

Overcome mass unemployment Distribute jobs justly

We want to make ourselves heard beyond party lines because we cannot see effective programmes to reduce unemployment neither in Germany nor in many other European countries. It is mostly economic growth and tax release of businesses which are seen as ways to overcome mass unemployment.

But already now one can clearly see:

The unemployment policy of the last decades which has only been focused on growth has completely failed. In Europe growth cannot overcome mass unemployment. More and more jobs are made redundant by more efficient techniques, steadily growing productivity, better qualifications and growing work intensity. Ever more goods and services can be made by ever fewer people. Under these conditions economy would have to grow for years by more than 3% annually to create the necessary jobs. Such a growth was possible on the low level after World War II. Under today's conditions it is sheer illusion. **Furthermore: our endless planet cannot cope with continuous quantitative economic growth.**

If politicians and businesses additionally favour longer working hours, they will create even more unemployment. An increase in the working week from 35 to 40 hours would make every seventh job redundant. All at once personnel capacity would increase by 15% without any new appointment. Furthermore: If employees had to work longer for the same monthly wage, this would mean a lower hourly wage. And as everybody knows, longer working hours are also damaging to one's health. And they are hostile both to families and children. If only one country could not withstand the pressure to extend working hours, other countries would have to follow.

The efficient programme against mass unemployment: Rethink work and share it justly

If the number of unemployed is high, the scarce gainful employment must be distributed in a better way. With a fair distribution of the available work to all men and women seeking gainful employment the average working time cannot be 40 or more hours per week but will be significantly lower.

That is why we demand a modern right of work, **“full employment of a new kind”** with shorter working hours.

An average of 30 working hours per week or a corresponding amount of working hours per year or a corresponding working life are sufficient! This is not a rigid standard but a new social orientation, a target for politics, unions and management, businesses and people. In the concrete realisation the relevant conditions on the labour market as well as personal needs and wishes of men and women in the different periods of their lives are to be considered. If for instance the children are little or the elderly need care, it should be possible for men *and* women to work shorter hours, at other times it should be possible to work longer. **In countries with short average working hours unemployment is relatively low.** In the Netherlands for instance the average real working week (including part-time work) amounted to only 29.5 hours in 2002 compared to an average of 35,5 hours in the 15 traditional EU-countries. At the same time the unemployment rate was the lowest (after Luxemburg) with 3.2%, whereas the average was as high as 8%. The situation is similar in Denmark.

We suggest a reduction of working hours together with a socially graduated income balancing:

For people with a higher income, singles without obligations to pay maintenance or couples with two full incomes the proposed “exchange of money for free-time” should as a rule be possible without income balancing. For those people a good life with more “time affluence” will be possible on the basis of a reduced income with shorter working hours.

For people with a low income and those with obligations to pay maintenance there should be financial balancing. We propose to finance this balancing through the money that will be set free by the reduction or the abolition of unemployment.

To share work fairly – this is not a completely fixed recipe which can easily be applied.

Some questions are still open and have to be picked out as a central theme in discourses in society, businesses and among individuals. They have to be settled under the consideration of the special situations in the different European countries. Many starting-points and steps for activities, however, have already been worked out by scientists, trade unionists and social movements together.

That is why we are convinced that it is possible to introduce the 30-hour working-week (or a corresponding amount of working hours per year) all over Europe by 2010. Instead of an extension of the time of gainful employment, the reduction in average working hours should be put on the agenda of politics, unions and management and the media.

Appeal for participation

A new working-time policy which shows solidarity is more than traditional bargaining – it is a decisive social challenge for movements critical of globalisation, for European and global policies of trade unions and for a broad alliance of social movements, trade unions and new political initiatives. We equally turn to conservatively, Christian, socially, ecologically or socialist orientated people and organisations with the appeal: **Put the social project of the distribution of work in a way that shows solidarity on the political agenda.**

A different world is possible!

You get more information on our homepage:

contact: