

**BEST WISHES!**





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## EDITORIAL

### GRASPING THE ISSUES, ACTING FOR TOMORROW

BY PIERRE PIRSON, president NCK/CNC

The rapid evolution of key sectors of the Belgian economy, including finance, chemistry, and energy, reveals unprecedented challenges. Banks, while consolidating their positions internationally, face intensified competition, particularly in savings and asset management. Meanwhile, the reintegration of sick workers and the increasing complexity of regulations underscore the urgent need for stronger social dialogue and streamlined legislation.

In this context, priorities must be clear: supporting innovation while ensuring effective inclusion. The European BEYUNBI project, focused on diversity, serves as an inspiring example, showing how enlightened leadership can create fulfilling work environments. However, Europe must also address critical energy and industrialization issues, where resilient, accessible, and sustainable solutions must prevail over costly ideological approaches.

Faced with these challenges, the CNCK remains an essential player at both the national and European levels. Leveraging its expertise and network, it advocates for a balanced vision that values both humanity and competitiveness. Now more than ever, it is time to act together to shape a prosperous and equitable future.

**Signed: ChatGPT on 12/23/2024, based on the first draft of this document with the instruction: "Can you create a half-page editorial summarizing the ideas in this text?"**

## A Human Editorial: The Future Is Ahead of Us

What AI cannot (yet) do is read minds and emotions or add what is self-evident. If I chose the hourglass as the cover image, it is to remind us that the arrow of time - or perhaps the sense of causality - remains unchanged.

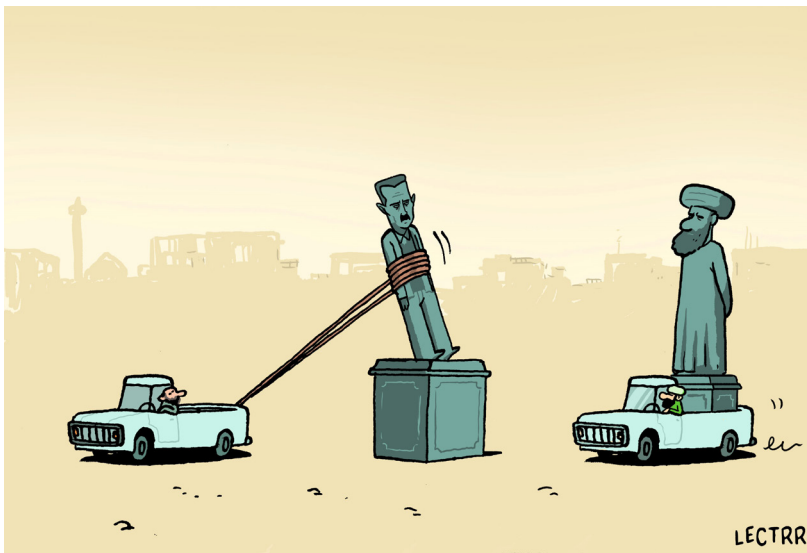
We must look to the future and act today for a better tomorrow with optimism. Artificial intelligence is a tool like any other, helping save time and enabling tasks we might not have otherwise accomplished. Like any tool, it can be used positively or negatively. It is therefore essential for people of goodwill to take charge of the future.

After leading the CNCK through the last two social elections, I can, like one of my predecessors, affirm without regret that I had my chance. While I come from the financial sector, my greatest achievement has been helping delay the closure of nuclear energy in Belgium and contributing to its extension.

However, it is time for new leaders to take the helm during our elective General Assembly at the end of March. I will gladly support them if they wish, ensuring continuity and freeing them to take decisive action. This is, therefore, an open call for candidacies.

ChatGPT had forgotten something important for an editorial at this time of year.

I wish you all an excellent 2025.



## MEETING FECEC 22 NOVEMBER (Fédération Européenne des cadres de banque)

BY PIERRE PIRSON, president NCK/CNC

Belgium took center stage, inviting its European counterparts to Ghent for a meeting. Johan Criel, Vice President of the CNC, facilitated the event, hosted at the KBC offices in the iconic Artevelde Tower, the largest office tower in Flanders.

The meeting was preceded by two topical presentations:

- Internal Presentation on Artificial Intelligence: KBC colleagues highlighted the evolution of AI, with examples such as ChatGPT demonstrating its growing power and real-world applications, including real-time image fraud. The presentation underscored a critical dilemma: seeing is no longer believing—touch is now required to verify.
- Remote Presentation on Sustainability and ESG: Open to all CNCK members, this presentation explored developments in sustainability, focusing on the CSRD (Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive) and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence



The FECEC continues to lead the banking sector within the CEC. The CEC and FECEC President have been the same person for several years, reinforcing the importance of strong relations with the CNCK to maximize impact.

