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### ***Towards a new definition of work, income and life - Theses relating to work in the future***

#### **1. Introduction**

In NRW (Nordrhein-Westfalen) 20.587 young people under the age of 20 are registered as unemployed (10.7%), which is well above the average for the BRD. Many young people find that their entrance into working life is made difficult or even blocked. Therefore, the question is whether political solutions for employment problems are going to be relevant for the future if they remain based on traditional assumptions which prevail in politics and in society in general, that work is synonymous with gainful employment. The ecumenical-socio-ethical study group NRW, a group of academics and representatives of different associations and churches, is presenting this statement in order to draw attention to extensive radical changes in gainful employment and thereby in the life stories of many people. Young people in particular have to be prepared for an unsettled working life. The crisis which the work-orientated society is undergoing could also be seen as a point of departure in the search for a new way of balancing work, income and life. We want to contribute building blocks towards a vision of a fair society and a life that is worth living. According to the social contract that still applies, it is gainful employment that secures our social integration; full employment must be assumed therefore. After 25 years of mass-unemployment these assumptions are losing their general validity. We experience millions of people being marginalised, and see how this leads to a substantial social division within society, and how this means that many people's potential to contribute and to be creative is being excluded. At the same time, there have been extensive radical changes in the nature of gainful employment. Both the meaning and the validity of traditional rights for employees are being undermined or even taken away altogether either because of technological advances or because of organisational innovations, but also because of a changing balance of power in society.

Reasons for this discussion paper are

- the observation that productivity is rising steadily and the volume of gainful employment is shrinking even while more and more people are demanding a place in gainful employment,
- the experience that millions of people are temporarily or even on a long-term basis excluded from gainful employment and face all the consequences of this in terms of their social security, their status in society and their self-confidence.
- the challenge that young people in particular are being denied their opportunities in life and that many are in danger of no longer getting access to gainful employment,
- the discrimination against women who take on about two thirds of the socially necessary work, who nevertheless continue to be disadvantaged in respect of access to gainful employment for qualified people.
- the contradiction that we finance unemployment with billions, and yet we leave undone plenty of socially useful work we need to have done for our general well-being and in areas of ecological concerns,
- and finally the tendency to curtail employees' rights to participate and to shape life at the place of work.

We experience against the background of these processes a worsening of the division of society; this is contradictory to our constitution and to the basic concerns expressed in the Christian churches' social message. The following theses are in the tradition of the Joint Statement of the Churches in Germany on the economic and social situation in Germany: "For a future founded on solidarity and justice" (1997); they are meant to stimulate developments towards a humane society from a theological-socio-ethical perspective.

### **I. Significance and limitation of the traditional interpretation of gainful employment and its socio-political effects.**

#### **2. Mass unemployment puts in question society's orientation on gainful employment**

Gainful employment has been the key to social and economic integration since the age of industrialisation. The normal course of life, especially for men in industrialised countries (up to the 1970s) was determined centrally by an orientation on gainful employment. The main educational and social systems relate to gainful employment

in as much as they first confer the qualification to work, secondly they help to bridge the gaps in one's working life (accident, illness, but also unemployment), and thirdly they take care of a smooth transition into retirement. Gainful employment is the foundation of a civic life; the social and democratic state founded on the rule of law is built on this. The individual derives from the work place decisive opportunities for an independent life-style, which is based on a personal income, including social security and old age pension; it may give opportunities for promotion and participation in one's area of work; and therefore it conveys one's standing and status in society. Considerable social achievements for this work-orientated society were fought for and won by the workers' movement in conflicts and confrontations. Some of these were enforceable pay agreements, general pay increases, the reduction of working hours by introducing a maximum working day, regulations for holidays, and finally various degrees of opportunities for co-determination. Until the early seventies unemployment could be coped with in the BRD, with adequate securities, as a short-term problem due to redeployment for technical reasons or due to job changes. Meanwhile, the structure of mass and long-term unemployment is causing a profound crisis for the performance-oriented society with its emphasis on gainful employment; and for those affected by unemployment the result is often a severe crisis in their lives and in self-identity.

