



COMMITTED TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

**ENGAGEMENT FÜR SOZIALE GERECHTIGKEIT
IN ENGLISCHER SPRACHE**

FOREWORD



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There have been many upheavals in the history of the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB). Upheavals that brought about new beginnings. The goal was and is to achieve a good life for all working people. Almost exactly 100 years ago, between the two world wars, our ancestors fought for workplace and inter-company co-determination and implemented numerous socio-political achievements that still benefit workers today. The horrors of National Socialism, which cost many of our colleagues their lives, led to a new development after the Second World War when ÖGB decided to unite all trade unions and political views and work together for the interests of workers, for peace, democracy and human rights.

Austria's path to prosperity and social peace has been characterised by a well-functioning social dialogue, the so-called „social partnership“ for many decades. The cooperation with the representatives of the employer side was supported by the interest to negotiate on equal terms and to contribute together to a reconciliation of interests. ÖGB will always be open to negotiating on equal terms; but, we are also ready to leave the negotiating table and to utilise all union resources in order to assert workers' interests.

We know that we can not and must not lead this fight for a good life on our own. In solidarity with unions around the world and with many sympathetic organisations, we will continue to work for a good life for all, for peace, freedom, democracy and human rights. The global challenges, such as technological change, an increasingly global economic power and - last but not least - the massive climate changes, will put our common task to the test. We are ready to help shape the future, so that the good life of all people is at the center of these changes!

Wolfgang Katzian

President

CONTACT DETAILS:

Austrian Trade Union Federation (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund, ÖGB)

Responsible for the content of this brochure: ÖGB International Department

Graphics: ÖGB Kommunikation

www.oegb.at

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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, racism, 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.

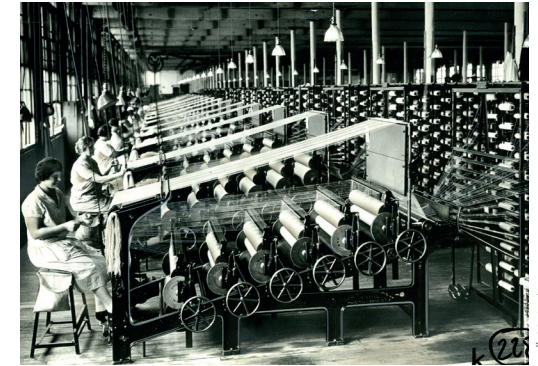
In companies, in offices, in various branches, in social partnership, in the social security system and as a counterpart in politics, it is our duty to provide all workers with a strong representation.



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.



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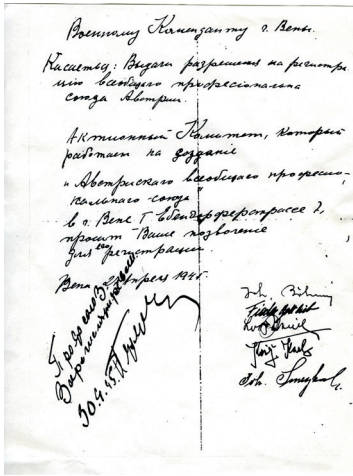
The end of the monarchy was marked by considerable unrest and discontentment among lower social classes; and, spawned a radicalisation of the workers' movement (such as on-the-spot creations of workers' and soldiers' councils). Milestones marking social policy during the First Republic were the Works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

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 organised by the "German Labor 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 would 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-Social, 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 among the workers in Austria. Seen in a global context, the ÖGB has a very high share of members among the working population.

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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:

1. 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 having 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. Works council members 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.



