

# POLICY PAPER ON GOOD WORK

proposed by the Working Group on Precarious Work (to the CALL Assembly 2014)

## 1. Work in Europe – precarious today (Executive Summary)

Most European countries today have more and more precarious working conditions and poor quality jobs. Job contracts offered now to people looking for jobs are often limited to short periods or to insecure tasks – the so called “atypical” contracts in contrast to the long term ones, still called “typical”. Employment is called “precarious” as soon as it does not include:

- an appropriate contract duration,
- a living wage,
- specified working hours,
- enough negotiation rights,
- and the required health and safety provisions.

For decades many European Churches and Church related organisations have tried to monitor and promote the dignity of workers in the economy through campaigns in public places centred on the concept of “**Good Work**”, first in Finland, then e.g. in Britain, Germany and Austria. In the light of the recent developments in our economy, it is now time to renew such action, reflection, worship, discussion, position taking and lobbying – all efforts serving to make citizens and decision makers aware of the requirements of dignity for all human beings, including in employment.

“Good Work” expresses faith in relationships: relation to Creation, to human beings, to their needs, and also to the individual strengths and weaknesses of people at work. People’s skills and contributions are valuable for themselves and for the survival of their family, but also for human society and for the whole Creation. Good work is working together with God, to continue his good work with Creation, and to respect everyone – especially the weakest (Hebrews 13:2).

Thus, in accordance with vital Christian values, every human being is to be treated fairly and equally. In defining new common rules and laws for security there is an important political role which has to be played by civil society in supporting human values and by Christian Churches in defending human dignity. Their action starts with consciousness raising and public condemnation of bad jobs which do not meet the criteria for decent work.

Employers and some political institutions are demanding that European labour law adopt the double principles of flexibility **and** security, linked in the concept of *flexicurity* or *flexi-security*. In this debate economic interest seems to be dominant but social security has to regain importance for all.

In the majority of European countries there are minimum wages on a legal basis, but no common understanding about what a minimum wage should be. In our understanding a minimum wage should not be less than 2/3 of the average wage for a single person in each country.

We ask for laws providing that a work contract should have normally a written form, an unlimited duration and a limited and fixed probation period, and should respect the minimum wage and the working time rules. Limited contracts should be justified exceptions.

All types of jobs should be covered by the social security system: health coverage, protection in the event of unemployment or accidents, a pension system. There should be effective checks ensuring that all employees and employers pay their contribution to social insurance. And there are new challenges for health and safety.

**Christian Churches** in Europe hear the call of people suffering under bad living and working conditions and put their situation, their needs and wishes for a better life in the centre of their prayers and demands. We recall here and support again the proposal made last March by CALL’s conference on Youth Employment to devote one Sunday each year to worship and action as **Employment Sunday**.

From a Christian perspective we intend with this policy paper to **contribute to “a social Europe”** that is not only a proclaimed target in declarations, but becomes a reality through political measures.

## 2. Good Work – a Christian holistic perspective

Christian traditions bring recognition of two main aspects of working life: human society is working in the given Creation – which means being receptive and thankful to the Creator – and finding there a means of living, which means producing enough to live on from this given Creation. But working people are not all producing directly for their own subsistence: they often depend for their living on an employer paying them a wage.

### 2.1 – Bible teaching on employment and good work

From early times the first biblical laws in Israel had rules on employment such as: “*Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns. Pay them their wages each day before sunset, because they are poor and are counting on it. Otherwise they may cry to the Lord against you, and you will be guilty of sin.*” (Deuteronomy 24:14-15)

And similarly the same experience of precarious workers is heard in the final letters of the New Testament: “*Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.*” (James 5:4).

In accordance with essential Christian values, every human being is to be treated fairly and equally. His or her work has its own quality: it is a work together with God, continuing his good work with Creation, and called to respect everyone – especially the weakest (Hebrews 13:2).

Clearly Bible texts come from different historical periods and different types of communities, with different perceptions of what is “work”. There is no coherent understanding of “work” to be found, but there are some common fundamental features:

- The Bible talks about the task of taking care of God’s Creation: “*The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it*” (Genesis 2:15).
- The Bible talks about a vocation in life. It is the call to take care of Creation, but also a special call to each person to be God’s co-worker through his/her work.

- The Bible talks about work as something necessary and as a hard struggle to win one's bread (Genesis 3:17-19), but also as something that gives human life a meaning.

