

Social Dialogue in the Czech Republic

Institutional Stability under Membership Decline

Trade Union Density, Collective Bargaining Coverage and Future Challenges

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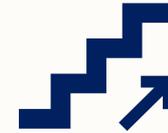
RILSA

A decorative graphic consisting of a light orange line with four circular nodes. The line starts from the left edge, dips down to the first node, rises to the second, dips slightly to the third, and then rises sharply to the fourth node.

Trade unions – South Korea - Gyeonggi Province
Meeting 2/3/2026 – Prague

Social dialog levels

National Tripartite Level



- Trade unions, employers and the government meet within the tripartite body, the **Council of Economic and Social Agreement (RHSD)**.
- The RHSD does not conclude binding agreements; it has an exclusively consultative function. Its aim is to maintain social consensus on key issues of economic and social development and to preserve social peace.
- Trade union organisations and employer associations must meet **criteria of representativeness**. The members of the RHSD include two trade union confederations and two employer associations.

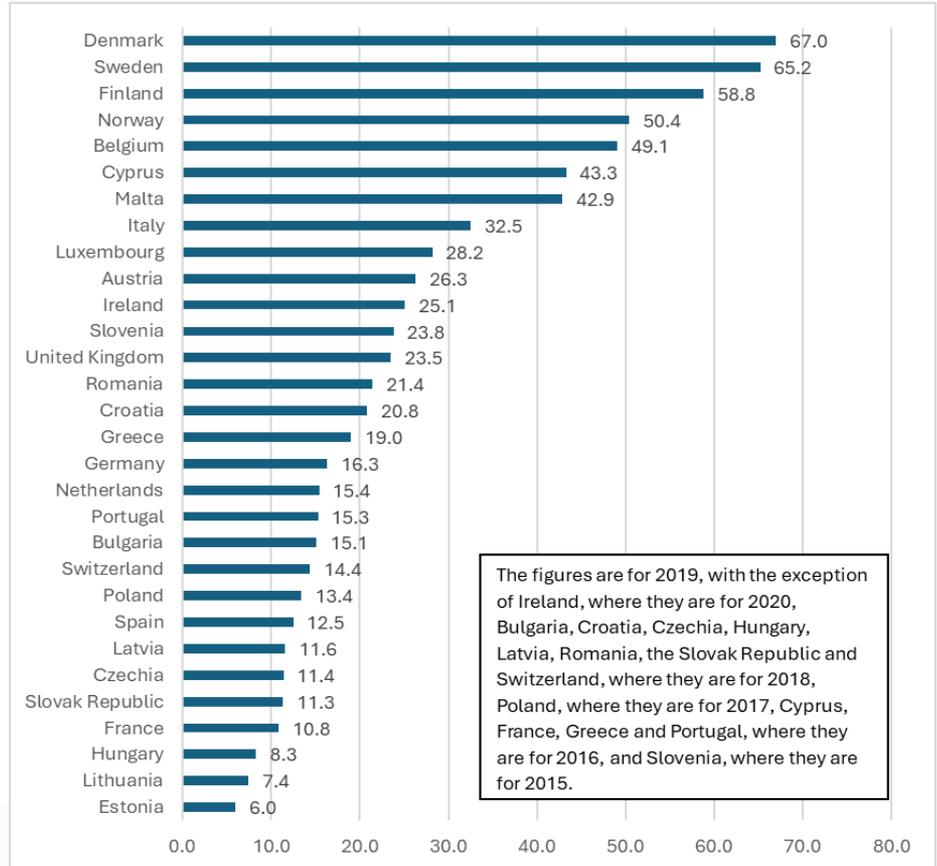
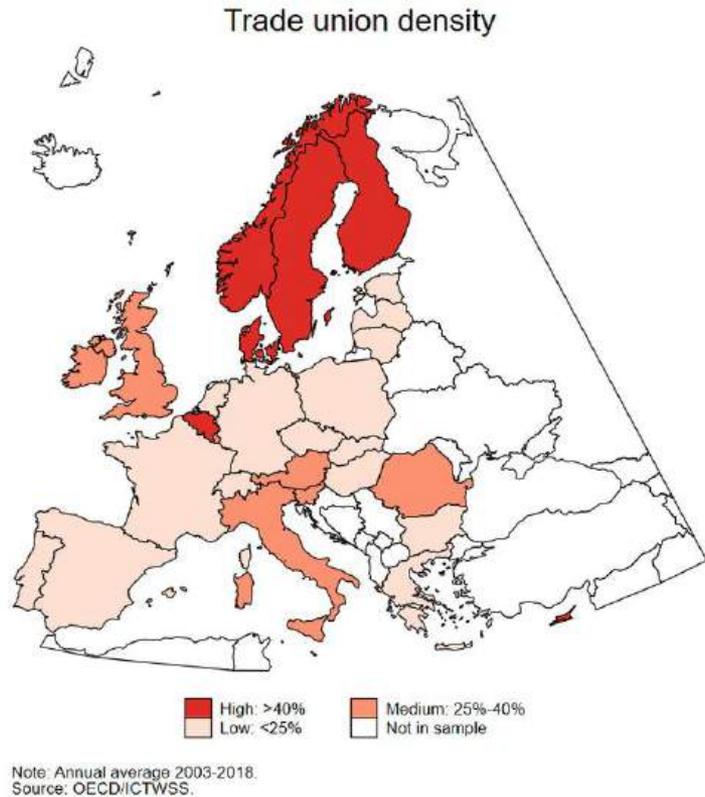
Social dialog levels