The meeting provided an opportunity to review the situation of Belgium's banking sector, focusing on three key areas: l'évolution, la bataille des 25 milliards du bon d'état et l'impact potentiel du nouveau gouvernement.

Evolution of the banking sector in Belgium :

- The Belgian banking sector is consolidating further, with increasing foreign control. By the end of 2023, only 80 banks were operating in Belgium, 80% of which were branches or subsidiaries of foreign banks, managing nearly 50% of assets. This makes Belgium the most internationalized banking sector after Luxembourg.
- Ongoing mergers and acquisitions
  - In 2024: Merger of Crelan AXA Bank and later bpost BNP Paribas Fortis. In both cases, a lot of dissatisfaction among customers...



- Closure of Banx (a joint venture between the state-owned bank and a telecom operator).
- Intensified competition in private banking and wealth management (e.g., acquisitions like Degroof Petercam by Crédit Agricole).
- Regulatory constraints are regularly discussed.
- Employment and the number of bank branches continue to decline, although some banks are beginning to prioritize accessibility.
- The evolution of interest rate curves has significantly improved the ROE (12.5% on average in 2023), and the sector is moderately optimistic.



### **The €25 Billion Battle Took Place**

Following the issuance of a one-year government bond in September 2023, with attractive tax incentives, €22 billion in retail funds shifted from bank accounts to the Belgian government. One year later, this money became the subject of even fiercer competition. The government claimed to improve competition on savings accounts. Factually, this did not work but triggered a shift of funds to other financial instruments, namely term deposits and certificates of deposit. ING and KBC announced they regained more than they had lost, BNP Paribas less, and Belfius appears to be “on par.”

### **New Government**

The year 2024 was an election year for all levels: social, municipal, provincial, regional, national, and European. At the social level, the CNCK remained stable in the financial sector. Nationally, two key surprises stood out: the clear shift to the right in the traditionally left-leaning francophone electorate and the much less significant rise of extremist parties than expected. To dispel the humor that Belgium does not have a government, it should be noted there are seven governments in Belgium, five of which are currently formed. The exceptions are the Brussels Region, which faces challenges, particularly on the Flemish side, and the federal level, where attempts are being made to merge the Flemish and Walloon regional government majorities. This (future) majority is significantly more right-leaning but still includes a left-wing party, which is demanding concessions. In this context, the financial sector seems a likely target.

At the time of writing, discussions include:

- Imposing a minimum rate on savings (despite an unfavorable report from the National Bank).
- Limiting allowable fees.
- Facilitating account mobility (which would pose an IT management challenge).
- Mandating the provision of basic banking services for all clients, even though exclusions are primarily due to regulations imposed on banks.

The risk is therefore high that the already excessive pressure on banking staff will only worsen.



## GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FECER

BY ROLAND GLIBERT, GENERAL DELEGATE NCK/CNC

The annual general assembly of the FECER took place in Alsace in October 2024. The assembly was preceded by a visit to the KEMBS hydroelectric power station on the Rhine. This station is one of 12 hydroelectric power plants located along a 185 km stretch between Basel and Lauterbourg, operated by EDF. Together, these 12 plants have a total capacity of 1,400 MW.



To facilitate navigation on the Rhine, each hydroelectric plant is equipped with locks featuring two chambers, operated jointly by EDF and the German navigation service. Navigation on the Rhine is a significant economic concern and is maintained 24/7, 365 days a year. Fish ladders have been installed to aid the passage of migratory fish.

During the assembly, the Spanish union Confcuadros was officially welcomed as a new member. The inclusion of this new affiliate, combined with prudent expense management, allowed for a slight increase in the financial balance compared to 2023.

The German delegate highlighted the fragility of the current political coalition in power in Germany. On the energy front, the hydrogen sector is the focus of various studies. A functioning electrolyzer is already operational in Berlin, and the use of hydrogen (H<sub>2</sub>) in the steel industry is being explored. The hydrogen sector, including a visit to a water electrolysis facility, may be part of the agenda for the next general assembly in 2025.

Finally, a summary was presented of the discussions held during a seminar on biases in team management, organized by the CEC.



## GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FECER

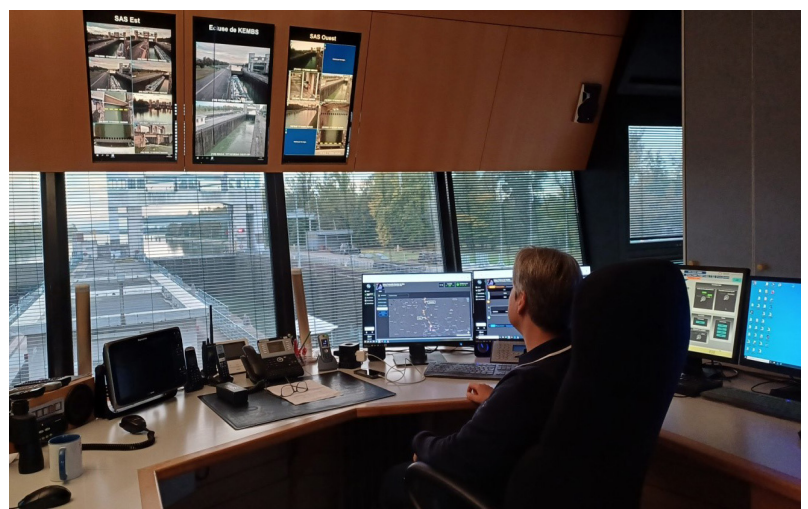
The Italian delegate presented an analysis of the Draghi Report, highlighting the cost of energy in Europe, which is two to three times higher than in the United States, and its implications for the European industry.

The CNCK reported on the situation in Belgium: two nuclear reactors will be extended for an additional 10 years and will be managed by a joint venture split 50/50 between the state and Engie. The maintenance personnel employed by Engie will retain their current employment status.

Hungary continues its collaboration with Russia, including the supply of nuclear fuel for existing plants and the construction of two VVER nuclear reactors at the Paks site. Hungary is also developing a policy for renewable energy sources, particularly solar energy, which will need to be supported by battery storage systems.

France reaffirmed its nuclear development strategy based on the EPR (European Pressurized Reactor). The connection of the Flamanville EPR to the electrical grid is expected by the end of the year.

It was agreed to hold remote meetings between members on a quarterly basis via Teams or Skynet.



## GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Final Conference on the BEYUNBI Project (Diversity and Inclusion)

BY PIERRE PIRSON, president NCK/CNC



The CNCK was strongly represented by Jérôme Habrant and Pierre Ykman for the Chemical and Pharmaceutical sectors, as well as Johan Criel, Vice President, and Pierre Pirson, President.

The General Assembly in Brussels marked the beginning of a renewed mandate following the election of the new office in Copenhagen in May. Together, we reflected on priorities such as strengthening social dialogue, addressing geopolitical challenges, and enhancing our capacity for innovation and competitiveness.

The office launched a survey on priorities, and the CNCK was pleased to see that its own priorities were reflected in the responses.

As with every General Assembly, it was also a moment to share important signals. (See section on CNCK's intervention at the CEC).

### November 27<sup>th</sup> : Final Conference of the BEYUNBI Project

The European project, Beyunbi, reached an important milestone with its final conference, which led to insightful and inspiring discussions.

As managers and executives, our influence extends far beyond our own organizations. We have a responsibility to address these deeply ingrained biases and create environments where everyone can thrive. While, as individuals, we may sometimes feel overwhelmed by this responsibility, at CEC European Managers, we are strengthened by a network of over one million managers across



Europe—a remarkable force that, together, can drive meaningful change and make a lasting difference.

### CNCK's Intervention at the CEC General Assembly.

Pierre Pirson, President, took the opportunity during the General Assembly to deliver a strong message. He reminded attendees that in October 2021, he had sounded the alarm for the energy sector, a warning whose relevance became clear in the years that followed.

This General Assembly was the moment to issue a similar call for the Chemical and Metal sectors, which continue to suffer from the consequences of the energy crisis. Restructuring and closure plans are unfortunately underway in many companies.

We believe that salaried executives possess the expertise and are the ones who keep the country and the economy running. They must be listened to.

Europe has yet to realize that it is not enough to spend billions ideologically to achieve a supply of energy that is cheap, resilient, and low-carbon.

The establishment of a new parliament and commission signifies a new round and a new opportunity, even though we are aware of the challenges.

We must remind ourselves that negative regulations are far too numerous and break down entrepreneurship.

