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A project for young people in the working field

Organizers

Catholic Youth Austria (KJ), Young Christian Labour Union (FCGJ), Iustitia et Pax (IUPAX), Catholic workers movement (KAB)

Background situation

In Austria there are over 75,000 unemployed youngsters (15-24). Many young people in Austria and Europe are in a precarious employment situation. A large number of young people after the 9th grade start to work. The shift to the workplace in many cases comes along with major challenges. In addition, there are often few opportunities for a debate and a targeted exchange on working conditions for the working youth.

In our project “we.design.work” we offered young people the opportunity to present themselves and their (working) situation and to address their questions and needs to young politicians in the parliament in a dynamic and creative framework. The project offered them a youth-oriented approach to political participation.

Participating youngsters

200 youngsters between the age of 16-20 in apprentice for several professions: retail, bakers, masons, plumbers, production schools (youngsters who have problems to find an apprentice place), AMS-initiatives. We deliberately took into account a large number of different groups participating in the project.

Procedure

1. In January and February collaborators of Catholic Youth conducted with each group of youngsters two workshops about 4 hours on the topic "fair labor"

The key questions were: How would I describe the current status of my work? Am I satisfied with my work place? What do I expect from my workplace?

What is decent and fair labor all about? What is a good training place for me?

Between the two workshops youngsters made a short video about their working places.

2. On 5th/6th March 2015 all groups that made the workshops in different parts of Austria came together in Vienna for a joint meeting. In a method called “World coffee” they talked again about several topics that have been arisen in the workshops. In the workshops they critiqued some points in a first step and in a second step they developed proper visions and utopias to the critiques. In Vienna the aim was to transform these utopians into (more realistic) ideas for the implementation for politicians.

Some discussed topics

1. Appreciation for the working youth

A lot of people in society look down to these youngsters who choose to learn a profession. Masons mentioned that they are called “fools, idiots” by their boss and responsible.

2. Good quality in their formation

Some teachers in classes don't have proper formation for teaching. Responsible people in their working fields sometimes don't teach them anything and they are feeling that they are losing their time.

3. Fair Working hours

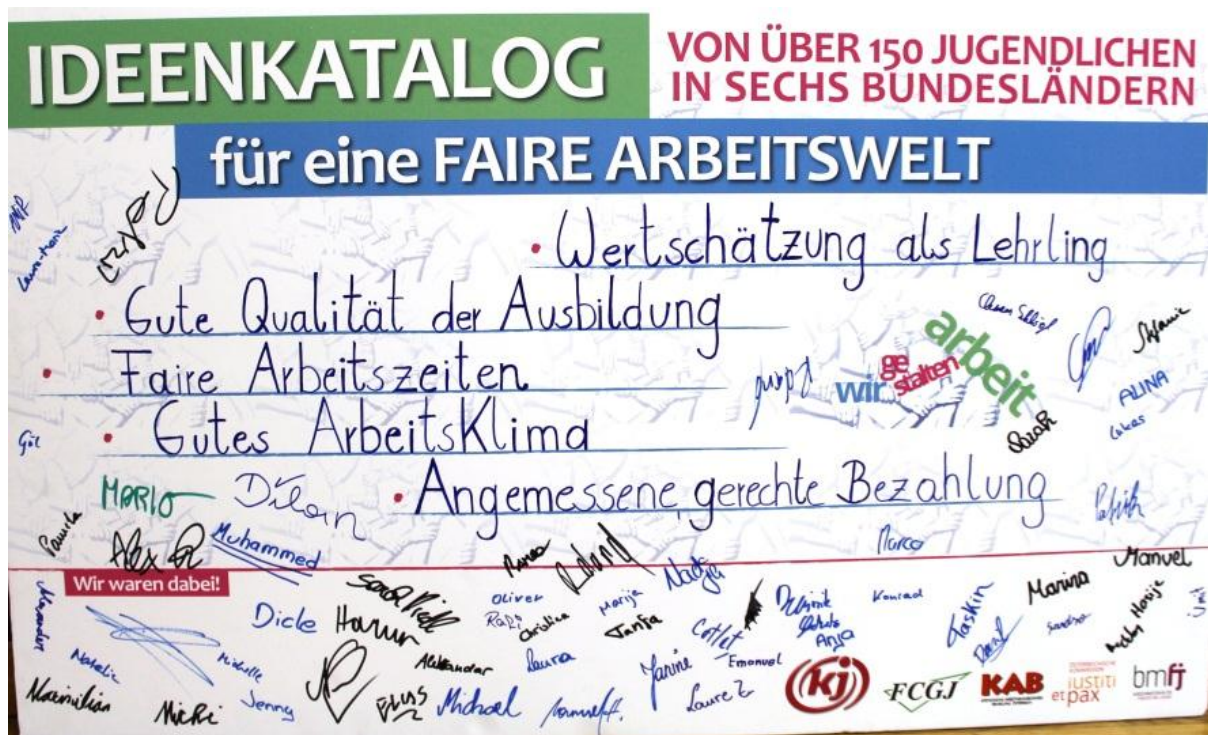
A lot of apprentices mentioned that they have to do extra hours, even though they are officially not allowed to do so and consequently don't get paid for it. Some complained they had to work on Sundays and days not mentioned in their contracts.

4. Good climate at work

This was one of the biggest wishes of the participants to work in a good and healthy environment where they are respected, can learn and grow as whole personality.

5. A fair wage

Lots of youngsters only get 450 Euro per month (eg.) even though they should get the double. The problem is some have to firm contracts very fast without getting the chance to read all the information.



Here you see the catalogues of ideas that were given to the politicians.

On the 6th March we met young politicians representing the four main parties in Austria: The Conservatives (ÖVP), The Social-Democratic Party (SPÖ), the Neos (Neoliberals), The Green Party (Grünen) and the head of the Austrian National Youth Council. Before the meeting the youngsters were given a tour through the parliament. Afterwards the politicians presented themselves in a very interactive way by a so called “word-rap”.

Then the young participants sat together around tables and hosted each politician for 5 minutes. In this time they could pose questions and tell them about their worries in work, studies and other areas. After the 5 minutes the bell rang and the politicians changed to the next table.

Objectives

The project was marked by the following objectives:

Offering space for young people

- i. Micro level. What can I do, where do I stand up for better working conditions?
 - ii. Meso level: What can be changed in my company, my school, in my working area?
 - iii. Macro level: What can we expect from our politicians?
- providing listeners for young people's problems
 - fostering political participation of young people and make them perceive they are serious actors in democracy
 - strengthening self-efficacy feeling
 - fostering the self-confident in their working, learning and living environment
 - to demonstrate and to improve their career opportunities
 - helping them for a better understanding and assessing of politics

Young people learn how to network and how to approach democracy

- The project was realized in several regions in Austria. For the closing days in Vienna all participants across the country came together, got to know each other and exchanged their ideas
- politicians took over the ideas created by the participants. They committed themselves to tackle these demands in their policy.
- By the great interest of the media we could foster the public debate on apprenticeships and young people in the working field.

To position church as a socio-political player and make lobby for young people

- The church from its roots is committed to social and political issues
- outwards: make new contacts with young people
- within the Church: the Church has been active for working youth
- within the church and outside: create new collaborations and partnerships, cooperation and to strengthen all stakeholders

Sustainable consequences

- Participants improved very much their self-confidence regarding their work and learning environment, got a better understanding of participation and democracy.
- The results are indicative of our work as Catholic Youth Austria and other youth organizations. We could improve our understanding of the needs and the lives of the young people.



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