



Committed to **Social Justice**

A good life for everyone.
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OGB



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Foreword

There have been many upheavals in the history of the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB). Upheavals that have led to new beginnings. The goal was and remains to achieve a good life for all working people. Almost exactly 100 years ago between the two world wars, our forefathers fought for co-determination at the workplace and beyond and pushed through numerous socio-political achievements that benefit workers even today.

The horrors of national socialism which also cost the lives of many of our colleagues, led to a new development after the Second World War, when the ÖGB decided to unite all trade unions and political tendencies and to join forces to fight for the interests of workers, for peace, democracy and human rights.

Austria's path to prosperity and social peace has been characterised for many decades by the well-functioning social dialogue, the so-called "social partnership". The cooperation with the representatives of the employers' side is based on the interest to negotiate at eye level and to jointly

contribute to the reconciliation of interests. The ÖGB is always open to dialogue; however, we are also prepared to leave the negotiating table and use all trade union resources available in order to assert the interests of the workers if there is no other solution.

We know that we cannot and must not fight this battle for a good life alone. In solidarity with trade unions around the world and with many sister organisations, we will continue to fight for a good life for all, for peace, freedom, democracy and human rights. The world faces numerous global challenges that are putting our collective efforts to the test. These challenges include wars, hunger, poverty, the erosion of democracies, rapid technological change, a growing global economic power, and last but not least, the escalating climate crisis which has become a catastrophic threat to humanity. Our ability to confront and overcome these challenges will be a true test of our shared responsibility and determination to build a better future. The climate crisis is not only an ecological but above all, a social issue.



"In solidarity with trade unions all over the world and with many like-minded organisations we are committed to peace, freedom, democracy, human rights and to a good life for everyone."

It will fundamentally change both the daily working and personal lives of everyone. Amidst the serious process of change, the most significant challenge is to prioritise the welfare of workers and prevent them from suffering adverse consequences. The ÖGB therefore demands that the undoubtedly necessary measures to protect the climate and our living space must be based on an approach that ensures affordability and fairness. We call this approach "Just Transition".

We are ready to help shape the future in a way that puts a good life for all at the heart of change!

Wolfgang Katzian
ÖGB President

Our Mission



We Stand for Social Justice.

Our job is to ensure that all people can trust in social stability; a just distribution of wealth; that all people – old or young, men or women, employed or unemployed, sick or healthy, born in Austria or born elsewhere – have equal opportunities. We are uncompromising in our fight against any form of discrimination, repression, racism, sexism, fascism or dictatorship. Our members make us strong. Together with them, we fight for a just

world of work with good working conditions and a fair income; for lawful and through collective bargaining regulated industrial relations; for a strong co-determination; as well as for a sustainable and positive economical and social development. In companies, in offices, in various branches, in social partnership, in the social security system and as counter-part in politics, it is our duty to provide all workers with a strong representation.



The History of Trade Unions in Austria

The origins of the Austrian trade union movement date back to the Habsburg monarchy. The first workers' associations were founded in the 1840s, and in 1870 the so-called Coalition Act established the legal basis for trade unions.

The first trade unions had a distinctly local organisational setup. It was only in the late 19th century that a union organisation reaching across industries and regions gained widespread acceptance. Thanks to their strength, the unions successfully fought for fundamental social rights such as a ban on Sunday work, the introduction of health and accident insurance, ten-hour working days, a ban on nightshift work for women, etc. Furthermore, the increasing number of collective agreements helped regulate working hours, minimum wages, overtime compensations and many other achievements now taken for granted.

The end of the monarchy was marked by considerable unrest and discontentment among lower social classes; and, spawned a radicalisation of the workers' movement (such as on-the-spot creations of workers' and soldiers' councils). Milestones marking social policy during the

First Republic were the Works Councils Act (1918), the Collective Agreement Act (1919) and the establishment of chambers of labour (1920). Further accomplishments up to 1934 included the introduction of the eight-hour working day and of unemployment benefits. While the trade unions were already organised across regions and industries, they remained fragmented in political terms. Social Democratic, Christian, and German National unions often worked against each other, resulting in a weakening of the entire movement. An additional problem was caused by the so-called "yellow trade unions"—as organisations directly dependent on the company, they mainly acted as strike breakers.