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2. 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 unionists have held position 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.a., 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 (status as of 2018):

- » GPADJP: Union of Private Sector Employees, Graphical Workers and Journalists
- » GÖD: Union of Public Services
- » yunion represents all municipal employees as well as art, media, sport 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

3. CHAMBERS OF LABOUR

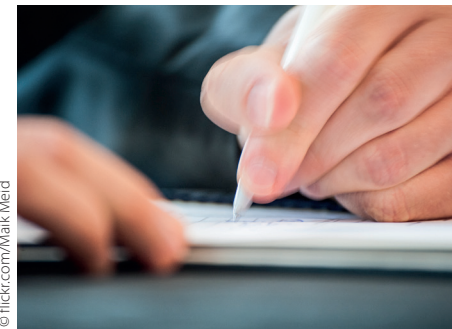
Already in the 19th century, the state had founded chambers of commerce to represent the interests of entrepreneurs. For workers, comparable institutions were not set up until 1920 – the Chambers of Labour, one for each of Austria's nine provinces, for blue- and white-collar workers. In contrast to trade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

The Chambers for Labour fulfill 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 (counseling 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.



ACTIVITIES

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

As part of its collective bargaining mandate, unions within the ÖGB conclude almost 900 agreements. 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 95%, 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.

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 quick economic recovery achieved by post-war Austria can be contributed, amongst other things, to the system of social partnership. Today, as ever, Austria is a business location characterised by high stability which in turn, is attributable to this tradition of social dialog and social peace. Throughout the past years, the social partners have developed joint concepts on various issues that were then taken up by the government to form them into new laws.

The Austrian government, elected in 2017 and compiled by the conservatives (ÖVP) and the right-wing (FPÖ), is focussed on the limitation of Austrian social partnership model: flexibilisation of working hours (12 hours per day, 60 hours per week), merger of social insurance organisations and aim to decrease the membership fee for the Chamber of Labour. The Austrian Trade Union Movement mobilised over 100.000 people to demonstrate against the flexibilisation of working hours, which was enacted by the ÖVP-FPÖ government in September 2018.

Austria has been known worldwide for its very low number of strikes. Due to the limitation of social partnership, many workers were pushed to go on strike in 2018, to protest the worsening working conditions in the course of collective bargaining.



June 2018, demonstration in Vienna against flexibilisation of working hours

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 mobilised 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. One such effort was the works council campaign that ran from November 2005 through the summer of 2006. The objective was to initiate the creation of new works councils. The consequence was numerous new works councils and almost a thousand new ÖGB members joining from the ranks of the works councilors. In 2011/2012, ÖGB also organised a campaign "Fair Teilen" ("Sharing Fairly") which should promote and enforce an equal distribution of wealth – the result was the passing of many laws pertaining to the re-distribution of wealth.

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 AUSTRIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



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.

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. 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.

TRADE UNION RESPONSE TO GLOBALISATION

Now that Austria has joined the European Union and its economy has opened itself up to neo-liberal globalisation, we are faced with new major challenges. The right response can only be a truly global dialogue as well as stepped-up international cooperation with trade unions.

Therefore, the ÖGB embraces the following international agenda:

- » respecting the principles of international law and of the UN Charter, strengthening the peacekeeping role of the United Nations,
- » and opposing unilateral actions taken by powerful nations or military alliances;
- » establishing a Europe without nuclear weapons, from the Atlantic to the Urals;
- » converting the European Union into a "union of peace" and countering an increasingly militarised Common Foreign and Security Policy;
- » protecting global public goods such as health, education, an intact environment, and social justice;
- » reforming international institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation
- » ensuring transparency, democratic legitimacy, full participation of "developing countries" and the involvement of civil society;
- » introducing debt relief for the least developed countries, as well as transparent and
- » IMF-independent debt settlement procedures;
- » effectively monitoring financial markets, such as by introducing a global foreign
- » exchange transaction tax (Tobin tax) earmarked for social projects;
- » establishing viable rules to prevent countries or regions from competing against
- » each other for attracting business by means of social dumping, eco-dumping, and tax
- » exemptions;
- » abolishing market-distorting agricultural subsidies in the North while opening up the European agricultural market to products from the South; promoting fair trade.

In order to meet the challenges of a globalised world cooperating with developing countries around the world, ÖGB has founded its own association for development policy called "weltumspannend arbeiten" ("working globally").

