



Industrial relations and social dialogue
**Belgium: Developments in
working life 2022**

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Contents

Introduction	1
Political context	2
Actors, institutions and processes	3
Social partners.....	3
Social dialogue bodies or frameworks	3
Other working life related institutions.....	3
Governmental responses to inflation.....	4
Collective bargaining and inflation	5
How inflation features in wage negotiations	5
Examples of recent responses.....	5
Developments in working time.....	6
Changes to legislation	6
Bargaining outcomes	7
Debates on duration and organisation	7
Labour market shortages and social partners.....	8
Other important policy developments	10
Labour market shortages	10
Employment status and contracts	10
Self-employed	11
Wage setting	11
Gender pay gap	11
Health and safety	11
Work–life balance	11
Lifelong learning and skills development	11
Working life of Ukrainian refugees	12
Employment and working conditions	12
Social partner initiatives to support Ukrainian refugees	12
Commentary and outlook	13
References.....	15

Introduction

As is the case for the majority of all European nations, the Belgian economy has been significantly affected by the war in Ukraine that started early on in 2022. In addition, some effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were still lingering on throughout the year.

Concretely, Belgian GDP grew by 1.9% in the third quarter of 2022, in comparison, the same figure was 6.1% in 2021.

The rising inflation rates were also an important topic within the country as it directly affected the general population. The automatic indexation system that applies to all wages and benefits in the country has led to several automatic increases in wages in order to compensate for the rising costs of living. In total inflation rose by 10.2% across the year, in comparison in 2021 this was only 3.2%.

With regards to rising costs, in particular the significant increases in gas and electricity prices have been the topic of much debate and has led to some panic amongst the general population. This is particularly the case as most Belgian households heat their homes using gas powered systems. In addition, different energy intensive sectors of the economy have been struck with rising costs due to energy price increases. The Belgian economy relies relatively little on Russian gas compared to other neighbouring countries, as an LNG terminal in the harbour of Zeebrugge provides for alternative suppliers of gas (mainly the Netherlands, Norway, UK, Qatar, etc). The risk of running without supply of gas if Russia should decide to no longer deliver gas to Belgium is therefore relatively small.

However, the demand for alternative sources of gas in neighbouring countries directly affected supply and therefore prices. Especially during the summer months (when gas supplies for the coming winter were replenished at the national level) gas prices rose extensively to record levels.

The main focus of the different governments (including the federal one) has been to compensate and support households and industry for these increasing energy prices. In addition the automatic indexation system has provided a buffer to the general population and decreased the impact of rising prices in general. However, many businesses and some political actors have expressed their concerns regarding the competitiveness of Belgian companies because of this increase in costs.

Despite the difficult macro-economic conditions, unemployment decreased from 6.3% in 2021 to 5.5% in January 2022. This shows that despite the challenges introduced by the war in Ukraine, there have been signs of recovery since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Political context

There were no significant elections in 2022, the next major elections will be held in 2024.

The coalition that is currently in power at the federal level (Decroo) in 2022 consists of liberals (Open VLD and MR), green parties (Groen, Ecolo), socialist parties (Vooruit and PS) and the Flemish Christian Democrats (CD&V).

At the Flemish level, the government (Jambon) consists of Flemish Nationalist party N-VA, Liberals (Open VLD) and Christian Democrats (CD&V).

At the Walloon level (Di Rupo), the government consists of socialist party PS, liberals (MR) and green party Ecolo.

At the Brussels Capital Region level, 6 parties are within government (Vervoort): socialists (PS and Vooruit), green parties (Ecolo and Groen), French speaking nationalists Défi and Flemish liberals Open VLD.

There have been strikes and actions to demand more purchasing power, mainly organised by the three unions. The main national manifestation being the national action day in Brussels on 16 December. In total between 10,000-20,000 people came to Brussels to strike and demand measures from the government to maintain and increase purchasing power given the increasing overall cost of living.