To look upon work this way gives a human person a dignity which it is important to maintain. Your skills and your contribution are valuable, for you and your family's survival, but also for human society and the whole Creation.

There are **risks** however: people can become greedy and selfish. Power, or the **fear of losing power**, could change one's attitude in a bad way. The Bible talks about employers who exploit their workers. The most prominent story about vulnerable workers is about the people of Israel and their slavery in Egypt. But it is also the prominent story about liberation from bad work (Exodus 1).

Jesus Christ taught us how important it is to take care of people: *"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."* (Matthew 25:40).

Our action is not just for our own sake: *"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."* (Luke 6:38).

The Apostle Paul urged the Church to be a good example in using the right measures and giving their own workers fair treatment as they deserve their wages (Philippians 4,10-20, 1 Timothy 5,18).

## 2.2 – What is "Good Work"?

As the first **campaign for "Good Work"** started in Finland, discussions organised by the Church with employers and employees lead to a definition in 10 points, still valid as a headline formulation (see box).

### 1. Good work produces things of real value

"Good Work" is expressing faith in relationships: relation to Creation, to human beings, to their needs, and also to the individual strengths and weaknesses of people at work. The result of work is an important part of its meaning and value.

### 2. Good work respects the dignity of every human being, women and men of all ages, as made in the image of God

Jesus taught in many ways that every human being is equal and should be treated as equal. The golden rule – to do to others what you want them to do to yourself – is just one example (Matthew 7:12). Another is the call not to despise the weakest (Matthew 18:10).

**"GOOD WORK" –  
The original Finnish  
definition**, revised by the  
**CALL** working group in 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 **does not 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**

### 3. Good work gives service to your neighbour

Our efforts at work are directed to the persons for whom we work, who make use of our services or products, and for this we should get recognition from them and also, in a normal relationship, from our employer directly.

### 4. Good work gives the opportunity to fulfil your vocation and to get training

Active people learn by working and being recognised in their work. Young people especially need such opportunities to avoid youth unemployment and discover the strength of their personal vocation and capacities through work. But equally, possibilities for life-long learning are becoming more and more important for an ageing workforce.

### 5. Good work does not make too many demands on creation (minimising pollution and the wasting of natural resources)

Responsibility for creation is part of decision making in economic life, even with costs which can be high. A sustainable economy needs clear measures against climate change. Consideration of the consequences of our actions in relation to nature is integral to work.

### 6. Good work gives at least a subsistence income and good working conditions

Time devoted to work is primarily a search for the bread needed on the day. In one of his parables Jesus described people waiting for jobs and a generous employer: the story challenged the normal practice by saying that this generous employer decided to pay the basic "living wage" to workers having just worked the last hour of the day for him exactly as he paid to those having worked the full day. A real necessity for the first group, a real shock for the last!

### 7. Good work brings the possibility of influencing working practices and the rhythm of work

Employment is a place for negotiation of the balance between working time and personal life: labour and life are both to be protected by the workers themselves and by those who help and support them in society. Working practices are too often decided one-sidedly by those determining the tasks.

### 8. Good work enables adequate rest and relaxation, health and safety

Life is more than work and has its own rhythms to be protected even in work, especially the need for respect of body and mind, for breaks and rest, for family and friendship, for art and worship – everything which the European Sunday Alliance still advocates as a social rhythm.

### 9. Good work affirms for each member of the working community the right to participate in decision making

An enterprise as a place to deliver tasks is a community of human beings, not of impersonal work forces, and they all share competencies in aspects of the tasks and about at least parts of the decisions to be taken in organising work. This includes the right of workers to associate in independent trade unions and to negotiate salaries and working conditions freely. At the level of individual enterprises the workers should be free to elect their representation such as a work council.

### 10. Good work balances family life and paid work and gives lifelong security to both women and men

As Christian traditions defend the role of family in society, they also defend this role in employment, as the whole family depends on the quality of the work places of their

members, for the balance of domestic and external tasks in their time, for material resources and for the spirit drawn by the workers from their activity in the daily life of their family.

### Criteria for “Decent Work”

Churches are supporting lay institutions which set themselves criteria and values recognised by all, for example the International Labour Organisation (ILO). This organisation brings together delegates from government, from employers’ organisations and from employees’ organisations (trade unions) from each country in the world. In the last decade the ILO has made proposals to improve global work statistics with a framework on the “*Measurement of Decent Work*” covering 10 broadly recognised central and substantive elements (see below chapter 4).

