

CALL

EUROPEAN CHRISTIAN
EMPLOYMENT AND
ECONOMY NETWORK

Church
Action on
Labour
and
Life

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY TO THE CALL ASSEMBLY – OCTOBER 2012

“No Future without Good Work!”

CALL to action!

After two years of reflection our group came to the conclusion that there is a need for action, on two different levels. One is directed to the people in our Churches who are ready to help others in diaconia or parishes: to make them more aware of the risks and needs of people in precarious working conditions. The other is directed to workers searching for jobs in countries with precarious working conditions: to give them basic information in their language on the rules, costs and prices of their new working place.

Employment is declared “precarious” when it does not have the convenient contract duration, a wage for living, enough negotiation rights and the required safety.

Intentions:

We were coming from 11 countries, East and West, North and South of Europe. Our background experiences were with unemployment, migration, diaconia, unions, parish activity.

We met first to understand and also to compare the situations of precarious workers in European countries. Our second intention was to support and to empower the concerned workers through diaconal services organised by our Churches.

The third direction of our work is to find – later – some policy elements and minimum policy standards in order for Churches and social services to lobby and negotiate on future laws and to prevent bad working conditions.

We “CALL” for Good Work in our countries. Christian voices have to get heard on this! This means the following series of issues.

Issues around fighting precarious working conditions:

Some more precise regulations are needed, but also the application of existing rules and rights. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has defined decent work and set criteria for it. These have to be included into the legal basic conditions for any employment in all countries.

Action needed is for better rights and for more support:

- More minimum standards and rights (based on the criteria for decent work)
- Wages for living, working conditions with dignity
- Equal rights, health and security
- Self-employed with better protection
- Better status of posted workers
- Counselling services, legal support
- Denunciation of illegal employers
- Access to legal status for migrants
- Flexicurity policies, transition from job to job
- Social alternatives, basic income

Christian reflection with biblical basis:

The parable of employees and salaries (Matt. 20) and the story of hard work (Exodus 3) show that both Testaments of the Bible have a clear consciousness of hard working conditions and insufficient wages. From the Gospel there is light and hope even in dark working conditions. People are listened to – by God and by us! And they are recognised in their achievements, they are released from the need to make more efforts to live in dignity.

But first: what is “good work”, and what is “precarious work”?

We needed definitions: we offer them here.

What is “Good Work”?

**“Good work” – The original Finnish definition,
revised by the CALL working group 2011:**

1. Good work **produces things of real value**
2. Good work **respects the dignity of every human being, women and men of all ages, as made in the image of God**
3. Good work **gives service to your neighbour**
4. Good work **gives the opportunity to fulfil your vocation and to get training**
5. Good work **doesn't make too many demands on creation (minimising pollution and the wasting of natural resources)**
6. Good work **gives at least a subsistence income and good working conditions**
7. Good work **brings the possibility of influencing working practices and the rhythm of work**
8. Good work **enables adequate rest and relaxation, health and safety**

9. Good work **affirms for each member of the working community the right to participate in decision making**
10. Good work **balances family life and paid work and gives lifelong security to both women and men**

What is “Precarious Work”?

Precarious work is frequently associated with – but cannot be considered identical to – the following types of employment: **part-time employment, self-employment, fixed-term work, temporary work, on-call work, home working and telecommuting.**

All of these forms of employment are related in that they depart from the standard employment relationship (full-time, continuous work with one employer), but they are **not in all cases to be considered precarious**, since a good legislation and/or good collective agreement can secure these contract forms.

In fact you can be in a precarious employment situation in any company, at any given moment.

For instance you can have **an insecure contract with a temporary agency**, with lesser pay than the comparable worker inside the company where you are working, with no safety equipment or social security, but you can also find yourself in an insecure employment situation in a company where temporary agency contracts are **replacing regular employment.**

Such contracts are **without rights and dignity** and workers cannot negotiate any aspect of their working conditions at a personal or collective level. They can only decide to accept or to reject them. The worker is alone, abandoned by trade unions and political parties.

