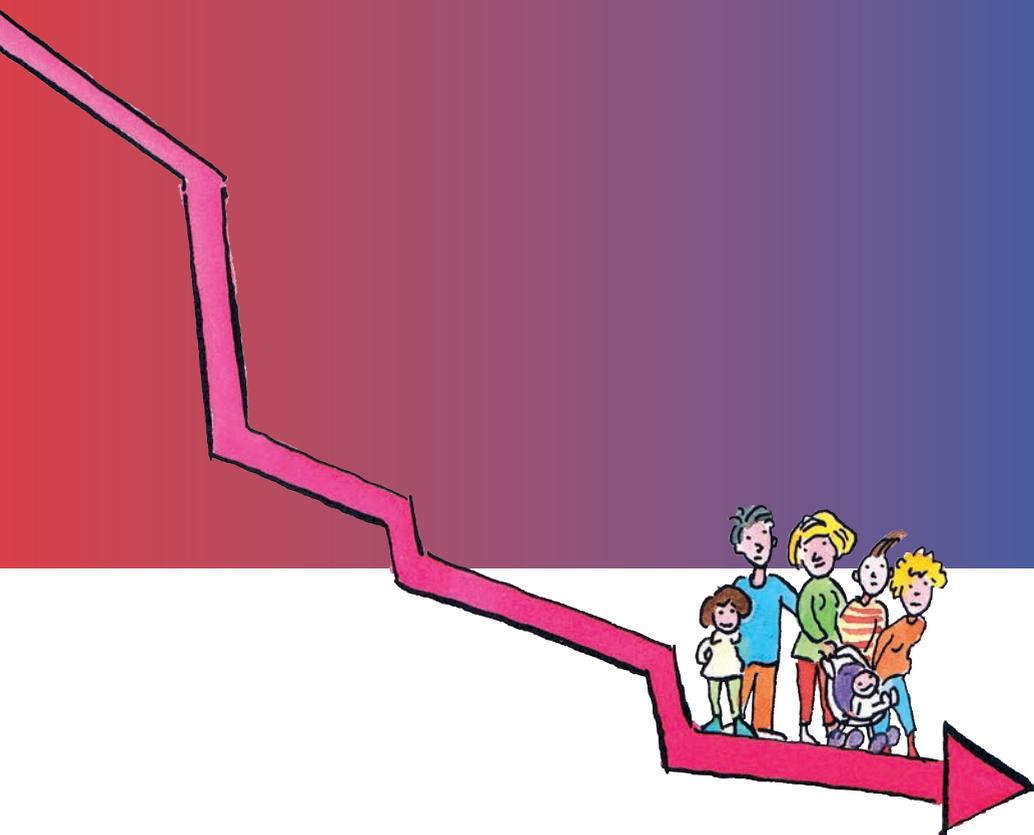


Working and Living after the Crisis





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Foreword

The financial and economic crisis has had a serious impact on workers and their families in Europe. Firstly, unemployment rose in most European states, in particular there were fewer opportunities for the long-term unemployed, young people and women in the labour market. Secondly, the quality and sustainability of working conditions decreased; precarious and atypical employment, temporary work, bogus self-employment and undeclared work increased.

The aim of the “Working and living after the crisis” series of seminars was to point up the consequences of these developments in European labour markets for both the individual worker and society as a whole. Besides the economic consequences, time and again reference was made in the seminars to the increase in insecurity: for long-term life planning such as an individual starting a family, and for society as a whole in being able to guarantee efficient systems of social security. Above all, the focus of concern was on the demographic shift, described in one of the project series seminars as “demographic winter”.

Recommendations for action for workers’ organisations were also drawn up. The participants were in favour of strong, inclusive workers’ organisations that appeal to the long-term unemployed and the bogus-self-employed. A further demand was for shorter working hours to enable more workers to access the labour market.