## 3. Jobs and working conditions under pressure

### 3.1 – The economic situation in Europe and its impacts on work

The European economy is still suffering under the present deep economic transformation.

It is not affecting all European countries in the same way but all over Europe the economic transformation has an impact on the working situation and working conditions. Especially in Southern and Eastern Europe but also in economically stronger countries in Central Europe unemployment is quite high and not only due to the economic situation. People with lower skills have a higher risk of becoming or remaining unemployed in this situation.

But the situation not only has consequences for those out of work: it creates insecurity and reduces the options of workers; it forces them to accept bad working conditions against their will, because there is no alternative.

The fear of losing a job leads to acceptance of low wages. High unemployment weakens the possibility of negotiating for better working conditions. “Any job is better than no job” is the mantra which forces unemployed workers to take any job because otherwise their right to unemployment benefit would be cut.

The economic transformation also has an impact on wages. In most European countries there is no increase in wages, in some like Greece there are deep wage cuts. For low paid workers the situation has worsened, and the number of so called working poor is growing even in the economically stronger states.

The employment situation is bad for young people especially. Their average unemployment rate all over Europe is more than 20 %, in Greece or Spain even higher than 50 %. This creates a generation of young people without hope and deepens the social gap inside and also between European countries.

Recent statistics show that today there are more and more precarious working conditions: 20% poor quality jobs and 29% poorly balanced jobs (European Working Conditions Survey, *Trends in job quality in Europe*, August 2012).

In addition, the number of people affected by mental health problems is growing and generates high costs in social and health insurance systems. As enterprises and workplaces are restructured to become more competitive, job demands are changing: skills required are at a higher level than in the past. Better qualifications, greater levels of autonomy and job control represent a raising work intensity and work load. Stress at work is often the reason for mental health problems like burnout.

A full-time job, a wage you can live on, the safety net of a social insurance system, care for health and safety at the working place, the possibility of training or a guarantee of long term prospects in a job are getting rare for more and more employees. The former “normal” or “typical”, “standard” working contract is becoming today un-normal and unusual for most new jobs. Atypical employment in the sense of part time work or temporary jobs or contracts with no defined working time is growing. Work is regulated in Europe, but due to globalisation the deregulated informal sector is taking over, and grey markets are growing.

All these types of atypical work are related in that they depart from the former “normal” employment relationship (full-time, continuous work with one employer), but they are **not to be considered precarious in all cases**, since good legislation and/or good collective agreements can secure acceptable forms of these contracts.

**To declare a job as precarious or bad**, it is not sufficient for there to be only one indicator of an “atypical” working relationship: it is the sum and the accumulation of more “atypical” working conditions which makes work precarious. Precarious conditions can be found more often in the following types of employment: temporary work, part-time employment, self-employment, fixed-term work, on-call work, home working and telecommuting.

Precarious work 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 %.

Precarious jobs exist particularly in services, food, agriculture, construction, transport and care, where migrants undertake a large part of this precarious work.

### 3.2 – What is “Precarious work”?

It is a job combining some of the following conditions:

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 below subsistence level**
6. **Lack of vocational training**
7. **Work without any social security (covering 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)**

We give below some details on these 10 points to show the whole picture.

1. **Uncertainty of continuing employment:** No job security is provided by many employment contracts. The last report of the European Working Conditions Observatory described how all over Europe, despite some rare exceptions, working conditions have worsened in the crisis. If one looks at indicators like job insecurity, involuntary temporary work or involuntary part-time work, more and more jobs are no longer ruled by the so-called “standard” employment.

Job insecurity is growing in most European countries. The fear of losing your job within the next six months decreased from 2007 to 2012 only in 3 of 15 EU countries (source *EuroFound*). More jobs than before are covered by agency contracts.

**2. Absence of trade unions and employee associations:** The types of enterprises offering unprotected jobs do not allow regular links between employees and the ability to associate in order to defend their rights and negotiate their conditions. Contracts in such economic sectors are not defined by agreements negotiated between employers and trade unions and rely only on minimal legal standards, which are not always fully applied.

**3. Non decent working conditions:** The jobs are defined by maximum effort and minimum time, do not offer real working relationships with colleagues nor reflection on good practice in the task requested from the workers.

