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The role of trade unions in regulating social and labour relations and shaping national policy in Latvia

Abstract. The relevance of this study is dictated by the need to determine the role of trade unions in social and labour relations and their degree of influence on the national policy of the Republic of Latvia. The purpose of this study was to determine the degree of influence of trade unions on social and labour relations within the framework of the current labour legislation of Latvia and to find potential ways to improve the efficiency of national policy, considering the requirements and desires of the working population of the country. The methodological framework of this study was based on the following methods of cognition: generalisation, analysis and synthesis, analogy, and SWOT analysis. The findings of this study are presented in determining the level of influence of trade unions on the lives of working people in the Republic of Latvia. The paper described the existing trend in Latvian society regarding the popularity of joining trade unions, as well as the conditions for the influence of trade unions on the development and reform of the national policy of the Republic of Latvia, considering the needs, desires, and interests of the working population (society) who are members of trade unions. The results of the study determined the potential significance of trade unions in regulating social and labour relations in Latvia along with the country's legislation and reflect the role of trade unions in establishing communications between society and the state (using evidence from the 2022 protests). The practical significance of this study is conditioned upon the possibility of using the results obtained in the future for a more in-depth study of the role of trade unions as a tool for communication between society and the state, a mechanism for regulating social and labour relations and supporting workers in Latvia, through the influence on the formation of national policy

Keywords: protection of the population; employees; employment; improvement of working conditions; wages; rights and freedoms

Introduction

Trade unions are established based on free choice and interest of their members united by common interests or activities. According to the Law of the Republic of Latvia "On Trade Unions", adopted in 2014, representatives of any profession can join trade unions and they should not be clearly limited by territorial, professional, or sectoral principles (Law of the Republic..., 2014). Trade unions are formed on a voluntary basis and are non-governmental organisations. Their main work is aimed at protecting the interests, professional, social, and economic rights of employees, which is explicitly stated in the Law on Trade Unions (Law of the Republic of..., 2014). The right of citizens of the Republic of Latvia to form associations, political parties or public organisations is constitutional and is set out in Article 102 of the Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (The Constitution of..., 2014).

In the 20th century, trade unions were considered as a threat to industry and the development of society (Khan *et al.*, 2019). Back in the second half of the last century, trade unions evoked strongly negative emotions in people, were associated with higher inflation, falling wages, and were considered the main cause of industrial decline and falling living standards (Khan *et al.*, 2019). Currently, people around the world, including in Latvian society, are changing their perception of the phenomenon of trade unions. Modern researchers have concluded that unionised workers have higher levels of job satisfaction, lower levels of stress, sadness, and loneliness, and a lower risk of depression than non-unionised workers (Blanchflower *et al.*, 2022).

Currently, trade unions, together with Latvian legislation, play a significant role in the protection of the working population. They are one of the tools to protect

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an employee if they decide to terminate the employment relationship. However, according to Latvian scholars A. Reine & D. Tarasova (2017), the Law on Trade Unions needs to be reformed. The main problem with the current legislation is the insufficient protection of employers, which arises from the lack of regulation of terminating labour relations with employees who are members of several trade unions (Reine & Tarasova, 2017). However, from the perspective of employee protection, this point is even beneficial. Currently, Latvia is the only country with a clause in the Labour Law (Labour Law..., 2001) that prohibits dismissal of a trade union member without the consent of the trade union (or unions).

Another instrument of support for employees by trade unions is the possibility for employees to sign a collective labour agreement, which allows them to receive higher salaries, better working conditions, etc. However, only an employee who is a member of a trade union can sign a collective labour agreement, and if the employer strictly complies with the agreements set out in the agreement, the employee is deprived of the opportunity to take part in strikes or protests to improve labour requirements (Labour Law..., 2001). The head of the Union of Free Trade Unions of Latvia E. Baldzēns (Vakhtyna, 2022) emphasises that trade unions have not only a protective but also an encouraging nature. Thus, employees who are members of trade unions can receive certain bonuses (e.g., discounts) when visiting theatres, museums, or certain retail chains, if such a system is implemented in their union. According to E. Baldzēns, over 70% of court cases on the issue of dismissal of employees are resolved in favour of the employees, with the support of trade unions, which provide their members with a lawyer if necessary (Vakhtyna, 2022).