This kind of employment is found in strong percentages **in many countries**, for example in Germany at 15 %, in Italy at 13 %, in Poland at 27 % and in Switzerland at 4 %. Our Austrian colleagues published a booklet (*“Fair statt prekär”*) and campaigning material showing that atypical working contracts are growing in number in their country, that especially part time work means reduced income and less unemployment benefits, that particularly women are touched and don’t know all their rights with part time jobs; the case of posted workers, leased to other countries or companies like goods or instruments, is particularly affecting their dignity as persons. In Germany Industrial Mission (KDA) organized two conferences about this issue and published a little booklet for church communities to use it in worships. KDA also decided to cooperate with a union initiative demanding “fair mobility”.

Precarious employment is endangering the whole wages system in the countries! The purpose of employers is to have mobile, flexible, obedient and cheap employees. But too low wages are discouraging unemployed persons to take these jobs.

A. Structural aspects

“**Precarious work**” is an employment combining some of the following aspects:

1. Uncertainty of continuing employment (job insecurity, limited contracts, agency work)
2. Absence of trade unions and employee associations
3. Non decent working conditions
4. Uncontrolled working time (long and irregular hours, unpaid overtime, less free time)

5. Wages beneath subsistence level
6. Lack of vocational training
7. Work without any social security (concerning housing, transport, health insurance, pension, unemployment pay and other social needs)
8. No protection against dismissal
9. Insufficient health and safety protection
10. Unclear status (workfare, training, internship, apparently self-employed, absence of legal admission, absence of national documents)

B. Effects on people

In general precariousness affects the self-image of the working person and the possibility of building expertise. The individual person feels alone and frustrated, surrounded by enemies and competitors.

Precariousness can develop the level of aggression and the breakup of social relationships. It can also create depressed people using medicine for something that in fact is a structural and political problem.

But the way in which people perceive precariousness, feel it and experience it, is certainly very personal.

CALL to Action on Good Work in the European Churches

Our working group is proposing here elements for the next CALL Assembly, in order to show to our Churches how a future action on “Good work” could be decided and realised. The action which our working group is proposing is first an action of our Churches with their own members, at least with those who are ready to help in diaconia or parishes to recognise the needs of people in precarious employment.

1. **Ethics and theology: Good work and minimum standards** (see the 10 principles above; new legal standards still to be prepared)
2. **Information on issues: Legal and illegal conditions of work** (see our survey below; see also the Austrian booklet “*Fair statt prekär*”; other booklets or leaflets still to be prepared)
3. **European survey: National experiences and evaluation** (see below)
4. **Action models for Churches**
 - a. **Local meetings** with people of faith on accepting or refusing precarious work conditions. Possible dates for action during the Church year:
 - around the 1st of May (Labour Day),
 - around the 7th of October (World Day of Decent Work – see www.wddw.org)
 - or around the 10th of December (World Day of Human Rights),
 - also in some Churches a national day of repentance.
 - b. **Public examination** of local employment conditions and critical support to the employees (with media instruments like articles, videos, post cards, flyers, web site).

- c. Co-operation with social services, non-governmental organisations and youth organisations in order to reach workers at risk of precarious employment (preventive action in migration contexts, counselling before and after acceptance of employment).
- d. Lobbying towards political parties, authorities, members of parliaments, as Church or in co-operation with social partners. Boycott, i.e. refusal to accept money or to buy commodities from firms using precarious employment.
- e. Later if possible: Public memorandum of Church leaders on ethical foundations and principles of good work.

Our working group suggests in the appendix the documents and material which we would prepare at different stages of the action on “Good work” in order to support it.

Each Church would of course have to adapt the documents to their own national situation and language, and publish and distribute the material.

Conclusions:

Having evaluated the answers to our basic questions (see appendix 1), we were able to understand better the different economic and social situations in European countries.

This brought us to propose a continuation of our project with two main lines:

- On one side, as we said above, we plan to produce more **information and education material for Church communities** which could be used in worship, in groups or in publicity. The aim is to rise up awareness and consciousness in Churches and society about precarious working conditions and to strengthen the demand for good work.
- On the other side, **concrete help and support through counselling** will be given to those who are mostly affected by precarious working conditions. The main target group of this are mobile workers coming from Eastern Europe to work in Western European countries. It is planned to produce in their languages **a leaflet with basic information** about labour and social rights in the immigration countries, in which they are in risk of unprotected employment, low wages and precarious conditions.