Regarding the talent war, we have created a debt by mistreating our industrial sectors. Let us recall that while education in Europe is likely still at an acceptable level, our population is aging, and our resources are limited.

It is time to act!



# THE REINTEGRATION OF SICK WORKERS

BY BAUDOUX FRÉDÉRIC, juridical service CNCK

Belgium currently has nearly 500,000 long-term sick workers, and without change, the Federal Planning Bureau predicts this number could exceed 600,000 by 2035. This is a significant societal issue, impacting not only the sick individuals but also their colleagues who have to cover for them, as well as employers. The strain is also felt on social security finances.

The failure of reintegration is one of the main causes of the high number of long-term sick workers.

The legislator is well aware of this challenge. The regulations related to the reintegration path were fundamentally modified by the Royal Decree of September 11, 2022 (MB September 20, 2022), aiming for better reintegration of sick workers. However, the regulation has become so complex that it is difficult to navigate.

## **From One Logic to Another: From Force Majeure to Reintegration.**

For a long time, the logic of terminating the employment contract due to medical force majeure prevailed. The occupational doctor would declare the worker permanently unfit for the agreed work, and the contract would be terminated without further formalities, resulting in no entitlement to a compensatory notice.

Over time, this logic was reversed in favor of the worker, and the employer is now required to propose a reintegration path.

The reintegration path includes several phases and aims to help the worker return to the job market through adapted work, another job, or training. The central figure in this process is the prevention advisor-occupational doctor. The three phases are initiation, reintegration evaluation, and the establishment of a reintegration plan.

## **Starting from the 4th Week of Work Absence.**

The longer the absence, the less likely it is that a person can successfully return to work with their original employer. Studies show that for an absence of more than three months, the chances of returning to the same employer drop to 50%. A faster return to work can even contribute to a faster recovery, provided the work is adapted to the worker's health. Therefore, it is important for workers to be informed as early as possible about their return-to-work options and the people they can contact.

The occupational doctor must contact the worker after four weeks of work incapacity to inform them about the various possibilities for facilitating their return to work, including requesting a pre-return visit or starting a reintegration path. With adjustments to the workstation or alternative/adapted work, it is possible to prevent the work incapacity from becoming permanent and make reintegration easier.

## THE REINTEGRATION OF SICK WORKERS

We need to move away from the binary thinking in terms of sickness: either you are fit to work or unfit. Too often, it is assumed that you should return to work only after a complete recovery. However, in most cases, work actually accelerates the recovery process due to its many beneficial effects.

Ultimately, it is the occupational doctor who will decide whether the worker can return to work, take on another function, what adjustments need to be made to the work function, or if the worker is permanently unfit.

If the worker disagrees with the decision of the occupational doctor who declares them permanently unfit for the agreed work, they can appeal the decision. This appeal procedure suspends the reintegration path, which can only resume once the outcome of the appeal is known by both the employer and the worker.

If the agreed work can no longer be performed but the worker is capable of performing other functions, the employer will establish a reintegration plan adapted to the worker's health and potential, in consultation with the worker and the occupational doctor. Other actors, such as HR or a disability case manager, may also be involved at this stage.

The worker can be assisted by a representative from the workers' committee for prevention and protection at work, or if no committee exists, by a union representative of their choice during this consultation (and in fact throughout the reintegration path). Employers must regularly remind workers of this possibility.

Finally, it is important to mention that the employer has a legal obligation to develop a collective reintegration policy, which must then be regularly evaluated and adjusted if necessary. This collective reintegration policy may also lead to observations that require measures in other areas of well-being, such as psychosocial risks, workplace safety, or ergonomics. The goal is that the collective reintegration policy also contributes to improving the overall workplace well-being policy. The employer must establish this collective reintegration policy and evaluate it in consultation with the Committee for Prevention and Protection at Work, or in the absence of such a committee, with the union delegation. This is another reason for the CNKC to continue its fight to be present within the CPPT.

The termination of the employment contract for medical force majeure has become significantly more difficult for employers. Despite its complexity, the new regulation offers genuine opportunities for the sustainable reintegration of sick workers.





## FECCIA, « WHAT IS THAT? »

BY PIERRE YKMAN

FECCIA is the organization representing European managers in the fields of chemistry and pharmaceuticals. The name originates from the French “Fédération Européenne des Cadres de la Chimie et des Industries Annexes” (European Federation of Managers in Chemistry and Related Industries). It should not be confused with the Italian word feccia!

FECCIA is a part of CEC, the European Confederation of Managers.

