

EPSU backs Norwegian unions' strike against labour law changes

(26 January 2015) EPSU sends solidarity greetings to its Norwegian affiliates and all the unions in the three confederations who will be taking strike action and joining the demonstrations planned for hundreds of towns and cities across the country on 28 January.

The coordinated political strike has been called in protest at government plans to weaken important elements of the Work Environment Act. EPSU agrees that the proposed changes will lead to more precarious employment and pressure to work longer hours.

The unions are concerned about four key changes:

- Relaxation of the rules on temporary contracts – currently temporary employment has to be justified by the needs to deal with seasonal work or sickness absence, for example, but the changes will mean any job could be advertised on a temporary basis. Unions are worried that this could see temporary employment increase from the current 10% to 25% of the workforce.
- Increase in the limits on contractual overtime from 10 to 12 hours a week and from 25 to 30 hours a month – with unions particularly worried about the lack of freedom and flexibility for workers to control their hours.
- A change in the treatment of working on Sunday so that it becomes almost a normal working day with employers able to call on employees to work up to five consecutive Sundays rather than the current maximum of two.
- Removal of the right to take collective actions to the courts, leaving unions only the option to take individual cases.

EPSU general secretary **Jan Willem Goudriaan** said: *"We wish the Norwegian trade unions every success in their action which we hope will put a block on this attempt to weaken employee protection. The Norwegian government seems to be in sync with the European institutions who are bombarding us with their negative messages on structural reforms."*

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