

Our view about the reasons for the UPM industrial action

Comments from the Paperworkers' Union and the Trade Union Pro with regards to the argument that the current industrial actions in the UPM company would constitute a "*force majeure*".

The Finnish Paperworkers' Union and the Trade Union Pro have been forced to take industrial actions, as the UPM company has refused to continue with agreements concluded according to the general labour market policy in Finland, but has proposed requirements that totally deviate from it. It is totally in the hands of the company to bring an end to these industrial actions.

Our three main arguments:

1. The decisions of the employer federation Finnish Forest Industries were the reason why the sector changed into negotiating company-level agreements instead of national collective agreements. UPM played then and still does play a very important role in the preparation and establishment of the policies of the forest industry employer federation.
2. UPM is the only company in the forest industry sector in Finland that has not accepted the company-level agreement proposed by the Paperworkers' Union and the Trade Union Pro. The agreement would establish that the terms and conditions of employment remain unchanged and an annual pay raise of 1.9%. Industrial workers in many sectors have concluded agreements, which provide an annual 2.0 percent pay raise for the contractual term.
3. UPM has unilaterally refused to continue with the terms and conditions of employment as recorded into the provisions of the collective agreement that expired January 1, 2022. The Paperworkers' Union and the Trade Union Pro proposed that if the terms and conditions of employment remained unchanged during the negotiations, it would be possible to seek for a solution during the so-called post-contractual protection time without taking industrial action; this is a tradition in Finland.

UPM is the only forest industry company, which has unilaterally announced in Finland that it shall no longer continue the practice of concluding collective agreements with white collar workers. The company alone will decide on their terms and conditions of employment, which it will defines by legal minimum conditions and individual employment contracts. Further, the company shall not accept that a trade union member would represent white collar workers at workplace.

In addition to the above, when in contact for negotiations, UPM has proposed to the Paperworkers' Union a major deterioration to the terms and conditions of the future collective agreement; an increase of the annual working time by 80 to 100 hours without additional compensation in pay, for example.

In fact, UPM is the only company in the forest industry sector that has set such demands to worsen the conditions of employment and dilute the power of trade unions. Therefore, it has caused the current situation completely by itself. Today, the industrial action of the Paperworkers' Union and the Trade Union Pro has continued for 44 days, and the trade unions have informed that industrial actions will end, if negotiations can be started during the post-contractual protection time provided by the collective agreement, and also, if the unions will be able to announce that the agreement will be established in accordance with the general result of negotiations defined in the point 2. This has not been accepted by the UPM company.

In view of the above, the Paperworkers' Union and the Trade Union Pro consider that a "*force majeure*" situation does not exist, but this is a conflict caused by the company pursuing its ideological objectives. It is important to note that the conflict is not caused by the demands of trade unions targeting to improve earlier terms and conditions of work.



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