1944: Break time at the Anker bakery



1952: Viennese commerce workers' strike

Ban On Trade Unions – A Dark Chapter

Since the 1920s, conservative and aristocratic elites had striven to curtail hard-fought democratic and social rights. In 1933 the Christian-Socialist government paralyzed the parliament and in 1934 military was used to attack protesting workers. A short but bloody civil war put a temporary end to the independent workers' movement in Austria.

The Austro-Fascist government abolished free unions and introduced a ban on strikes. It founded a single union whose representatives were appointed by the

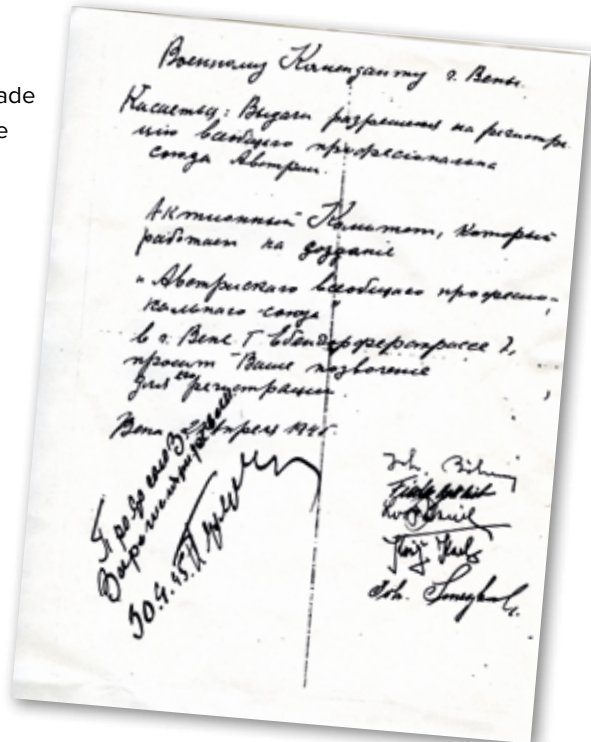
Ministry of Social Affairs. In 1938, when troops from Fascist Germany entered Austria, the demise of Austria as a state exacerbated the situation facing trade unions even more. Austrian workers, often by force, came to be represented and organized by the "German Labour Front" whose main task was to motivate workers to contribute to wartime production. Any resistance was severely punished. Many dedicated Austrian unionists perished in the concentration camps of the Nazi regime.



Foundation Of The Austrian Trade Union Federation in 1945

Already during World War II, trade union activists had planned the foundation of a unitary trade union organisation as soon as Austria could reclaim its independence. This decision has to be seen against the backdrop of the negative experiences gained with the separate political unions during the First Republic. Far from safeguarding workers' rights, this "union pluralism" had actually weakened the workers' movement in the face of the threats posed by fascism and war.

As early as April 1945, in the middle of the ruins of war and destruction, Social Democratic, Christian-Socialist, and Communist officials founded the Austrian Trade Union Federation which still exists today. Only a few European countries have succeeded in building up and maintaining a unitary trade union organisation representing the interests of all its members. At the ÖGB, the rapid increase in membership rolls proved how much this idea took hold



In April of 1945, trade unionists from social democratic, communist and conservative groups met in order to found the "Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund (Austrian Trade Union Federation)" (ÖGB).

among the workers in Austria. Seen in a global context, the ÖGB has a very high share of members among the working population.



Representing the Austrian Workers Today

In line with the eventful history of the Austrian workers' movement and changing political conditions, a complex system has evolved that ensures proper representation of workers. It is based on the following three pillars:

Works Councils

At company level, the interests of employed persons are represented by works councils or – in the public sector – by staff representatives. For companies with more than five employees the Labour Constitution Act stipulates that a works council or staff representative be elected. All employees are entitled to vote, not just trade union members. Works council members have special protection from dismissal. At company level they have clearly defined participation, information, intervention and supervision rights. Under the collective agreements negotiated annually by individual industry unions, they conclude agreements with their companies which may exceed – but

not fall short of – the levels laid down by collective bargaining. Shop stewards are entitled to seek the assistance of their trade union representatives for their deliberations. Today more than 80% of all members of works councils are ÖGB members. It is through them that unions learn more about the problems and concerns of employees and thus are able to respond appropriately when collective bargaining takes place.