Thus, the purpose of this study was to identify general trends in Latvian society regarding the desire of employees to be members of trade unions and the need to determine the role of trade unions in the activities of the state, their impact on the legislative framework of Latvia and the overall development of the state.

Materials and Methods

The theoretical framework for this study is represented by the scientific papers of scholars who have investigated the role of trade unions in the context of national policy making and their role in regulating social and labour relations in the Republic of Latvia and other countries (the United Kingdom, the United States of America (USA), Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, Ukraine, etc.). When analysing the role of trade unions in labour relations and in formulating national policy, the study used scientific publications, expert articles, statistical information and regulatory documents (The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia, 2014), the Law of the Republic of Latvia "On Trade Unions" (Law of the Republic of Latvia, 2021b), the Law of the Republic of Latvia "On Labour" (Labor Law..., 2001), which are publicly available.

The methodological aspects of this study consider the degree of influence of trade unions on the national policy of the Republic of Latvia, mainly in the field of labour relations. The methodology of this study was based on a set

of methods of cognition, which included analysis and synthesis, which were used for a detailed investigation of such a phenomenon as trade unions and their tasks, goals, and role in the state and society; the method of generalisation, which was chosen to assess the degree of influence of trade unions of particular working groups involved in the 2022 protests (Vakhtyna, 2022) (healthcare workers and workers in education and science); the method of analogy, which was used to compare the trends in the development of trade unions in European countries (UK, Netherlands) and the degree of their influence on social and legislative processes with the trends in the Republic of Latvia. In addition, the expert assessment of the Head of the Union of Free Trade Unions of Latvia E. Baldzēns was used to assess the degree of influence of trade unions on social and labour relations and to determine the role of trade unions in the formation of the national policy of the Republic of Latvia (Vakhtyna, 2022).

Another method used to determine the role of trade unions in the state and the degree of influence of trade unions on social and labour relations was the SWOT analysis, which helped to identify the main external and internal factors of influence on the trade union movement. The method also helped to identify the strengths and opportunities that trade unions provide for workers and to identify the weaknesses and threats to trade unions. The information on protests among the working population in 2022 helped to analyse the effectiveness of trade unions in the context of finding mechanisms for establishing relations with public authorities in the current environment. As a basis for analysing the activities of trade unions in the Republic of Latvia, two trade unions that took the most active part in the 2022 protests were chosen – the Trade Union of Education Workers and the Trade Union of Healthcare Workers. Considering the conducted analysis, it became possible to determine the role of trade unions in social and labour processes, including in terms of the supporting and protective role of trade unions in the life of the working population of Latvia.

Results

The right of people to associate is one of the key factors in achieving a satisfactory level of working conditions. This is conditioned by the possibility of creating and freely joining trade unions, which serve as a protective and supportive mechanism for the working population. Currently, the humanisation of social and labour relations is a hot topic around the world, while trade unions reflect the principal areas of society's development and help the state choose the most effective social and economic management models (Kaplin, 2021).

Trade unions are essential to the building and existence of any democratic state. Trade unions can act as a link between society and the state. It is trade unions that reflect the main trends, desires, and demands of employees, enabling the state to find the best ways of development. Furthermore, trade unions are a social regulator. Unfortunately, in today's world, there is a negative trend towards the proliferation of positions with low salaries or insufficiently good working conditions. Short-term work

with poor pay is on the rise in Europe (Doellgast, 2018a). The coronavirus infection (COVID-19) that emerged in the world in late 2019 and led to a global lockdown in 2020 also demonstrated the vulnerability and imperfections of European countries' labour policies (Su *et al.*, 2022).

About a third of all jobs in the European Union (EU) are in the most at-risk category. The work of the two employees could be adapted to the new conditions, e.g., by transferring their work to a remote format. However, 30% of employees were almost deprived of this opportunity. Most of these workers were from less developed regions with relatively low wages, and mostly young people who were industrial

workers and migrant workers (Sanchez, 2020). Moreover, the coronavirus pandemic has caused a sharp rise in unemployment across Europe, including the Republic of Latvia. Many businesses were forced to downsize or close, and workers lost their jobs and were unable to find new ones (Su *et al.*, 2022). However, with sufficient funding for trade unions in the EU, it would be possible to offset this scale of the labour market crisis to some extent and protect the working population of the EU countries. In general, the issue of unemployment is still quite relevant today. According to Figure 1, the average unemployment rate in Latvia over the past 5 years has been 7% (Unemployment rates in..., 2022).