I would like to thank the EZA member centres that were involved in the project series (ZD N.Si, UNASM, YCW Europe, LOC/MTC, ECWM, FIDESTRA and C.F.T.L.) for their active participation and their exceptional commitment. In addition to that, my special thanks go to Sarah Prenger, President of the International Young Christian Workers (IYCW), who co-ordinated the projects, gave input on content, evaluated the results, and wrote this final report.

The European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion supported our activities with content and funding. Our aim with the results and recommendations for action in this brochure is to give workers' organisations and their multipliers ideas for their daily work. Suggestions and comments on all issues that are pressing for workers in Europe are welcome at any time. You will find our contact details on the back of this brochure.

I hope you enjoy reading the brochure!

Sigrid Schraml

Secretary-General EZA

1 Introduction

“Working and living after the crisis” was the title of a series of coordinated projects carried out as part of the European Centre for Workers’ Questions (EZA) “European Social Dialogue” education programme during the 2016 education year. The impact on the conditions of gainful employment and jobseekers, on social security systems, on families and demographic development and on young people as well as gender-specific consequences were analysed from various perspectives. Irrespective of different approaches, it became clear that the crisis had and still has significant effects on each of these aspects of individual lives and societal structures.

The individual seminars held were as follows:

- Finding a balance between flexibility and security: young workers seek sustainable solutions (15 to 17 April 2016 in Ljubljana/Slovenia), organised by ZD NSi (Združenje delavcev Nove Slovenije)
- The role of trade unions in creating decent jobs with regard to guaranteeing a good work-life balance (25 to 28 May 2016 in Ohrid/FYR Macedonia), organised by YHACM - UNASM - UIATUM (Union of Independent Autonomous Trade Unions of Macedonia)
- Insecurity and precariousness – How young people in Europe live and work (25 September – 2 October 2016 in Herzogenrath/Germany), organised by the European Young Christian Workers (JOC Europe)
- Family and social insecurity – How can family difficulties be overcome in the face of poor economic conditions, high unemployment, a lack of jobs for young people and migration? (6 to 9 October 2016 in Coimbra/

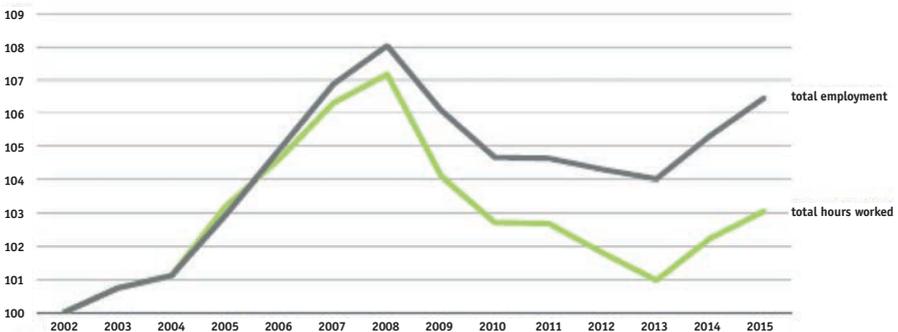
Portugal), organised by LOC/MTC (Liga Operária Católica - Movimento de Trabalhadores Cristãos)

- The changing world of work: phenomena, causes and impact on workers' lives (27 to 30 October 2016 in Avila/Spain), organised by ECWM - EBCA - MTCE (European Christian Workers Movement)
- "Demographic winter": the compatibility of work and family for young female workers, a means of strengthening social dialogue structures on a national and European level (27 to 29 January 2017 in Lisbon/Portugal), organised by FIDESTRA (Associação para a Formação, Investigação e Desenvolvimento Social dos Trabalhadores)
- The future and sustainability of the European public systems of social security (9 to 12 February 2017 in Porto/Portugal), organised by CFTL (Centro de Formação e Tempos Livres)

2 The background

Following years of recession and increasing unemployment rates, during the period of the coordinated projects some signs of a decrease in the number of jobless workers were observed. However, in view of the growth in part-time jobs in Europe, the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) points to the pertinent difference between a growth in real gainful employment time (number of hours worked) and a decrease in the numbers of unemployed:¹

Figure 2.8. Trends in employment and total hours worked (Index 2002=100) (EU28)



Source: Eurostat (ELFS), ifsa_ewhais; ifsa_efpt; own calculations.

