

6

Industrial relations

CLOCK-IN



How much do you know about trade unions? Discuss the following statements with a partner and correct any that you think are false. Do others in the group agree with you?

- 1 European countries with the highest strike rates are Spain, Greece and Finland.
- 2 Trade unions are called 'labor unions' in the US.
- 3 The largest union in Czechia is Odborový svaz pracovníků dopravy.
- 4 A 'closed shop' is common in some large industrial sectors in the UK. It's illegal in the Czech Republic.
- 5 Sweden's largest union represents more than 1/5 of the country's population – 2.1 m members.
- 6 The main purpose of a trade union is to look after the interests of employers.
- 7 The largest umbrella organization in the CR is the ČMKOS, Českomoravská konfederace odborových svazů.
- 8 The biggest industrial action in the Czech Republic took place in 1989 to oppose the planned pension reforms.



DID YOU KNOW?

'Closed shop' means a company can engage only employees who belong to the union.

1 Work with a partner. What do you think the following headlines are about?

German court supports Sunday closing law

Finance workers in Denmark
anxious over bank security

Union leaders turn up the
heat in wage negotiations
with Czech Railways

Now read the summaries of the three stories behind the headlines to see if you were right. Find words or phrases which mean the following:

- 1 fighting for something
- 2 a worldwide plan
- 3 an arrangement made between management and union representatives
- 4 an offer made by somebody who has rejected a previous offer

- A Germany's Federal Constitutional Court has refused to allow shops to open on Sundays. Rest on Sundays and national holidays is considered more important than the economic interests of businesses, says the court. Germany's largest union Ver.di had supported this decision and, together with church groups, had been campaigning to keep Sunday a day of rest.
- B The leader of the finance workers' union has called for national and European action to make workplaces more secure. Thousands of bank staff have been victims of bank robberies (an average of one a day in Denmark), with many requiring post traumatic stress treatment. He encouraged unions and employers to work together in a global initiative for safer workplaces.
- C In ongoing negotiations to renew the collective agreement for Czech railway workers, České dráhy has not put yet forward a counter-offer to Odborový svaz pracovníků dopravy for better income conditions. OSD is seeking a 7 % increase in wages and has called for a general strike on railways to put pressure on the company.

2

Put the phrases below into the right word order. Then use them to complete the sentences.

- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-------|
| a | a shop closed enforce | <i>enforce a closed shop</i> | _____ |
| b | conditions pay and negotiate | | _____ |
| c | take action industrial | | _____ |
| d | interests after look employees' | | _____ |
| e | wage involved be in negotiations | | _____ |
| f | agreement collective discuss a | | _____ |
| g | offer put a counter- forward | | _____ |

- The Personnel Manager is going to _____ to the union of a 5% pay rise.
- Each year we have to _____ with the union representatives.
- The major publishing company had no choice but to *enforce a closed shop* _____.
- The workers threatened to _____ if the redundancies went ahead.
- In the UK, shop stewards are elected by union members to _____ and represent them to management.
- Legislation lays down minimum time periods for consultation to _____ when more than 20 redundancies are proposed.
- The company will soon _____ with the union.

DID YOU KNOW?

The unions in Britain had long been associated with Labour Party and union leaders sometimes even became Cabinet Ministers when Labour won the election. Only when Tony Blair became the Labour chairman in 1994, the party managed to reduce the unions influence on its politics (e.g. rejected the call for extensive nationalization of the economy) in order to attract the middle-class electorate.