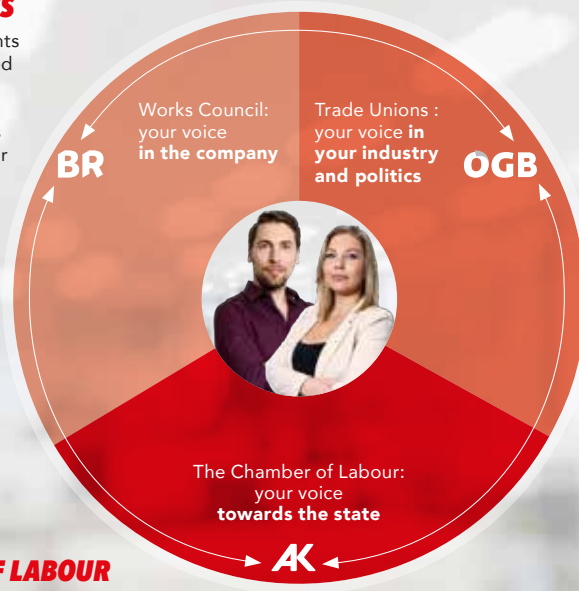
Austrian Trade Union Federation

Founded in 1945, the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB) is the only Austrian organisation representing the interests of workers based on voluntary membership.

The ÖGB is non-partisan although in its efforts to achieve its goals, it does influence politics. It is also possible for trade union leaders to run for office for political parties and become members of parliament. During the Second Republic, trade

WORKS COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

- monitor that your rights at your job are secured
- negotiate company agreements for you
- deliver your demands to the trade unions for collective bargaining



THE CHAMBER OF LABOUR

- is your lawyer in the business world
- consults you in matters from consumer protection to tax law
- examines new laws and uncovers pitfalls in contracts

TRADE UNIONS

- advise and support you at court
- negotiate collective agreements
- when it gets tough: rallies and strikes

USE YOUR STRENGTHS

BR ÖGB AK

For more details:



unionists have held positions in the government (notably as ministers for social affairs) or various other official functions.

Members, should they so wish, may join various ÖGB platforms with a certain political or ideological focus. The largest one of these currently existing platforms is the group of Social-Democratic and Christian Trade Unionists; apart from these, there are also Communist, Green and other groupings.

Trade union members are entitled to legal advice and legal representation in court as well as many other benefits. They profit from the host of collective agreements

negotiated by the ÖGB trade unions at industry level. This dense network of collective agreements which benefits all blue- and white-collar workers in Austria, regulates, i.e., working hours, holiday and Christmas bonuses, supplements, overtime compensation, etc. Annual wage and salary increases are also covered by collective agreements.

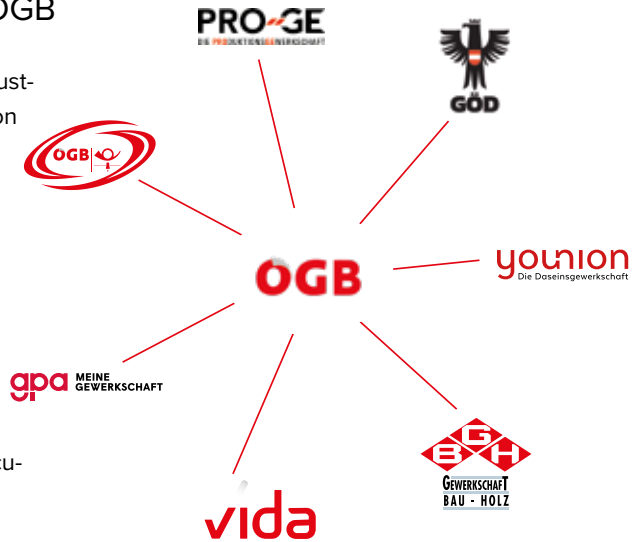
The ÖGB has a major function in the development of new laws: it not only initiates the drafting of bills but also provides political reviews of and comments on bills submitted by other bodies which are then incorporated in the decision-making process.