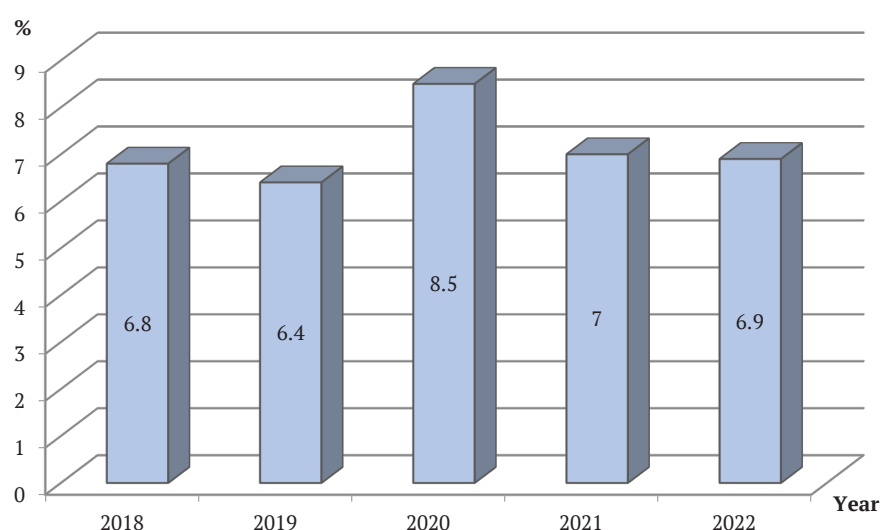


Figure 1. Unemployment rate in the Republic of Latvia for 2018-2022

Source: developed by the authors

According to this data, the highest unemployment rate over the past 5 years occurred during the “COVID” times (2020). At that time, the unemployment rate in the Republic of Latvia reached 8.4%, exceeding the average unemployment rate in recent years by 1.5%. In 2021, the situation began to improve, but even in 2022, the unemployment rate in Latvia did not reach “pre-COVID” levels. The average unemployment rate in the European Union in 2022 is 6%, which is almost 1% less than the unemployment rate in Latvia (Unemployment rates in..., 2022).

However, it was the coronavirus infection that highlighted the real state of affairs, revealing that most countries in the world cannot protect the working population in such crisis situations (McNicholas *et al.*, 2020). One of the biggest conclusions that can be drawn from the crisis during the coronavirus pandemic is that the international occupational health and safety system needs to be reformed. In Latvia, over 22.5 thousand people have lost their jobs since the start of the pandemic. The most affected are workers in the tourism, food and catering, and tourism sectors (Berezovskaya, 2021).

Over time, government restrictions were eased and a greater proportion of people who lost their jobs were able to adapt to the changes and find work in new industries. However, at the time of the loss of their jobs, the employ-

ees received almost no aid. The downtime allowance was paid from autumn 2020 to summer 2021 in the amount of EUR 330 to EUR 1,000 per person per month. However, the amount of the payment did not exceed 70% of the monthly salary, and the employee was not paid sick leave or crisis support payments that had been previously granted (Law of the Republic of..., 2021b). However, unfortunately, not every employer applied for cash benefits from the state for their employees, and many employees were forced to resign, as collective resignations became common (Berezovska, 2021).

Thus, if trade unions were sufficiently funded, workers who are members of trade unions could count on additional payments from their unions during downtime. In this way, trade unions would have the opportunity to further support the working population of Latvia. In 2021, trade unions in the Republic of Latvia, led by the Board of the Union of Free Trade Unions of Latvia, began to fight against amendments to the Law on the Management of the Spread of COVID-19 (Law of the Republic..., 2021b), which gave employers the right to dismiss employees who had not been vaccinated against COVID-19 and did not have a certificate (Shulzhyts, 2021). However, it was almost impossible to defend the right of employees to keep their jobs if they refused to obtain a certificate confirming

the fact of recovery or vaccination against the COVID-19 coronavirus infection. Thus, according to the amendments to the Law of the Republic of Ukraine “On Management of the Spread of COVID-19” (Law of the Republic of Ukraine, 2021b), introduced in July 2021, the employer has the right to dismiss employees who do not have a certificate, subject to the principles of legality and equality. However, this can hardly be considered a victory.

