

Work Package 5: Case Study on Industrial Relations during Covid-19

Air traffic controllers - the Polish example of aviation sector collective bargaining

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Introduction

The subject of the case study concerns the dispute between air traffic controllers and their employer Polish Air Navigation Services Agency (PANSA¹). The conflict took place in two phases in late April and mid-June 2022. It was a direct consequence of changes in employment conditions during COVID-19 pandemic.

During the pandemic PANSA agreed with the trade unions to reduce number of staff and their salaries. The situation changed at the end of 2021. Although the signs of recovery of the air transport sector became visible, PANSA wanted the changes to the agreement to be transformed into permanent, even after the end of the pandemic. The proposal was made by PANSA to the trade unions, which has been turned down. The Unions insisted that with the improvement of the situation, there should be a return to pre-pandemic levels of staffing as well as salaries.

The conflict gained momentum in 2022 during the Easter period and beginning of May – which traditionally in Poland is characterised by two days of national holidays (so called “long weekend”), which are time of increased international travel. Good timing allowed the controllers to attract the attention of the public opinion. The Unions also shifted the weight of the dispute from issues around wages - which could be met with a mixed reaction from external observers - to the issue of travellers’ safety, which immediately gained them sympathy and support from the media and public opinion. They forced PANSA management to reach the final agreement at the end June 2022.

The case study is an example of the effectiveness of shifting the narrative from wages to passenger safety and using public advocacy in the negotiation process.

Section I: Context

There are about 600 flight controllers in Poland². They play a key role in ensuring the proper functioning and safety of air traffic. Their wages are several times higher than the average wage in the national economy. This is understandable and socially acceptable given the stress, responsibility, and no margin for any error as well as the requirement of many years of training.

¹ In Polish: Polska Agencja Żeglugi Powietrznej - PAŻP

² Polacy nie polecą na wakacje? Rzecznik lotniska: Wznowienie sporu z kontrolerami groźne dla branży, <https://next.gazeta.pl/next/7,151003,28436047,polacy-nie-poleca-na-wakacje-rzecznik-lotniska-wznowienie.html> (11.05.2022)

Air traffic controllers are employed and remunerated by Polish Air Navigation Services Agency (PANSAs). PANSAs income comes predominantly from fees paid by airlines. Fewer flights mean less revenue for PANSAs and less resources to cover costs, of which staff wages are a major item. With the dynamic development of the COVID-19 pandemic and the related restrictions, there was a significant reduction in air traffic. This has resulted in a decrease in revenues to the agency's budget. Air traffic controllers approached the pandemic restrictions with understanding. In the second quarter of 2020 PANSAs agreed with the trade unions to reduce the staffing of air traffic control towers and to reduce wages by one third.

The situation changed at the end of 2021. There has been an upturn in air traffic because of the reduction in restrictions. At the same time, the management of PANSAs decided to consolidate the wage arrangements for staffing flight control towers introduced during the pandemic. Proposal to make permanent the solutions applied in the rail moment of crisis was criticized by trade unions. They emphasised that the consent to the earlier provisions be dictated by the uniqueness of the situation. Air traffic controllers have received notices amending their employment contracts. Trade unions demanded the return to the employment and wages before the pandemic with the improvement of the situation in the sector.

The dispute between the board and the unions over the level of wages lasted for several months. It gained momentum in April 2022. Just before Easter and beginning of May – which traditionally in Poland is characterised by two days of national holidays (so called “long weekend”), and so which are times of increased international travel, air traffic controllers launched a protest action and attracted the attention not only of PANSAs management, but also of the public. There has been a lot of media coverage about the potential consequences of the controllers' protest. Trade unions managed to shift the weight of the dispute from wage issues themselves to traveller safety. It allowed them to gain public opinion recognition and support.

The protest action of the air traffic controllers consisted of their non-acceptance of the revised terms and conditions of employment. The threat of collective abstention from work was not the result of a strike, but the result of the termination of their employment contracts due to their rejection of the conditions imposed by the employer, introduced in the form of amending notices. The air traffic controllers' refusal to accept the new terms and conditions of employment meant that their employment contracts were terminated at the end of the notice period. This would mean them leaving their jobs, which would in consequence lead to the threat of closing part of the sky over Poland. Due to fears that the controllers will fulfil their promises and quit their jobs, the management of PANSAs reached a preliminary agreement with the unions on changes in the work and wages regulations, giving themselves time until 10 July 2022 to resolve the dispute.

The conditions were agreed a little earlier, at the end of June - just before the holiday season. The air traffic controllers got all the conditions they fought for. The threat of closing the skies has been averted.