Structure Of The ÖGB

The highest body of the Austrian Trade Union Federation is the National Congress, which takes place every five years. The National Congress establishes priorities for the next five-year period and elects the President, one male and one female Vice-President, the members of the ÖGB Executive Board and the Audit Commission.

The supreme decision-making body in between National Congresses is the National Executive Board, consisting of Presidium members, representatives of unions and of the ÖGB's women's, youth, and pensioners' departments.

The Presidium, made up of the President, Vice-Presidents, the Chairpersons of the Trade Unions and the Executive Secretaries, coordinates the ÖGB's daily political work. Activities carried out at company and industry levels are reserved mostly to the trade unions: they negotiate wage increases, assist works' council members in elections, legal issues and other concerns.



At its foundation in 1945, the ÖGB had 16 member unions which have meanwhile been streamlined through mergers, to the current level of seven:

- › GPA: Union of Private Sector Employees
- › GÖD: Union of Public Services
- › younion: Union of the municipal employees, art, media, sports and freelance workers
- › GBH: Union of Construction and Woodworkers
- › vida: Transport and Service Union
- › GPF: Union of Postal and Telecommunications Workers
- › PRO-GE: Union of Production Workers

Collective Bargaining

As part of its collective bargaining mandate, unions within the ÖGB conclude almost 800 agreements, approximately 450 agreements are negotiated each year. These are applicable to all companies and all workers employed in a particular industry (not just union members). According to the OECD, Austria has a collective agreement coverage of more than 98%, which has contributed to considerable income security for those employed and a level competitive playing field for companies – a unique feature of the Austrian system. In addition to achieving satisfactory income levels that reflect economic development and rising prices, the ÖGB through its collective bargaining policy aims to create a positive legal framework for workers.

Chambers Of Labour

Already in the 19th century, the state had founded chambers of commerce to represent the interests of entrepreneurs. For workers, comparable institutions were not set up until 1920 – the Chambers of Labour, one for each of Austria's nine provinces, for blue- and white-collar workers. In contrast to trade unions, in which membership is voluntary, the chambers of labour rely on mandatory

Deine Vorteile eines Kollektivvertrages:

- Gute Arbeitsbedingungen
- Jährliche Lohn- und Gehalts-erhöhungen
- Urlaubs- und Weihnachtsgeld
- Kürzere Arbeitszeiten
- Bessere Urlaubsregelungen

ÖGB

The advantages of having a collective agreement:

- > good working conditions
- > yearly wage and salary increases
- > vacation and Christmas pay
- > shorter working hours
- > better vacation policy

membership of all dependently employed persons (excluding those working for the public sector); this principle, incidentally, also applies to the chambers for entrepreneurs and the self-employed.

The chambers of labour are funded by the so-called „Kammerumlage“, or chamber contribution. This levy is to guarantee the independence of the institution concerned. Officials are elected by members every five years. Chambers of labour and trade unions cooperate very closely – both at the political and staff level.

DIE SOZIAL PARTNER ÖSTERREICH



The chambers of labour fulfil the following functions:

- introducing and reviewing proposals for legislation relevant to employees;
- pursuing basic research on economically and socially relevant issues;
- participating in government commissions and advisory councils;
- offering member services (counselling in the areas of labour and tax law,
- unemployment and social insurance, consumer protection);
- involvement in social partnership institutions.

The chambers of labour do not negotiate collective agreements and do not represent their members internationally – these duties are exclusively performed by the trade union movement.

Social Partnership

Economic and social partnership is a typical Austrian institution. It refers to the voluntary and informal cooperation of employers' and employees' associations in economic and social policy with a view to striking a compromise that both sides can live with. Essentially, it is a bipartite system which, if need be, may also contain tripartite elements (by involving the government).

The Austrian model of social partnership was born due to the commitment of political and economic leaders in the post-war era following 1945 to build up the country's war-ravaged economy and infrastructure through a national consensus. Thanks to their support of social dialogue, unilateral economic liberalism, which had triggered workers' protests in 1950, was "nipped in the bud". In subsequent years, this mechanism for finding the right balance between the interests of employees and employers was also extended to other areas, and soon addressed other key social issues such as economic growth, full employment, and monetary stability.