Even the hope for a growth of relevant vacancies in the labour-intensive service sector is lost by and large. In the course of the next decade several million work places will be lost in the service sectors of trade, public administration and banking due to micro-electronic automation and organisational reforms. Creating more personal services will hardly compensate for this loss.

One result of this process of technological and organisational rationalisation is likely to be that the gulf between supply and demand in the labour market will widen even further. The demographic trend will ease only marginally the tension of such conditions. Work is as it always was, the pivot and centre in most people's lives. However, work is and always has been more than gainful employment.

### **3. Gainful employment from the gender perspective**

According to this perspective it is not just unemployment that reveals the limitations and deficiencies of the present work-orientated society. The gender-hierarchical

distribution of work that had already emerged in agrarian and feudal societies was merely being consolidated by the process of rationalising work. In the context of a bourgeois view of marriage and family women's work was allocated to the private sphere. The course of industrialisation meant a rapid shift of a man's work outside the home and for woman's work in the home to escape from (male) view. The woman became invisible and devalued accordingly. At that time there started to emerge a different family image, which meant that in addition to reproductive housework the child and with it the mother-role became more important. Gainful employment for a woman represented would remain for a long time a deviant notion, irrespective of the work women's actually performed, such as factory work or housework. Women were meant to be the "reserve army" on the labour market, a stop-gap for exceptional occasions or in times of emergency. Only through the educational reforms in the sixties and seventies did women increasingly gain higher educational qualifications and obtain normal positions in the work place. However, these are in the majority of cases still given less importance in terms of assessment and pay than is true for the conditions of work for men. There is therefore parallel to the clear precedence given to gainful employment over all other forms of work a prioritising of types of work within the sphere of gainful employment which still reflects a widespread gender-related dominance. Only in recent decades has this social distribution of work been challenged by the women's movement when first initiatives were taken to overcome them. Compared with other highly industrialised states Germany has still a higher percentage of women who are left outside the employment system. In this context one also needs to point out the considerable increase of unemployment for women in the new Bundesländer (former GDR) after reunification. Women were the "losers of German unification", since they had not intended to give up their gainful employment, but were the first to be made redundant. Women's work means in Germany to a large extent part-time work. Furthermore, unprotected gainful employment is on the increase - as for example the minimally agreed working conditions and various forms of self-employment with only apparent independence. Women are affected by these conditions to a disproportionate degree. Despite all the efforts at emancipation, women are still disadvantaged in respect of gainful employment to a degree that should not be underestimated. Moreover, the work they contribute in the private and the public arena is not rewarded with appropriate social, legal and financial recognition - entailing often considerable consequences for the women in respect of securing an independent existence and social insurance, most of all for their old age.

The distribution of the different forms of work and gainful employment as shown here by the example of the relationship between the sexes is the origin of structural injustice. This affects both inequalities in income structures and opportunities for participating in social life.

#### **4. Forgetfulness about nature in the modern view of work**

Finally, the economic base for attitudes to gainful employment has led to a one-sided overestimate of the productive share the human being contributes to the process of producing life-sustaining goods. The widely spread perception that work is the only source of all riches bears the sign of a dangerous forgetfulness about nature.

Thus, in the major economic theories that have been put forward since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century nature has largely been missed out of consideration as an independent factor of production. Nature was merely being exploited as a store of raw materials that had no intrinsic value; nature was considered as providing free resources in abundance, or as an object at our disposal for our technological and economic ambitions.

The economic rationale overlooked, and to this day still does overlook, that “creation of value” assumes the “co-operation” of nature (with its limited resources). Over-exploitation of natural resources, which form the basis for our life, brings untold damage and considerably impairs future generations’ chances of survival. Already today it is a main cause for poverty and migration in the South.

This dangerous economic forgetfulness about nature reflects a perception of work that assumes the domination and subjugation of nature. Against that, one should emphasise from a biblical-theological point of view, that the human being and nature are two closely connected parts of creation and that we owe nature the recognition of its independent value.