The interest of NCK – CNC in FECCIA stems from the desire of managers in the chemistry and pharmaceutical industries to better represent Belgian managers in these sectors, not only at the national level but also at the European level. Currently, we are observer members of FECCIA and are considering becoming full members.

To represent both the pharmaceutical and chemical industries, we have a representative from the pharmaceutical sector and one from the chemical sector.

If you're interested in the future of our industries in Europe, join us.

# BENEFITS for our members

Terms and conditions: contact the secretariat.

For current or additional information see [www.cnc-nck.be/members/benefits](http://www.cnc-nck.be/members/benefits)

### 1 LEGAL COVERAGE OF OCCUPATIONAL RISK :

Supplementary insurance In the context of professional activity, this insurance relates to :  
to the civil remedy, to the criminal defence  
to civil defence  
to the driver's guarantee  
disputes arising from social legislation and the employment contract.

Annual premium: 35

### 2 HERTZ:

Car rental at 10% off the national price.

### 3 LEGAL ADVISE ON LABOUR LAW :

This legal advice is extended to family members living in the same household as the CNC member.

### 4 CARLSON WAGONLIT TRAVEL :

Discount offered on various trips ordered via the website: <http://leisureatwork.cwtonline.be/index.aspx>

### 5 TRAINING SESSIONS

The CNC regularly organises training sessions. These are free of charge for members (or with a minimal participation fee). Non-members pay the full rate (min. 145).

More information ?

Contact the CNC/NCK secretariat

[info@nck-cnc.be](mailto:info@nck-cnc.be).

# THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

BY VAN STEENKISTE NIKOLAAS, DUTCH LAWYER CNCK

## 1. The Concept of Dismissal:

A unilateral legal act in which one party notifies the other party of their wish to terminate the employment contract. Dismissal necessarily involves an irrevocable manifestation of the intention to end the employment contract.

### 1.A. Dismissal with Notice Period:

The dismissal notice must be in writing and specify the start date and duration of the notice period. If the notice of termination does not include these details, the termination is void, but the dismissal is upheld. This means that the employment contract is terminated immediately.

The party terminating the contract is then liable for a severance payment.

**Notice given by the employee:** The employee provides the written notice to the employer, either by registered letter or through a bailiff's notification.

**Notice given by the employer:** The employer sends the notice by registered letter or through a bailiff's notification. The length of the notice period depends on the worker's seniority and the party initiating the dismissal (either the employer or the employee).

**Exemption from duties:** The parties may agree that the employee will be exempt from duties during the notice period. The employee will receive their salary at the end of each pay period, and the employment contract will only be terminated definitively at the end of the notice period.

If the notice is given by the employer, the notice period can be suspended due to illness, annual leave, maternity leave, sick leave, etc. If the notice is given by the employee, there is no suspension of the notice period.

**Job search leave:** During the notice period, the employee has the right to take paid leave to search for new employment. This right applies both in the case of dismissal by the employer and in the case of resignation by the employee.

**Outplacement support:** In certain cases, employees are automatically entitled to outplacement support (for notice periods of at least 30 weeks or for employees aged 45 or older).

### 1.B. Dismissal with Severance Pay

The party terminating the employment contract without a serious reason, without respecting the notice period, or with an insufficient notice period, must pay the other party a severance payment or dismissal indemnity.

No specific form is required for this type of termination (it can be verbal or written).

The severance pay is equivalent to the salary corresponding to the normal duration of the notice period or the remaining portion. It also includes any extra-legal benefits acquired under the employment contract. In principle, the severance pay must be paid in a lump sum. A company recognized as being in difficulty or facing exceptionally unfavorable economic conditions may pay the severance in installments. The parties may also agree on this arrangement between themselves.

### 1.C. Dismissal for Serious Cause:

The employer or the worker can immediately terminate the employment relationship without notice or severance pay if there is a serious cause. A serious cause is defined as a serious fault that immediately and permanently makes any professional cooperation between the two parties impossible. The party invoking the serious cause must notify the other party of its existence.

A strict procedure must be followed under penalty of nullity

- **Notification of the Serious Cause:** The serious cause must be notified in writing to the other party, who must sign a duplicate of the notice as proof of receipt. This can be done via registered mail or by a bailiff.
- **Time Limits:** The party terminating the employment for a serious cause must act within three working days from the day the facts are known. Furthermore, the party terminating the contract must notify the other party of the facts within another three working days, starting the day after the termination. In practice, the decision to terminate and the notification of the serious cause can be made simultaneously in a single letter sent within three working days after the facts are known.
- **Burden of Proof:** The party invoking the serious cause must prove its existence. If there is a dispute, the labor court assesses the validity of the serious cause. There is a one-year limitation period from the date of termination to file the case with the labor court. In case of a dispute, it is up to the labor court to assess the serious cause invoked.