Austrian accession to the European Union in 1995 was prepared by a concerted effort on the part of the social partners and the government. In an "Agreement on





Europe” the government undertook to involve the social partners in decisions and policies of a European dimension. Based on this agreement the ÖGB and the Federal Chamber of Labour operate liaison offices in Brussels.

Social partnership is comprised of the following four associations:

- Austrian Trade Union Federation
- Federal Chamber of Labour
- Austrian Federal Economic Chamber
- Conference of Presidents of the Austrian Chambers of Agriculture

The rapid economic upswing in post-war Austria is due not least to the social partnership. Austria's business location is characterised by particular stability which can be attributed to the policy of social dialogue and thus to social peace. However, the system of social partnership has suffered a great deal under the

ÖVP-FPÖ government elected in 2017. This government introduced the flexibilisation of working time (12 hours per day, 60 hours per week), forced the merging of social insurance institutions and many much more disadvantageous reforms for workers. The Austrian trade union movement mobilised over 100,000 people to demonstrate against the flexibilisation of working time, but unfortunately without success.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the importance of social partnership was recognised by the ÖVP-Green government, and important measures such as the short-time work regulation or the home-office regulation were negotiated by the social partners.

It is now important to reinstall the social partnership in the long term in order to master the challenges of today and tomorrow for the workers and for Austria as a business location.



1983: ETUC rally in Brussels. To this day, ÖGB participates regularly in the activities of the European Trade Union Confederation



2003: Walkout of the streetcar drivers.

5. Campaigns and Activities

Traditionally, Austrians prefer consensus and negotiated solutions. As evidenced by our strike statistics, Austria is a country with very few walkouts. An exception to this rule was 2003. ÖGB mobilized approximately one million people on June 3 throughout Austria to demonstrate against the pension reform planned by the government. The industrial action was a success: the government was forced to back-track from the proposed piece of legislation and incorporate numerous changes in the new law.

There have always been occasions for ÖGB to protest and to initiate campaigns. ÖGB launches campaigns whenever it

wants to disseminate information and sensitise the public.

In 2014, ÖGB started a campaign for more net income for workers through a rapid decrease in income tax. Almost 900,000 people supported ÖGB's petition. This decrease in income tax was consequently adopted into the government programme and came into effect on January 1, 2016 – a great success for the trade unions.

The coronavirus triggered a pandemic in the spring of 2020 – the effects of which have massively preoccupied our entire society, politics and economy. Many people were suddenly confronted with job losses and existential insecurity.

The ÖGB and the chamber of Labour reacted within a few days and installed a job-and-corona hotline that offered initial information as well as legal advice by phone. Between mid-March and the end of July 2020, over 100,000 calls were received. The website www.jobundcorona.at, which provided information in German and another 11 languages, was accessed 1.2 million times. The joint initiative of the ÖGB and the chamber of Labour became the central communication window to working people who, worried about their professional existence, urgently needed advice and help.

Another campaign called “Mir Reicht’s” (Enough is Enough) ran between April and December 2021. The objective was to initiate the creation of new works councils. Starting with a survey and testimonials of works councils in mass media, we could collect contact data could be collected from people interested in building a works



ÖGB campaign "Enough is enough!"

PREISE RUNTER



Demo gegen die
Kostenexplosion!

ÖGB campaign for lower prices. Advertisement for a rally against the "cost explosion".

council in their place of work workplace. A “buddy system” was also put in devised place. Finally, 207 new works councils were founded in 2021 which meant that 650 newly elected works council members and more than 25,000 employees that are now organised.

The latest ÖGB campaign “Preise Runter” (Prices Down – a campaign to lower prices) deals with the very high inflation in Austria. The campaign started in the summer of 2022 with street actions. In autumn, there was a conference with over 3,000 works council members, followed by demonstrations and action weeks in all regions of Austria. Pressure was put on the government to find quick solutions for the population, which is suffering severely from the highest inflation in decades. The ÖGB demands massive price reductions for energy, housing, food and mobility. Unfortunately, inflation continues to be a major problem and the government is not offering any far-reaching solutions for the population. The campaign will therefore run for the time being until the ÖGB Congress in 2023 and will possibly be extended.



"ÖGB because..."

