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## Perspectives for a European Work Climate Index

### Relevance of the Concept

Amid the raging global economic crisis, the work climate concept has become all the more relevant today. Macroeconomic data and figures from economic statistics alone are insufficient to adequately describe the implications of the economic downturn. Rather, the status quo can be depicted accurately only based on additional data obtained from employees, that is, data on how they, threatened by unemployment and exposed to increasing pressure, see their own situation.

### The Austrian Experience

The aim was to provide data obtained from employees on how they themselves assess the situation at their workplaces and jobs. Based on this data, we are now able to describe the status quo of business and work life in Austria more accurately and comprehensively. The surveying method used is to conduct periodical representative face-to-face interviews with all employed persons. The extent and development of differences in the work climate between various groups of employees, professions, economic sectors, and regions in particular provided valuable pieces of information. From them, it was possible to draw conclusions for necessary action in terms of economic and social policies.

### Other Approaches

The fact that the questions of the Work Climate Index are of great relevance today is aptly documented by the great number of copycat

products created in Austria in recent years by various profit-oriented market research institutes. Obviously, during the last twelve years, the Work Climate Index has heightened the general public's awareness of this issue. Even business consultants have, during the last decade, discovered the market of conducting employee interviews. Only recently, a project comparable to the Work Climate Index was developed in Germany. The „Good Work“ Index of the German Trade Unions is a very thorough and conclusive study also arousing great public interest. Apart from that, there have been and still are a continually growing number of individual studies on various aspects of the life of work. Their shortcoming is their lack of comparability, the divergent and often unreliable database, and the lack of continuity.

### Perspectives at a European Level

The „well-being@work“ project has clearly demonstrated that for a successful post-Lisbon strategy and policy of the European Union we will need social benchmarks measured in and compared between the various member countries on an ongoing basis. For any solutions to be suited to help us overcome the ever worsening economic crisis, they need to act on economic and social relationships and change them. To what extent such changed policy approaches will actually produce positive effects for employees can only be determined by interviewing those concerned, and the effectiveness of such policy can only be assessed by continuously measuring these data.