

The Netherlands - Employers suspend metal bargaining due to conflict over youth pay.

March 2024

After three encounters with FNV Metaal, the employers decided to suspend negotiations 28 March 2024, even if the current agreement expires on 1 April 2024.

Apparently, Dutch metal employers believe that youth wages and apprentice remuneration are unimportant. FNV finds this attitude unacceptable and demand a constructive response to their improvement proposals on these topics.

The current stalemate leaves 360.000 workers in a waiting room anticipating a necessary wage increases to compensate the inflation from recent years. The employers are unwilling to budge on these issues, effectively holding up talks on every aspect of the sectoral agreement. As a matter of fact, youth wages have been abolished in many sectors in the Netherlands, however not in metal & technology, despite the sector facing a significant shortage of young workers.

A working group has been holding discussions over this important issue for years. Union proposals have been outright rejected, without the employers putting forth any counterproposals. They dare to claim at the bargaining table that enough young people are entering the sector and that adjusting youth scales is unnecessary.

Remarkably, these same employers are asking the government for half a billion euros to promote entry into the sector and address the shortages of skilled workers in the technology industries. FNV finds this hypocritical.

With no prospect of a decent pay rise for young people and only improvements proposed for older workers, the technology sector is left in a lurch. Employers talk about working groups and studies, but FNV demands concrete agreements and a future-proof collective agreement.

On 28 March, FNV will make a final attempt to reach a revised deal with the employers. But unfortunately, there is still much bargaining to be done before a satisfactory result can be achieved.

Edited by industriAll Europe.