Many projects have been implemented within the framework of this association with emphasis on

- » the Trade Union School in the Republic of Moldova
- » training courses on globalisation
- » support for the "Klinik der Solidarität" (a hospital clinic providing medical services and when possible, mediation free of charge) in Thessaloniki
- » developing projects with certain countries such as Tunisia, Tanzania or Georgia



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OUR GOALS

Excerpt from the Policy Statement of the 19th ÖGB National Congress in 2018

ECONOMIC POLICY

The world's economic crisis has deeply affected all workers. Thus, contrary to the assumption that the adoption of austerity measures and cutbacks are a way out of the crisis, it was shown that countries with a good functioning social system (such as Austria) could manage the crisis easier. ÖGB is committed to an active labour market policy and the expansion of social services. The maintaining of demands is an important factor which has to be taken into consideration when adopting budget policies. Moreover, ÖGB demands a stronger control and regulation of the financial market and banks in order to put a stop to rampant speculation.

TAX POLICY

Compared internationally, the incomes in Austria are very highly taxed in contrast to the tax on wealth. ÖGB is committed to workers receiving more net income as well as higher net pay raises. For a fair distribution of wealth, ÖGB promotes the re-introduction of inheritance and gift taxes as well as wealth taxes so that those with more wealth would be called to contribute more adequately. The introduction of a tax on financial transactions would provide extra security and regulation for each sector – the lack of which played a significant role in the economic crisis of the last years.

LABOUR MARKET

Given the precarious social situation which led to the crisis in many European countries, the prevention of unemployment is one of the greatest political concerns. For this reason, ÖGB promotes the attainment of full employment as its most important objective. The lack of skilled workers should be counteracted with the „Fachkräftemilliarde“, a model in which businesses must pay a percentage of their gross income as an investment in advanced vocational education. This way the employers' side would also take responsibility for a solid training of apprentices. An effective prevention of wage and social dumping must also take place! The social infrastructure should be rebuilt to promote the employment of women.

WORKING HOURS

Workers are being put under continuously growing pressure, flexible working hours and overtime work put a strain on them and minimises the borders between personal and professional life. For this reason, ÖGB is committed to a reduction of working hours while protecting purchasing power. Employers should pay an additional fee of one euro for each overtime hour which should benefit the Austrian Employment Agency as well as the health care system. The practice of „salary theft“ through not paying overtime hours must be effectively combatted. To be able to keep these regulations, it is necessary to have a stronger surveillance of working hours through the supervision of the labour inspector.



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WORKER PROTECTION

Pressure at the workplace can lead to sickness. A better prevention of factors causing illness and compulsory health promotion would mean considerably less absences due to sickness. ÖGB is also committed to ensuring workers the legal right to switching to a less burdening activity – provided that the worker is unable to carry out the regular activity on a permanent basis.



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HEALTH

The Austrian trade union movement is dedicated to high quality health care which must be accessible for all people without any social obstacles. This includes reasonable financial and social resources which should not be financed through the patients' own contribution or extra fees. To guarantee patient-friendly and unbureaucratic health care, the self-administration of the social insurance system should be guaranteed by the Austrian constitution. Moreover, ÖGB demands a high quality education for all people working in the health care system.

OLD-AGE CARE

From ÖGB's point of view, old age care is the duty of the welfare state which considering the rate that society is aging, is becoming increasingly more urgent. To be able to guarantee a uniform, high standard care throughout the country, a nationwide fund for old age care must be established and the working conditions in this area must be improved. 24 hour care must not be carried out on a freelance basis. Moreover, ÖGB firmly believes that the right of recourse for family members should be abolished.

RETIREMENT

The Austrian retirement system is from ÖGB's point of view, efficient and should be maintained. A fair and secure pension can only be enabled through this federal system. In order to be able to ensure the same standard of living in old age, cuts in pension benefits or raising the age of pension must be rejected. Thus, measures for age appropriate work must be established – this is also the responsibility of the employers/companies.