Section II: Relevant Actors

The air traffic controllers' conflict involved a wide range of stakeholders. These include:

- the PANSAs management,
- the Air Traffic Controllers' Trade Unions,
- all air traffic controllers employed by the PANSAs,

- airlines using PANSAs services,
- passengers travelling by air transport.

In order to compare the perspectives of the different stakeholders, a qualitative and quantitative study was conducted by the authors. In the qualitative part, the statements of four individuals were analysed:

- The representative of the President of PANSAs responsible for Communications – the person played an active role in conflict resolution and represented PANSAs management in negotiations with the Trade Union of Air Traffic Controllers.
- The communications expert who represented the Trade Union of Air Traffic Controllers – the expert played an active role in conflict resolution and developed and implemented a communication strategy during the conflict, including taking care of media messages.
- The traffic controller - long-time employee of the PANSAs – the person was an observer of the conflict, commented on its course and the negotiated solution and represented the employees affected by the negotiated solution.
- The Vice-President of IATA – the person represented the perspective of the airlines using PANSAs's services.

The last and most numerous stakeholder group analysed in this study were the passengers. The quantitative research explored their perspective. A survey was conducted using a tool designed by the research team. The field research with the use of a computer-assisted web interview (CAWI) was performed, using the Google Forms application. Air passengers, who used social media and the research team's network of contacts were invited to complete the questionnaire. The link to the questionnaire was active from mid-May to the beginning of December 2022. The research was conducted to investigate the passengers' perspective, so it was decided to use a minimum, but sufficient, sample size.

The survey consisted of a total of 20 questions, addressing the opinions of passengers in three areas:

- The legitimacy of organising protests and the role of trade unions in resolving conflicts with the employer.
- The nature and legitimacy of the air traffic controllers' protest.
- Assessment of air traffic controllers' wages.

Respondents rated statements on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 is "strongly disagree" and 5 is "strongly agree".

The sample analysed was N=207 passengers. The sample obtained was predominantly female (69%) and people with higher education (98%). More than three quarters (78%) of the respondents were employed, mostly in private enterprises (73%). Slightly more than a half of the sample (54%) was under 24 years of age. A detailed description of the sample of passengers is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Description of the sample of passengers

Characteristics	Category	Frequency
Gender	Female	69%
	Male	31%
Age	18-24 years	54%
	25-29 years	18%

	30-39 years	14%
	40-49 years	11%
	50 and more years	3%
Education	Higher (e.g. bachelor's degree, engineer, master's degree)	98%
	Secondary (e.g. secondary school, technical school, upper secondary school)	1%
	no data	1%
Professional status	Working	78%
	Running own business	4%
	Studying	17%
Sector	Private enterprise	73%
	Public sector (e.g. authority, school)	13%
	Foundations, associations, cooperatives and others	2%
	Not applicable	12%

Source: own development based on survey findings.

The characteristics of air transport passengers are very complex. In order to capture its cross-section in the sample, questions were asked about the characteristics of the air journeys made. These included: frequency and type of journeys, types of airlines used, and travel companionship. Respondents also answered whether they had been directly affected by the consequences of a conflict involving air traffic controllers, e.g. by delaying a flight.

Among the respondents, those who fly quite often, i.e. several times a year, were the most represented - they accounted for 49% of the sample obtained. They were followed by infrequent travellers (once a year) - 31% of the sample. Very infrequent and very frequent travellers accounted for 16% and 4% of the sample respectively.

The vast majority (83%) of respondents used airlines mainly for private purposes. Private and business travellers with similar frequency accounted for 11% and mainly business travellers for 7% of the sample obtained.

More than half (54%) of the respondents mainly used low-cost airlines and just over a quarter (26%) used low-cost and legacy airlines equally often. Legacy airlines were used by 15% of the respondents and charter flights were used by 6% of the respondents.

Travellers accompanied by family and friends accounted for the largest share (70%) of the sample obtained. Those flying sometimes alone and accompanied accounted for 20% and mainly alone 10% of the sample.

The majority of respondents (84%) had not been personally affected by a conflict involving air traffic controllers. Problems resulting from the conflict, e.g. flight delays, were experienced by 16% of respondents, of which for 11% the problem was a one-off.

Table 2: Characteristics of air travels

Characteristics	Category	Frequency
Frequency of air travel	Very rarely (less than once a year)	16%
	Rarely (once a year)	31%
	Quite often (several times a year)	49%
	Very often (several or several dozen times a year)	4%
Type of journey	Business trip	7%

	Business and private travel equally often	11%
	Private travel	83%
Type of airlines	Usually legacy airlines (e.g. LOT, Lufthansa)	15%
	Equally frequent both types (legacy and low-cost airlines)	26%
	Usually low-cost airlines (e.g. Ryanair, Wizzair)	54%
	Usually charter flights (transport organised by travel agencies)	6%
Travel company	Alone	10%
	Alone and with others	20%
	With others (e.g. family, friends)	70%
Being affected by air traffic controller conflict	Yes, more than once	5%
	Yes, once	11%
	No	84%

Source: own development based on survey findings.