### 1.D. Protection of Worker Representatives:

Ordinary and substitute representatives of the works councils, as well as candidates for worker representative positions, enjoy special protection against dismissal.

The law states that worker representatives and their candidates can only be dismissed for serious cause, as defined by the labor court, or for economic or technical reasons recognized by the competent parity body. This legal protection is mandatory.

The protection period begins 30 days before the announcement of the date of the social elections (day X - 30) and ends when the successors are installed in the following social elections. The installation typically occurs during the first meeting of the advisory body with the newly elected members.

The law lists authorized termination methods, for which no special procedure is required. The law's list is exhaustive: expiration of the term, completion of the work for which the contract was concluded, unilateral termination by the worker, the worker's death, force majeure, and mutual agreement between the employer and the worker.

### 3. Special Procedure for Dismissal for Serious Cause:

1. **Informing the Worker and Organization:** The employer must inform the worker and the organization that proposed their candidacy and notify the president of the labor court within 3 working days of becoming aware of the facts justifying the dismissal. A petition must be presented to the president of the labor court within the same 3-day period.
2. **Negotiation Period and Appearance before the President of the Labor Court:** A 5-day negotiation-



period begins the third working day after sending registered letters to the protected worker and their trade union organization. During this period, the parties meet separately and in person with the president of the labor court. Legal representation is not allowed, but the parties may be assisted by a lawyer.

3. **Conciliation Attempt:** During the first appearance, the president schedules another hearing to try to reconcile the parties. If an agreement is reached, it is documented and becomes legally binding. If reconciliation fails, the president issues a ruling on whether the employment contract should continue or be suspended pending approval.

If the parties cannot be reconciled, the president of the labor court mentions this in the order he issues on the same day. In this order, he discusses the continuation or potential suspension (during the approval procedure) of the employment contract of the workers' representative.

The suspension of the execution of the employment contract also implies the suspension of the exercise of the workers' representative mandate.

4. **The contentious phase:** If the employer maintains their intention to dismiss after the 5-day negotiation period has expired, they must have the serious cause recognized by the labor court. The time frame for filing varies depending on whether it concerns an unelected candidate or a full/alternate staff representative.

At the next available hearing, the president of the labor court will make one final attempt to reconcile the parties. If this attempt fails, the case is referred to a chamber of the court. The pleadings generally take place within 30 to 45 business days after the judgment

Dismissal for economic or technical reasons:

The employee representative can also be dismissed for economic or technical reasons. These economic or technical reasons must first be recognized by the competent joint body.

The economic and technical grounds are neither defined nor listed in the law. According to the preparatory works of the law, they refer to (insurmountable necessities). Dismissals must be due to economic difficulties or an unavoidable reorganization of the company

Economic or technical reasons can be related to bankruptcies, the closure of the company or a department of the company, the dismissal of a specific category of staff, or reasons linked to market evolution, reorganization of activities, and staff reductions... In other words, all cases where a company faces operational difficulties that are entirely independent of the behavior of the affected employees.

If the employer has sent a letter to the competent joint body, this body has two months to decide on the existence of the economic and technical reasons. The decision of the joint body must be made unanimously by the members present. This procedure must be followed even if the employer completely closes their business. The competent joint body decides on the existence of economic and technical reasons without being bound by a legal definition of the concept.

The decision can be appealed in labor courts. The labor courts assess whether the competent joint body was correct in recognizing economic or technical reasons.

A. **Termination by mutual agreement:** The parties may decide to terminate the employment contract at any time. The conditions for the termination are determined by mutual agreement.

B. **For fixed-term contracts:** The contract ends as soon as the expiration date is reached. No other formality is required for this.

C. **After the completion of the work:** In the case of a contract where the work to be done is clearly defined in a written agreement rather than the duration, the contract expires after the completion of the work. Again, no other formality is required.

D. **After the death of one of the parties:** When an employee dies, the employment contract automatically ends. With the death of the employer, the situation is a bit more complicated: the contract only ends if there is a personal collaboration or if the employee can no longer continue their work.