With regards to the increased costs of living it appears that the different governments have mostly aimed at providing support and subsidies to compensate increasing energy prices. Increases in food and other essential goods have not been addressed as directly. However, the automatic increase of wages and benefits has the purpose to compensate for such increases as well.

There have been significant discussions and debates about energy throughout the year. A significant topic has been the feasibility of nuclear power as an energy source for the future. Traditionally the green parties across the country have always been against the usage of nuclear power, pleading to abolish it in the future and rely on more sustainable alternatives. Given the significant increases in gas prices (which is also used for electricity generation), the planned nuclear exit was questioned by other parties. Given the fact that the Minister for Energy (Tinne Van der Straeten) is member of Groen (Flemish green party). This has led to significant debates which have been exacerbated by the fact that a number of the existing nuclear facilities in Belgium are old and were already intended to become obsolete and/or due for significant renovations around 2025-2026. Currently, discussions are ongoing with Engie to decide on the issue and establish which route to take in the years to come.

Actors, institutions and processes

Social partners

There have been no significant changes in this regard. In addition, no membership rates of the unions have been released to compare with previous years.

Social dialogue bodies or frameworks

In January a new joint committee was introduced, JC 335. It is applicable to all blue and white collar employees that are involved in services and support to business and self-employed.

As is the case with all joint committees it is set up with the aim of grouping companies with similar activities. This in order to work out regulations regarding working conditions.

Its main activities are the following:

- Concluding collective bargaining agreements.
- Preventing or settling social conflicts.
- Advising the Government, the National Labour Council and the Central Business Council.
- Performing any task entrusted to them by law.

Other working life related institutions

No new developments in 2022.

Governmental responses to inflation

There have been governmental subsidies to alleviate the costs of the increasing energy prices. On the one hand the automatic indexing system has been in place for years and is one of the main measures that decreases the loss of purchasing power. Because of the way it is calculated (coupled to a number of goods, including energy prices), there have been a number of automatic wage increases due to this mechanism. Some members of liberal parties have showed criticisms towards the mechanism, as they fear it increases wage costs too much, which in their opinion decrease competitiveness of Belgian companies. The same applies to employers' associations (e.g.: the Federation of Belgian enterprises (VBO-FEB), the Union of Self-Employed Entrepreneurs (Unizo), etc), which have stated on a regular basis that the system risks making Belgian companies less competitive because of high labour cost prices.

In addition, there have been other compensating measures to alleviate energy costs,ⁱ like grants and subsidies that grant a fixed sum of money to the majority of households.ⁱⁱ Similar systems are in place in order for people that heat their homes using heating oil. For people in financially vulnerable situations, there has been a system in place, whereby they receive a social tariff for their energy costs, which is significantly lower than that on the open energy market. The eligibility conditions to be able to benefit from these tariffs have been loosened, in order to include more people. Finally, the VAT on energy prices has been reduced from 21% to 6%, it is possible that this reduction will become permanent and continue be maintained after the crisis has passed.ⁱⁱⁱ

On the regional levels there have been initiatives and measures as well, for example support and subsidies for renovations that increase energy efficiency of homes as well as free energy scans for homeowners to potentially reduce their energy costs in the future via renovations. Another measure to aid people in vulnerable situations because of the rising energy crisis is temporarily suspending the penalisation of people that are unable to pay their energy bills.

ⁱ Eurofound (2022), [Heating and electricity premiums for households](#), case BE-2022-12/2814 (measures in Belgium), COVID-19 EU PolicyWatch, Dublin.

ⁱⁱ Eurofound (2022), [Basic energy package to support household's energy bills](#), case BE-2022-38/2931 (measures in Belgium), COVID-19 EU PolicyWatch, Dublin.

ⁱⁱⁱ Eurofound (2022), [Measures to compensate increasing energy prices for citizens](#), case BE-2022-10/2405 (measures in Belgium), COVID-19 EU PolicyWatch, Dublin.

