

# Guidelines for the World of Work and Occupation

## 1. The Present Situation

(1) Today's global economic system is facing a radical transformation. The industrial societies find themselves in transition, changing into post-industrial service-oriented societies for which no model or clear profile exists. In the agrarian societies, industrial production methods are increasingly gaining importance, with dire consequences for small farms, and for those employed in agriculture.

(2) On the level of the world economy, an ever stronger interlocking is evident: one speaks of the globalization of the economy. Such globalization can, on the one hand, lead to lower production costs, but, on the other hand, increases the danger that business decisions are made solely on the basis of costs and profitability, without taking into consideration the situations of the working people who are affected by these decisions. At the same time, in a globally-operative world economy, the ability of independent nations to influence economic activities steadily diminishes with the lack of appropriate, international, regulating mechanisms, globally effective economic, monetary, and social policies that could limit the unbridled powers of the marketplace and lead to an economic outcome that is more just and oriented towards the general welfare of society. From the perspective of his/her dignity and his/her connection to work, the individual is threatened with being left out of the picture.

(3) For millions of people, agriculture is the foundation of their livelihood, which is being threatened through the over-utilization of ecologically sensitive soils, the ruthless clear-cutting of forests, and the ever-increasing natural catastrophes, such as storms or floods, which are caused by climatic changes for which mankind is partially responsible. Valuable soils are being washed away through erosion, and changes in the climate lead to diminishing harvests.

(4) Micro-electronics and automation, in fact, all advances in technology, have made work easier for people and increased production quantitatively as well as qualitatively. However, we are becoming more and more aware of the fact that the mechanization and automation of work is displacing people from the work-process and forcing many into unemployment. The technology that was once man's ally is now threatening to become his enemy. The increasing numbers of unemployed all over the world seem to confirm this viewpoint.

(5) The growing unemployment not only leads to a worsening of the individuals' economic situation and, with the absence of a social safety net in many parts of the world, to poverty, but it is also connected with a loss of the unemployed's self-esteem. For those who are affected, failure to find employment means a diminished opportunity for personal development. This has even more validity since the work that is being done without remuneration in the broad sphere of family and community is seen as being of little value.

(6) Automation in the workplace and the ongoing economic transformation not only lead to unemployment, but also place higher demands on those people remaining in the labour market. The acquired occupational knowledge quickly becomes outdated, without appropriate structures and facilities being available to constantly broaden one's vocational knowledge, or even to learn something completely new. The forever changing demands on one's occupational skills leads to insecurity among working people, and only a few have set themselves on a course of life-long learning.

(7) The ongoing automation in the workplace makes the working person insecure and treats him/her as a replaceable small wheel in a big machine. The principle that work has precedence over capital is seldom followed and there is an absence of a clear formulation and implementation of a policy that allows working people to share and participate in the decision-making process. The valid framework for this varies greatly worldwide. At the same time, the ever-growing concentration of business enterprises that overlap and interlock involving several countries minimizes the availability of opportunities for participation in the decision-making process.

## **2. The Christian Concept of Work and the Significance of Occupation and Work in the Fundamental Principles of the Kolping Society**

### **(8) Work as a Distinguishing Mark of Human Beings**

"Work is one of the characteristics that distinguishes human beings from the other creatures, whose daily activities for the preservation of life cannot be called 'work'; only human beings are capable of work; only human beings perform work with which they occupy their earthly existence. Thus work represents a special characteristic of man and of mankind, the identifying mark of the individual who operates within a community of individuals". (LABOREM EXERCENS, Preamble)

### **(9) The Christian Concept of Work**

Work is the unfolding of our God-given mental and physical powers through their utilization towards a serious and sincere goal. Through their work, human beings participate in God's plan for creation. Accordingly, work is much more than just gainful employment.

In allegiance with the teachings of the Catholic Social Doctrine, the Kolping Society bases its endeavours on a three-dimensional concept of work. Accordingly, work is simultaneously

- an opportunity and purpose for the development of the human person;
- a service to the community and for the common good;
- a responsible interaction with the Creation.

Taking this into account, human work becomes not only a human right, but also an obligation. Here, with explicit reference to the ideas of Adolph Kolping, the starting point for the Kolping Society is the fundamental parity of all human work. At the same time, the Kolping Society proceeds on the premise that it is absolutely essential that a person's gainful employment provide the security of an appropriate living standard for himself/herself and his/her family.

### **(10) The Program of the International Kolping Society (1982)**

For the International Kolping Society, human work is not only a necessity for earning a living, but it is also an opportunity for self-development and - as a service to the community - an obligation for Christians world-wide. The Kolping Society expects from its members a readiness to pursue occupational training and further education, as well as personal commitment and involvement within the framework of existing opportunities for participation. The Kolping Society places special importance on fashioning a world of work that embraces human dignity.

### **(11) Ecological Guidelines (1991)**

Behaving in a conscientious, ecologically-responsible manner is not only required in private life, but also in the world of work. Starting with the concept that work contributes to the personal development of the individual, is a service to the community, and shapes the environment, the impact of work on the environment must be given greater consideration. It is an ethical necessity that the industrial processes be constructed in such a way as to minimize the expenditure of energy and to guarantee the economical utilization of resources. Everyone participating in the work process also carries a responsibility for the economical use of resources and the avoidance of defective workmanship and garbage.

### **(12) Socio-Political Guidelines (1992)**

In industrial, agrarian, and post-industrial service societies, work is basic to human existence and an insurance against social needs. The obvious conclusion is that work exists to serve individuals rather than individuals existing to serve work. In this context, a new understanding of work becomes more significant: Work is understood as an opportunity for personal development, for service to the community, and for the shaping of the environment.

However, technological progress, the opening of borders, free access to markets, and other conditions, causes and interdependencies increasingly limit the function of work. Unemployment and the absence of a secure foundation for human existence are the consequences. Therefore, the unemployed and their families require special legislative assistance.

The lower the unemployment and the more comprehensive the assistance for the unemployed and their families, the more secure will be the foundation of human existence in the various societies.

### **3. The Objectives of the Kolping Society**

#### **(13) Creating Appropriate Parameters for Gainful Employment**

For a comprehensive understanding of work that meets the needs of man's basic personal, social and cultural needs to become truly effective, appropriate parameters with respect to gainful employment are necessary. This is especially true for:

- the appreciation of work by society, including appropriate wages;
- the creation of concrete working conditions, including opportunities for participation in the decision-making process;
- the opportunity to obtain occupation-specific competence, as well as vocational and professional qualifications, including opportunities for corresponding advanced education;
- the provision for the acquisition of co-ownership in the production equipment.

#### **(14) Enhancing the Status of Work Not Associated with Remuneration**

The countless activities performed within the family or for the community, normally not classified as employment, go unnoticed, and their significance for the individual and the community are greatly undervalued. The work in the family and volunteer work in and for the community deserve to be given much greater recognition, creating a framework in which the activities are increasingly given greater consideration with respect to social insurance, and the skills thereby acquired are acknowledged in the field of employment.

#### **(15) Developing and Maintaining Social Security Systems**

Without weakening the responsibility of people for themselves, it is necessary to develop social security systems and maintain existing ones to enable people to better cope with the fluctuations in life such as illness, accidents or unemployment, as well as old age. In this aspect, the strengthening and support of the family as the primary and fundamental social unit becomes an important function.

#### **(16) From a Free to a Socially Responsible Market Economy**

So far the market economy has proved itself world-wide as the economic system that was best able to secure for people a sufficient supply of material goods, to increase the material welfare of a community, thereby reducing the level of poverty and need. However, the market-regulating forces are confronted with their limitations, in that increasingly non-marketable common values, such as education, protection of the environment, social security, means of transportation, and services in the framework of the infrastructure, have become important for the welfare of mankind. The Catholic Social Doctrine has therefore always emphasized the principle that the results achieved through the forces of the market must be corrected in consideration of the common good and augmented through compensating social services. A free market society must be further developed into a socially responsible market economy.

#### **(17) Developing a More Just Global Economic Order**

The worldwide inter-relations and obligations, and the reciprocal inter-dependence require an improved framework for global economies and a more just economic order. In such a global economic order, the component "work" requires greater consideration, particularly in view of the enormous need for jobs in the countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. At the

same time, certain basic standards should assure a minimum level of social security, the prohibition of child labour, and the implementation of basic ecology-protection measures through appropriate internationally verifiable mechanisms. An important task on the global economic level is finding solutions to the urgent debt problems of the countries of the Third World and some nations in Middle and Eastern Europe.

#### **4. Consequences for the Work in the Kolping Society**

According to the basic principles and traditions of the Kolping Society, the whole field of labour and occupation must continue to be a prominent focal point of its work. Independent of specific focal points in individual countries, the following areas should be given particular attention:

##### **(18) Occupational Training**

From its very beginning, the Kolping Society ranked occupational training as one of its most important functions. It was always well aware that its occupational training programs could never replace the vital educational opportunities offered through state and industry, but should serve as a model and stimulation for both state and commercial institutions dealing with occupational education. Wherever possible, the Kolping Society should make its occupational training measures available to function in subsidiary cooperation with state facilities or companies.

##### **(19) Intensification of Occupational Training**

Occupational training is severely neglected in many countries and national economies. Compared to the emphasis placed on general basic education and the academic programs, occupational training is given a very low priority. Yet the development of occupational training is an absolute existential necessity because economic progress without vocationally qualified people is impossible. The Kolping Society is therefore an advocate for elevating occupational training to its appropriate status within the educational system, and it promotes a constant adaptation of educational content and training methods to the ever-changing challenges and needs of society. For the Kolping Society, occupational training is more than just the teaching of technical skills and competence: Occupational training includes the teaching of social skills.

##### **(20) Occupational Training for Special Target Groups**

A special function of the Kolping Society is to offer occupational training to target groups that are neglected in the system of general vocational education. This is especially true for people who, because of physical or mental handicaps, cannot be integrated into the normal vocational training system. However, the Kolping Society also targets in a special way those groups which, because of race, language, or other reasons, cannot participate in regulated state or company occupational training programs, or which, because of the level of their basic schooling, cannot meet the prerequisite entrance requirements.

##### **(21) Occupational Training in the Informal Sector**

Occupational training aims directly at the acquisition of skills and practices through which the livelihood for oneself and one's family can be secured. Such knowledge can easily be taught in short courses, without having to go through a formalized government educational program. Basic occupational training in the informal sector is even more important when a large number of vocationally unqualified people are faced with only a very limited number of available openings in training facilities. For Kolping, therefore, especially in the Third World, this means emphasis on and initiation of informal occupational training programs in order to increase the level of vocational education..

##### **(22) Practice-Oriented Occupational Training**

For the Kolping Society, the practical requirements of occupational training also play a decisive role. Its training programs are therefore very practice-oriented. Wherever possible, the Kolping Society uses the dual educational system, which combines theoretical instruction in a school setting with practical teaching of vocational skills in a workshop.

### **(23) Ongoing Occupational Training**

The rapid technological developments make a constant upgrading of vocational education necessary. The Kolping Society sees it as one of its important functions to encourage its members to participate in these ongoing training opportunities, and at the same time, it endeavours to offer such vocational education programs. These vocational extension courses are not limited only to the technical side of an occupation, but also include the teaching of managerial skills.

### **(24) Occupational Training in the Agricultural Sector**

As the presence of the Kolping Society increases in rural areas, so does its responsibility to educate the people who are working in the agricultural sector. The encyclical *LABOREM EXERCENS* already mentions the fact that in view of the problems of the industrial world, it is only too easy to overlook that a large segment of our planet's working population are farm-workers. Precisely for the broad masses that are involved in farming, appropriate basic training and continuing education are missing, particularly in those countries where the majority of the people depend on farming for their livelihood. The Kolping Society is challenged to expand its efforts in this area.

### **(25) Intensifying Education in the Area of Work Without Remuneration.**

From the Kolping Society's concept of 'work', further educational measures cannot limit themselves solely to the area of gainful employment. Rather, the Kolping Society believes its task is to include qualifying and furthering the education of people involved in work without remuneration. Consequently, the Kolping Society offers further education in all areas of work in the family, for example, raising children, the care of family members, increasing home-making skills, and work in family relationships. The Kolping Society is also challenged to implement measures for furthering education in other areas of work, where immeasurably important and absolutely essential work is done for the community without remuneration, such as in the area of culture, communal civic responsibilities, or social work.

### **(26) Promotion of Entrepreneurial Initiatives.**

Entrepreneurial initiative is not only an important personal right, but also an opportunity to use one's creativity to benefit the common good. Unencumbered creative and enterprising abilities are very important for economic development and the creation of new employment opportunities. The Kolping Society encourages its members to become economically independent, and whenever possible, to acquire the appropriate qualifications. It promotes an economy in which the small and medium-sized independent business enterprises are encouraged and can prosper.