Nor should the demographic development, whereby the absolute number of gainfully employed will fall across Europe in the next few years, be ignored, as it shifts the ratio between job vacancies and jobseekers without any increase in paid work. Altogether the unemployment rate in most EU Member States was higher in 2016 than in 2008. Youth unemployment averaging 18.7% (4.21 million) was significantly higher than the average; unsurprisingly, it was also above the average of 2008 (15.2%, 4.02 million). According to the ETUI, one in three young people across the EU was in paid work in 2016 – 10% less than in 2008.²

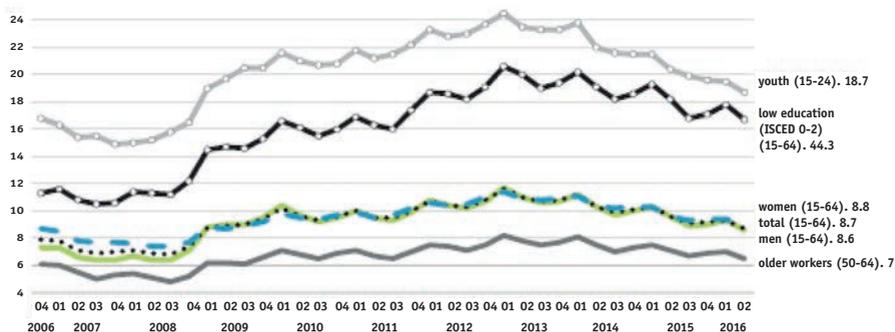
¹ ETUI (2016): Labour market and social developments In: Benchmarking Working Europe,

www.etui.org/content/download/26427/248573/file/Chapitre+2.pdf, accessed: 24.3.2017, henceforth quoted: ETUI: labour, p. 28.

² cf. *ibid.*, p. 29.

A second group with significantly higher unemployment than the average were low-skilled workers with an average of 16.7%, in stark contrast with percentages of under 12% prior to 2008:³

Figure 2.3. Unemployment rates by age, education and gender (EU28)



Source: Eurostat (ELFS), ifsq_urgaed.

Just as important as the quantity of existing gainful employment is the development of its quality. Altogether there has been a significant rise in atypical and precarious employment in Europe. Because of this trend, as the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) puts it in a nutshell, “employment no longer guarantees [economic, S.P.] wellbeing”⁴. Precarious forms of paid work include temporary employment, which grew by 25% in the EU-27 between 2001 and 2012⁵, whereas the percentage of those who one year after accepting temporary employment had a permanent job, as described by the ETUI referring to Eurostat data, fell between 2008 and 2016.⁶

3 cf. *ibid.*, p. 25.

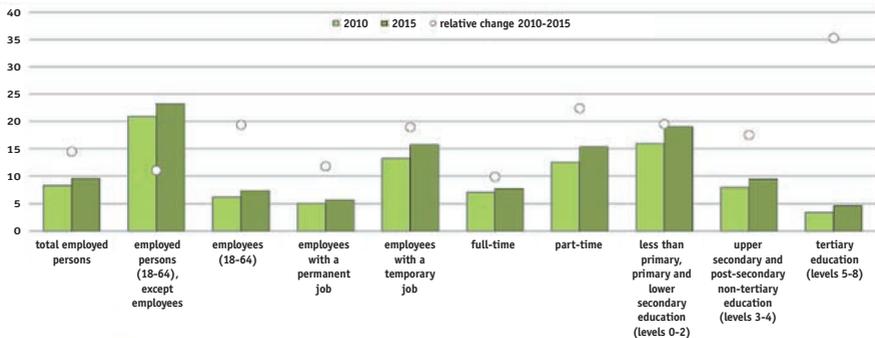
4 Eurofound (2015): Families in the economic crisis: Changes in policy measures in the EU, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, henceforth quoted: Eurofound, p. 63.

