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The Chamber of Labor Upper Austria represents more than 500,000 employed persons and all consumers. It is a democratically organized, efficient, and modern representative body for its members. Its main roles are: the codetermination and control of lawmaking and the related representation of interests, research on behalf of employees and consumers, and the provision of services (consultancy and representation).

First launched in 1997, the Austrian Work Climate Index was designed by the Chamber of Labor Upper Austria in cooperation with SORA and IFES. The Work Climate Index describes what supposedly objective and „hard“ indices fail to describe: that is, the implications of economic change on how employees see and experience their own situations at the workplace.

The Work Climate Index has meanwhile become well established and recognized, and as a result it has been possible to compile a unique wealth of data on issues concerning job satisfaction and occupational health. These data help us to effectively represent the interests of employees. In addition, important discussions – such as about changing the existing regulation of working hours or about the gender pay gap – have benefited considerably from the results contributed by the Work Climate Index. Only recently, two new aspects were integrated, the Executive Personnel Monitor and the Occupational Health Monitor.

During the last few years, it has become increasingly apparent, however, that there exists

no comparable instrument at a European level. We have no social benchmarks that would generate data on the work climate in EU member states at regular intervals. The „well-being@work“ project was initiated by the Chamber of Labor Upper Austria in order to develop a flexible, widely applicable European instrument. In this context, it is necessary to factor in the different social, economic, cultural, and political situations.

Strengthening Europe’s economic performance, which was defined as an objective of the Lisbon Strategy, is of enormous importance. However, in recent years, improving the working and living conditions of Europe’s citizens was often neglected. The current economic crisis has entailed massive changes in the labor markets of EU member states. It cannot yet be said how the people faced with this situation are feeling. In order to be able to respond to the changes and problems in the labor market, we need valid socio-scientific data. Presently, we only have assessments provided by experts, but it is not possible to act fast on a Europe-wide scale.

In a memorandum, the partners to this project agreed that there must be a new form of economic conduct in Europe. It is necessary to continuously monitor, measure, and discuss changes in business and working life, with the help of and based on suitable instruments.

Important parameters of job quality include: job security, job satisfaction, opportunities to participate and have a say at work, elimination of discriminatory practices at the workplace, opportunities for career advancement, physi-

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cal and mental health, and work/life balance. As a consequence of the current economic crisis, such social benchmarks are now more important than ever.

It is the aim of today's conference to promote the development of a tool that will generate

valid results. Using these results, employee representatives will then be able to approach politicians and entrepreneurs with clear and substantiated arguments and demands. This will eventually pave the way for a transition from an economic union toward a social union.