**4. Uncontrolled working time:** People are asked to come and work for long and irregular hours, or to stay longer at work with unpaid overtime. As they cannot negotiate, they enjoy less free time and social life. Shift work, work at night or on Sundays is growing for economic reasons: machines must run constantly or shops must remain open day and night.

**5. Wages below subsistence level:** By definition a low wage is one that is less than two thirds of the average wage. Compared to other European countries the low wage sector in Lithuania, Germany, Cyprus, Bulgaria, UK, Poland and Slovenia is higher than the average percentage of low paid worker in the European Union, which is about 16%.

Just to take the two counties at the top: nearly every fourth person in Germany is occupied in the low wage sector and is earning less than 9,54 € per hour. In Lithuania nearly 30 % are low paid with 1,67 € per hour.

Looking at gender it is worth noting that the figures for women in the low paid sector are much higher than for men. This correlates with the fact that for example in Germany 40 % of part time workers are low paid. It is no surprise that lack of skills or insufficient qualifications is one important reason for a low wage. Even if a minimum wage exists it is often not high enough to live on.

**6. Lack of vocational training:** No progress in jobs is possible. Even after many years the same job is still to be done with the same methods and space – or even less. Learning better practice and training for new skills is not part of the duties of the employer.

**7. Work without any social security:** Many work places should require adequate access and means of transport, adequate housing, provision of a health insurance, of an old age pension, of other insurances like unemployment benefits, or should cover other social needs – but as they don't, they can be defined as bad and precarious.

**8. No protection against dismissal:** Unwritten contracts or contracts for short term jobs can be rapidly broken. The promise of a longer employment is not included in the contract itself, and the legal rules preventing unjustified abrupt dismissal do not apply.

**9. Insufficient health and safety protection:** Checking of working conditions by legal authorities is not frequent enough to demonstrate their unhealthy or unsafe character or to improve the requirements imposed by employers on their employees.

**10. Unclear status of employees:** The grey or black labour market is growing, where it is normal to have no written contract and no clear status. Work is done, jobs are paid – but on very different bases: some can be working on workfare, some on training or internship, some can even be apparently self-employed (fully dependent in reality on the mandating owner as hidden employer). Employed people in such positions include nationals as well as migrant workers. For the latter more status problems may arise from lacking legal admission papers or even lacking national documents.

### 3.3 – Mobile workers in the European Union

Another deep impact of the economic transformation and crisis, showing an extreme form of the 'less choice' situation described above, is the fact that more and more people in Eastern and Southern Europe are forced to go abroad and look for a better job in another country.

Be it migration from outside the EU or mobility of workers inside the EU, the same is true: workers are often forced to work under bad working conditions and to accept lower wages compared with the local workforce, even if higher than in their country of origin. Especially in construction enterprises, in farming and in domestic work, millions of people are moving from East to West, some only for a short time as seasonal workers, some staying longer.

For mobile workers emigration seems to be a good option for improving their personal living situation. Even if they accept that they will not find paradise in the richer western countries and are disappointed about the reality in the new environment, they have no alternative but to leave their home country as long as its economic situation does not improve.

Mobile workers have a high risk of being exploited as 'cheap labour' or of working under bad working conditions. They often do not speak the language of the country where they are working well enough and know little about labour law and social law. Forced labour up to forms of slavery which were thought to have been abolished are once again a growing phenomenon. Some recruitment agencies working within a legal framework are a base for criminal structures exploiting the ignorance and poverty of people.

In recent years we have witnessed a new phenomenon: gender migration. Women coming from Eastern Europe easily accept work in the domestic and care fields, without clear contracts or in some situations even without any contract. As in most periods of human history the status of women is marked by gender discrimination. Now in the actual context of the economic crisis, the gender imbalance is felt at all levels. Without jobs and with big debts to the banks, many women from Eastern Europe are forced to leave their country and their families for job opportunities in other countries. They are easily cheated by the traffickers for forced labour.

This has a deep impact on family life: the number of children left alone back in the home country (the so-called "work orphans") is growing. And in the long run the brain drain of skilled workers reduces the competitiveness of such less developed countries: the economic gap within Europe widens.

### 3.4 – EU responsibility

The European Union and its institutions have a significant and recognised responsibility in economic matters. In comparison their responsibility in social matters and their capacity to influence social conditions remains very small.