Another area of trade union activity is the fight for higher wages and reduced workloads. In general, in terms of the average salary in the Republic of Latvia, according to official information, it ranges from EUR 580 to EUR 2,325 per month, however, the real figures may be lower. The lowest wages are for people under the age of 24, and the highest for people in the middle age group – 35-44 (Fig. 2) (Salaries in Latvia..., 2022).

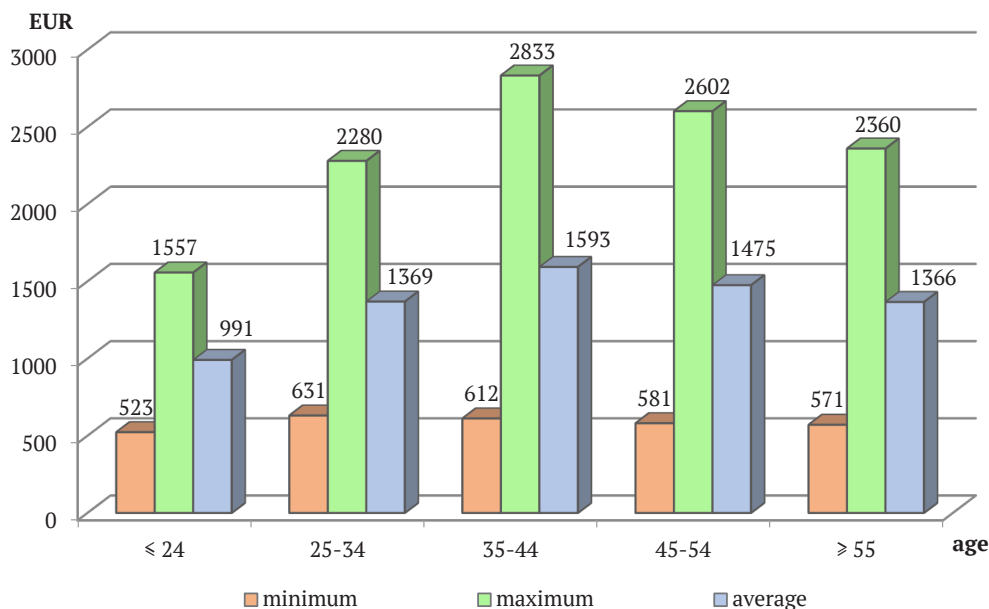


Figure 2. Wage level of the population, breakdown by age (2022)

Middle-aged workers have the highest salaries, which is conditioned by the sufficiency of professional skills, knowledge and abilities, job stability, and clarity of goals for the future. The population of Latvia is dissatisfied with the level of wages and the amount of workload (Avotiņš, 2018). Thus, several large protests by healthcare, education, and science workers were planned for 2022. The Latvian Education Workers' Trade Union and the Latvian Healthcare Workers' Trade Union (Vakhtyna, 2022) represented the interests of workers. As a result of the protests, healthcare workers failed to defend their interests. For example, in 2022, the process of calculating salaries for junior healthcare workers (ambulance drivers, nurses, and physician assistants) was revised in relation to the level of doctors' salaries, which led to a drop in their average salary. Healthcare workers believe that they are paid too little for the work they do and the workload they have, and they are demanding a recalculation of their salaries. However, the protests did not bring any results. Notably, some representatives of the healthcare sector, according to the current legislation of Latvia, are simply not allowed to take part in protests and strikes. Thus, doctors and their unions have a rather small number of people who can be involved in protests. Unfortunately, the protests failed to achieve the demands, and healthcare workers' unions assure that they do not plan to stop fighting and will do everything possible to resolve issues and establish understanding with the state (Vakhtyna, 2022).

The situation with regard to the protests of education and research workers is much better. Education unions were preparing for a major protest action aimed at reducing the workload of teachers (from 37 to 28 hours) and increasing their salaries. However, the strikes did not take place, as the Union managed to establish communication with the authorities and partially meet the teachers' demands (Vakhtyna, 2022). The head of the Union of Free Trade Unions of Latvia, E. Baldzēns, believes that the cancellation of the strike has only led to a positive result. The education workers did not lose their salaries for the potential days of strike action and were able to achieve results because their union had established communication with the state (Vakhtyna, 2022).