Bipartite Level

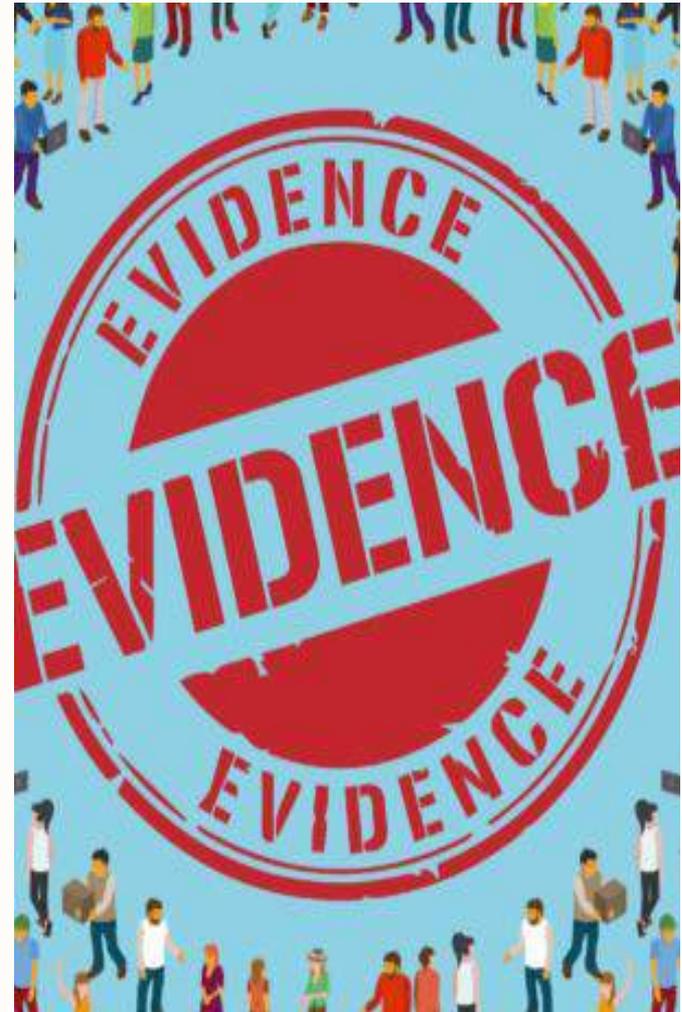
- Social dialogue between social partners at the sectoral or company level.
- In the Czech Republic, the company level is the most important.
- The main form of employee representation at the workplace is trade unions (due to historical tradition).
- Works councils are legally permitted but very rare – they have only a consultative function and do not participate in collective bargaining (with the exception of European Works Councils in multinational and transnational companies).
- Only trade unions have the right to engage in collective bargaining.
- More than one trade union organisation may operate within a single company