#### **5. Radical changes in gainful employment and their socio-political consequences**

Mass unemployment, gender-related inequalities, and the discovery of nature's independent value make apparent the limitations of the modern economic view of gainful employment. Without wanting to deny the importance of gainful employment, one may see a chance in today's many-layered crisis situation to reinvent the social concept of work. We have been used to a way of working and living in an industrial society which is now coming to a close. The present crisis situation is comparable to the radical changes from an agrarian to an industrial society.

This suggests that the qualitative and quantitative change of conditions of employment is heralding a farewell to the general validity of standard conditions for gainful employment. This means that the relationship between those who work in non-standard conditions (including fixed contract employment, part-time work entailing payment of insurance contributions, short-term employment, job opportunity schemes, minimal employment, subcontracted work and dependent self-employment) and those in conditions of normal gainful employment have changed radically: at the beginning of the seventies the ratio was still 1: 5; by the mid nineties it was 1: 2. This is another reason for gainful employment no longer being able to provide the sole key to cultural and economic participation. This many-layered change is often seen as a "new industrial revolution". The term refers to the course and effect of all technology that has been generated by the application of micro-electronics. No other invention since that of the steam engine has had such a wide impact on all areas of the economy - "for better or worse" to quote the report by the Club of Rome. According to the analysis there, the advance of microelectronics was a creeping infiltration of society by forming the base for many innovations. Its influence would be felt in the manufacturing sector as much as in the service sector where the labour-saving impact was more visible. The number of people needed is continuously falling whilst the output of social wealth is constantly rising.

If it is possible to use modern rationalisation technologies to lower man-hours for production and yet raise the volume of output, then the measure of income is going to be for a long time to come not the working hours of the worker, but the life time of the citizen. Work and income must be separated more clearly. With a different emphasis on technology for production one also needs different forms of income distributions.

These developments in the labour market are amplified by inequalities in the relationship between the sexes and in our approach to nature. They show up a need to let go of the fixation on restoring the situation to full employment in the sense of traditionally normal conditions of gainful employment - namely, a man is working, uses his income to take care of his wife and family, finances community projects with his tax contribution, and pays social security contributions in case of illness, accident or for an old age pension. These days, when more than 4 million people are registered as unemployed and we have a mixture of employment conditions without a full income; with forms of income ranging from minimal income and partial income to fixed contract income, the present system is simply no longer functional. And the demonstrated perspective of rising productivity would suggest that it is not going to be possible to restore it ever again.

There is therefore the inescapable question about a new way of defining the conditions of work, income and life-style. Any model to be proposed for future developments will have to guarantee a long-term secure income for everyone and will also have to answer the question: what kind of work should be paid for in future - for men and for women? What kind of income should there be without work? What kind of work should be done without pay?

## **II. Towards a new definition of work, income and life**

### **6. Social justice as the standard for future development of society**

Agreeing that we need a view of work that transcends the notion of gainful employment as a meaningful base for working out socio-political concepts for sustainable developments will not be enough to settle the issue of how other activities should be dignified and valued. The moment one looks at concrete issues of, for instance, upgrading educational work or in looking at questions of obligation in the context of community work one finds that socio-philosophical and political controversies will emerge. To overcome these by political pragmatism is hardly a realistic expectation. As an alternative, there are models on offer that aim for change in the relationship between the human being and work by different kinds of stimuli and incentives. This approach assumes a wide-ranging process of transformation as a consequence of the changing living conditions. This position assumes a real process of individualisation and a development of pluralistic life-styles

that can be assumed and built upon. Consequently, an increase of various options for linking work, income and life-style is in this approach considered to be an opportunity for self-determination.

Another viewpoint favours a systematic approach of strong political intervention aiming to impose on people clear social obligations. According to this view, liberalisation is an abortive development. The contention is that necessary attention to social institutions and moral values is undermined by this development. The systematic approach is essentially concerned with moral values in politics and seeks to enforce obligations derived from these in the social context.

The authors of this discussion paper are convinced that the changes in the employment system involve issues of economic power and inevitable changes in people's everyday life, and that any changes will only be acceptable if carried by a democratic consensus. This is why one needs to enlist the support of the people for any changes towards a society with a sustainable concept of work, and why people need to be convinced of the advantages of any new interpretation of working life. It will only be possible to achieve this in the face of present economic constraints on people's lives by negotiating an agreement about societal developments that are informed by an underlying social justice.