The present report is in this sense a provisional step in an ongoing double project. We made the experience that we need more time to reach our goals. The discussion and the cooperation in an international working group on such a complicated issue like precarious work are not easy, because the background, the possibilities for work and action are very different. Unfortunately our application to the EU to fund our project was not successful in the first step. A good financial basis is not all but it would help a lot to come forward faster.

APPENDIX 1***Our European Survey: facts and figures***

The precarious working conditions are conditioned by particular situations in the economy of certain branches or firms. They don't touch only migrants, but predominantly (see below).

Economic background:

- Weak or threatened firms (small or middle-size) avoiding parts of their duties (for ex. cleaners)
- Seasonal work (agriculture, forestry, construction, restaurants)
- Domestic services
- Unregulated markets, insufficient enforcement of laws, informal labour markets
- Garment industry (see the "Clean Clothes Campaign")
- Self-employment
- Subcontracted enterprises and posted workers
- Privatisation of wealth and incomes, dissolution of solidarity

National situations:

Laws do exist in most countries on protection around issues like Temporary agency work, Fixed-term contracts or Part time employment (not in Poland, but their labour law is flexible enough). But laws don't restrict really the precarious working conditions by lack of control or by fear of the employees to go to courts.

Fixed-term contracts:

- Czech Rep.:*** Sometimes such contracts are repeated for more than three periods! They are prohibited for single parents, but these have to agree nevertheless to have a job!
Italy: Training contracts, temporary contracts, deregulated employment.

Informal sector (main examples):

- Austria (Aus):*** construction, tourism, domestic work
Belgium (Bel): construction
Czech Rep. (Cze): construction, agriculture, domestic work, services
Finland (Fin): construction, agriculture, restaurants, cleaning
France (Fra): tourism, construction, call centres, theatres
Germany (Ger): cleaning, construction, agriculture, domestic work
Italy (Ita): agriculture, construction, care; 12% of work forces
Lithuania (Lit): construction, wood work, commerce
Romania (Rom): construction, commerce, food and clothing production with very low wages
Sweden (Swe): construction; 13% of work forces
Switzerland (Swi): domestic work, services, family restaurants and businesses, fitness and sex clubs.

Migrants in the EU countries:

| POPULATION ORIGIN Eurostat 2011 <i>p = provisional</i> | BY figures | All foreigners | Not-EU 27 | Not-EU 27 % of total |
|---|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Czech Republic | | 416'737 | 281'336 | 67,5 |
| Denmark | | 345'884 | 220'736 | 63,8 |
| Germany | | 7'198'946 | 4'570'640 | 63,5 |
| Estonia | | 208'038 | 195'42 | 9,4 |
| Ireland | | 361'557 | 69'14 | 1,9 |
| Greece | | 956'007 | 802'969 | 83,9 |
| Spain | | 5'654'630 | 3'325'477 | 58,8 |
| France | | 3'824'828 | 2'484'944 | 64,9 |
| Italy | | 4'570'317 | 3'235'497 | 70,8 |
| Cyprus | | - | - | - |
| Latvia | | <i>p</i> 379'778 | <i>p</i> 369'983 | 97,4 |
| Lithuania | | 33'567 | 31'656 | 94,3 |
| Luxembourg | | 220'705 | 30'137 | 13,6 |
| Hungary | | 209'202 | 82'138 | 39,2 |
| Malta | | 20'384 | 10'004 | 49,1 |
| Netherlands | | 673'235 | 338'686 | 50,3 |
| Austria | | 907'407 | 555'222 | 68,2 |
| Poland | | <i>p</i> 47'261 | <i>p</i> 31'733 | 67,1 |
| Portugal | | 448'083 | 344'853 | 76,9 |
| Romania | | - | - | - |
| Slovenia | | 82'746 | 77'383 | 93,5 |
| Slovakia | | 67'976 | 26'094 | 38,4 |
| Finland | | 166'627 | 105'402 | 63,2 |
| Sweden | | 622'275 | 352'325 | 56,6 |
| United Kingdom | | <i>p</i> 4'486'644 | <i>p</i> 2'425'219 | 54,1 |
| Iceland | | 21'143 | 4'449 | 21,1 |
| Liechtenstein | | 12'004 | 6'083 | 50,7 |
| Norway | | 368'475 | 154'491 | 41,9 |
| Switzerland | | 1'765'750 | 667'993 | 37,8 |