Collective bargaining and inflation

How inflation features in wage negotiations

Negotiations regarding statutory minimum wages are the competence of the social partners at the national level. The negotiations take place within the National Labour Council (NAR-CNT) on a biannual basis. The National Labour Council consists of the trade unions and employers' associations that are formally considered representative at the national level. These negotiations are prepared and initiated by the Central Economic Council (CRB-CCE), which delivers a report that defines the possible margins with which wages can increase. This "Wage Norm" is of significant importance as it forms the basis of minimum wage negotiations across all sectors, including the national minimum wage.

The negotiations for an interprofessional agreement (IPA) for 2023-2024 have started after publication of the preparatory report in October 2022 and the government has already frozen real wage growth but guarantees wage indexation and allows premiums of €500 to €750 for companies and sectors with sufficient profits, and does not revoke the increases of the national minimum wage which were planned already.

There is no formula or automatic coupling between the automatic indexation system and the wage margin or wage bargaining. The maximum wage margin that is calculated by the Central Business Council (and passed on to the National Labour Council for negotiations) is to a large extent based on how wages have changed in neighbouring countries. However, social partners take into account increases in wages when negotiations within the National Labour Council take place. For example, in recent months the employers' associations have signalled that it is not possible to increase wages (via the wage norm) further on top of the automatic indexation mechanism, as they believe this would lead to an overall excessive growth in wage costs, which in turn would be a risk for Belgian companies.

The inflation is measured by the 'consumer price index' on the national level. It is an economic indicator whose main task is to objectively reflect the evolution of prices over time of a basket of goods and services purchased by households and considered representative of their consumption habits. Some variants are used as well, for example the consumer health price index, consumer price index without petroleum good and consumer price index without energy product.

Examples of recent responses

The main response (even though it predates this crisis) to increases in living costs has always been the automatic indexation system in Belgium. This takes into account the prices of a number of goods and increases wages and benefits if these prices increase too much.

This has led to the fact that the government has introduced no additional measures to accommodate for increases in prices of essential products.

However there have been some specific measures implemented to alleviate increasing energy prices like a VAT reduction as well as lump sums provided to the government for people that heat their homes using gas or heating oil.

Developments in working time

Changes to legislation

The law of 3 October 2022 (often referred to as the “labour deal”) introduced several changes with regards to working time.

Variable work schedules for part-time workers: the minimum deadline for announcing the work schedules of part-time employees with variable work schedules was increased from 5 working days in advance to 7 working days in advance. This deadline of 7 working days may be amended by a collective labour agreement declared universally binding by royal decree, but it may not be less than 3 working days.

Four-day week: Full-time employees within the private sector will have the option of performing a four-day week. When the effective weekly working time is equal to or less than 38 hours, the maximum daily working time can be increased to 9h30 hours per day through an amendment to the working regulations. When the actual weekly working time exceeds 38 hours (with a maximum of 40 hours), a collective agreement may provide that the daily working time is equal to the actual weekly working time divided by four. The employee enjoys the right to request the application of this measure which requires the employer to justify a refusal. The employee should not be adversely affected by such a request.

Alternating weekly regime: The full-time employee has the option to arrange his working time according to a cycle over two consecutive weeks. During that cycle, up to 9 hours per day and up to 45 hours per week can be worked provided that the performance in the first week is directly compensated by the performance in the second week, to comply on average with normal weekly working hours. For example: if a full-time employee works 45 hours in week A, he will work 31 hours in week B. The employee enjoys the right to request the application of this measure which requires the employer to justify a refusal. The employee should not be adversely affected by such a request.