Our Goals

(Excerpt from the Policy Statement of the 20th ÖGB National Congress in 2023)

1. Climate, energy, transformation, mobility, transport – Just Transition

The transformation of our economy generates job losses on the one hand, but on the other hand it creates high-quality employment in ecologically and socially sustainable areas. For the ÖGB, the focus is on ensuring an affordable and equitable transition. This requires an active labour market policy to provide the best possible support for workers and to maintain and create new high-quality jobs.

The expansion of services of general interest as well as social and ecological infrastructure should be carried out by a strong state in the role of strategist, regulator, demand and provider.

2. Social security

Our health system faces numerous challenges and must be adapted accordingly. Among other things, the effects of climate change and pandemics as well as demographic developments must be taken into account. Particular importance must also be attached to the role of health care workers.

A strong public pension system with the goals of ensuring the standard of living and avoiding poverty in old age is indispensable. Social insurance must be further developed in the interests of the insured and financial security must be guaranteed in the long term.

3. Care, poverty, social assistance, family benefits

People are living longer and this will also increase the need for care and support. At the same time, many workers in the care and nursing sector are leaving the industry because of the stressful working conditions. There is an urgent need for better working conditions, higher pay and a reduction in working hours with full wage and staff compensation as well as free vocational training opportunities.

Reconciling work and family life continues to be a challenge in Austria. There needs to be a legal entitlement to an affordable





Hospital in Feldkirch

child education place from the child's first birthday onwards.

Social assistance should be replaced by a nationwide, living minimum income – with minimum rates instead of maximum benefit levels.

4. Education

Education is still “inherited” in Austria. All people must have equal access to education, regardless of origin and background. Schools must be equipped financially and with staff in such a way that the potential of every child is brought to their best possible development.

The vocational training of the future must be based on a broad, professional foundation that prepares people for today's

necessary mobility in the labour market, it must be socially secure, fairly remunerated and highly qualified. There needs to be a legal entitlement to lifelong education.

5. Business and industrial location

The Austrian industrial location is facing big challenges. The short-sighted and neoliberal policies of the last decades have led into a dead end. An active state is required to secure the industrial location and to invest in infrastructure and future technologies. The regional economy as well as security of supply and raw materials must be strengthened. Everyone has a right to affordable and environmen-



Activity for campaign in front of the Austrian Federal Chancellery in Vienna

tally friendly energy. Energy supply is the task of the public sector – the market alone cannot provide it. The basic need for energy must be ensured at affordable prices. At the same time, we must save energy.

All areas of services of general interest, from water supply to health and care, from education to public transport, must be guaranteed for all people. Funds for municipalities and cities must be expanded for this purpose.

6. Labour market

The next few years will bring major changes to the Austrian labour market. With the so-called "baby boomers", a large group of workers is retiring. For the following generations, more frequent changes of jobs are common and work-life balance has a higher priority today.

In addition to shaping the future world of

work, continuing education is also becoming increasingly important throughout a person's working life. The profound structural change, especially due to supply crises, digitalisation and the climate crisis, makes a paradigm shift in skills policy necessary. In the Labour Market Service (AMS), education should therefore be put on an equal footing with job placement. For this, the AMS needs sufficient resources.

7. Work and income

Trade unions shape the conditions of modern wage labour. This involves shaping paid work, framework conditions, wages and salaries, working time, protection of workers and last but not least, fighting against the increasing precarisation in the world of work. In recent years, there has been increased exposure to the attacks of anti-union policies by neoliberal

parties. This must be countered. A collectively agreed minimum wage of 2,000 euros and a collectively agreed minimum apprenticeship income of 1,000 euros must be put in place. There is a need for a reduction of normal working hours in working time law with full wage and staff compensation as well as a reduction of the maximum permissible daily and weekly working hours. The health and interests of workers should be protected through the expansion of protection, effective control and deterrent penalties.

8. Europe, EU and International Affairs

Brexit and the disappointed expectations of workers towards European politics must be seen as a wake-up call: A new orientation of European policy is needed in which the interests of workers and social and ecological goals must be the focus. Austria should pursue an active foreign and peace policy on the basis of neutrality. Furthermore, international trade union cooperation should be strengthened, especially with the countries of the Global South. Regarding the global challenges, it is important to fight the causes of migration and not the people. For this, new standards for fairer economic activity such as supply chain laws must be adopted in order to sustainably prevent the exploitation of working people globally.



