



TRADE UNION IN YOUR  
WORKPLACE.

**DO NOT WAIT, ORGANIZE  
YOURSELF!**



# WHY DO EMPLOYEES NEED TRADE UNIONS?

- free weekends
- paid annual leaves
- reduction of the working time to 8 hours
- retirements and pensions
- health and accident insurance
- minimum wage
- the right to strike

All these **social privileges** exist thanks to the unions. They were not "gifts" from the employers or the government but the result of **many strikes, protests, and social struggles**. Without this, the living conditions of workers would most likely still be as they were in the XIX century.

Unions have led to great improvements in multiple areas. But in many cases, it was not enough. In Poland just like in other countries, workers still face discrimination, poverty, mobbing, and exploitation.

Many workers barely make ends meet. The number of people without basic workers' rights due to temporary employment or junk contracts is constantly increasing. In many places, working for over 300 hours a month and unhealthy conditions are the norm. In

warehouses or factories, expectations and effectiveness are rising, but wages either remain unchanged or improve very slowly.

The situation of those working in the financial services sector is also deteriorating. There is a continuing crisis in education, health care, social welfare, and administration.

Meanwhile, **the hard work of employees and its fruits are being exploited by the bosses**, giving them dividends and profits. The changes in labor law are made for the good of the companies, not the workers. Social disparities are widening by the day, the natural environment is in a deplorable state, and the elites respond to protests with dismissals and police repression.

The actions of unions are the **responses to these challenges**. It depends on us to preserve what the labor movement has already achieved. It is also up to us to take the next steps toward creating a fair and just world.

WORKING TOGETHER  
WE CAN MAKE  
A BIG DIFFERENCE!

# WHY IS IT WORTH IT TO FORM TRADE UNIONS?

In every company with an active and strong trade union, the working conditions are far better, and the salaries are higher. Workers organized into a labor union gain **considerable influence over their workplace**. They no longer need to passively accept the management's decisions. They can fight for higher wages, oppose layoffs, decide on Social Fund expenses, and monitor compliance with OSH rules.

By establishing trade unions, we can also **affect the politics of the government and local authorities**. How is the budget money distributed? How should labor law look? The unions have a say in all of these, representing the demands and opinions of the employees.

Labor unions mean **mutual aid**. If you belong to such an organization, you have access to professional training. You will also receive legal or financial help if you find yourself in a difficult life situation. While working at your job, you can always count on the assistance of the trade unions from other places.

TRADE UNIONS ARE TOOLS WITH WHICH WORKERS CAN IMPROVE THEIR LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS.





## WHAT CAN A TRADE UNION CHANGE AT YOUR WORKPLACE?

For a trade union to start at your workplace (company, agency, warehouse, institution, or office), you need to create a workers' commission or an intercompany commission. This commission (workers' or intercompany) will be a part of the Ogólnopolski Związek Zawodowy Inicjatywy Pracowniczej. It can be established in both private and state enterprises. You do not need the employer's approval to form the commission. It can be organized by the employees and the people hired on a basis other than an employment contract if they do not employ workers themselves.

The workers' or intercompany commission can:

- control the **dismissals** (the employer must consult with the commission on all disciplinary actions and terminations of indefinite (employment) contracts; they are also obliged to negotiate with the commission if they wish to do a collective lay-off.)
- influence the **remuneration policy** (without the commission's approval, the employer cannot

alter the remuneration and the premium granting policies).

- affect the **organization of work** (the employer is obligated to consult with the commission on all the changes to the work regulations which contain rules concerning the working time, billing periods, disciplinary actions etc.)
- decide about the rules for spending the money from the **Social Fund**.
- control the **OHS** regulations (the employer must consult with the commission on all actions and rules concerning hygiene and security at the workplace. The union has the right to contact **Spółeczna Inspekcja Pracy**- an independent workers' service that overlooks OHS)

The commission can also file **demands** to improve the salaries and working conditions. If the employer refuses to fulfill them, the commission has the right to organize **protests**, enter a **group conflict**, and start a **strike**.

## WHAT CAN A TRADE UNION DO FOR YOU?

A trade union can:

- represent you before the Labor Court (for example, to retrieve an outstanding remuneration or to return to work after an unjust dismissal).
- make postulates, present opinions, and file demands to your employer in your name.
- organize legal aid for you (legal advice, help in filing a complaint to Labor Inspectorate)
- negotiate with the employer and organize strikes in your name.

It is important to note that Inicjatywa Pracownicza **is not a "company"** that offers "services" for paying contribution fees. Our union is **a community of workers** who **cooperate** to improve the situations at their workplaces and outside of them. If the union helps you out, you should aid the others by following the slogan, "Solidarity is our weapon."

MUTUAL AID AND  
SOLIDARITY ARE THE  
STRONGEST WEAPONS  
OF TRADE UNIONS!