Trade Union Density – EU



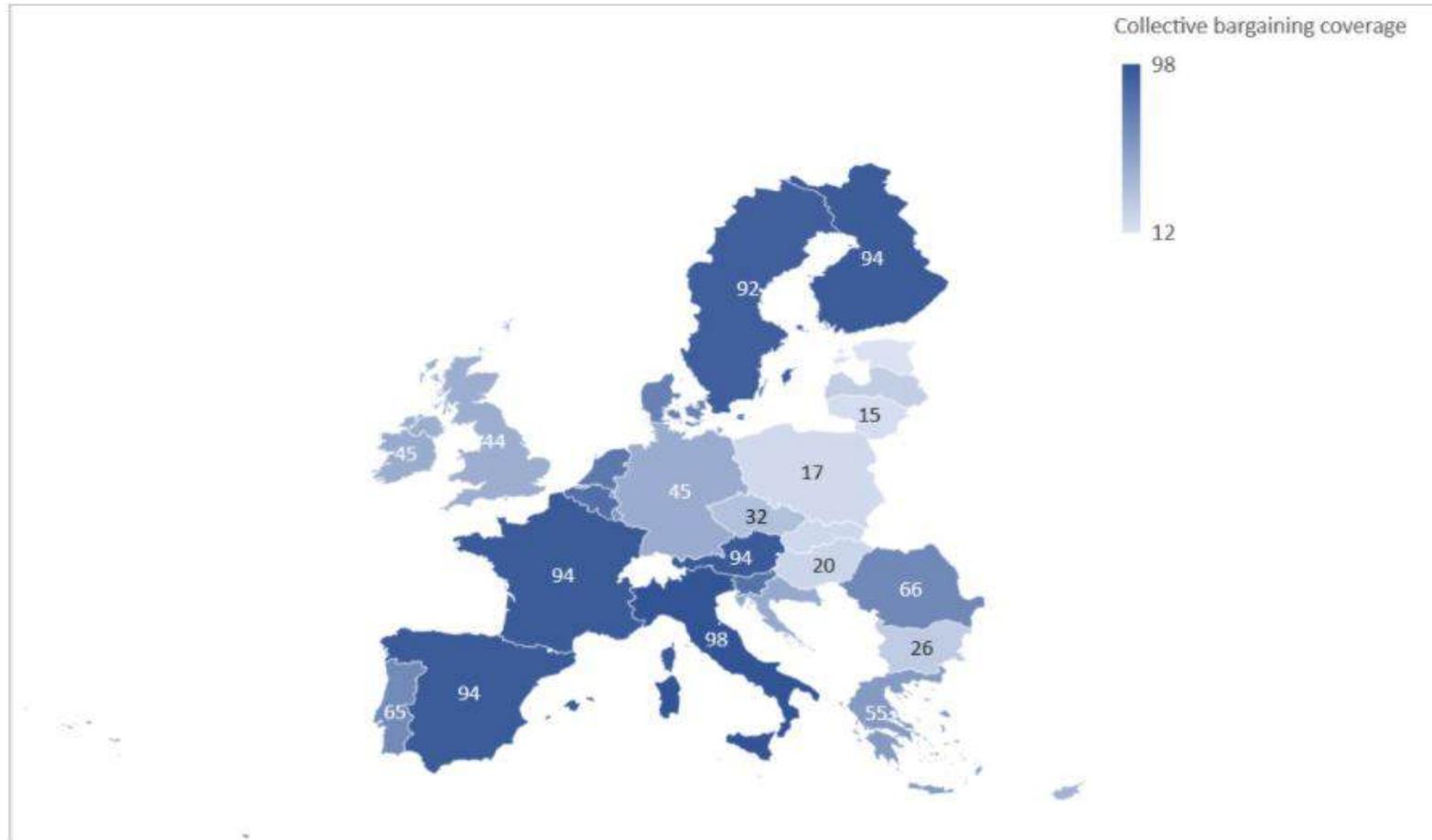
Trade Union Density Development

- Continuous decline in the share of trade union members among employees
 - OECD: from 27.2% to 9.4 % between 2000 and 2023
 - RILSA: from 32% to 14% between 2003 and 2023 (survey data)
- The average duration of membership is decreasing (from 19 to 13 years between 2003 and 2023) – half of current members joined within the last 10 years