Social justice is considered by the most varied of social groups to be the foundation for political policies. However, the concept does need to be given its theological-socio-ethical perspective: Social justice signifies fundamentally justice in several dimensions. These include participation, meeting needs, rewarding performance, equal consideration in all proceedings and equity for both the sexes. These dimensions can be placed in a hierarchical order as follows: A decisive challenge to the question of justice is today the exclusion of masses of people from participating in the labour market and in political and social events. Considering that at present the tendency to exclusion is still rising, the criterion of participation must be the most extensive dimension of social justice with the aim of ensuring the fundamental right to participate in the economic, political and socio-cultural wealth of society. This fundamental dimension of justice stands in opposition to any kind of exclusion of human beings. This is also reflected in the all-encompassing message of the bible and in the Christian tradition, and it is in accordance with the basic articles of the constitution. A denial of opportunities to participate - whether for reasons of a

particular Weltanschauung or of racism, sexism or for economic reasons - is not compatible with the idea of human dignity. The positive meaning of justice in respect of participation is to give people opportunities for self-determination in creating their own life-styles. This assumes the political task of creating social institutions for educational, health and social systems that open up for everyone opportunities to take an active part in the community life. The criterion of justice according to needs must secure a social-cultural minimum existence for that section of the population where people for various reasons can make only limited use of their right to participate. Only after conditions are fulfilled where society guarantees most extensive participation and secures a dignified life-style to all is it possible to introduce the criterion of justice according to performance - the allocation of economic income and of social status according to a principle of performance. Finally, all members of society need to be ensured a reliable scope for legitimate action, which has to be based on the certainty of law.

In the face of the ecological crisis we have recently become aware of the time horizon for the criteria of justice. The idea that future generations should have rights of participation, according to need and according to performance can no longer be taken for granted; it is threatened and qualified by our actions now. To this extent the moral claims of future generations on justice for both sexes have to be kept in mind constantly as a critical boundary to other claims and criteria of justice.

### **7. The importance of the justice of participation in a society with tendencies to exclude**

The criterion of the justice of participation means comprehensive opportunities for individuals to choose their own patterns of work, their own life-style, without having to fit into a vast array of standards set by the state. It implies for the future of work first of all the elementary socio-ethical right to gainful employment. Gainful employment is of fundamental importance in the choice of a self-determined life-style, so that exclusion from gainful employment is tantamount to a refusal of elementary rights in participation. People who are excluded from gainful employment on a long-term basis are not able to participate in the social activities, nor can they determine their own life-style appropriately. Despite reverse developments in labour market politics and existing prognosis, this point of view represents a social-ethical maxim that cannot be compromised.

Justice in participation is, however, not realised by access to gainful employment alone. Other areas of activity - from work in education and in the home, to the social involvement with a rich variety of voluntary work and to working for oneself - all of these should open up broad opportunities for participation. For this purpose we need conditions in society that can help to overcome the de facto one-sided - and particularly gender-specific - allocation of roles and activities.

### **8. Justice according to needs and security of existence**

The issue of a future in which gainful employment is not secured raises renewed the problem of a comprehensive security of existence. What is going to happen if fewer and fewer people are able to stay in regular gainful employment and are therefore not able to build up sufficient security - including security for their old age? What will the situation for women and young people look like if the majority of them do not have sufficient income to secure their existence? What will happen about national insurance contributions for unemployment, sickness and old age if income is further reduced because of increasing unemployment, but expenses are rising? How can one then keep to the principle that has been stated by the two big churches in Germany in their Joint Statement of February 1997 under the title "Für eine Zukunft in Solidarität und Gerechtigkeit" (For a future founded on solidarity and justice): "The welfare state is and will remain obliged to facilitate for every human being in Germany the opportunity for a dignified life." (L. 179)