Night work in E-commerce: Night work, between 8 p.m. and midnight and between midnight and 6 a.m. can be introduced in the company by collective bargaining agreement or with the agreement of at least one trade union without the need to amend the labour regulations (which is less strict compared to the past, as it also removes veto possibilities for other trade unions to refuse night work). In addition, as part of an 18-month pilot project, employers can ask their employees to perform night work between 8 p.m. and midnight and midnight and 6 a.m. on a voluntary basis. This does not require a collective labour agreement or amendment of the labour regulations (registration is necessary with the General Directorate of Social Law Supervision).

Right to disconnect: By 2023, companies with more than 20 employees must conclude agreements on the right to disconnect (through a collective labour agreement or an amendment to the labour regulations). These agreements must lay down the details of the right to disconnect on the part of the employee and the introduction by the company of mechanisms to regulate the use of digital tools.

Bargaining outcomes

On 27 September 2022, the National Labour Council approved Collective Agreement No 162: Establishing A Right To Request A Flexible Working Arrangement (CNT-NAR, 2022). This collective agreement, as its name suggests, introduces a right for employees within the private sector to request a flexible working arrangement for care purposes. In doing so, the social partners implemented the European directive of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance, known as the Work-Life Directive.

Debates on duration and organisation

Before the Labour Deal (law from 3 October 2022) was formally signed and finalised it was a topic for significant discussion amongst social partners, who were asked for advice and input on the different aspects that were included within the law.

Ultimately they were forced to publish a non-unanimous advice via the National Labour Council (the peak level social dialogue organ within Belgium).

Trade unions had several criticisms: they believe that social dialogue at company and sector level is being seriously undermined by various of the proposed measures within the law. One example that was given was the introduction of evening work in e-commerce. They state that collective bargaining is the cornerstone of labour law in Belgium. Any form of reduction, limitation or abolition poses a serious threat to workers' rights and protection. As the new procedure only requires the agreement of one trade union, it reduces the need for negotiations between all representative parties involved.

Workers in SMEs (with less than 20 employees) are excluded from many of the measures (e.g., right to disconnect, right to training). This clause was implemented to reduce possible additional strain introduced by these measures on small to very small companies (as they have a smaller workforce to spread out workload). Moreover, this exclusion runs counter to the Labour Deal's objective of achieving an 80% employment rate by 2030, as 83.9% of enterprises in Belgium employ fewer than 10 workers.

For employers, it was crucial that the labour deal contributes to achieving an 80% employment rate. In addition, they demand more flexibility, including for night work. They agree with the flexibilization in nightwork regulations introduced by the Labour Deal but still find the rules to be too strict. They make the comparison with neighbouring countries in this regard and disagree with the fact that nightwork already starts at 8 p.m. in the Labour Deal. In contrast, in many other countries nightwork is only formally recognised starting 12 p.m., meaning 4 hours of additional nightwork/overtime pay is required for Belgian e-commerce companies.

Labour market shortages and social partners

Social partners emphasize the need to invest in education, training and lifelong learning in order to fulfil the vacancies of sought-after profiles on the labour market (e.g.: care personnel, teachers, technical profiles, transport personnel, etc).

For example, Agoria, the employers' association of the technological sector has formulated several propositions to alleviate the problem:

- All long-term unemployed people should undergo training that, in line with their abilities and interests, provides them with a job in a bottleneck occupation.
- The number of young people between 15 and 24 not in employment and training has to be reduced by half by 2030.
- The budget from the Employability Fund has to shift from study work to de facto workable work initiatives via technology.
- By 2030, it is necessary that 80 percent of active Flemish people will use the personalised learning and career account, which provides insight into options for financing and trainings.

The Flemish social partners united within the Social Economic Council of Flanders (a significant regional bipartite advice organs) have formulated a number of propositions to address the issue of insufficient employment rate and labour market shortages. The main axes in which they believe actions need to be taken in the short term are the following:

- Result-oriented activation policy
- Comprehensive training policy
- Reinforced commitment to work
- Exploiting opportunities of interregional mobility and economic migration.