5 cf. European Parliament - Policy department C: Citizen's rights and constitutional affairs (2016): Differences in men's and women's work, care and leisure time, pdf, http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/556933/IPOL_STU%282016%29556933_EN.pdf, accessed: 25.3.2017, henceforth quoted: Ipol, p. 19.

6 ETUI, p. 27.

The risk of in-work poverty is an increasingly worrying problem.⁷ In 2015, the highest risk of having a disposable household income below 60% of the median income was among the group of self-employed, followed by the low qualified, by temporary workers and part-time workers. For the group of self-employed, who were already at the highest risk in 2010, this risk rose by 11% between 2010 and 2015.⁸ The risk among the other groups mentioned also rose: in the case of part-time workers by 22%, in the case of temporary workers by 19%. Altogether the risk across all professional groups rose slightly, it being noticeable that in no group was the increase as sharp as among the highly qualified: their risk in 2015 was 35% higher than in 2010.

Figure 2.15. In-work risk of poverty rates (% of population) and relative change in levels thereof (%) EU-28



Source: Eurostat (EU-SILC), ilc_iw04, ilc_iw01, ilc_iw05, ilc_iw07; own calculations.

Another issue discussed in the coordinated projects was work-life balance, or the compatibility of the following three areas: firstly the sphere of paid work, secondly the sphere of unpaid work, including primarily care work and family work, and civic involvement, and thirdly the sphere of leisure. The mutual influence of these spheres has grown, meaning there is a conflict between work and private life¹⁰ in Europe. This and constant pressure (of time) are just two of the negative effects of developments in recent years.¹¹

7 Eurofound, p. 63.

8 ETUI, p. 33.

9 cf. ibid

10 IpoI, p. 6.

11 cf. inter alia ibid

On the other hand, neither traditional gender role models nor their consequences, such as the gay gap and the horizontal and vertical segregation of the labour market, have lost in relevance. Thus women, who are more reliant on state social security, have been hardest hit by the austerity policies of recent years.¹²

Regardless of gainful employment, the risk of social exclusion and poverty has increased on average in Europe; 4.8 million more European citizens were affected by it in 2013 than in 2008.¹³ In particular, it has affected single parents and families with several children; child poverty has risen in 19 member states since 2008.¹⁴ In the course of austerity measures in the area of family policy, financial benefits (tax relief, grants) in particular have been cut, albeit less so measures on family-related interruption to gainful employment. According to Dr. Konstantina Davaki, this can be interpreted as work-life balance continuing to be regarded as a priority.¹⁵

This is a brief overview of some of the topics the coordinated projects focused on in particular. Another issue discussed, although not made an explicit focus of a seminar, was the arrival of people with a refugee background coming into the EU in 2015 and 2016 (up to November 2015, there were 1.34 million first-time registrations; up to November 2016 1.31 million)¹⁶. On top of that, election results in some member states showed scepticism towards the European Union, which caused concern and was likewise mentioned.

12 cf. *ibid*

13 cf. Eurofound., p. 1.

14 cf. *ibid*, p. 62.

15 cf. *ibid*

16 cf. ETUI, p. 30.

3 Seminar results

3.1 Finding a balance between flexibility and security: young workers seek sustainable solutions

15 to 17 April 2016 in Ljubljana/Slovenia, organised by ZD NSi

As the basis of the search referred to in the title, representatives of eight different European countries first addressed the situation of young people in the labour market and thus the phenomenon of insecurity. The particular focus was on the problem of bogus self-employment. It became evident that good education and training do not protect against precarious employment. Instead, (pseudo) contracts for work and services were observed as a mechanism for ascribing all contributions to social insurance and long-term responsibility to the worker. Negative consequences of this were also seen for the employers, as identification with the job suffered as much as the workers' efficiency and creativity. In addition, hiring a person working for several employers also meant a potential flow of information between them. Overall the "young generation" was identified as being the one hardest hit by the crisis and as "victims of the financial market", with the political system not having corrected the market failure. It became clear that the root causes of the development are not only on the legislative level. For instance, the non-compliance with some laws to protect workers was criticised. Many EU member states also lacked structures for implementing the European Youth Guarantee, which was in itself not sufficiently known. Altogether it was deemed necessary to accompany flexibility in the labour market with socio-political measures. The introduction of a social security system not based on paid work was also considered. In addition, further training systems ought to impart social skills. Companies, education and training institutions, and political decision-makers should cooperate to prepare young people for the labour market. On the other hand, simply copying the German and Austrian dual-track training system was not viewed as appropriate, owing to the differing boundary conditions. In addition, working