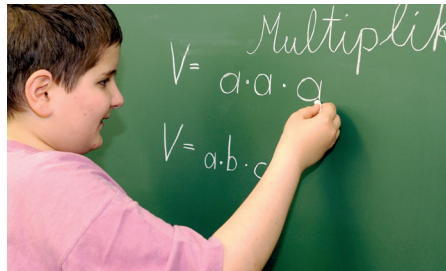
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NEEDS-BASED MINIMUM BENEFIT SYSTEM

ÖGB welcomes the introduction of the needs-based minimum benefit system. Should it however, mean a slight decrease purchasing power in Austria, it must still be viewed as an advancement in the social system. Through this, we are promoting an increase in the amount of assets is exempt from tax, a strengthening of measures for the labour market and a partial payment for special benefits.

FAMILY POLICY

From ÖGB's point of view, the policies in place for family life should not only aim for the financial support of families but also for a work-life balance and equal opportunities for women and men. For this reason, ÖGB is committed to promoting the development of child care facilities, a qualitative extension of a full-time child care system from the first year of life until the beginning of school. In the same vein, a modification of family allowance should lead to a unification of benefits which would give the system clarity and eliminate uncertainty.



EDUCATION

The trade union movement is dedicated to equal opportunities. Unfortunately, education is another area where social selection takes place. ÖGB considers education a basic right and will continue its fight for an open educational system that counteracts this social selection. For this reason, ÖGB demands that a common school for pupils from 6 to 15 years be put in place. A nationwide educational system should be provided for all people starting from nursery school education until university. Adults must also have the opportunity for lifelong learning in order to further their own development.

LABOUR LAW

Changes in the labour market and the increasing demand for flexibility on behalf of workers make modern labour law a central component of the social state. Many companies try to avoid adhering to the labour law by forcing employees into atypical employment relationships – this development should be opposed. ÖGB demands not only a stronger consideration of new developments in labour law and a uniform regulation for employees but also that the working conditions of certain groups of workers be given particular attention.

WAGE AGREEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

One of the main duties and interests of the trade unions is the commitment to negotiating a fair income. A united wage policy proves to be the best way for low-earners to be guaranteed a fair wage. For this reason, ÖGB is dedicated to a high coverage of collective agreements as well as for wages that allow a decent lifestyle for even minimum wage earners. Members of works councils which are committed to the interests of workers should not only have more rights in the decision-making process of companies, but also be better protected from discrimination.

EUROPE

The adopted path out of the crises has proved to be a dead-end. Instead of austerity policy and cut backs, ÖGB demands a fundamental change of policy at EU level which would make a modern growth and distribution model possible. Sustainable investments create new workplaces, consolidate consumption and reinforce the real economy. From ÖGB's point of view people from the EU should be put before economy: not only is a social pact that complements the economic and monetary union but also a fair taxation of incomes and wealth are necessary. Moreover, a stronger regulation of the financial market and the introduction of a tax on financial transactions is essential in order to hinder the repetition of the crisis as well as to gain economic growth, employment and to finance social measures.

INTERNATIONAL

In many countries, the gap between rich and poor is increasing, social rights are being curtailed and in many places, a constant worsening of the labour union rights can be observed. It is ÖGB's firm conviction that the core labour standards as determined by International Labour Organisation (ILO) must be respected without exception and that social services be removed from free trade agreements in order to stop further liberalisation. To prevent impoverishment, ÖGB demands a stop of the food speculation and an international guarantee of trade union rights.



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ECOLOGISATION



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Global warming is a reality against which something must be done. ÖGB demands an extensive and socially fair ecologisation of communities. It includes for example, the expansion of public transport, the ecological restructuring of the tax system – the burden of which should not be borne by the financially weakest members of society. .

DEMOCRACY

Many laws interfere with hard-won social rights. ÖGB is committed to the preservation of these rights which are not able to be abolished with a simple parliamentary majority. On the contrary, they should be considered fundamental social rights and be enshrined in the constitution. ÖGB also believes that the European Parliament should be given more power in order for more democracy on the European level. Only in this way, can non-democratic and right-wing extremist movements be stopped.

