



## **The labor shortage in industry must not be used to undermine working conditions and pay**

While the reduction of working hours is now a necessity throughout the world, the employers' representatives of Luxembourg industry (FEDIL) have just announced that they are demanding, among other things, precisely the opposite, namely an increase in working hours - a measure presented by FEDIL as the main solution to the problem of labor shortages in the sector. The OGBL industry syndicates would like to denounce this lame shortcut of blaming employees or even the government, while completely ignoring their own failings.

Anyone who follows the international news discovers every day the results of another country that publishes the effects produced on its territory by a reduction in working time with salary maintenance. Everywhere, the results are the same: an improvement in employees' personal balance and the maintenance or even an increase in the productivity of companies. The OGBL's position is thus confirmed: satisfied employees who are able to better reconcile their private and professional lives are beneficial to companies, which thus become more productive and therefore more profitable!

### **Employees in industry are not suffering, they are suffering badly!**

In Luxembourg, some FEDIL members do not want to question themselves and identify the real reasons for the difficulties that some companies have in recruiting or retaining employees. Whose fault is it? For FEDIL, it is the employees who do not work enough, the sick who pretend being sick, the laws and collective agreements that protect the employees and prevent employers from doing as they please.

### **Living to work or working to live?**

To want to increase the «effective» working time is in itself an insult! For the OGBL, there is only one working time, that during which the employee is at the disposal of the employer without being able to freely do his or her personal business. To raise doubts on this notion, by inserting the term «effective», has the sole aim of concealing an employer's demand to increase working time beyond the legal provisions currently in force or, worse, to call into question existing reductions in working time, negotiated in the framework of collective agreements. This includes extra-legal leave, reduced working hours (yes, these already exist) or paid breaks. Some less well-intentioned people might even see this as a desire by FEDIL to put an end to pee- and coffee-breaks, dressing or shower.

These demands seem all the more inappropriate as FEDIL seems to forget that workers in the industry work in continuous-fire and/or shift regimes with atypical working hours and often with flexibility in working time. The FEDIL, with unbounded greed, demands more flexibility, without control, forgetting to point out that thanks to collective agreements, many companies in the sector already have a flexibility that takes into account the rights of employees, since it has been negotiated collectively.

This raises the question of whether the reality experienced by company managers is really the same as that of companies and employees on the ground? Or is it simply a new attempt to reclassify overtime and thus no longer have to respect the authorised limits and, above all, to avoid paying or compensating overtime at its fair value?



### **Work makes you sick**

Sick hunting seems to be a favourite pastime for companies, given the repeated demands from the federations for more means of controlling certificates and reducing wages in the event of illness. The OGBL defends the provisions protecting sick employees and wonders rather about the causes of illnesses? Could it be that the illnesses are caused by the fact that many companies are understaffed as a result of yet another reorganisation or restructuring? Or is it due to the increasing intensity of work and the demand of companies to do more with less? The FEDIL forgets that work also makes you sick, both physically and mentally, especially when you have to deal with toxic management and work schedules that are not respected.

### **Labor shortage goes hand in hand with lack of attractiveness**

Many companies believe that the labor shortage is due to the fact that people «don't want to work anymore». However, one only has to look at the unemployment figures in Luxembourg and beyond our borders to dispute this assertion. Nor is it the government that will allow industry to stand out from other sectors in the country through one measure or another. Companies in the industry need to take responsibility and ask themselves the right questions: why are they having trouble recruiting and retaining employees? Are these industry professions still attractive?

For the OGBL, the answers and solutions are relatively simple: better working conditions, better pay and real career prospects. And this is only possible through collective bargaining. Companies will never do it voluntarily. The European institutions have confirmed this view by asking the Member States - and Luxembourg is also targeted here - to extend the coverage of collective agreements. Across the Atlantic, the Biden administration is making the maintenance and creation of well-paid union jobs a key element of its recovery plan for the USA.

The OGBL is convinced that it is not by dismantling the Labor Code and collective agreements that industry will become more attractive and attract «talent». On the contrary!

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