Thus, workers trust their trade unions to a certain extent, entrusting them with the authority to negotiate with the authorities in the fight for their rights and improvement working conditions. Trade unions fight to give workers a voice by acting as a focal point between society (workers) and the state (Marino et al., 2019; Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman, 2019). However, in Latvia, apart from low wages, there is also some gender-based discrimination against employees. On average, women earn almost 24% less than men. The average monthly salary of a working woman in Latvia is EUR 1,232, while a man's salary is EUR 1,595 (Salaries in Latvia..., 2022). In general, this situation is not unique to the Republic of Latvia. Thus,

the average monthly salary in Austria is EUR 3,671 for a woman and EUR 4,218 for a man (a difference of about 13%), in Germany the average salary for a woman is EUR 4,069 and for a man EUR 4,936 (a difference of 17.6%), in the Netherlands, on average, a woman earns EUR 3,940 per month, while a man earns EUR 4,585 (a difference of more than 14% (Salaries in Latvia..., 2022). Thus, women earn significantly less than men. This situation is another area of work for trade unions. Their activities are aimed not only at improving working conditions and raising the overall level of wages in the country, but also at eliminating discriminatory employer policies regarding the gender of employees.

In general, the international market is experiencing a trend towards fragmentation and the spread of inequality in the labour market (Jetha *et al.*, 2021). At present, there is a disturbance in the balance, in favour of employers rather than employees. Employers, who receive national support

and almost complete power over leverage over workers, hinder the development of the labour market, artificially lower wages and create an even greater wage gap between employees of different genders (Keune *et al.*, 2020).

In the United States of America, for instance, there is a much higher proportion of women in senior management positions with salaries equal to those of men than in European countries (Germany, Denmark, Latvia), due to the fact that American legislation aims to equalise salaries for the same positions and equal employment opportunities for both women and men (Iversen *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, considering the existing positive practices of developed countries such as the United States, the current European labour market is not normal and needs to be reformed. In general, in terms of the activities of trade unions, they act as a protective and supportive mechanism. Considering the weaknesses and strengths of trade unions, a SWOT analysis was conducted, as presented in Figure 3.

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Legal protection for trade union members; • Financial aid (including the possibility of using savings banks); • Help in finding a job; • Social protection; • Information support, training and professional development of trade union members.	• Not always qualified help; • Poor motivation of trade union members and employees; • Unclear formulation of plans and goals (high uncertainty); • Low level of communication with state authorities.
Opportunities	Threats
• Improving working conditions and increasing salaries; • Reducing the level of discrimination; • Introduce additional incentives and bonuses for trade union members; • Establishing close and effective communication with the state; • Improving the quality of life of the population; • Implementation of innovations; • Attracting investment.	• External threats and crisis moments (e.g., coronavirus infection); • Changes in legislation; • Conflicts within trade unions; • Decline in the overall level of trust among the population; • Elevated levels of migration and rising unemployment.

Figure 3. Generalised SWOT analysis of trade unions

Source: developed by the author

Thus, according to the results obtained, trade unions play a rather positive role in developing the national policy of any democratic and developed state, and also have a qualitative impact on social and labour relations. Trade unions serve as an additional tool in the workers' struggle for their rights and improvement of their working conditions.

Discussion

In today's world, preserving human rights and freedoms is a fundamental good and task. Trade unions serve as a tool that provides people with the opportunity to express their opinions, build communication with the authorities, and enable them to defend their rights.

Both Latvian and foreign scholars from the USA, the Netherlands, Germany, Ukraine, Denmark, Italy, and other countries have investigated the role of trade unions in social and labour relations between people, in the fight against inequality, as well as in determining the degree of influence of trade unions on national policy, within the historical context and in the present day. The following scholars have published their studies on the subject: S. Khan *et al.* (2019), D.G. Blanchflower *et al.* (2022), A. Jetha *et al.* (2021), and others.