## WHEN IS A TRADE UNION EFFECTIVE?

Forming a trade union is not enough to change your workplace. Employers will disregard your propositions, break, or bend the rules, and refuse to meet your demands. The courts, the labor inspectorate, or the authorities will not always be on your side.

To truly improve your workplace, the union **must be active** in various fields. It must write letters, negotiate with the employer, lead legal interventions, and organize protests, demonstrations, and strikes. As many people as possible should be involved in these actions. Only in this way can the labor unions make a change for the better.

LABOR LAW, JUST LIKE ANY  
OTHER LAW, PROTECTS THE  
WEAKEST ONLY IF THEY ARE  
ORGANIZED AND ARE  
ACTIVELY FIGHTING FOR  
THEMSELVES. WITHOUT THIS  
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WILL REMAIN MEANINGLESS  
WORDS ON PAPER.

# HOW DOES INICJATYWA PRACOWNICZA WORK?

Ogólnopolski Związek Inicjatywy Pracowniczej was launched in 2004. Our organization was formed in response to the passiveness of other unions that did not react to mass dismissals, a surge in unemployment, privatization, and anti-worker changes to labor law.

We strive to be an **independent, active, and democratic** association. We want to introduce the union movement to those who, up till now, have not been represented by other organizations.

We think that **all the workers have common interests**. IP believes that **collective labor solidarity and joint action** are essential for improving the current working conditions.

For these reasons, we have adopted the following principles of operation:

- **We organize all the workers**, regardless of where they work or what kind of contract they have. In Inicjatywa Pracownicza, we are equal.
- **We are independent of employers, the government, and political parties.** We are a self-dependant and self-governing workers' movement that does not support political leaders or organizations.
- **We consistently protect the workers' rights.** We do not want to come to agreements with the employers without the laborers' knowledge to guard the privileges of a few. We do not shy away from protesting and striking in the name of workers' rights.
- **We avoid bureaucracy.** The basis of the IP's activity is the involvement of company-based and local union structures. We limit the number of paid functions in the union's management to the necessary minimum.
- **We engage in social activities.** We support the tenant's movement in their fight for roofs over their heads, as well as the organizations advocating women's and men's equality. We fight for a worker-friendly city budget and the development of public services.
- **We demand changes to the system.** We criticize the current economic system, which is based on exploitation and social inequalities. We oppose the privatization of profit and the socialization of losses. We seek different economic and political solutions that will take into consideration the employees' opinions on what they produce and how they do it.

# HOW CAN YOU JOIN?

To join Inicjatywa Pracownicza, you must contact the commission that functions at your workplace or in your city, and then fill out the membership form. If at your workplace or in your city, there is not yet an IP committee, you must find 10 people who are willing to create a company, intercompany, or environmental commission.

Inicjatywa Pracownicza is open to all those who do contract work, are unemployed, retired, or are still studying. You can join IP regardless of what kind of contract you have or whether you work in the public or private sector.

## How to form a company or an intercompany commission?

To form a company commission, you only need 10 people who will organize a meeting, decide on the formation of the commission, choose the representatives (presidium and audit committee) and then announce the formation of the commission to your employer.

Those who create the committee must have an employment contract or be hired based on a civil law contract by the employer for at least six months.

If you cannot find 10 employees at your workplace who are willing to form a committee, you can always launch an inter-company commission that will function in more than one company.

**ATTENTION! Before the founding meeting, contact OZZIP by email or by phone.**

A detailed manual on how to form a commission at your workplace can be found on the website:  
<https://www.ozzip.pl/przystap-do-ip>

## What if I am unemployed, studying or I do undeclared work?

In these cases, you can still join IP. For people who, for various reasons, cannot join an intercompany or company committee, there are **environmental commissions**. Those who study can join a pre-existing or create a new **Youth Circle of OZZ IP**.

**If an IP committee does not function at your workplace  
or in your city, contact us. We will help you with  
founding a company, intercompany,  
or an environmental commission!**

**Tel: 888 135 022**

**email: [migracje@ozzip.pl](mailto:migracje@ozzip.pl)**



### **The Domestic Workers Committee**

The Domestic Workers Committee unites workers who perform paid domestic labour, such as care for the elderly or children, or cleaning.

We founded the union because we want together to fight for the improvement of conditions for domestic workers.

**<http://pracownicedomowe.pl/ua/>**

**email: [pracownicedomowe@gmail.com](mailto:pracownicedomowe@gmail.com)**



**[www.ozzip.pl](http://www.ozzip.pl)**



Facebook: [@InicjatywaPracownicza](https://www.facebook.com/InicjatywaPracownicza),

YouTube: [youtube.com/c/InicjatywaPracownicza/](https://www.youtube.com/c/InicjatywaPracownicza/)

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