THE INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF ÖGB

The duties and responsibilities of the International Department are manifold and include membership to international organisations, strengthening bilateral relations, being in charge of international delegations, carrying out international projects, organising international events, campaigns and much more.

1) MEMBERSHIPS

An important part of international cooperation is the union networking. ÖGB is a part of European and international associations and plays an active role in the organisation of conferences and activities.

A. ITUC – INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

The ITUC was founded in 2006 in Vienna (fusion of social democratic ICFTU and Christian socialist WLC) with its headquarters in Brussels. The ITUC has more than 300 affiliates from over 150 countries. As the global voice of more than 200 million workers it defends their rights and interests and is a strong unionist counterpart to the economical network.

B. ETUC -EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

The ETUC was established 1973 and is the umbrella organisation of the European trade union federations. ETUC represents 45 million members from 90 national trade union confederations from a total of almost 40 European countries as well as ten (10) European Trade Union Federations. EGB is dedicated to creating high quality jobs and to social stability in Europe.

C. TUAC – THE TRADE UNION ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF OECD

TUAC is a trade union organisation which has a consultative status at the OECD and its committees. It introduces union positions and tries to establish a social dimension in industrial countries. The TUAC has 59 affiliates from 31 OECD countries and it represents more than 60 million workers.

D. ILO –INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION.

The ILO was founded in 1919 and is an UNO special organisation which is responsible for promoting and supervising social justice and the compliance of international human and workers rights. It is the forum for employees, employers and government officials of 185 member countries that are committed to the further development of social rights and the creation of fair jobs.

E. PERC – PAN EUROPEAN REGIONAL COUNCIL

PERC is a trade union organisation within the ITUC. It represents a pan-European network of trade unions with 89 almost 90 affiliates from European Union member countries as well as non-member European countries. PERC is dedicated to social security, sustainable development and the stability of a democratic society in the regions.

F. WFTU – WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

Even after ÖGB left the WFTU in 1949, the communication channels have remained open. The dialogue between the two organisations was especially stable during the Cold War. Even today ÖGB, through its left-wing political fraction of communist trade unionists „Linksblock“, is connected with WFTU and keeps bilateral contacts with many WFTU member countries, especially with countries in the south.

1) IRTUC – THE INTERREGIONAL TRADE UNION COUNCILS

The close cooperation of unions is not only an effective instrument on an international level but also on a regional level. Interregional trade union councils are official structures of the European Trade Union Confederation and are the cross-border alliances of trade unions within a European region. They represent the economical and social interests of workers in that region and their duties include legal advice on labour and social matters, assistance in these areas for commuters, support for the European works councils as well as exchange of information and best practices of trade union officials and workplace representatives.

There are 45 IRTUCs in located all across Europe – nine of which are partnered with Austrian trade unions.

The nine Austrian IRTUCs are:

IRTUC EURALP

Carinthia - Friuli-Giulia-Venezia
Founded in 1994

IRTUC TiSoBa, (formerly Interalp founded in 1995)

Trade union organisations from Upper Austria, Salzburg, Tyrol, Bavaria
Founded in 2014

IRTUC Zentralalpen

Trade union organisations from Tyrol – South Tyrol, Belluno, Trento - Graubünden
Founded in 1996

IRTUC Burgenland – West Hungary

Trade union organisations from Burgenland – Győr – Moson – Sopron, Zala, Cas
Founded in 1999

IRTUC Carinthia – West Slovenia

Carinthia – Slovenian Carinthia, Upper Carniola
Founded in 2002

IRTUC Lake Constance

Trade union organisations from Vorarlberg, Bavaria, Baden Württemberg, St. Gallen
Founded in 2002

IRTUC Danube-Moldau/Dunaj-Vltava

Trade union organisations from Upper Austria and South Bohemia
Founded in 2004

IRTUC South Moravia – Lower Austria

Jižni Moravy – Dolniho Rakouska
Founded in 2006

IRTUC Styria – East Slovenia

Styria – Podravje – Pomurje
Founded in 2009

3) STUDY GROUPS IN ÖGB

In the times of globalisation and the concomitant networking of international economy as well as the negative effects of wage and social dumping for workers, international cooperation and the building of a global trade union networks are especially important. Personal contact and the possibility to exchange best practices can be effectively done through international visits.