E. **Force majeure:** If an unforeseen event makes work impossible, it is referred to as force majeure. Only in the case of permanent force majeure does the employment contract terminate. If the force majeure is temporary, the employment contract is suspended.

F. **Judicial termination:** Both the employer and the employee can invoke a breach by the other party to terminate the employment contract. A judge then decides which party is right and the conditions for the termination. This procedure does not apply to protected workers and is very rarely used in practice.

G. **Termination conditions:** A termination condition is a future but uncertain event that may lead to the termination of an employment contract.

6. **Social documents:** In all cases of employment contract termination, the employer is required to provide the following documents to the employee through the social secretariat:

- A work certificate (with the start and end dates of the contract and a description of the work performed)
- The tax form
- The individual account of the last payments
- The vacation certificate (only for employees)
- C4 unemployment certificate form

# SITUATION WITHIN THE CHEMICAL INDUSTRY OF BELGIUM

PAR PIERRE YKMAN

Due to the war in Ukraine, the price of energy, particularly natural gas, has risen significantly in Europe, whereas this is not the case in other parts of the world, especially the United States and the Middle East.

In recent months, bad news has been following one after another: the closure of Arlanx-eo in Zwijndrecht and Celanese in Mechelen.

Apart from factory closures, reorganizations are occurring or will take place. Where NCK – CNC is present in works councils, we defend our representatives and affiliates. We also defend our individual affiliates in the event of restructuring in the company where they work.

**Umicore** has announced a major restructuring of its automotive battery division (260 jobs lost, including 100 in Belgium).

*Umicore has chosen (likely due to its history with cobalt) the cobalt-nickel-manganese technology, whereas the technology currently gaining dominance is lithium iron phosphate. Apart from the technological choice, it should be noted that the European electric car market has not risen as expected.*

**Yara** has announced the closure of ammonia production at its Tertre plant. A loss of 115 jobs out of 300.

*Ammonia is produced from natural gas, the price of which in Europe is not competitive with prices in the USA (which uses the “fracking” technology to produce it, a method banned in Europe) or the Middle East (democratic regimes?).*

It is likely that the Yara site in Brussels will undergo a reorganization in 2025.

**Syensqo**, the “high technology” part of Solvay, has announced a reorganization. Syensqo is not doing poorly, but it seems that management wants to increase profits. Jobs are at risk in Belgium.

*It seems that top management is increasingly using American methods. Or as an article in Tijd on November 9, 2023, said: “de CEO die meer dan haar gewicht in goud waard is” (“The CEO who is worth more than her weight in gold”).*

**Agfa Gevaert** is restructuring its most traditional business; 530 jobs are at risk over a period of three years.

*It is the traditional medical films business of Agfa Gevaert that is in decline.*

**Tessenderlo** is restructuring its gelatin business in Vilvoorde. 106 jobs are at risk.

*The Vilvoorde plant produces gelatin, a declining market, which is also in competition with production in countries with lower labor costs.*

CNCK is the only to addresses executives and to defend them during reorganizations.





## POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE SOCIAL DEBATE

N-VA, Vooruit, CD&V, MV, Groen, PS, MR, and Les Engagés were consulted. Below are the responses from Les Engagés and MR, who answered our call.

We wish to reiterate, if necessary, that the responses from political parties in no way imply any endorsement by the CNC, which remains apolitical. The CNC's only policy is to defend executives. (See Infocadre 312).



### **For a Tax System Serving All Citizen.**

Taxation is crucial to creating a prosperous and fair society: it enables the funding of public services, reduces inequalities, and ensures better redistribution of resources. Les Engagés advocate for a less burdensome and fairer tax system for workers and the middle class, one that is adapted to environmental challenges to support a more sustainable and equitable economy.

In the latest Regional Policy Declaration, the Walloon government expressed its ambition to profoundly reform the fiscal framework. We consider this essential to breathe new life into Wallonia.

### **A Strong Commitment to Fair and Equitable Taxation**

Within the government, Les Engagés ensure that every measure implemented is not only in tune with our times but also serves solidarity and social progress. Through these reforms, we aim to make taxation a tool for empowering citizens and fostering a fairer, more inclusive society, where every Walloon can confidently aspire to build their future.

### **A reform of registration fees to facilitate housing Access.**

One of the flagship measures is the reduction of the registration fee rate to 3% for the purchase of a primary and sole residence, replacing the current rate of 12.5%. This measure, effective January 1, 2025, addresses a crucial need for young adults and families aiming to become homeowners. Les Engagés support a property access policy as a lever for economic and social stability, reflecting Belgium's cultural attachment to "a brick in the stomach."

