fifth gospel”. So it is not a matter of using all thirty-six ‘building blocks’, but of finding the right combination as appropriate. Consequently the use of the building blocks will certainly look different in Spain than in Poland, in Holland than in Italy, and so on.

Ultimately, the most important thing is that the building blocks are much more interventions than proposals for solutions. Their intention is to provide a “de-icer” to a frozen system. Time and again in the course of history, cultural, political or religious systems have closed themselves so tightly

that people could no longer believe that it was possible to change anything at all.

The core task of every trade union and workers' movement is sustaining the belief that if we organise, we can change things, quixotic as this may at times seem, because the German saying Geld regiert die Welt (money rules the world) has apparently become an all-encompassing truism.

The building blocks of this pamphlet hope to contribute to keeping this idea alive and carrying it forward in all our EZA affiliates. The blocks have been kept as short as possible and are intended to each convey one idea. They are intended to inspire the respective organisations to keep talking about the foundation of values on which we all stand together.

With this in mind, we can all learn from the last few years that contagion is not just viruses, it can also be ideas and beliefs!

I hope you enjoy working with the building blocks.

Andreas Gjecaj

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andreas Gjecaj

Secretary General of the Christian Trade Unionists' Group FCG in the Austrian Trade Union Federation, Austria

Born in 1957 in Maribor, Slovenia; son of a Christian Albanian family of silversmiths who fled to Austria in 1957. After graduating from school and completing his apprenticeship, he worked for some ten years as a goldsmith and silversmith; trained as a singer; worked in the Triangel jazz café; then for seventeen years as diocesan and federal secretary of the Catholic Workers' Movement Katholische Arbeitnehmerbewegung – KAB-Österreich. In the 90s he was also Deputy General Secretary of Katholische Aktion Steiermark Catholic Action Styria. Chairman of the works council of the diocese of Graz-Seckau. In 2006, moved to the Austrian Trade Union Federation – ÖGB, as Secretary General of the Fraktion Christlicher Gewerkschafterinnen und Gewerkschafter (FCG in the ÖGB); member of the executive committee and federal executive committee of the ÖGB; member of the editorial board of Arbeit & Wirtschaft of AK/ÖGB; FCG magazine Vorrang Mensch.

Gjecaj has written and contributed to numerous key motions, publications and articles on dialogue, on the future of work, digitalisation, the European Pillar of Social Rights and more besides: Revision of the Manifesto of KAB (2001) and FCG (2009); at the Austrian level: participation in the campaign team for Gute Arbeit and in the establishment of the Allianz für den freien Sonntag (Alliance for the Free Sunday); revision of the ÖGB/AK publication Christliche Soziallehre.

Married since 1982, three grown children; five grandchildren; works in Vienna and lives in Kalsdorf near Graz, Austria.

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