It is time to take a look at the concepts that secure a livelihood independent of gainful employment. This is the most far-reaching answer to the crisis of a society that is committed to gainful employment, in that it dissolves in principle the hitherto inseparable link between gainful employment and income by granting a basic income. A basic income that can be justified by every human being's social-ethical right to a dignified life is a share of income, to which in principle every citizen is entitled and which guarantees a socio-cultural minimum. A regulation of this kind realises the basic theological conviction that human life is not indebted to itself, but to a state of acceptance by God irrespective of any personal achievements. God's loving kindness that is given undeservedly establishes the human being's self-esteem independently of achievements. God's promise and the experience of His love relieve us from the compulsion to have to realise ourselves through our

achievements. To be a human being is in this perspective not identified by our capacity for work and performance, but is a free gift from God. In a society which today more than ever ranks the value of gainful employment particularly highly, unemployed people experience increasing psychological and social strain. It is an important task therefore to offer people the experience of establishing their identity beyond gainful employment. This might well be a centrally important challenge to society since the deeply rooted historical link between gainful employment and a long-term view of life is at the point of collapse through the tendency of an increasingly flexible labour market. In this situation it is helpful to remember the bible message of the human being's self-worth as independent of performance and so to create an inner freedom, and with a basic income to make possible the material sphere of freedom. It would then be possible to bring new order to the diverse forms of human activities. The reorganisation should bring more justice for people who up to now have been working in the hidden economy or under conditions of rigid dependency, and it should reduce the worries and fears about their everyday life. The demand for a minimum income that guarantees for all human beings a reliable basic security is therefore essential.

In reality, a basic income is already available in Germany - although in rather rudimentary form - by access to various benefits and allowances for a variety of specific life situations. A strongly parallel development since the early eighties shows a rise by a multiple of four in both unemployment and the number of people depending on benefits. Poverty is thus no longer a problem only for marginal groups, but has become a risk to people's livelihood in general, as it can even touch people who are at the very centre of society. This makes the need to reform the way we organise social welfare irrefutable. Up to now the various benefits carried a whiff of the Victorian workhouse and the associated sense of humiliation. Every second person receiving benefits felt lost in the administrative machine of social welfare and its extreme bureaucratic claims and regulating mechanisms. Moreover, many people, whether out of shame or pride, did not claim the benefits and allowances they were entitled to receive. Against that, a basic income as a person's fundamental right would convey respect for the individual's autonomy and dignity. The appropriate amount of a basic income of this kind would have to be discussed in relation to assessed empirical facts about different life situations among the population. Relevant models are already available and need to be analysed critically. Acceptance and support will grow for the institutions of social compensation once it

is apparent that the diversity of individual life opportunities depends on it. It is the image of a “social contract” that can bring together the dynamics of economics and a system of social compensation so that opportunities to take up diverse life-styles are increased for women, men and children. This “higher cultural level of freedom” has its price. It could mean having to forgo short-term economic advantages, having to accept for the sake of a new social balance a tax distribution system of reduced privileges, and having to come to terms with uncertainties related to changing the traditional way of life.

The more one can balance distribution conflicts in relation to poor and rich, men and women, old and young, the less will public institutions be bureaucracy-ridden and the simpler is their task of controlling social conflicts. The idea is therefore not one of getting more work for the civil service. On the contrary, the idea is to promote the development of balanced social forces that make it possible to limit economic concentrations of power and allow social integration to ease the creation of economic and cultural processes.

### **9. Incentives for accepting justice according to performance for a multitude of activities**

Granting a basic income is on its own, however, not sufficient for various reasons. It is a necessary, yet not sufficient, condition for reorganising the way people live and work. For there is the risk that a society that grants a basic income is manifestly giving a private status to the members of a section of society - that is to say: there are people who are excluded from social obligations and rights who receive money and who are therefore, not least through their dependency on the budget, vulnerable to a potential abuse of considerable power.

In order to avoid this possibility of excluding people, it must be possible to combine receipt of a basic income - in contrast to how social security benefits are at present handled - with other forms of income, whether these are for gainful employment or other activities. Gainful employment and other activities have important functions and significance for the individual's personal and social identity; for which one cannot compensate by payment of a basic income. The issue is therefore to link the right to a basic income and the socio-ethical right to gainful employment: The basic income should not - as is the case with social benefits so far - be lost the moment a person

obtains any additional income. One should rather fix an amount of income from gainful employment up to which basic income will not be considered for tax. One could further decide on incremental levels of taxable income up to a limit of income from gainful employment when one can discontinue payment of a basic income.