- 10% of members occasionally consider leaving the union (2003: 15%)
- 11% of employees have at some point considered joining a trade union (2003: 18%)



Collective bargaining coverage in Europe - 2020

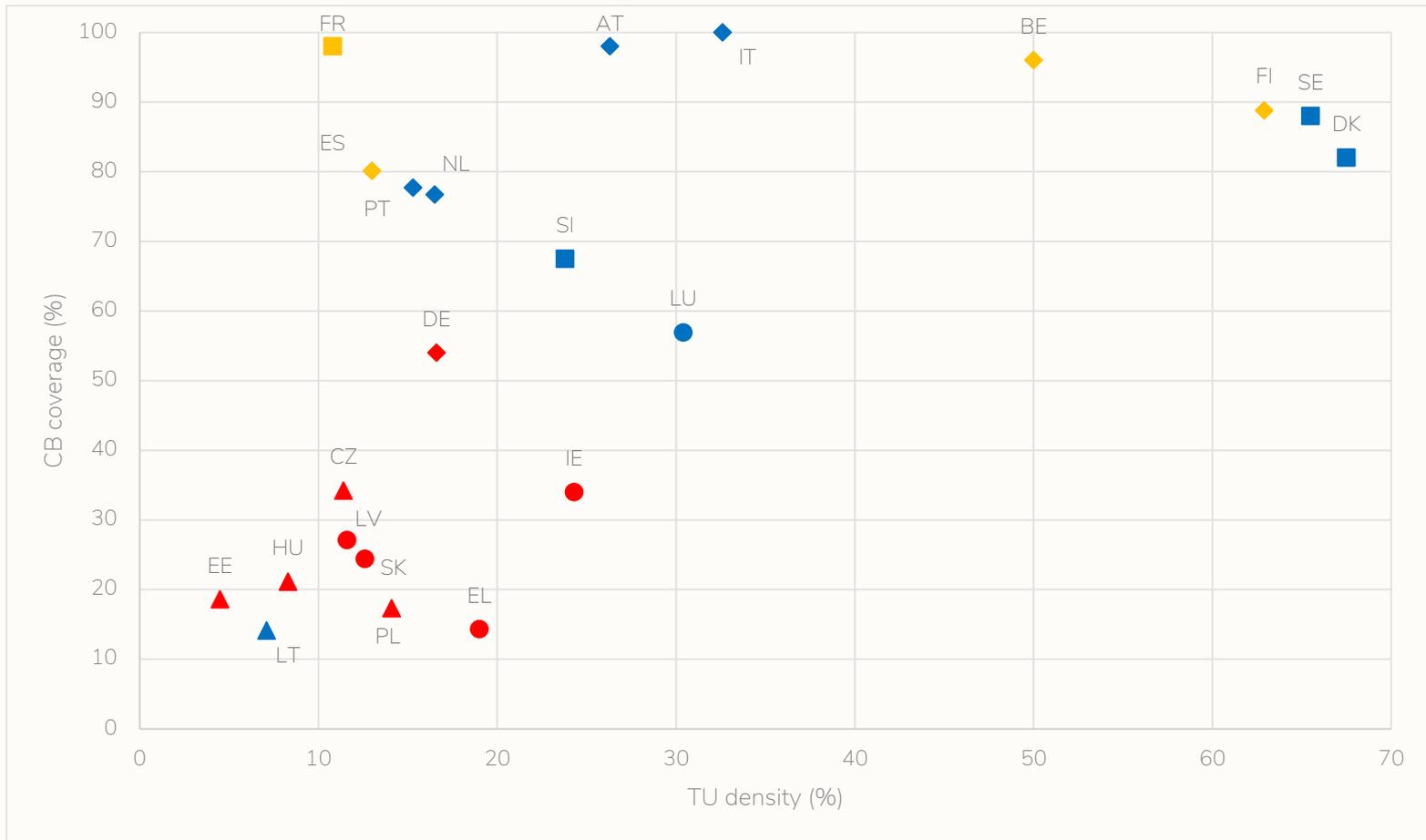
Figure 1: Estimated proportion of employees covered by any form of collective wage agreement in the private sector (%)



