

Focal points of the contents of the GPA-djp Congress 2015

Collective agreements and income policies

One focal point of GPA-djp is to ensure that the success achieved through collective agreement policies should cover and benefit a maximum number of employees. This is why the areas in which collective agreements apply should be maintained and further improved by actively shaping the scope of collective agreements. We are aiming at reducing the number of collective agreements in favour of a broader scope and are thus trying to prevent any trends to escape from existing collective agreements.

An essential goal of our income policies for the years to come is to achieve a minimum wage or salary of € 1,700.- gross per month in collective agreements.

In the area of working time, our main goal is to further reduce regular working time. In doing so, it is imperative to combine any form of working time reduction with accompanying measures in order to ensure a positive impact on employment and to prevent any intensification of work.

Furthermore, the following topics will continue to be among the main focal points of collective bargaining policies: equality policies, co-determination, structural change and mobility.

Social security

For GPA-djp, social security constitutes the core element of the Austrian social system which is based on the principles of compulsory insurance, solidarity-based funding, a comprehensive compensation of risks, autonomy and reservation wages. These are to be safeguarded and developed further.

We are opposing any tendencies to diminish solidarity and are fighting for the preservation and further development of a publically funded health system based on solidarity which enables all people to gain access to medical care, irrespective of their income levels.

We are committed to a public pension insurance system based on the pay-as-you-go principle which makes it possible to secure the standard of living. We reject a conversion from a benefit funded to a contribution funded pension scheme.

The rising need of long-term care and assistance constitutes one of the main challenges in an aging society. Similarly to other social risks, long-term care needs to be secured by sufficient public funding.

Wherever the social security system does not prevent poverty, there needs to be a complementary system of a means-tested minimum income. GPA-djp is opposed to any stigmatization and advocates that people affected by poverty receive support to help them overcome poverty.

Fighting the enormously increased unemployment rate is one of the greatest challenges for the coming years. GPA-djp therefore advocates public investments creating employment, redistribution of work by reducing working time and a better social protection of people who are unemployed.

Labour law, working time, working conditions and co-determination

GPA-djp advocates a further development of the Labour Constitution Act which will do justice to the changing circumstances of the modern working world. This is why we are also calling for regulations which sufficiently take into account international company and group structures, restructuring, changing economic boundary conditions, attempts to escape collective agreements and precarious forms of employment.

It is imperative to especially include independent workers (freelancers) in the code of industrial relations. In light of the increasingly difficult tasks of representation that members of works councils are confronted with, it is necessary to extend their protection under labour law.

In terms of working time policies, our core demand is a general reduction of normal working hours to 35 hours per week (and in the medium term to 30 hours per week) with neither pay nor staffing levels reduced. In a first step, the idea is to reduce the statutory working time in collective agreements to 38,5 hours, in line with many other regulations.

Reduction of working time is intended to enable diversity and give security. It must not lead to work intensification but achieve a redistribution of work, providing more people with employment and bringing about more gender equality in the distribution of gainful employment and unpaid work (such as care work, household work or long-term care work).

In order to help achieve good working conditions, the focus will be placed on the following fields of action:

- Fair employment contracts designed to improve the mobility and employment opportunities of workers. This will require the effective restriction of unfair contract clauses (such as competition clauses, obligations to reimburse training costs) as well as the containment of all-in contracts.
- Healthy work requires a stronger focus on the prevention of mental health risks. In particular, there is a need for a regulation evaluating psychological stress and obligatory measures adapting workplaces to the needs of aging employees.
- In the area of data protection for employees, there is a need for improvements in terms of the quality of data protection at the workplace as well as measures to guarantee and to enable the enforcement of participation rights. A core demand is the anchoring of employee privacy in the law on data protection.

Shaping mobile work which is subject to a dissolution of its boundaries through digitisation is just as indispensable for good working conditions in the world of digital work as the targeted promotion of innovations creating employment and a fair and socially valuable use and distribution of any gains in production caused by digitisation (the keyword being the „digital dividend“).