The Labour Deal and its goal of 80% employment rate by 2030 includes some measures to achieve this, currently mainly aimed at improved monitoring, reducing discrimination on the labour market, activation and training (especially for people with precarious profiles on the labour market). Within these different measures, a significant role is reserved for social partners and establishing collective agreement.

Annual training plan: Employers with 20 or more employees must create an annual training plan by March 31st. The plan must include training for high-risk groups like those aged 50+ and people with disabilities, and training for bottleneck occupations in the employer's sector. Social partners may establish minimum training plan requirements through collective bargaining agreements.

Individual right to training: Previously, training was a collective right with a set number of days per full-time employee. Now, each employee has an individual right to training. In companies with at least 20 employees, the entitlement is 5 days per year starting in 2024 (4 in 2023), while companies with 10-20 employees get 1 day per year. Social partners can adjust the number of training days through collective bargaining but not below 2 days.

Another set of measures relate to activation after dismissal.

Transition path: Dismissed workers can work for another employer during their notice period, but they must use an employment agency or regional public employment service like Actiris, Forem, or

VDAB to arrange it. The worker's original employer continues to pay their wage during this time, which is the same as the wage for the worker's new position.. However, if this wage is lower than the current wage to which the employee is entitled under his notice period, the employer must continue to pay the current wage.

Promoting employability: When an employee is terminated with 30 weeks' notice, the notice period becomes a two-part employability package. The first part is a two-thirds notice period or severance pay of at least 26 weeks. The second part is a severance pay or notice period for the remaining period. If the notice period is to be served, the employee can participate in employability activities with pay. If severance pay is provided, the employee must be available for employability measures funded by the employer's contribution during the second part, except during a transition process.

Monitoring diversity and discrimination in the labour market at sector level: The National Recovery and Resilience Plan requires scientific monitoring of labour market diversity and discrimination by sector. Joint committees and subcommittees will assist with the monitoring, with social partners preparing reports based on departmental sheets..

Monitoring of bottleneck occupations: The social partners will be further involved in the monitoring of bottleneck occupations. Joint committees and subcommittees will help identify and understand labour shortages based on the unique characteristics of different industries, and recommend solutions.

Creation of intersectoral subsistence security funds: The Law on Subsistence Security Funds is amended to let joint committees create intersectoral funds. These funds will aid intersectoral worker mobility to bottleneck occupations through joint actions, such as facilitating training outside of an employee's own fund. This will unify sectoral consultations and foster intersectoral cooperation on lifelong learning, work, and careers.

Other important policy developments

Labour market shortages

Labour market shortages continue to remain a significant issue for the Belgian labour market. The economy and labour market started recovering quickly throughout 2021 and 2022. This has led to a significant increase in vacancies in 2022, which once again increased the issue of labour market shortages.

In Flanders the issue is more prominent compared to the other regions with a vacancy rate of 5.51%, compared to the Brussels Capital Region (4.14%) and the Walloon Region (3.89%).

More than three-quarters of vacancies are situated in five economic sectors: non-profit, science and services, manufacturing, trade and construction. The need for specialized and trained workers like nurses, IT-personnel, technicians, etc. is significant across all these sectors.

The labour market shortages are one of the main reasons behind the Labour Deal goal of reaching an employment rate of 80% by 2030. A group that is considered to have potential for the labour market by politicians is the relatively large group of long-term sick and incapacitated workers.

On a regular basis there are reports and news articles about companies that are struggling with finding sufficient personnel for certain profiles. In particular technical profiles, drivers, cleaners and care and nursing staff are sought after and have been for several years.

Employment status and contracts

Another aspect that the Labour Deal elaborated further upon is the statute of platform workers within the Belgian Labour market.

Concretely, it concludes that (starting 1 January 2023) there is a rebuttable presumption of the existence of an employment contract in the case of work through a digital commissioning platform. However, for this presumption to apply, a number of criteria must be met.