Production of school uniforms with the use of child labour. Myanmar, 2013

9. Democracy, Workplace Co-determination

The challenges posed by the crisis in recent years have had a strong impact on social life. Anti-democratic forces are trying to take advantage of this uncertainty in society – to question the basic democratic order and use the crisis to their political advantage. ÖGB resolutely opposes these developments

and is committed to a pluralistic society in which workers have a special status – in which peace, democracy, social justice, equal opportunities and gender equality prevail. Internal co-determination should be strengthened and the prevention or obstruction of works council elections should be made punishable by law.



Collective bargaining 2022: Works meeting at the Miele factory

The Austrian Trade Union Movement and International Relations



1955: ICFTU World Congress in Vienna

From the vantage point of a trade union that comes from a small country heavily impacted by economic developments occurring at European and global levels, international cooperation has always been crucial. Hence, the ÖGB's international ties are highly diverse.

In 1945 the Austrian Trade Union Federation joined the only global trade union association existing at the time, the World



Federation of Trade Unions, or WFTU, headquartered in Prague. In 1949, it switched over to the newly established International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, or ICFTU, headquartered in Brussels. While this shifted the international focus of the ÖGB, it was able, due to its commitment to Austria's permanent neutrality laid down in the State Treaty of 1955, to maintain close ties with the WFTU member organisations in Eastern Europe.



It can thus be argued that the Austrian union movement contributed to the policy of détente on the European continent.

For years the ÖGB, mindful of its country's own history of split unions before World War II, was outspoken in its criticism of the competition existing between two global trade unions, and therefore supported the foundation of a new international movement made up of member organisations of the two dissolved associations structures of WCL and ICFTU, as well as of others with no international affiliation yet. The decision to hold the Founding Congress of the new International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) in Vienna on November 1, 2006 was made in recognition of our dedication to greater unity.



2006: ITUC Founding Congress in Vienna



2022: ETUC rally in Brussels © EGB

The ÖGB is a founding member of the European Trade Union Confederation, or ETUC, created in 1973. Even though the ETUC plays a key role in representing the interests of trade unions in its interactions with the European institutions, it has never served organisations solely from the member countries of the European Economic Community (EEC) and, later on, the European Union (EU), but always oriented itself on the geographic borders of Europe.

Naturally, the priorities of the ÖGB as regards international solidarity have changed over the decades. In light of the decolonisation movement of the early 1960s, cooperation with trade unions from newly independent African countries became a priority task for the ICFTU and thus also for the ÖGB.





2022: Training course in Vienna for young, international trade unionists

Later, the ÖGB was directly involved in solidarity campaigns launched against dictatorships in Chile, Portugal, and Spain, against the Vietnam War, and against the Apartheid regime in South Africa. In the 1970s, it focused its activities on the widening gap between industrialised nations and developing countries.

Since 1990, close cooperation has been developed with the trade union movement in the Central and Eastern European countries, especially with the neighbouring countries of the Czech Republic, the

Slovak Republic, Hungary and Slovenia. Several interregional trade union councils were founded in Austria's border regions on the basis of the ETUC charter. The regional organisations of the ÖGB participate in cross-border activities with partner trade unions in the border regions.

Bilateral relations and international projects have led to cooperation beyond the border regions. Close cooperation with Georgia and the Caucasus region, the Western Balkans and Israel/Palestine should be highlighted.



The international agendas of the ÖGB are taken over by the International Department of the ÖGB in Vienna and the ÖGB European Office in Brussels.

International Department of the ÖGB

The International Department of the ÖGB deals with a wide range of international agendas. These range from affiliations and active work in international federations such as the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) or the annual conference of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to the maintenance of bilateral relations and international projects and events.

ÖGB international

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The ÖGB European Office

The European Office is the political representation of the ÖGB at the EU in Brussels. This means that the ÖGB is locally able to help opinion-making at European level and to give Austrian workers a strong voice in EU decision-making. The ÖGB is also a member of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) which coordinates policies and provides mutual support with trade unions from all over Europe.

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