time reductions such as cutting the 40-hour week to a 30-hour week were proposed. This was suggested both as a general approach and as a specific measure for elderly workers who could take on mentor roles for younger workers.

3.2 The role of trade unions in creating decent jobs with regard to guaranteeing a good work-life balance

25 to 28 May 2016 in Ohrid/FYR Macedonia, organised by YHACM - UNASM - UIATUM

Representatives from the FYR Macedonia, Albania, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Turkey and Kosovo discussed the issue of the compatibility of different areas of life in relation to paid working time, legislative measures and specific provisions for family work. These subjects were closely linked with gender equality. In this respect, big gender-specific differences were identified in access to the labour market, in some countries also to education and training. The title of the seminar should not be misunderstood as trade unions being seen in the role of creating jobs. Rather, their task was regarded as representing workers and in helping guarantee indispensable standards for society and citizens. To this end, the influence of trade unions in the region had to be strengthened. For instance, in the context of work-life balance it was felt there was too much focusing on the requirements of the paid job. Part-time work was no solution because of the poorer pay often associated with it. According to the Chairman of UNASM, Slobodan Antovski, a step towards boosting the effectiveness of workers' organisations would be stronger cooperation between them.

A major finding of all participants in relation to the situation in their own country was insufficient implementation of legislation on health and safety or the compatibility of family and work, particularly in the context of harmonisation with the legal framework of the EU. The seminar saw a need for action on the part of the trade unions to draw attention to these deficits, as well as the need for state enforcement institutions.

The challenges of unemployment, youth unemployment in particular, were discussed. There was great interest in examples from Western Europe. Overall, though, the conclusion drawn was that the various countries had to come up with solutions themselves appropriate to their respective reality. The tax systems of the individual countries were discussed, in some cases taxation that was too similar for wealthy and less wealthy population groups was criticised, and progressive tax rates were called for. Altogether the need to strengthen social dialogue in the region became very clear. Further recommendations for action included measures for sharing care work in families and a general reduction in paid working time. Overtime had to be compensated financially by higher rates. The seminar also saw a need for the targeted encouragement of young women in general and specifically female entrepreneurs.

3.3 Insecurity and precariousness – how young people in Europe live and work

25 September to 2 October 2016 in Herzogenrath/Germany, organised by Young Christian Workers (JOC) Europe

Representatives from Portugal, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Spain and Ukraine discussed the experience of young people in Europe who have access to precarious employment only, if at all. As varied as the forms of that work may be – such as time-limited jobs with differing forms of contract, through a temporary employment agency, involuntary part-time work, in the low-wage sector, different kinds of bogus self-employment – the trends seem comparable. Informal paid work as a growing phenomenon was discussed, as was the dismantling of social security systems and a decrease in real wages. The consequences have proven to be equally consistent: no possibility to plan ahead, a permanent feeling of insecurity with an impact on socio-political involvement and willingness to start a family, mental illnesses, a decrease in consumption, as well as a manifest loss of trust in democratic institutions and political parties. The last point was bolstered by

structures of inequality. For instance, the participants criticised both differing conditions for men and women (the pay gap, the horizontal and vertical segregation of the labour market) and the exclusion of migrants. What was described as particularly striking was the growing inequality between the wealthy and the less well-off. As Luc Cortebeek pointed out, since the crisis the capital of the 62 richest people in the world has grown by 44%, whereas that of the poorest has fallen by 41%. At the same time the wealthiest 1% has benefited from 50% of income generated in the last 15 years.