1. The platform operator may demand exclusivity with respect to its field of activity
2. The platform operator may use a geolocation mechanism for purposes other than the proper functioning of its basic services
3. The platform operator may restrict the freedom of the platform worker in the way the work is performed
4. The platform operator may restrict the income level of a platform worker, in particular by paying hourly rates and/or by restricting an individual's right to refuse job offers based on the rate offered and/or by not allowing the individual to determine the price of the service
5. To the exclusion of legal provisions, in particular on health and safety, applicable to users, clients or workers themselves, the platform operator may require a platform worker to comply with mandatory rules on appearance, behaviour towards the recipient of the service or the performance of the work;
6. The platform operator may determine the prioritisation of future offers of work and/or the amount offered for a contract and/or the determination of ranking by using the information collected and by monitoring the performance of the service by the platform workers, excluding the result of this performance, in particular by electronic means;

7. The platform operator may restrict, possibly including by means of sanctions, the freedom to organise the work, in particular the freedom to choose one's own working hours or periods of absence, to accept or refuse tasks or to have recourse to subcontractors or substitutes, except when, in the latter case, the law expressly limits the possibility of having recourse to subcontractors
8. The platform operator may restrict the possibility for the platform worker to build up a customer base outside the platform or to perform work for a third party.

Self-employed

Another important addition included within the Labour Deal relates to the changes in statute for platform workers. Concretely it is now formally stated that self-employed platform employees must be insured against accidents at work. What is new is the obligation for all employees, including self-employed workers, to take out insurance for any damage they may incur while performing their jobs.

Wage setting

There have been no significant changes with regards how wages are set in 2022.

Gender pay gap

No concrete changes implemented.

Health and safety

Starting 1 October 2022, a new royal decree came into effect regarding re-integration of long term sick employees. Concretely it reduces the time when a re-integration trajectory can be initiated. Until October, the employer could only start a reintegration process after 4 months of disability. From 1 October 2022, this was reduced to be possible after 3 months. The employee does not have to respect a waiting period and can start a reintegration process immediately.

Work–life balance

The different aspects that were mentioned in the chapter about working time were included within the Labour Deal law to also improve the work life balance of employees. They could also be included here.

In addition, in 2022 an extension of birth leave was agreed upon and formalised. From 1 January 2023, birth leave will be 20 days instead of 15 days. Fathers and co-parents can take this leave freely in the first four months from the day of delivery. For the first three days, employees will receive their normal pay. From day four, it is considered a benefit paid by the health insurance fund.

Lifelong learning and skills development

The strategy of the government to tackle labour market shortages relies heavily on training and lifelong learning. Several measures were implemented within the Labour Deal law (see chapter: 'labour market shortages and social partners').

Working life of Ukrainian refugees

Employment and working conditions

In total there are currently 64,370 officially registered Ukrainian refugees within Belgium (10 March 2022 – 31 January 2023). The main peak of applications to register for asylum were in March and April of that year, at the time of writing the number of applications has been at its lowest level since the start of the war, 49% of refugees reside within Flanders, 33% within Wallonia and 4% within Brussels.

Formally, Ukrainian nationals can obtain temporary protection in Belgium. Those who have obtained that status will receive an electronic residence card type A (proof of registration in the Foreigners' Register - temporary duration). Those under temporary protection will have unrestricted access to the labour market, as will be stated on the back of their electronic residence card: "Labour market: unrestricted". They therefore do not need to obtain admission to work through an employer.

There have been initiatives organised by the different PES's (Public Employment Services) of the regions to stimulate employment of Ukrainian refugees. For example by creating separate pages on their vacancy websites where employers' that are extra committed to employing people from Ukraine.

According to some media reports relatively few Ukrainian refugees have found their way into the Belgian labour market. The main reason is the fact that a majority of the refugees is in Belgium with the intent to return back to Ukraine in the (near) future. In addition, approximately 61% of refugees are women, many of them with children to take care of (86% of refugees come to the country as a family). This also leads to less of them deciding to look for paid employment. Additionally there is also a segment of refugees that is struggling with physical and/or mental trauma which prevents them to work.