European Union

GPA-djp is campaigning for economic policies promoting employment. We are convinced that growth cannot be achieved through neoliberal „structural reforms“. This is why we are clearly opposed to plans of the European Union to make the existing country-specific recommendations on structural reforms binding and enforceable (the so-called competition pacts or competitiveness councils).

We are opposed to endeavours to exploit the crisis in order to dismantle the welfare state and to deteriorate working conditions. The programmes of the troika consisting of the EU Commission, the ECB and the IMF are calling for unilateral austerity measures and need to be revised based on social and distribution policy based considerations and subject to comprehensive democratic control.

Hands off trade union rights, collective agreements, pension regulations, minimum wages and wage formation systems at the national level. Fundamental social rights must outweigh free market considerations on the internal market. This also needs to be safeguarded through appropriate clauses in treaties affecting economic policies as well as in EU Treaties.

We demand to put an end to rigid austerity policies: restrictive deficit rules in the framework of economic governance at the European level prevent important public investments which are urgently needed to overcome the crisis and to stimulate economic activity. We are calling for the introduction of a „Golden Rule of Fiscal Policy“ which would exempt any public spending which has the character of investments from the calculation of structural budget deficits. Furthermore, we support the demand put forward by the ETUC for an operative and effective European investment plan.

The persistent fight against youth unemployment has to be given priority and must also be anchored in the Europe 2020 strategy as a measurable and mandatory EU target.

Economy and Taxes

Austria has a lack of strategic industrial policies. Trade unions are involved in their re-orientation. The new public holding company ÖBIB has the task of securing jobs and guaranteeing value-added by acquiring stakes in companies and by fending off undesirable takeover bids. GPA-djp is also campaigning to maintain the existing public ownership of utilities.

In the financial sector, we are advocating a stronger decoupling of investment bank risks and are demanding to put a stop to outsourcing/nearshoring in banks. GPA-djp continues to strongly support a financial transaction tax. Banks should focus on their core business without any pressure to achieve return on investment to enable them to make a valuable contribution to the real economy.

The boundary conditions of Industry 4.0 have to be shaped together with all stakeholders and social partners at the company as well as the inter-company levels. Works councils must be involved in launching new technologies. Company data protection officers have been anchored in the law. There is a need for clear rules for online trading to ensure fair competitive conditions between established retail businesses and online traders.

The successful campaign „Cut Income Taxes“ waged by the Austrian Trade Union Federation and its affiliated trade unions with a total of 882,000 signatures put pressure on the government. As a result, there will be a tax reform in 2016 which largely corresponds to our demands to reduce the burden of employees.

We are continuing to pursue the goal of increasing the share of property-related taxes in total tax revenues. Large multinational companies must contribute their fair share to tax revenue, for instance through the introduction of a European minimum corporate tax rate of 25% coupled with harmonised regulations for the calculation of profits.

Social policies and education

In the field of social policies, GPA-djp is opposed to any restrictions of fundamental rights such as freedom of association, freedom of opinion, freedom of the press and data protection. In addition, constitutional rights also need to include fundamental social rights.

Solidarity constitutes the main pillar of trade union ideology. In light of rising numbers of refugees, GPA-



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djp is also campaigning against the restriction of the human right to asylum, to safe and/or legal entry corridors, equitable burden sharing as well as fundamental social services based on human needs with a nationwide professional support structure. Furthermore, access to the labour market is to be facilitated for asylum seekers.

All educational policies are to be oriented towards the goal of equal opportunities. Optimised educational opportunities for the entire population should start at nursery school and end with apprenticeship and in-service training in companies. A second mandatory year in nursery school free of charge, the nationwide introduction of integrated comprehensive schools for the first nine school years and a new set of regulations to subsidise apprenticeships with a funding scheme that will make all companies more aware of their responsibilities. These are central demands designed to restrict the high degree of selectivity of our educational system.