The trend in conditions of gainful employment for young people is comparable the world over – that is the finding following an exchange with representatives of other continents. Accordingly global interdependencies had to be considered in the analysis of causes. Global value chains as a whole were discussed, and in particular the role of European transnational companies as exporters of precarious employment.

From a Christian and human perspective the seminar-goers clearly condemned this reality, as man should be the aim of any development and production instead of a resource for maximising profit. Accordingly, money should not be the measure of human dignity. However, the global system was preventing young people from assuming their ethical responsibility. There should also be no unequal treatment on the basis of gender, nationality or skin colour. Hence the representatives of Christian (young) workers' associations attending the seminar reported anger and frustration among their members. Making our current reality more human, which was urgently required, called for the activation of (young) workers, a greater sense of responsibility among consumers, and the bolstering of workers' organisations. At the same time, structural political measures had to be taken, especially in the areas of precarious and informal paid work, gender inequality and the exclusion of people with a migration background. There were demands for more standard jobs, a significant reduction in unemployment, the abolition of informal work and a modification in temporary agency work to the extent that agency workers had to be paid more than permanent staff to make up for their greater degree of insecurity. Pay also had to be adjusted to growth in producti-

vity, and social justice brought about through tax measures. This was a key aspect of social protection, regarded as a prerequisite for a decent life. Last but not least, in view of the analysis of global processes the participants called for urgent reforms to value chains and transnational structures.

3.4 Family and social insecurity – How can family problems be overcome in the face of poor economic conditions, high unemployment, a lack of jobs for young people, and migration?

6 to 9 October 2016 in Coimbra/Portugal, organised by LOC/MTC

Addressing the topic stated in the title, the seminar-goers first discussed the vision of a family that could be regarded in modern-day society as positive. It became evident that families provide stability today and should assume responsibility for one another. Owing to their major benefit to society, they had to be supported, regardless of the concrete form.

As the seminar progressed, however, it was shown that unemployment and insecure employment entailed instability for families. Likewise migration forced by the economic situation had a patent impact on families, and an individual's situation invariably affected the whole family. Child poverty was also addressed as a consequence of the impoverishment of families, even in countries considered prosperous.

Thus decent paid work was an essential precondition for successful family life. More time had to be accorded to family life as well.

Altogether the seminar called for greater cultural awareness of family social rights and concrete socio-political family-friendly measures. Moreover, the distribution of the wealth produced by paid work had to be questioned, because everyone had to be guaranteed decent work. This was possible with a different organisation of society that prioritised citizens and fair distribution of wealth. Young people in particular required guaranteed employment, stability and security precisely after completing compulsory schooling.

Social dialogue also had to be strengthened, with the social partners having

to be aware of the primacy of the human being and the relevance of family-friendly policy.

3.5 The changing world of work: phenomena, causes and impact on workers' lives

27 to 30 October 2016 in Avila/Spain, organised by ECWM - EBCA - MTCE

A key aspect of the changing world of paid work identified was the process of digitalisation, which plays a part in the constant acceleration and pressure on individuals and in the replacement of human workers by technology. Overall the representatives diagnosed a crisis in both employment and general climate in Europe. The former crisis is clearly manifested in joblessness and youth unemployment as well as the marked increase in long-term unemployment since 2008. Equally worrying was the growing pressure and stress in paid work and education, the increasing precariousness of jobs and the problem of the “working poor”. These trends had not only considerable impact on the self-esteem of individual workers, but also drastic societal consequences. This included growing insecurity among the population and a lack of opportunities to start a family and for civic involvement. Digitisation not only exacerbated individualisation but also presented workers' organisations with new challenges in terms of defending the interests of workers. How could this be organised, say, in the case of crowd-working? The seminar identified a growing division of workers through the processes of precarious employment, whilst at the same time wealth was increasing. The growing problem of social exclusion particularly affecting the long-term unemployed, the working poor, single parents and their children as well as migrants, was discussed. These groups, like society as a whole, were affected by political austerity measures to cut social security and were victims of a “privatisation of social life”.