To align this measure with real-life circumstances, current homeowners can also benefit from this reduced rate, provided they sell their previous property within three years. This initiative marks a shift toward a more inclusive and flexible tax system, addressing concrete expectations.

### **Simplification and Modernization of Existing Regimes.**

Les Engagés are dedicated to making the tax system more understandable by eliminating existing regimes that are inequitable or ineffective, such as tax relief for first-time buyers, the housing allowance, and the reduced rate for modest housing. This focus on direct access to property ownership addresses the actual needs of households and represents a key priority for our movement.

### **Inheritance and Donation Taxes: Toward Enhanced Fiscal Justice**

We have also prioritized the reform of inheritance and donation taxes, often viewed today as a “death ax.” These taxes are outdated and unfair. Maximum rates will be halved by 2028, easing the tax burden for many citizens and better reflecting the diversity of family and emotional relationships. For example, rates will drop from 30% to 15% for direct descendants and spouses, with similar reductions applied to collateral relatives and other categories.

This reform will ensure better wealth transfer and encourage real estate donations while stimulating reinvestment in the regional economy. For Les Engagés, this approach aims to make taxation more humane, closely aligned with the real needs of citizens, while modernizing procedures for monitoring and combating major tax fraud.



The MR fully supports the ongoing work of the formateur, Bart De Wever. Since the beginning of the discussions, the MR, through its representatives at the negotiation table, has been clear and constructive to enable our country to implement the necessary reforms in socio-economic matters as well as in security, justice, and health.

It is imperative to form a government as quickly as possible. The budgetary urgency is undeniable, and we can no longer afford to wait.

In this context, the establishment of the budget must address the fight against the waste of public funds and cannot be achieved at the expense of those who work, save, and invest, particularly in one of the most heavily taxed countries in the world.

Finally, it is crucial to support the competitiveness of our businesses, especially SMEs, given the challenging period ahead. Entrepreneurship is the engine of our economy.

We must create a more favorable environment for entrepreneurship to develop our country and contribute to European autonomy, particularly as Germany and France face major challenges.

## **CNCK GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**When is it? March 25th or 27th, 2025**

We are pleased to invite you to our Annual General Assembly, a key moment to exchange ideas, discuss, and define together the main directions for our organization in the upcoming year. During this edition, we will also elect a new president!

The exact date of the assembly is still to be confirmed, but it will take place on either March 25th or 27th. The location of the event will also be specified in the coming weeks.

## CNC/ NCK: INFORMATION AND FACTS.

- The fourth trade union alternative that has been specifically defending the interests of professional and managerial staff since 1966.
- The CNC is an independent association.
- The CNC helps its members: per year +/-1000 individual interventions +/- 200 interventions at collective level.
- Gives a voice to it's members.

## OBJECTIVES OF NCK/CNC

- Improvement of working conditions for all workers including managers and executives
- The CNC/NCK is the only organisation that opposes fiscal and parafiscal discrimination.
- Defending our interests in a humanitarian context without belonging to a particular political party.
- Our association is fighting for legal recognition in order to be present at all levels of social dialogue.
- The defence of professional and managerial staff at European level through the European Confederation of Professional and Managerial Staff (CEC).
- Legal pension increased in relation to management contributions.

## SERVICES OF THE CNC/NCK

- **Individual juridical advise and assistance**
  - Conclusion of employment contract
  - Working out an amicable agreement
  - Secondment and modification of function
  - (supplementary) pensionplan
  - Evaluation of function
  - Dismissal and outplacement
  - Company car package
  - Restructuring
- **Collective services.**
  - Organisation of an executive association
  - Reorganisation in the company
  - Analysis of collective labour agreements
  - Closure or sale of the business
- **The NCK/CNC is present in the works council and supports candidates in social elections.**



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JAARLIJKSE BIJDRAGE ( € )	Bankoverschrijving	Domiciliëring	
		jaarlijks	maande
Actieve leden	145	135	11,5
Jonger dan 30 jaar	72	60	5,50
Gepensioneerden	61	50	4,00
Werklozen met uitkering, langdurig zieken	72	60	5,50
Echtparen	165	150	13,50

Collaborated to this issue:

Pierre Pirson, Roland Glibert, Bas Pauwels,  
Philippe Gouat, Nikolaas Van Steenkiste,  
Frédéric Baudoux, Pierre Ykman

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