European policy is still focused too much on economic issues such as developing the internal market and defending the four fundamental freedoms (of capital, goods, services and free movement of people). The central goal in the EU strategy is to become the most dynamic and knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs, greater social cohesion and protection of the environment.

There is a mismatch between economic deregulation, the dominance of the market on one side, and on the other side the necessity to protect workers by labour laws and social provisions.

Employers and some political institutions are demanding that European labour law adopt the double principles of flexibility **and** security, linked in the concept of *flexicurity* or *flexi-security*. In this debate economic interest seems to be dominant, but social security has to regain importance for all.

## 4. Protection

Our reflection on precarious employment in Europe leads us to argue for some legal and structural changes.

For this purpose **actions** are needed (see below section 4.2):

- Counselling services, legal support
- Naming and shaming illegal employers
- Developing public awareness
- Requesting better legal standards.

These actions require the contribution of both trade unions and employers' associations.

### 4.1 – Better legal standards for “decent work”

All countries in the world are called upon to recognise and ratify the basic conventions on labour rights adopted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). It is hard to understand how some conventions can be ignored without triggering international sanctions.

To improve our knowledge by global labour statistics following generally agreed and broadly recognised criteria, the ILO (as already mentioned in chap.2, see box) has published a manual presenting the producers of statistics with a framework on the “Measurement of Decent Work”.

The ILO criteria on decent work should lead to minimum standards not only in statistics, but in national law in all European countries.

Due to the fact that there is a broad variety of economic and social situations, history, culture and legal systems in the different European countries, we accept that the ILO criteria on decent work will be diversely transferred into national law and will not lead to one and the same solution for all. But on the other hand the variety of solutions should not weaken or undermine the ILO criteria.

To combat precarious working conditions we suggest **developing better standards on the following points:**

- 1) **Regulations covering the duration of contracts**
- 2) **Unions and the right of association and negotiation**
- 3) **Decent working conditions with dignity**
- 4) **Controlled working time**
- 5) **Living wage**
- 6) **Equal education rights**
- 7) **Social security rights**
- 8) **Regulated rules for dismissal and redundancies**
- 9) **Health and safety controls**
- 10) **Flexi-security policies in transitions from job to job**

### "DECENT WORK INDICATORS" Internat. Labour Organisation, Manual, Draft 2<sup>nd</sup> version, Sept. 2013

“In September 2008, the ILO convened an international Tripartite Meeting of Experts (TME) on the Measurement of Decent Work, and consequently, adopted a framework of **Decent Work Indicators** that was presented to the 18<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians in December 2008. The Framework on the Measurement of Decent Work covers ten substantive elements which are closely linked to the **four strategic pillars** of the Decent Work Agenda: (A) International labour standards and fundamental principles and rights at work, (B) Employment creation, (C) Social protection and (D) Social dialogue and tripartism.

These **ten substantive elements** for measurement are:

- (i) employment opportunities;
- (ii) adequate earnings and productive work;
- (iii) decent working time;
- (iv) combining work, family and personal life;
- (v) work that should be abolished [ i.e. child labour and forced labour ];
- (vi) stability and security of work;
- (vii) equal opportunity and treatment in employment;
- (viii) safe work environment;
- (ix) social security; and
- (x) social dialogue, employers' and workers' representation.

These 10 substantive elements represent the structural dimensions of the decent work measurement framework under which both statistical and legal framework indicators on decent work are organised and classified.

**1. Contract duration:** A work contract should normally have an unlimited duration and a limited and fixed probation period. Limited contracts should remain an exception and would have to be justified. Only contracts in a written form should be recognised as legal.

**2. Union rights:** Often the influence of unions is very small because people in precarious jobs are rarely organised. At the same time legal institutions like workers councils do not exist. There is a strong need for legal support and information (see below), and those who refuse to recognise union rights should be fined.

**3. Decent working conditions:** Formally there are no exceptions in labour law, but in reality low paid workers especially are afraid to demand their legal rights because they risk losing their jobs. Low wage sectors of the economy and those with precarious jobs are often those with fewer working rights. In particular migrants and low skilled people have no information about their rights and cannot demand decent conditions.

Demanding equal rights is also a question of gender: a higher percentage of people in low paid or precarious work are women.

**4. Controlled working time:** Working time must be regulated and limited by national and international law (e.g. eight hours per day or 40 hours per week). Overtime should always be paid. Shift work and night or Sunday work should only be allowed for justifiable reasons.