When analysing the reasons for this development, Pedro Fuentes (a sociologist and representative of Caritas) pointed out that although the number of socially excluded people had risen owing to the crisis, two thirds of those

excluded today were already suffering from social exclusion before the crisis. So not only the crisis but the current economic system as a whole had to be looked at. In addition, the pressure resulting from unemployment to take on any job was identified as much a cause of the trends as a widespread belief among decision-makers in flexibilisation. Moreover, employers assumed less and less responsibility for their employees as a result of the increasing division of work.

GDP as an average value was subjected to critical scrutiny against the background of the Christian understanding of the common good, whereby everyone has to be well off. According to the principle of human dignity, man had to be the purpose of economic activity and of social institutions.

Likewise the principle of subsidiarity presented us with the challenge of deciding between what could be dealt with by an entity itself and what could not. For the principle implied not only the call to self-help, but equally the obligation of the next higher level to intervene whenever necessary. The encyclical "Laudato Si" turned the principle of sustainability into another socio-ethical principle whereby man and ecology could not be viewed in isolation. The principle of solidarity was characterised as a combination of brotherly love and justice. In this respect, justifications in individual case were irrelevant in societal debates ultimately about structures.

To resolve the public contradiction between reality and values, following the seminar ECWM demanded a fair redistribution of wealth and of paid work. In addition, they called for measures to protect the environment and for principles of sustainability to be considered in political and economic decisions. Every consumer was also obliged to make his or her own decisions consciously. Furthermore, the participants condemned the rejection of immigrants and refugees. In concrete terms, they proposed measures for distributing paid working time, such as reducing the working week, separating the social security system from gainful employment and, to achieve this, the introduction of a guaranteed basic income.

3.6 “Demographic winter”: the compatibility of work and family for young female workers, a means of strengthening the social dialogue structures on a national and European level

27 to 29 January 2017 in Lisbon/Portugal, organised by FIDESTRA

During this seminar, representatives of European workers’ organisations addressed the demographic situation in Europe and put it in the context of gender discrimination. As examples, the demographic crises in Portugal, Bulgaria, Serbia and Romania were examined, as well as causes and consequences of the vertical and horizontal segregation of the labour market; this is already evident at the start of a career when young women have greater difficulties finding a job because of a potential pregnancy. Mothers are at an even greater disadvantage in the world of work than childless women. The example of Portugal showed an escalation of gender discrimination in access to paid work during the financial crisis. The seminar-goers also discussed the very negative impact of interruptions to gainful employment on old-age pension. These consequences of maternity were inducing well-qualified women in particular to decide against having children.

Another cause of the demographic shift identified was the insecure employment and low pay of young people. Further challenges for young families today were mobility, which resulted in the grandparents or parents’ siblings no longer being able to help care for the children, but the parents or single parent alone being left to their own devices. A weakening of the welfare systems was criticised, and the question was asked why the economy was allowed to take precedence over social security.

Equality and equity had to be combined with the principle of dignity, as an equal but undignified situation was no solution either. To produce such a dignified and fair situation, the seminar called for work-life balance measures such as quality childcare facilities, state support for kindergartens and crèches, and facilities such as rooms for breastfeeding and childcare facilities at the workplace. There was also a call for the promotion of paternity “leave” and of fair distribution of domestic and care work among men and

women. Care work for elderly relatives should also be taken into consideration. Another question is whether in view of the high rate of unemployment it was advisable to follow the model of one partner focusing on gainful employment and the other concentrating on family work. It became evident that family work was of equally high relevance to society as paid work, and this model had to be available as an option like any other, with the respective roles not being defined by gender. Moreover, this option obviously presupposes wages that permit a family to be fed on one wage, as well as a solution for old-age pension. And it does not meet the challenges faced by single parents.

Overall, freedom of choice was regarded as indispensable. For this Europe required equal opportunities based on a policy of work-family balance, helping improve the demographic development of Europe.

