

Belgium – Telecommunications company convicted of unlawfully dismissing staff rep.

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METEA-ACV/CSC can celebrate a significant victory after a five-year long legal battle. The country's judiciary has eventually established justice for a staff representative who was fired in December 2018.

The delegate's name is Chris Corten and he used to work for a telecoms company called Commscope, where he was the chief representative of METEA. Corten lost his job in December 2018, something which resulted in a nine-day strike.

He was dismissed without any urgent cause or economic reasons, in flagrant violation of a Belgian law of 1991 on the protection of staff representatives. The company simply calculated the cost of sacking him, thinking that was the end of the matter.

However, METEA took Commscope to court for discrimination and won the case. On Monday 6 May 2024, the Brussels Labour Court, found Commscope guilty of discrimination based on trade union conviction.

The Labour Court stated that Chris Corten had been "expressly targeted in his capacity as a staff and union representative". Although Commscope had already paid damages immediately after the dismissal, it must now pay additional compensation equal to six months' wages for its discriminatory behaviour.

This conviction makes it clear that "buying off" a workers' rep is illegal. The judgment will set a precedent for staff and union representatives across the country. For all workers who care about the fate of their colleagues, it is heartening. For employers toying with a similar idea to Commscope, it is a stark warning.

Edited by industriAll Europe.