Note: Private sector establishments with more than 10 employees.

Source: Estimates by Eurofound (2020), based on fourth European Company Survey 2019, replies from more than 21,000 management respondents.

Relationship between collective bargaining coverage and union density according to the prevailing level of collective bargaining in EU-27 countries.



Trade Unions at the Workplace

Almost one-third of employees reported that trade unions were present at their workplace in 2023 (48% in 2003).



In 2023, 22% of employees stated that a CLCA was concluded in their enterprise or organisation (44% in 2003).



Nearly 15% of employees in 2023 did not know whether trade unions were present at their employer (4% in 2003).

Typical Trade Union Member

- Full-time employee
- Permanent (open-ended) contract
- Longer tenure with the employer (on average 14 years)
- Large company (250+ employees)
- Public sector
- Family experience with union membership (e.g. parents)
- Rather left-wing political attitudes
- Older age

Gender and level of education do not play a role



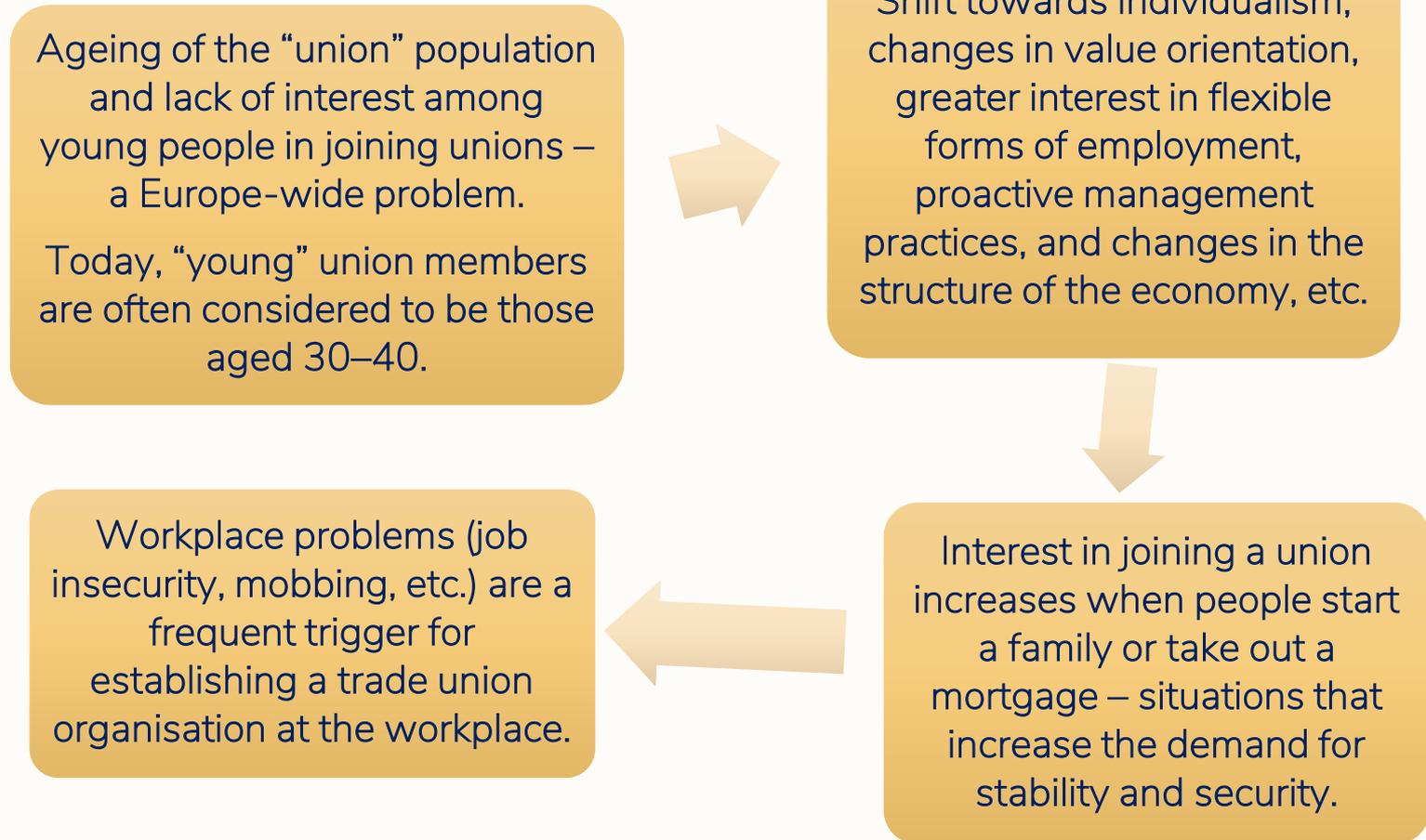
Why Are Trade Unions Losing Their Members?