Origins of migrants:

mainly Turkey and Eastern Europe

(Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Russia, Serbia...)

- and now *China* and *Near East* (now in Romania and Lithuania for ex.)!

Qualification:

Educated workers, young and skilled, are immigrants to EU countries. They find jobs generally below their qualification, less paid than others.

Emigration of EU nationals to other countries:

Some EU nationals are moving to richer countries in the EU.
- *Czechs* and *Lithuanians* to the UK, Ireland, Germany, Austria /
- *Poles* and *Romanians* to EU countries / *Germans* to Austria and Switzerland... /
- ...and from *Spain* and *Portugal* to... where?

To be continued on next page

Bold are countries with high increase from one year to the other.

| EMIGRATION TO OTHER COUNTRIES | | |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| Examples | 2009 | 2010 |
| Czech Republic | 61782 | 61069 |
| | 28658 | |
| Germany | 2 | ? |
| Ireland | 65253 | 73675 |
| | | 11998 |
| Greece | ? | 5 |
| | 32364 | 40301 |
| Spain | 1 | 3 |
| | | 17915 |
| France | ? | 9 |
| | p | |
| | 80 | |
| | 59 | |
| Italy | 7 | 78771 |
| | | p |
| | | 10 |
| | | 70 |
| Latvia | 7388 | 2 |
| Lithuania | 21970 | 83157 |
| Hungary | 10483 | 11103 |
| Malta | 7389 | 5954 |
| | p | |
| | 85 | |
| | 35 | |
| Netherlands | 7 | ? |
| Austria | 56397 | ? |
| | p | |
| | 16 | |
| | 89 | |
| Portugal | 9 | 23760 |
| Slovenia | 18788 | 15937 |
| Slovakia | 4753 | 4447 |
| Finland | 12151 | 11905 |
| Sweden | 39240 | ? |
| | 36815 | 33930 |
| United Kingdom | 0 | 6 |
| Norway | 17072 | 25835 |
| <i>p = provisional</i> | | |
| No information from Poland and Romania ! | | |

Decision to migrate to a country often relies on insufficient information on prices and salaries in this country.

Information should therefore be shared more broadly: see here our own first examination!

Prices and Salaries (estimations from our group):

1 kg bread:

*1 € in Cze or Bel / 1,4 € in Rom or Pol / 2,3 € in Lit /
2,5 € in Ger or Ita / 3 € in Swi / 4 € in Swe / 5 € in Fra or Fin!*

1 lt milk:

*0,6 € in Cze or Pol / 0,8 € in Lit or Fra / 1 € in Bel, Ger, Swe or Swi /
1,4 € in Fin, Rom or Ita.*

3 rooms flat with heating and energy per month:

*250 € in rural Fra / 350 € in Lit / 400 € in Rom / 400 € in rural Pol, Fin or Ger /
500 € in Bel or Cze / 600 € in urban Pol / 650 € in Swe and urban Fra /
800 € in urban Fin or Ger / 1200 € in Swi.
– This means between 1/3 and 2/3 of one month wage.*

Monthly costs of living for a family with 2 children:

*2100 € in Aus / 1400 € in Bel / 800 € in Cze / 2000 € in Fin / 1800 € in Fra /
3000 € in Ger / 1000 € in Lit / 720 € in Pol / 1500 € in Swe / 5000 € in Swi.*

Minimum wages: Not fixed by law in Aus, Ger, Ita, Fin, Swe, Swi. –

1400 € in Bel / 1400 € in Fra / 320 € in Pol and Cze (2€/hour) / 155 € in Rom.