**5. Minimum Wages:** In our understanding a minimum wage should be not less than 2/3 of the average wage for a single person in each country. Together with additional financial support for families and especially children, this will ensure a living wage and offer the means of participating in social and cultural life.

In the majority of EU countries there are minimum wages on a legal basis, but there is no common understanding about what a minimum wage is. Often the national law on a minimum wage is not a real protection against poverty.

In some European countries the need for minimum wages is still denied with the argument that they cause unemployment and reduce the opportunities for people in low paid sectors to get a job.

**6. Equal education:** Gender, social or financial situation should have no impact on the opportunity to finish school with qualifications and to get a valid education. For young people especially the right to real training (apprenticeship or study) must be guaranteed in order to avoid youth unemployment. Workers in jobs should all have access to life-long learning.

**7. Social security rights:** All types of jobs must be covered by the social security system. Everybody should have access to health coverage, be entitled to protection in the case of unemployment or accidental injury and be included in a pension system. There must be effective checks ensuring that all employees and employers pay their contribution to social insurance. If somebody for any reason does not benefit from the social insurance system, his or her basic needs like medical care, accommodation or minimum income for food have to be covered by legal provisions.

**8. Rules for dismissals:** Unfair and unjustified dismissals should be prohibited. Dismissals should be covered by labour law including the possibility of appeal to a court. If there is no written contract the employer has a duty to demonstrate that he or she is acting correctly.

**9. Health and safety:** The protection of workers against unhealthy and unsafe working conditions is better than ever in most European countries, and the danger of physical injury can be minimised. Working tools and machines as well as control systems

help to avoid accidents or injuries. Low paid workers and self-employed people are often working under very unhealthy working conditions. At the same time mental health problems are becoming more important. So there are new challenges for health and safety. Where there is a poor balance between work and life, daily stress often leads to mental health problems like burn-out.

**10. Transitions flexible and secure:** Change of job is often hindered by the fear of losing social and employment rights. Flexibility needs to be coupled with a basic protection against unfair changes to conditions of employment and support for training opportunities between jobs.

#### 4.2 – Actions to promote “decent work”

**Counselling services and legal support** are needed to provide:

- information about specific labour legislation within the country and about general standards in EU member States;
- mediation between employees and their employers in conflicts about labour rights (equal pay, violation of dismissal rights, etc.);
- identification of possible access to job opportunities through vocational training.

**Naming and shaming of illegal employers** (before the courts or at least in public) requires solid information, case studies, knowledge of the application of the law, access to mediators if there are any, then access to the employment court, and as a last resort to mass-media.

**Developing public awareness** means for example:

- creation and distribution of information and educational material on labour standards;
- cooperation between Church based NGOs and trade unions to work together to raise public awareness around illegal working conditions and minimum standards for dignity at work;
- national and European partnerships with other social players interested in promoting **labour rights and equal opportunities** for employees in the labour market.

Principal partners for this are the employees' unions, employers' associations and ultimately the legal authorities.

- **Trade Unions:**

In the past unions were often focused on only protecting and defending the rights of their members, who are still mainly workers with “normal” contracts. But as more and more workers are employed under precarious or atypical conditions, this should have an impact on how unions are acting and on their goals.

The most vulnerable working people especially need strong unions and their protection, even if these poor and precarious workers are not able to pay membership fees.

Since the role and responsibility of unions are changing today, they should be supported in undertaking these new tasks.

- **Associations of Employers:**

Enterprises acting in a market system based on competition always have to consider the cost and the quality of their products and services. From the perspective of a single enterprise it is necessary to reduce the cost of production or service to survive. Wages and salaries are an important part of such costs, and unlike other costs they are flexible. It seems to be normal to try to become more competitive by reducing the cost of the work force.

On the other hand only just and sufficient wages allow people to buy goods and services. It is not only a moral issue: good employers have an interest in ensuring that legal frameworks are not misused by some.

In a political economy one of the tasks of the employers' associations is to take responsibility for fair competition rules. And these rules should include fair working conditions and wages.

- **Government and State authorities and the EU:**

Authorities are responsible for changing the main factors producing precariousness, by introducing for example:

- for migrants, access to legal status;
- for the self-employed, better regulation;
- for transferred workers, a revised status;
- for economic players with few resources, an alternative social economy;
- for people with no chances of getting a normal job, a basic income...