Within the community of Ukrainian migrants, there were some cases of refugees being employed at very low rates at improvised jobs such as gardening. There was uncertainty on whether this was illegal under labour law, or rather a kind of community service that was well-intended and compensated as volunteering work. There is no indication that in terms of working and wages abuse would be widespread.

Social partner initiatives to support Ukrainian refugees

The trade unions have mainly provided support and information to Ukrainian refugees entering the Belgian labour market as well as general information about living in Belgium. They have created different leaflets and brochures (including in Ukrainian) to provide basic information to those who need it.

Different sectoral organisations (which are in turn established and consisting of social partners) have launched the Matching Talent project in August-September 2022. Concretely, they want to aid companies and employees in improving their match (with regards to skills and work experience). The project provides relevant training and information to Ukrainian jobseekers, in order to improve their chances on the labour market and maintain sustainable employment. At the same time they aid employers' who are willing to hire Ukrainian refugees.

Commentary and outlook

Given the rising wages via the automatic indexation system, it is clear that the next round of interprofessional bargaining regarding wage increases will be very difficult. The viewpoint of trade unions and employers' associations have proven to be quite different in recent months. Employers' associations have expressed their worry about the competitiveness of Belgian companies because of these rising wage costs. Trade unions on the other hand believe that despite the automatic indexation system, still a large amount of people suffer the consequences of the price increases and remain financially vulnerable. Several manifestations, including a national one have been organised in order to address this issue and demand from the government that additional actions have to be taken, including abolishing the wage norm law, which in their opinion reduces the possibility of significant wage increases during the biannual wage negotiations at the national level.

After much discussion amongst the social partners and within the government, the so-called Labour Deal law was ultimately signed. Its main aim is to increase employability to 80% by 2030. It aims to achieve this goal in several ways: improved monitoring, reducing discrimination in the labour market, activation and training. In many of these measures the social partners are involved via collective bargaining and/or sectoral funds. In addition some aspects to improve workability and work life balance for employees were implemented.

Despite the involvement of social partners in executing the Labour Deal, the negotiations that took place between social partners have shown the division between them on several points. The government promised to take into account unanimous advice formulated by the National Labour Council when drafting the law. However, as the social partners within the council failed to come to terms on any points, they were unable to formulate any formal advice.

It was impossible to bridge the gap between the employers' higher flexibility demands and the greater protection for workers that was demanded by the unions. Employers' organisations already considered the right to disconnect in February as a vote of no confidence against employers. In addition, they are critical of the extra training days that are now obligatory. As working costs are already increasing due to successive indexation of wages. In turn, the unions feel that the flexibility in e-commerce is becoming excessive and that platform workers are still insufficiently protected. Because of this, the social partners within the National Labour Council opted to formulate a separate advice from the employers' and trade unions sides.

With regards to the green transition, it is the general belief of the Belgian government and social partners that Belgium has an important role to play. Given the fact that the Belgian economy is knowledge intensive and has a strong focus on innovation, it provides opportunities for the future in that regard. However, this introduces significant challenges as well, in particular within the context of labour market shortages. The issue of finding skilled and specialized technical profiles has been an issue for several years and will probably continue to be in the foreseeable future. The government intends to address the issue via initiatives like the recent Labour Law, which focuses heavily on an increase in employment rate, education and training. The social partners are on board with this general vision in terms of importance of education and training. As stipulated within the Labour Deal, they will have their role to play as well in providing advice and expertise, establishing collective

agreements that support that vision and providing training via the sectoral training funds that are already in place.

References

All Eurofound publications are available at www.eurofound.europa.eu

CNT-NAR (2022), collectieve arbeidsovereenkomst nr. 162 , available at https://cnt-nar.be/sites/default/files/documents/nl/cao-162_4.pdf

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