#### **10. The socio-political goal is “flexicurity”**

This kind of arrangement would aim to guarantee social security by making it possible to combine diverse sources of income. Such an arrangement could particularly contribute to more equal participation by women and men in all forms of work. One could thereby overcome the gender-hierarchical division of work and so move forward towards a realisation of genuine equality between women and men while also opening up for people at the same time a pluralistic choice of life-styles. Experts in social politics from Denmark and the Netherlands use in this context the term “flexicurity”, a combination of fundamental social security and flexibility that can have an effect on the labour market, but also in other areas of activity in civil society. Thus people could combine several forms of work and have a variety of diverse kinds of income depending on their needs and desires and on different life situations. This will ease the transitions from gainful employment to focus on the family, to self-employment or to community work. It is also quite feasible that several of these activities will be combined whereby different types of income will make up the main part of a person’s livelihood at different times in their lives. Considering that already more time is spent working in the “informal sector” than in gainful employment, it seems absolutely necessary to upgrade this sector and to facilitate fluid transitions from and into gainful employment. This would make it possible to implement many of the measures of reform - reducing working hours, facilitating part-time work, combined wages and others - that are being discussed at the moment. However, the decisive prerequisite for sharing the available work for gainful employment remains the idea of granting a basic income because that alone ensures that one cannot slide off into the poverty trap.

#### **11. Ecologically desirable factors as a condition for future developments of society**

All of these types of work and areas of activities are to be modelled according to their “sustainability”. One has to ask again and again to what extent they meet the needs

of today's generation without threatening the necessary resources for the survival of future generations. Finding a route to a sustainable activities-orientated society requires more than the concern for ecological issues in the narrow sense. We also need to redirect our present patterns of gainful employment and consumerism, which we need to examine for their respective use of natural resources. Because of our forgetfulness about nature we still need to establish how much we ignore the ecological costs of our economic activities; we need to put an end to this by setting prices that come closer to the "ecological truth". Consequently, an ecological tax reform worth its name would have to mean that the resulting revenue would be allocated for the specific purpose of protecting the environment. Finally, the undeniable task of securing and creating opportunities for gainful employment should not be undertaken at the expense of lasting damage to the environment.

The following guidelines for a sustainable development need to be observed:

- A system of environmental protection as an integrated aspect of production.
- A lowering of the consumption of energy and natural resources by systematically raising productivity in energy and materials and by opting for a more modest life-style.
- Greater emphasis on the use of renewable raw materials and regenerative energy sources.

This strategy could allow us both to bring down the environmental stress from our economic activities to an acceptable level, and to open up new opportunities for gainful employment in areas such as an efficient use of energy and of regenerative energy production, and of the labour intensive service sector (maintenance, repairs and counselling). It is important at this level that gainful employment should aim for sustainability. One could open up additional new sustainable fields of activities beyond that of gainful employment. The crucial point here is the active commitment of civil society to long-term and sustainable development.

### **III. The option for a plurality of developmental routes for society**

#### **12. Critique of the one-dimensional model of social development**

There is no "magic route" for overcoming the present crisis of the traditional society in respect of gainful employment. The actual political initiatives for opening up such a

route should be pluralistic as far as possible. A society that places importance on varied forms of community involvement for the way ahead would be ill served by partitioning life in rigid patterns and by imposing a host of coercive governmental policies. It is appropriate therefore to make use of diverse political concepts of present thinking for building a route into a sustainable activities-orientated society. One needs to check how far corresponding measures do promote this way forward and where one has to be aware of undeniable difficulties.

### **13. Redistribution of gainful employment**

The unions especially are now as always promoting models based on reducing and redistributing working hours. Such models are highly relevant because the vast majority of people are striving to have gainful employment and, seeing that the volume of work keeps falling, these interests can only be met with projects for different kinds of distribution of work. Due to the shortening of working hours, for which the unions have fought since 1984, it has been possible to redistribute the available work within the community and avoid the worst of rising unemployment.