Earlier, in the last century, trade unions were not popular among the working class at all, and, moreover, participation in trade unions was considered as a negative mark on their members and condemned by society. Trade unions

were considered a threat to society and the development of countries, associated with economic decline and a drop in overall living standards, as noted by scholars in their scientific paper “The Role of Ethical Human Resource Management, Trade Unions, and Situational Moral Will” by S. Khan, T. Bartram, and J. Cavanagh (Khan *et al.*, 2019). Currently, the situation has changed considerably, the popularity of trade unions is not yet very high, but a fairly large number of people are members of trade unions, as noted by scholars R. Gumbrell-McCormick & R. Hyman (2019).

As the findings of this study suggested, Latvian workers increasingly trust trade unions to resolve acute issues. The events of late 2022 with the organisation of protests by education and research workers and healthcare workers also testify to the growing level of public trust in trade unions (Vakhtyna, 2022). Such events demonstrate a positive trend in increasing the role of trade unions in the processes of social and labour relations. Based on the developments, it can be concluded that the Latvian population recognizes potential in cooperation with trade unions in the context of achieving higher living standards, improving working conditions for the working population, and the possibility of establishing communication with the state for its overall development in line with the needs of the population.

A. Trif *et al.* (2023) note that trade unions can achieve considerable results in addressing low wages, giving workers the right to vote, normalising workloads, and addressing irregular working hours. According to the researchers, this situation is possible even in unfavourable conditions. However, for trade unions to achieve this level of influence, they need to improve their internal resources. A similar opinion is shared by V. Doellgast *et al.* (2018b) in their research on the policy of institutional change in Europe) and “From dualisation to solidarity” (Doellgast, 2018a), noting that weak external resources of trade unions are not an obstacle to their development and effective existence, since trade unions can make the most of internal resources in their activities.

That is why the main task of trade unions is to optimise internal processes, plan clearly and ensure the required level of investment. The capacity of Latvian trade unions cannot fully meet the needs of their members. However, they can demonstrate quality results in local areas, e.g., in providing legal support in court cases of trade union members on termination of employment. In a general sense, trade unions act as a tool for reaching consensus between employees and employers, and they are also responsible for establishing a link between employees and the state.

In their research paper “The dynamics of changes in the number of trade unions and COVID-19: what is the importance of social dialogue?”, the researchers O. Otieno *et al.* (2021) identify the following areas of trade unions activities: strengthening the institutions of labour and social relations; ensuring measures for social protection of the working population, protection of the most vulnerable segments of the population (migrants, people with disabilities, etc.); establishing a dialogue with the state to build decent work opportunities; informing the state and society to support enterprises and jobs. All of this is true. Latvian trade unions work in these areas, constantly

improving the efficiency of their work. However, with ineffective internal work of trade unions, insufficient funding and lack of redistribution mechanisms, the activities of trade unions become purely formal and have no applied nature. Therewith, it is advisable for trade unions to create associations and establish communications with each other to achieve common results, which in the future will lead to an improvement in the overall level of labour, higher wages, and a reduction in the stratification of society in terms of reducing the level of discrimination of any kind.

Moreover, researchers note that in today's environment, employees who are members of trade unions have a higher level of job satisfaction and a much lower risk of depression than non-unionised workers (Blanchflower *et al.*, 2022). D. Blanchflower *et al.* (2022) in their paper “Trade Unions and Worker Wellbeing” note that the relationship between job satisfaction and union membership changed only in the early 21st century; before that, union membership was quite burdensome for employees. There is a rather positive trend in the relationship between the psychological state of employees and their level of job satisfaction and their membership in trade unions. Thus, international representatives of trade unions conduct analytical and research activities on possible measures to improve the overall level of employee satisfaction. In the research paper “Shorter working weeks for all: how much paid work is needed for mental health and well-being?”, D. Kamerade *et al.* (2019) propose to consider the possibility of working hours for employees as one of the possible tools for achieving mental health of the working population and increasing life satisfaction. Notably, this issue is quite relevant in Latvia, as, unfortunately, the real amount of workload of employees often exceeds the recommended workload (Vakhtyna, 2022). At present, Latvian trade unions are struggling with this problem, trying to achieve better working conditions from employers and the state.