3.7 The future and sustainability of the European public systems of social security

9 to 12 February 2017 in Porto/Portugal, organised by CFTL

Representatives of various organisations from Portugal, Spain, Belgium, France, Italy and Germany described the European social insurance systems and social protection altogether as “the heart of Europe” and “a legitimate reason to be proud”. That is why state welfare mechanisms for distribution had to be safeguarded and defended. The same applied to their universality, since the minorities’ state of mind was both an indicator and essential condition for a society’s wellbeing.

However, social exclusion, poverty and the watering down of workers’ rights indicated deficiencies in social protection. The reasons identified for this were the crisis and the resultant high level of unemployment and austerity policies. Precariousness per se was not a new phenomenon. What was new now was that precariousness was affecting not just the fringes of society but also the entire middle class. Moreover, even standard jobs were exposed to increasing pressure and poor social insurance, hence to precariousness.

These processes could be further exacerbated by globalisation and digitalisation.

Other challenges mentioned by the participants were the demographic change and cultural individualism. Consequently, the big question was how social security could be safeguarded in the face of these challenges.

To this end, strengthening the value of solidarity was seen as indispensable. The seminar also discussed the necessity for tax increases and the approach of broadening the tax basis instead of raising taxes. For instance, companies off-shoring their business should continue contributing funds to societal functions.

Whether debts represented a suitable means of guaranteeing citizens' rights was discussed from the perspective that prosperous states have at the same time a high level of national debt, and from the perspective of the challenge of future debt repayment. The necessity of cuts to safeguard social security systems was also advocated. Migrants were considered as a possible solution to the demographic problem, with this entailing investments in education and, say, language courses.

Because of the close correlation between social security and gainful employment, the participants viewed the latter as an important issue. Reductions in working time were proposed, as was the introduction of a 36-hour week and increasing minimum wages.

At the same time, there was in-depth discussion of a guaranteed basic income. Advocates referred to work essential to society that was done without monetary reward. Others described receiving money without working for it as immoral and feared inflation, whereupon the former group replied that a basic income was not funded by an increase in money. Altogether the seminar-goers regarded the guaranteeing of accommodation, health and involvement in the democratic system as a state duty to be fulfilled with or without a basic income

They were agreed about the necessity of inclusive, transparent social dialogue as well as strong and inclusive trade unions that also addressed target groups like the unemployed and the socially excluded.

4 Recommendations for action for workers' organisations

Irrespective of the focuses of the individual seminars, today's living and working conditions in Europe are cause for concern. The austerity policies of recent years have obviously produced no real improvements but only worsened the consequences of the crisis.

Accordingly there is considerable need for action; each seminar came up with concrete approaches and measures. I have described these individually in the course of each report (see Chapter 3). However, one phenomenon was frequently discussed without options for action being developed each time: the lack of compliance with legal provisions at the workplace. As such incidents were mentioned repeatedly, this suggests structural challenges which workers' organisations must analyse urgently and discuss in public.

Furthermore, state institutions have both responsibility for and a patent interest in pursuing this.

Otherwise, because of the detailed description of the options for action developed in Chapter 3, I will limit myself here to measures very frequently recommended in the course of the project coordination.

There was a great deal of agreement on the necessity for social protection as a guarantee of a decent life, social justice and social peace in Europe. There was also a need for strong workers' organisations and real, effective social dialogue.

The situation in the labour market contradicts human and – as centres with a strong Christian motivation showed – Christian values. A large number of concrete proposals for reform to regulate the labour market were discussed (see Chapter 3). One result of the analysis was the striking frequency with which working time reductions were demanded. These are advisable both in terms of reducing unemployment and from the perspective of a better work-life balance.

On top of that, measures for safeguarding work-family balance and to promote gender equality seem necessary both from an ethical perspective and in the face of demographic challenges.

On the other hand there was no unity on the introduction of a guaranteed basic income. However, as this was discussed so often (see Chapter 3), further serious debates including considerations of consequences and possible financing concepts seem necessary, especially since the correlation between paid work and social security is being increasingly questioned.

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