All the same, the employed are not exactly overjoyed at the idea of a forced redistribution of work. Some of the barriers to accepting new policies for work initiatives originate in fear of loss of income, worry about increasing pressures at work, and two-edged experiences with company schemes of flexible working hours. The only possibility of motivating people lies along the route of voluntary options and more possibilities for the individual to organise their own working time.

A forward looking strategy for a redistributing work will therefore no longer take the form of a uniform collective reduction of working hours. Collectively regulated working hours will have no future potential unless they build on an expansion of individual opportunities to choose. The latter will, on the other hand, only be realisable in the context of a collective contract to ensure their protection. In the face of companies' ongoing demands for more flexibility and of employees' needs for more specifically differentiated schedules there is no sense in trying to redistribute working hours by fixed schedules; instead, one needs to modernise the approach to structuring working hours. Instead of a focus on weekly hours we need to look more at seasons through the year and at patterns of people's working-life, as with a proposal of reducing within the next four years the fixed average for annual working

hours from the present 1,641.3 hours to 1,500 hours, the equivalent of a 34.5 hour week. It is crucial to offer more options for shorter working hours on an individual basis. This means that the individual can structure various life-phases with periods of part-time work and even have complete breaks in gainful employment, and yet be covered by social security.

A strategy of forcing a redistribution of work as a means against unemployment contains the nucleus for a more just society in respect of work. Such a strategy helps to upgrade gainful employment for women both in quantity and quality to form a base for an independent existence, and it replaces the standard model of the man as sole or main breadwinner by enforced shorter standard working hours. It opens the chance to create more quality time and it eases the transition to an activities-orientated society where activities other than gainful employment are fully integrated rather than downgraded at women's expense.

#### **14. The ongoing need for publicly promoted work**

Access to gainful employment solely via the labour market does exclude many people from the chance to participate; we therefore need to retain a planned approach to creating and extending publicly promoted work. It is a matter of strengthening the apparatus for implementing the employment promotion law and of purposefully using a second labour market for areas of community work, for which because of insufficient profitability there would be no interest in the private sector. The whole of society benefits from such initiatives because it is precisely in this area that so much important social, ecological and cultural work is being done.

In this context it is also worth considering how far one can safeguard conditions of employment by meeting with public funds a certain share of wages or by taking on the employer's additional wage costs. There is obviously a danger of this triggering off a "downward" trend in wages and of stabilising forms of precarious employment with public funds. This approach might, on the other hand, make it possible for people who lack both the opportunity and the potential to get qualifications to get at least a certain degree of integration in some subsection of gainful employment. Pilot projects of this kind have to be closely monitored and watched with a view to their effect in terms of policies for the labour market. A final consideration is the possible effect the proposal for linking a basic income to a small income from gainful

employment might have on social policies and policies for the labour market. A system for social security that is increasingly detached from gainful employment can offer a secure basic existence, which might make many jobs with minimal contractual commitments still appealing to some groups in the population, because the threatening phenomenon of the “working poor” would be removed. In general, the concept of a basic income could open up the chance to organise forms of precarious gainful employment which would be more socially acceptable more personally attractive - whether as part-time work, minimum employment, or as activities within public schemes for gainful employment.

### **15. The importance of voluntary work**

The recent intensive debate about “citizenship” has helped to bring out into the open the immense social importance of voluntary work as an aspect of citizenship. According to most recent estimates, there are around 16 million people in Germany who have some form of commitment in sports clubs, in the fire service, as “green ladies”, in parish work, in work with refugees, and so on. The tendency for people to make this kind of commitment is rising. By now this is no longer a matter of “selfless action”; instead people emphasise the social and personal advantages they gain in the context of this kind of work. There is a rising interest in freely organised activities, which are limited in time and relate to a specific project and which give a sense of identity and purpose related to responsibilities and social contacts and where one might be able to get qualifications which will come in useful for obtaining gainful employment. In order to elevate the social importance of “voluntary work” or “citizenship” we need to take care that this kind of involvement will not quietly be declared a second class kind of work. We must rather discover new areas of citizenship, which are linked to social participation. The active participation in shaping democratic society and in establishing generally held values and convictions as part of this kind of work serves to underline yet again its great importance. The prevailing social conditions have a strong influence on the development of this work, particularly since it became apparent that not everyone has the same ease of access to these community activities; not everyone can therefore be equally involved in the process of shaping society. For this reason do we need to emphasise the social importance of citizenship by making available an appropriate social infrastructure. This would include the clear affirmation that it is not a matter of compensation for