Current low wages:

*920 € as poverty level in Aus / 6€/hour in Bel / 520 € in Cze /
2000 € in Fin / 1200 € in Fra / 1300 € in Ger and Ita / 350 € in Lit /
400 € in Pol / 200 € in Rom / 1900 € in Swe / 2400 € in Swi.*

APPENDIX 2

Material to be prepared for the action on “Good Work”

| <u>Type</u> | <u>What for whom?</u> | <u>Contents</u> |
|---|--|--|
| <p><u>EDUCATION MATERIAL</u> Principles of good work, theological foundation and examples of bad and good practice.</p> | <p><i>a) Base for Church action with parishes and local services</i> – Education material to train local supporters of the action. Common base for the action material.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles of good work, basic rights and existing laws. • Examples of current precarious work places and of good practice. • Theological foundation. Gospel dimension of the action: hope for hopeless people. • Suggestion of dates for local action during the Church year. • Prayers and readings for parish meetings and youth groups. • Basic information on economic factors (see our survey below). |
| <p><u>ACTION MATERIAL</u> Stories: examples of bad working places, of court judgements against illegal working conditions, of minimum standards to be defended</p> | <p><i>b) Ideas for action in the broader public</i> – Action material to explain, delegitimise and hinder precarious employment.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenario for a radio programme, a video clip or a press article with testimonies and reflections. • Examples of current precarious work places and of good practice. • Examples of court judgements against bad working conditions. • Experiences of migrants from one country to another. • Templates for: Flyers / Petition / Post cards / Web site. |
| <p><u>INFORMATION LEAFLET</u> Main information in short, centred on migration risks (mobility in the EU to some immigration countries)</p> | <p><i>c) Flyers for the workers at risk through counselling centres and social services</i> – Leaflets on the biggest differences in labour conditions between country of origin and country of employment.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic information on life costs and wages levels. • Differences in employment conditions. • Places of support for concerned workers. |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p><u>Later:</u></p> <p><u>DISCUSSION WITH POLITICAL PARTNERS</u></p> <p>Development of existing actions on violations of rights and discriminations.</p> <p>Development of existing EU Directives on working conditions and labour relations.</p> | <p>d) For workers organisations (Unions) and NGOs – Discussion points, possible minimum standards on employment conditions.</p> <p>e) For Church lobbying teams – Information on European labour law and on ethical standards.</p> <p>f) For the EU politicians and civil servants – Proposal for a new set of EU minimum standards on employment conditions.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of equal rights and of non-discrimination also in employment. • Working conditions and labour relations in EU Directives and national laws. • The criteria for “decent work” of the International Labour Organisation. • Definition of possible minimum standards to be put in new laws. • Ethical discussion material on the quality of employment. |
|---|--|--|

APPENDIX 3

“World Day for Decent Work” – each year on the 7th October

Here the example of the international campaign of organised employees (Trade Unions) for new legal conditions of employment respecting the dignity of workers (quotation from the **International Trade Union Confederation - ITUC**):

*“Since 2008 the ITUC has been organising the World Day for Decent Work (WDDW) on **7 October**.*

This is a day for mobilisation all over the world: one day when all the trade unions in the world stand up for decent work. Decent work must be at the centre of government actions to bring back economic growth and build a new global economy that puts people first.

No action is too big or too small for the World Day for Decent Work. → Go to the WDDW website and sign up your action: whether be it a round table discussion, a huge demonstration, a protest letter, a flash mob action or something completely different.

***This year [i.e. 2011] the WDDW will concentrate on precarious work.** Typically, precarious employment refers to **non-permanent, temporary, casual, insecure and contingent** forms of work.*

*From a workers’ point of view, precarious work is related to **uncertain, unpredictable and risky** employment. Workers in these jobs are not, or only partially, covered by labour laws and social security protection. They encounter **difficulties either in law or in practice** to join or form a trade union. Female precarious workers are likely to be **excluded from pregnancy protection and maternity leave provisions**, as well as other important forms of social protection.”*