

They want our hours for their profits, we want time for our lives!

During meetings of the so-called "social round table" (Sozialronn), Luxembourg employers, represented by the "Union des entreprises luxembourgeoises" (Luxembourg Business Union), demanded that the issue of working time organisation be placed on the agenda.

The employers' representatives presented what can only be described as a catalogue of horrors: increasing the maximum weekly working time, reducing weekly rest periods, undermining special leave, excessive flexibility, and more.

Although this list has not been made public, employers are clearly taking advantage of the openings provided by the CSV-DP government to push for further concessions. In an ideal world, they would like workers to be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with working hours dictated solely by employer needs, with no regard for workers' personal or family lives.

The CSV-DP coalition has effectively opened the door in its government programme, notably by proposing the automatic implementation of a 12-month legal reference period - currently only possible under a collective labour agreement. This would make working time organisation significantly more flexible, without requiring employers to negotiate conditions and compensation with trade unions.

Enough is enough!

The "Quality of Work Index" published by the Chambre des Salariés (Chamber of Employees) shows that between 2014 and 2022, an increasing number of workers are finding it harder to balance personal and professional life. More and more are being forced to work irregular hours, while their ability to influence their own work schedules continues to decline. The measures being considered by the government and the UEL would only make this situation worse.

Meanwhile, the same study shows that 83% of employees are in favour of a reduction in working hours - with full pay. Employees are clearly demanding fewer working hours to claw back more time for their personal lives.

Historically, modernisation in working time has meant social: the eight-hour day, the 40-hour week, Sunday rest, paid leave, etc. Today, what is being touted as "modernisation" is, in reality, forced flexibility: a reduction in time for family and leisure, all for the benefit of employer demands.

Real negotiations, not pseudo-social dialogue

In its unilateral conclusions following the social round table, the government tasked the Standing Committee on Labour and Employment (CPTÉ) with discussing working time organisation.

But all signs point to these discussions becoming a farce. As was the case during the social round table: not real negotiations, but simply an exchange of opinions, with the government making the final decision alone.

Faced with this break with the Luxembourg social model, the Union of Trade Unions OGBL-LCGB has decided to no longer participate in CPTÉ meetings and will instead present its demands directly to the relevant ministers in bilateral meetings.



**UNION DES
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Our proposals

The OGBL and LCGB trade unions propose several measures to improve work-life balance, in response to the government's conclusions on working time organisation.

REDUCTION OF WORKING HOURS

A legal reduction of working time by at least 10%, with full pay, to meet the growing demand from employees to work fewer hours. This reduction should be negotiated between social partners within collective labour agreements.

SIXTH WEEK OF STATUTORY LEAVE

The introduction of a sixth statutory week of paid leave, bringing the total to 30 days for all employees. This four-day increase compensates for the lack of change in leave entitlement since 1975.

REST PERIODS

Categorical opposition to any reduction in the minimum weekly rest period. Instead, the rest period should be increased from 44 to 48 hours. The definition of uninterrupted rest periods should also be clarified.

BREAKS DURING THE WORKING DAY

The maximum duration of unpaid breaks should be limited to 2 hours. Any break exceeding this duration must be paid.

RIGHT TO PART-TIME WORK

Employees should have the right to part-time work, with a guaranteed return to full-time employment. This is particularly important for reintegrating employees - especially women - after parental leave.

REFERENCE PERIODS

The OGBL and LCGB reject the annualization of working time outside of collective agreements and without union negotiation.. Any reference period longer than one month must be agreed upon within a collective or inter-professional agreement.

OVERTIME

The definition and compensation of overtime must be clarified. The concept of "abnormal circumstances" should be excluded from overtime calculations.

FLEXIBILITY CLAUSES

Flexibility clauses in employment contracts must be more strictly regulated to protect employees' rights.

BAD WEATHER UNEMPLOYMENT

The role of workplace safety representatives should be strengthened. In the event of a red weather alert issued by the government, the implementation of bad weather unemployment must be mandatory.

FAMILY LEAVE

Family and parental leave must be improved. A new, equal three-month birth leave should be introduced for both parents..

These proposals aim to strengthen workers' rights and improve quality of life, while addressing of the evolving nature of work. This is the kind of modernisation we need - one that puts people before profit.