denied gainful employment, but much more one of complementing this to allow citizens to realise their personal interest in the democratic life of the community.

### **16. Change of life-styles**

The classical pattern of life within the nuclear family has lost its importance. The plurality of life-styles - with and without children - will continue to increase. Even if women are still undertaking most of the work in house and home - that is to say the reproductive work in our society - it must be nevertheless apparent that fewer and fewer women are prepared to limit themselves to the traditional role of housewife and mother.

Women have won in recent decades a claim for more self-determination; this is significant for their legal situation, but because it enables women to plan their own lives. Female life histories have changed; they have become more open, more easily organised. Young women today can be responsible for making independent decisions in areas where the previous generation of women frequently had no choice at all. Besides expectations of women to fulfil the classical woman's role, which therefore imply rather heteronomy, there are today also expectations that women will act self-assuredly on their own account. Girls experience the same demands and opportunities as do boys and they develop a self-assured claim to have a life of their own. The women of today want both an occupation and a family life. In this, women cannot call on previous patterns of reconciling the different areas of activity because their situation is historically new. As a consequence, there is for women an increased experience of uncertainties. The life-plan chosen by them is in competition with other possibilities in the market of opportunities. Under the conditions of reflexive modernity one's own life plan is always exposed to uncertainties, which are derived from the fact that one's own life plan is inevitably always on one of many possibilities.

Furthermore, this changed view of women's roles is not matched by a similar changed view of men's roles. The new awareness is often still vying with the old ways. For instance men are not getting increasingly active in house and home as women have got increasingly involved in gainful employment. The contradiction between female expectations of equal sharing and the reality of unequal participation intensifies constantly and deepens a growing rift between women and men.

This causes an urgent need particularly for men to get used to adopting new roles, a necessary learning process, which should get political support. It is necessary to create conditions that enable men to work reproductively exactly as women do. In order to get men to contribute a bigger share in the work at home one needs to give the same recognition to this area of activity as to that of gainful employment. This is all the more important because it is undisputed that the parents' responsible care for the children and the grown-up children's care for the older generation is best organised in the private sphere. These areas of activities specifically need a stable financial and social frame of reference. However, what is already on offer in this respect, as for instance the possibility of taking educational leave, do not lead to the desired goal as long as they are not made compulsory measures for men. Here is a political task of creating the appropriate structural conditions.

#### **17. The demand for a broad pattern of sharing and a sustainable concept for a secured existence at a time of radical social change**

The crucial test for this concept is of course the problem of financing it. Investigations into this issue consist so far only of first beginnings. It is possible to say, however, that the expense involved will not overstretch the bounds of public spending, particularly since any possible extra expenses could be set against savings in many other areas of social welfare and administration. One would also have to clarify the question of financial responsibilities for this concept, which would have to be shared out between local authorities, the Länder and the Bund.

The conversion of a society with an orientation on gainful employment to an activities-orientated society is at present an open project that is discussed by groups of diverse social forces. Some pointers to this process can be found in the Joint Statement of Churches in Germany; these are to be further developed by the present reflections - which also are the result of ecumenical co-operation - in order to get the discussion going throughout society.

As this process is concerned with more than economic and social aspects, there are bound to be hitches and conflicts. The emphasis in our initiatives is on demanding a broad spectrum of possibilities for participation and a sustainable security for everyone's existence at this time of radical change. On this basis we can try out and get running some new ways of relating "work and life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century" without

expecting people to adjust to unreasonable working and living conditions. The intention is instead to provide the opportunity for people to open up the rich potential of human capabilities and develop appropriate profiles of activities based on a secured existence.

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