Public control of the labour market requires good laws (national and EU), competent courts to stop mishandling, and sufficient civil servants to check the conditions in work places and to follow up information about breaches.

## 5. Churches in action

Which kind of role have the Churches to take in the field of work?

Church clergy began to visit workplaces after the Second World War. This was due to the discovery made by the clergy during the war that Churches had lost contact with working class people. They did not know each other anymore; the clergy did not share the same fate as lay people.

In order to rebuild the connection priests should learn from the life situation of people. As these are at work most of the day, priests needed to visit these places. Some of them actually started to work in normal jobs, but most just decided to visit local factories on a regular basis as chaplains.

In some European countries like the UK, Germany, Holland, Austria, Sweden and Finland, networks were formed between these workplace chaplains, and training courses were organised to support this kind of chaplaincy.

Visits to work places and experiences of chaplains' support have given some people the feeling that the Church is interested in their everyday life. To clergy, these experiences have brought a new understanding about what life and work are like in modern society.

### 5.1 – Practical help: Diaconia

Churches have taken action to intervene in some precarious situations. Some examples are:

- In Finland the chaplain in the construction site of a nuclear power plant has worked with the workers' committee to help migrant workers to get their money paid.
- In Romania, the “Ecumenical Association of Churches AIDRom” is organising shelters for women victims of trafficking for forced labour, helping them to get some education and find a proper job in a new area. AIDRom has also opened counselling centres for people looking for work, giving information about working conditions and wages, legal advice on labour contracts and work opportunities within Europe.

- In Germany people get different kinds of help from parishes or the “Kirchlicher Dienst in der Arbeitswelt” and other specialised services for unemployed people or for harassed workers.
- In Linz, Austria, the catholic diocese has developed a project called *Santa Precaria*. They gather women working in precarious conditions and help them to share experiences and find solutions to these bad working conditions.

There are plenty of examples from different countries and churches, where Church people have been able to help those who are in precarious situations.

Part of this help is legal advice, often given in cooperation with trade unions.

Sometimes diaconia helps by listening, by giving advice, and sometimes a little financial support or a training course is also available.

## 5.2 – Consciousness building: Parishes

The major power of Churches is based on their spirituality. Their message speaks about equality between people and about civil rights, which guarantee decent living conditions to everybody. We are all equal before God, and He wants us to take care of each other.

This means that at a community level we should look at the local community and recognise oppressive structures. The Churches should preach against oppression, and congregations should be sensitive to the life around them.

Church publications, educational material and web sites are good places for the presentation of these ethical priorities.

The Bible is also a very practical tool for consciousness raising. There are many aspects of life in its texts, and it might be easier for some people to learn to see things with the eyes of others by hearing this in a Bible story.

Local congregations should encourage awareness and develop the attitude of members, so that it will matter to them how people around them live.

Awareness grows when people meet with others and share their stories. Congregation centres offer room for that, be it in the library or in the meeting room. Meetings can take place there on a secure basis.

Churches should use all available tools in their hands to help in calling their members to action.

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## CALL to action!

After two years of reflection our group reached the conclusion that there is a need for action, and after three years we decided to circulate material and this position paper for such action.

We come from 11 countries, East and West, North and South of Europe, and our background experiences are with unemployment, migration, diaconia, unions, parish activity.

*WE CALL FOR GOOD WORK in our countries.*

Christian voices have to make themselves heard on this!

Our invitation is now directed to people in our Churches in parishes or diaconia who are ready to show concern: be more aware of the risks and needs of people in precarious working conditions today!

Our slogan is: **“NO FUTURE WITHOUT GOOD WORK!”**.

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We suggest organising locally each year at least one event relating to good quality in working conditions. It could be a *meeting* or public discussion, *worship* or prayer, a *bible study*, a group *discussion* with youth or with adults, actions to *inform* a broader public or a petition to *authorities*.

>> **Material for these actions can be downloaded from the CALL website!** <<

<http://csc.ceceurope.org/issues/social-and-economic-issues/call-network/>

**Action material** includes (*in English only – to be translated and distributed*):

- Invitation to a local action on Good Work and bad employment conditions
- Local action planning with biblical references
- Prayers and liturgical material
- Discussion plans for groups, youth and adults, on employment alternatives
- Policy Paper on Good Work
- Position in short and pictures for post cards, flyers and posters (*on request*)