

NEWSLETTER

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Meaningful Work

Is work more than the next pay cheque? No doubt pay is important, and governments have an ethical and moral obligation to ensure that every worker

See - Judge - Act

"Growth in justice requires more than economic growth, while presupposing such growth: it requires decisions, programs, mechanisms and processes specifically geared to a better distribution of income, the creation of sources of employment and an integral promotion of the poor which goes beyond a simple welfare mentality. I am far from proposing an irresponsible populism, but the economy can no longer turn to remedies that are a new poison, such as attempting to increase profits by reducing the work force and thereby adding to the ranks of the excluded"

~ Pope Francis ~
(The Joy of the Gospel no. 204)

gets a fair living wage, but are people looking for something more out of work? The concept of work as a means to the next pay cheque is a vestige of the Industrial Revolution which made work very transactional, a very different approach to a pre-industrial revolution way of thinking where one worked to survive, but work was an integral aspect of the community that person worked in.

A survey published by McKinsey in 2020 suggested that 82% of employees wanted the company they work for to have a social purpose as well as creating meaningful work. Being part of such a company equates to the employee as meaningful work as it goes beyond the next pay cheque. It becomes something worth doing as it leaves in the worker a sense of doing something worthwhile that is benefiting society in a positive way. This way of thinking can be observed in other surveys, for example a survey of American professionals published in 2018 found that up to 90% of those interviewed would have considered earning less if that meant getting a job that left them with a sense of meaning.

This suggests that work is integral to our identity. We are not suggesting that work should define an individual, but separating work from a person's identity is de-humanising that person. Viewed from a Christian tradition standpoint one might add that Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation, and maybe the surveys mentioned above are a reflection of this inner yearning to be participant in God's creation.

Many people, especially the younger generation, experience that disengaging from work is becoming increasingly difficult, with people finding that even off work, they are still thinking about work. This reality is a direct result of how work has evolved especially with automation removing most work drudgery. With people finding it hard to disengage from and therefore spending most of their time and mental energy at work, then work must provide more than a pay cheque to ensure the well-being of the person, and a person's sense of worth - not monetary worth, but the worth associated with doing good, doing something that matters, being part of something bigger.

It is therefore critical that governments put in motion policies that address and harness this. We cannot rely on low skilled, mostly imported, jobs to run the economy. Before we know it, the workers in these jobs will become disenfranchised and the result is civil unrest. We need an economy built on quality work opportunities. People deserve a sense of worth in what they do. People are asking more 'Does what I do matter?'

The right to productive and meaningful work is a basic right of workers alongside the right for a decent and fair wage and the right to economic initiative. An economy built on work drudgery is outmoded and outdated. We note that in Malta, a large part of the local workforce is still engaged in jobs which do not meet this expectation - maybe resulting in local business bemoaning that the Maltese average as lesser productive in Europe. The less attractive the workday, the less productive people will be, and this is detrimental to business who is not able to compete and generate enough wealth which in turn makes it harder for business to meet expectations for higher wages. The cycle is vicious - difficult and courageous decisions need to be taken to break this cycle.

A sense of meaning in work comes from various avenues and can be as diverse as humanity. However, there are several traits which might be telling. On the one hand there is work that directly improves people's lives. This kind of work leaves a sense of doing something meaningful because it directly impacts others positively. On the other hand, there is the less obvious which is related to the ability to use creativity and talents and put them to good use - this alignment of work activity with who I am (my abilities) creates meaning because I feel like using the best parts of my being to make a contribution to whatever it is I do resulting in a feel good factor. This in a way reminds me in the [parable of the talents](#), where the master praised those that did their best with their talents, not the profit they made, and equally scorned the one that hid his talents.

Peter Watkins, a UK based university relations director of the CFA institute puts it this way "It's important that people are able to talk about their job with pride, and that is connected to knowing that their small part in a larger organisation is leading to something a bit more worthwhile." It's not only knowledge work that can provide this feel-good factor. Any work that feels like contributing to a greater purpose has meaning and provides a sense of meaning and achievement to the worker.

There are also people that view work as a way to reclaim time outside of work - they work and then go home to family, to volunteer groups, to activities that make them feel good and possibly doing something for the world around them. So not only must work cater for an in-work satisfaction but also provide for a means to live not just exist - fair remuneration plays an important part in this.

Whether it's because they're making a measurable difference, because they feel like their work aligns with who they are, or simply because what they're doing pays to support their lifestyle, workers want to know their work has meaning.

Be the change you want to see, be that change today.



Statement: The futility of war

Amidst the horrifying conflicts unfolding in the world today, ZHN would like to invoke the inter-religious values that youth cherish and hold so close to their heart.

- Violence is always and unequivocally unacceptable – be it present or historical.
- Recognising our common humanity necessitates interpersonal understanding. People – no matter their acts and actions – always remain people with dignity. Food and water should therefore never be weaponised, and dehumanising treatment and language, particularly in the media, should never be justified.

We call on all youth, all workers, and all people, to hold these values to heart,

- in our discernment of the occurrences in the world around us,
- in our conduct, and
- in interacting with our family, friends, colleagues, and strangers.

During these troubling times, we call on all people to keep championing these values, and to continue to pray for these values to be upheld always and all places.



Democracy at work session

On the 25th of September, ZHN members had the honour of meeting with President Emeritus Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca. The purpose of this meeting was to delve into pressing topics that have been selected for the upcoming COMECE (Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community) gathering.

The topic, "democracy at work: how active participation of workers can develop a more humane and sustainable economy" sparked a lively exchange of ideas. Recognizing the pivotal role of workers in shaping the economic landscape, the participants explored ways in which their active involvement can lead to a more just and sustainable future. They discussed the significance of empowering workers, promoting fair labour practices, and fostering an environment that values their contributions. The conversation highlighted the potential for a harmonious synergy between workers and employers, where mutual respect and shared decision-making can pave the way for a thriving economy that prioritizes the well-being of all.

Throughout the meeting, President Emeritus Coleiro Preca's insights and experience inspired ZHN members to think beyond conventional boundaries and explore innovative solutions.

Reaching out

As part of ZHN's ongoing reach-out to other youth organisations the fortnightly meeting with the Ibragg Group has been progressing nicely.

During these sessions discussions focus on helping the young people become aware of social situations and issues around us.

During the month of October one of the sessions was lead by Albert Debono from Caritas who gave a lecture on Diakonia in the Church and invited youths to discuss what they can do to be of service.

In the spirit of the See-Judge-Act method the group followed up on this session on subsequent weeks to come up with a concrete action plan on how to be of service to others.

Young people and work



Session with the Augustinian Youths

During the month of October more sessions of the Young People and Work programme were delivered by Christian Cassar on behalf of the Żgħażaġh Haddiema Nsara. These sessions, aimed at youths aged 15 and over, provide practical information, skills, insights and awareness to facilitate the young people's transition into the work-world.

Several organisations have already benefited from this programme, with some asking for additional sessions. If interested to host a session, send us an [email](#) to discuss the needs for your group.