The decline in union membership 
difficult to identify universal causes

- macro-level factors such as globalisation, economic cycles, structural economic changes (e.g. the decline of traditionally unionised sectors),
- new flexible work forms, political and institutional developments, legislative changes, and digitalisation
- association of weak membership in countries without mechanisms for extending collective agreements to employer resistance and anti-union strategies, such as work organisation that promotes individualised employment relations
- unions themselves are failing to adapt to structural changes or lacking the personnel and financial capacity to recruit new members
- free-rider problem in trade union membership

TUs are losing its members accross all countries in EU

Reasons -



How to solve decline in trade union membership?

Joining a Trade Union – Motivation

Instrumental values

(Trade unions as service organisations)



Ideological motives

(Trade unions as organisations through which individuals can manifest their values)



Recommendations for TUs strategies I.

1 Targeted Recruitment Strategy

- Focus on clearly defined groups of potential members (sector, profession, employment type)
- Expanding beyond traditional “core” employees; organisation of new categories of workers (atypical workers, platform workers, self-employed, foreigners)

2 Active and Motivated Union Representatives

- Invest in training and leadership development
- Prevent collapse of workplace organisations due to loss of key individuals

3 Data and Strategic Member Management

- Maintain detailed membership records (age, sector, profession, tenure)-evidenced based recruitment

Recommendations for TUs strategies II.

4 Attractive and Visible Member Services

- High-quality labour law counselling and legal protection
- Additional services (civil law advice, leisure support, benefits, insurance)
- Taylor made services for specific groups of workers
- Addressing the free-rider problem by emphasising exclusive member value

5 Continuous Communication and Legitimacy Building

- Constantly explain the role and importance of trade unions
- Communicate at national, sectoral and workplace level
- Activate passive but not hostile non-members

6 Diversify Union representatives

- Broaden the profile of union leaders and members

7 Introduce Cross-Generational Agendas

- Address themes resonating across age groups (job security, work-life balance, housing, digitalisation, career development)
- Combine instrumental benefits with value-based narratives

Thank you for your attention

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