Furthermore, trade unions are not only protective, but also encouraging. Thus, the head of the Union of Free Trade Unions of Latvia E. Baldzēns (Vakhtyna, 2022) notes that most trade unions have a system of bonuses for trade union members and their families. For example, some Latvian trade unions provide their members with discounts on visits to museums, theatres, and even certain retail chains, as well as discounts on vouchers to tourist destinations in the Republic of Latvia. Apart from the bonus system, several trade unions have introduced a more substantial system of financial aid to employees. Thus, members of some Latvian trade unions can use trade union savings funds to take out a loan on fairly favourable terms. Moreover, trade union members can sign a collective bargaining agreement, which allows them to receive higher wages and more favourable working conditions (Vakhtyna, 2022).

The provision of certain bonuses and privileges by trade unions greatly increases the interest of the working population in joining trade unions. Moreover, employees who receive the support of a community that shares their views, aspirations and goals feel more secure, which has a positive impact on their psychological state and motivates them to better perform their job duties, improve the area in which they work and develop the country as a whole.

Thus, it can be argued that the activities of trade unions in Latvia are only gaining momentum, with trade unions gaining more trust from employees and society and increasing the efficiency of their activities.

Conclusions

The findings of the present study have made it possible to determine the degree of influence of trade unions on social and labour relations and the role of trade unions in shaping the national policy of the Republic of Latvia. The study conducted a historical analysis that provided insight into the positive change in society's attitude towards the trade union movement. In today's world, trade unions have the potential to effectively influence the labour sphere to achieve the basic requirements and wishes of the working population. However, as the study has shown, trade unions in many countries, including Latvia, are currently unable to realise their full potential. Thus, trade unions are only partially able to meet the needs of their members in their struggle for better working conditions and higher wages. However, in terms of legal aid provided by trade unions (e.g., in the context of court cases on unlawful dismissal of employees), trade unions have quite significant achievements and demonstrate high efficiency. Another advantage of trade unions is their positive psychological impact

on employees. According to the information processed, employees who are members of trade unions have a significantly higher level of job satisfaction than employees who are not members of trade unions. Members of trade unions feel fully supported, united, and motivated. They can expect to receive support in defending their rights and freedoms, while non-unionised workers are left to their own devices.

Thus, albeit not to the fullest extent, trade unions can provide comprehensive support to their members. As trade unions gain in importance and popularity among the public, they are becoming increasingly important and effective as a tool for communication between employees and employers, as well as between society and the state in regulating social and labour relations in Latvia. Furthermore, trade unions can broadcast the demands of the working population, taking measures to influence the formation of state policy of the Republic of Latvia, to improve the level of labour and development of the state as such.

Acknowledgements

None.

Conflict of Interest

None.

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Роль профспілок у регулюванні соціально-трудових відносин та формуванні державної політики Латвії

Анотація. Актуальність цього дослідження продиктована необхідністю визначення ролі профспілок у соціально-трудових відносинах та ступеня їх впливу на національну політику Латвійської Республіки. Метою даного дослідження було визначення ступеня впливу профспілок на соціально-трудові відносини в рамках чинного трудового законодавства Латвії та пошук потенційних шляхів підвищення ефективності національної політики з урахуванням вимог і побажань працюючого населення країни. Методологічну основу дослідження склали такі методи пізнання: узагальнення, аналіз і синтез, аналогія, SWOT-аналіз. Результати дослідження полягають у визначенні рівня впливу профспілок на життя працюючих у Латвійській Республіці. Описано існуючу в латвійському суспільстві тенденцію щодо популярності вступу до профспілок, а також умови впливу профспілок на розвиток і реформування національної політики Латвійської Республіки з урахуванням потреб, бажань та інтересів працюючого населення (суспільства), яке є членами профспілок. Результати дослідження визначили потенційне значення профспілок у регулюванні соціально-трудових відносин у Латвії поряд із законодавством країни, а також відобразили роль профспілок у налагодженні комунікації між суспільством і державою (на прикладі протестів 2022 року). Практичне значення дослідження зумовлене можливістю використання отриманих результатів у майбутньому для більш поглибленого вивчення ролі профспілок як інструменту комунікації між суспільством і державою, механізму регулювання соціально-трудових відносин та підтримки працівників у Латвії через вплив на формування національної політики

Ключові слова: захист населення; працівники; зайнятість; поліпшення умов праці; заробітна плата; права і свободи