### **(27) Strengthening Small Farming Units**

Just as in the area of business, the Kolping Society promotes small and medium-sized, economically independent units in the area of agriculture. Small farms not only offer a secure livelihood for a large number of families, but they are worth promoting also from an ecological and environmental perspective. The Kolping Society sees a particular function in the promotion of subsistence farmers, so that by growing marketable products they can be better integrated into the economic cycle and provide monetary income. To improve the economic condition of small farms, the Kolping Society initiates and promotes the development of co-operatives and co-op-like associations.

**(28) Support on the Path to Economic Independence**

The Kolping Society considers supporting people on their path to economic independence as an important mandate. To accomplish this, it offers, wherever possible and necessary, courses on the basics of self-employment, teaches the fundamentals of business management and legalities, supports savings groups, initiates programs for small credit loans, and assists in the finding of new marketing opportunities.

**(29) Agrarian Reform**

In a great number of countries, the access to land is the deciding factor for the livelihood for millions of people. Yet, the distribution of arable land is particularly unjust. While a few big landowners control immense estates, which they often do not even use for agricultural purposes, great numbers of small farmers and lease-holders are denied access to more land, and often to credit, water, and means of production, too. The Kolping Society actively supports all endeavours for changing agricultural charters, so that an improvement in the situation of rural poverty groups can be achieved through effective agrarian reforms.

**(30) Promotion of Co-Ownership**

Not all people are able to establish their own independent economic livelihood. But in accordance with the teachings of the Church and the position of the Catholic Social Doctrine, the Kolping Society sees it as an important mandate to promote co-ownership of the means of production for workers, and to demonstrate ways and means for creating a broader equity base in the hands of the workers. Through co-ownership in the means of production, there is a guarantee that the worker can profit from the fruits of his/her labours beyond the remuneration, and the awareness grows that one is working for one's own benefit. Co-ownership is furthermore a foundation for participation in the decision-making processes within the business. The additional equity base in the hands of the workers gives them additional social security and broadens the scope of their freedom.

**(31) Promotion of Solidarity Movements**

In view of the social situations of individual groups of working people, the creation of solidarity movements is indispensable. Through an association of individuals, many problems can be solved more easily. Co-ops and pre-cooperative associations represent alternatives to independent businesses. The Kolping Society sees its function as supporting such initiatives, and to educate the members of co-ops primarily in cooperative thinking. An important task is given the Kolping Society in those countries in which national social-security systems are almost non-existent and, where through the weakening of the familiar solidarity structures, the individual is left without any social security in case of illness or accident. Here the Kolping Society sees its function as developing alternative forms of social security and initiating new models of solidarity movements. The same is true for the growing number of victims of modernization in industrial countries.

**(32) Support for the Representation of Special-Interests**

In an economy with divisions of labour, representation of the interests of individual occupational groups through unions is indispensable for "legitimate social, cultural and economic progress" (LE 21). Here the Kolping Society sees its function predominantly as motivating its members to work with, and to become members of, the appropriate agencies representing their specific interests, and to qualify themselves to take on responsible leadership positions in these agencies. At the same time, it supports and encourages its members to participate within existing parameters in the decision-making process in the industrial arena, as well as within the framework of economic and social self-determination, and in national organizations and institutions relating to the world of work.

**(33) Representation of Interests on the Political Level**

The situation of working people is influenced to a great extent by political decisions. The state determines the legal framework of economic activities, and thereby exerts a major influence on the extent to which the rights of the worker are secured and his/her personal dignity remains protected. The Kolping Society sees a function in developing, and entering into the political debate, political positions that correspond to the Kolping Society's concept of the world of work and to the Catholic Social Teachings.

**(34) Ongoing Development of Work and Professional Ethics.**

According to the Christian concept, every act of work is participation in God's creation. "Men and women who, in earning a livelihood for themselves and their families, conduct their activities so as to be in meaningful service to the community, can rightfully be convinced that, through their work, they are contributing to the ongoing development of God's creation." (GAUDIUM ET SPES 34). Based on the spirituality of work, the Kolping Society recognizes its mandate and responsibility to develop elements for present-day ethics in the area of occupation and work, to pass them on to its members, and to bring them into all discussions on occupational and work-related issues.

**Ratified by the International Convention on May 8, 1997**