ÖGB works very closely with the ILO training center in Turin and organises seminars for study groups in Austria, whereas emphasis remains on the trade union movement in developing countries. Within the framework of this cooperation, a group of Asian or African unionists are invited yearly for a training in Austria. Some of the topics include social partnership, collective bargaining and collective agreements, trade union education, campaigning or social security.

In addition to the ILO study groups, approximately ten to 15 study groups from other countries visit ÖGB. The topics of interest for these mostly trade union groups include the Austrian trade union movement, social policy as well as special research topics.

4) MULTILATERAL AND BILATERAL CONTACTS

Besides cooperation with European and international associations, it is also necessary to have strategic partnerships with single trade union organisations from other countries. ÖGB has a good network of contacts with different countries with which Austria has strong ties either due to its history or due to economical and strategic position.

ÖGB has a continuous exchange with the neighbouring countries, countries of the European Union and some countries from the Danube region. The topics of these meetings are mostly preparations for common activities, trade union and social policy.

Every year, the international secretaries are invited to different international congresses. The occasions for these congresses vary. Due to the growing network, that has been built up in the recent years the number of invitations is continuously increasing. Congresses over the borders of the European continent are no longer seldom. These international congresses offer special opportunities to exchange experiences on a bilateral or multilateral level. They also the planning of common activities and actions of international level.

5) CAMPAIGNS AND THE WORLD DAY OF DECENT WORK

The international department actively supports the campaigns of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). This cooperation began with the „Re-run the vote“ campaign pertaining to the consideration of the World Football Championship of 2022 which will take place in Qatar. The working conditions in this country are unbearable and can be referred to as „modern slavery“. ITUC demands better working conditions and should the Quatari government not comply with its demands, the ITUC will do everything in its power to have the World Championship re-located.

Alongside the campaigns, ÖGB also organises various activities and events. One such activity is planning an annual event on the 7th of October which is the World Day of Decent Work. Each year a different aspect of Decent Work is emphasised and is presented to the general public in the form of e.g. panel discussions, informational events, or special lectures in ÖGB's „Trade Union School“.

The International Department of ÖGB organises annual events to honour this day. Some examples include „From Exploitation in Greece to Modern Slavery in Qatar“(2013); „Working and Living Conditions of Textile Workers in Developing Countries“ (2014); and, „Child Labour Throughout the World“ (2015), „How Fair is my Car?“ (2017).

6) PROJECTS

The International Department of ÖGB cooperates very closely with other trade union federations and international organisations across borders for longer periods to create better working and living conditions for employees. Close cooperation with neighbouring countries, especially the Czech and Slovak Republic should lead to increased cooperation among the labour market players in order to have a positive impact on the social situation of all countries and to achieve worldwide improvements in working conditions. One highlight in the projects with the Czech and Slovak Republic was the pro bono legal advice in Czech and Slovak languages. This service made it possible for thousands of workers from the two countries to enforce their rights at the workplace. Since 2016, ÖGB offers pro bono legal advice in Bulgarian, Romanian, Turkish and Arabic.

Our project activities also focus on improved cooperation with the trade unions in the Danube area. As a future and developing region, the countries in the Danube area offer many chances and challenges. Through the cooperation between all stakeholders of the labour market a high potential for the improvement of the situation for workers in all countries is possible.

Important and current topics on the labour market, such as the dual vocational training system and the impacts on digitalisation are explored in the projects. Together with the trade unions and social partners from the Danube area, the International Department develops concepts for future projects in order to strengthen cooperation between the labour market stakeholders that will have positive effects on the social situation of all people.

For further information please contact the International Department of ÖGB:

international@oegb.at

Contact details:

Austrian Trade Union Federation (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund, ÖGB)
Johann-Böhm-Platz 1, 1020 Wien

Responsible for the content of this brochure:

ÖGB International Department

www.oegb.at

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