Section III: Industrial Relations

There are over 600 air traffic controllers in Poland, divided into three groups. The first group takes care of a plane during the takeoff and guides it through the takeoff. Then controllers who take it to the cruising altitude take over. Finally, the so-called area controllers guide it to the other state or to a different region. The landing is also generally the same, i.e. the descent controller and the tower controller. There are over 200 area controllers, that is the group that contribute mostly to the PANSAs revenues.

There are specific requirements that are placed on air traffic controllers³:

- he/she is obliged to complete the training which is organized by PANSAs,
- he/she must have at minimum secondary education, completed maturity examination,
- good knowledge of English – minimum at the B2 level, as well as knowledge of Polish, which is required for foreigners,
- he/she should have good diction,
- generally good health - examination of category 3 of the aviation medicine,
- additionally, air controllers should have spatial imagination, decision-making skills, and should be focused on cooperation,
- he/she must be able to cope with stress because this job is very stress-inducing.

Air traffic controllers expect long-time job stability and permanent rules of their wages, and these requirements are no longer fulfilled. The person who was the acting president of PANSAs introduced a new salary regulations. „[...] *the key problem was that it was at his discretion how much who would earn.*”⁴ The sudden change in application of basic rules by the employer provoked protests of the controllers.

During the dispute, each of the interested parties participated in the discussion and, understandably, their attitudes and statements were considerably different.

The conflict started with arguments concerning the wages of the air traffic controllers. The key actors in the dispute quickly realized that such argumentation would not guarantee them public opinion

³ Zostań kontrolerem ruchu lotniczego!, <https://www.pansa.pl/kariera/kurs-na-krl/> (27.03.2023)

⁴ *The sky under control*, representant of Air Traffic Controllers Trade Union (ZZKRL)

support. They began to understand that public support would guarantee them an advantage in the dispute. Therefore, the flight controllers placed the main emphasis on the flight safety issues. Flight safety is important for all involved in the dispute, including passengers.

Negotiations of trade unionists from the Air Traffic Controllers Trade Union (ZZKRL) with the management of the PANSAs were carried out every day. The main target of these negotiations was to reach an agreement concerning the changes in the work rules and wage regulations.

In the conflict between air traffic controllers and PANSAs, the assessment is of the substance, the methods and the shape of the solution varies according to the perspective of the different stakeholders. In order to present a complete picture, it will be presented separately for each of them.

The PANSAs management's perspective

All communications of the Air Traffic Controllers Trade Union and PANSAs ended with the following conclusion: „*The negotiations have been conducted in a substantive way in an atmosphere of mutual respect*”. According to the plenipotentiary of the PANSAs President for communication, this is how the talks proceeded. The dispute started due to the personal conflicts that have plagued PANSAs for a long time, and due to the introduction of new employee wages regulations in the agency, which changed the rules that have been in force for 10 years. At that time, air traffic controllers associated in the Air Traffic Controllers Trade Union did not agree with the wages conditions proposed by the Agency, and more than 40 people filled notice of job termination or declaration that they would not accept the new working and pay conditions.

According to the plenipotentiary of the PANSAs president for communication, “*these negotiations were even, because on both sides of the table were people prepared to conduct the talks*”. “[...] *Both sides had to verify their original needs and requirements at some point in order to reach this agreement. Together we have been looking for chances to reach an agreement and consensus*⁵”.

Such an agreement has been reached and changes have been introduced. The new annex to the regulations limits the increase in allowances, changes the rules for remunerating controllers, but not only in Warsaw, but all over the country, and decreases disproportions in income levels between employees. The important thing is that the changes that have been made also concern issues strictly related to the flight safety. Work was also carried out on a code of ethics and social issues. As a result, according to the new regulations, there will be no discretion and the salary structure will be based on the competences, experience and level of qualifications of controllers.

The Air Traffic Controllers' Trade Unions' perspective

The situation of the dispute and the ongoing talks was presented in a different way by the representative of the Air Traffic Controllers Trade Union during the conflict. She judged this situation as „*very, very unpleasant*”. She described the savings introduced by the new president as the main reason behind the conflict. The president punished people for behaviors desirable in this job, that is behaviors affecting safety. The atmosphere began to get worse and worse, and this ended in a crisis. „*There is a shortage of air traffic controllers all around the world, particularly in Europe, so we had a kind of a solution, that is if the negotiations failed, if the authorities ignored us, we would have a*

⁵ *The sky under control*, Representative of the President of the Polish Air Navigation Services Agency (PAŻP)

chance and an opportunity to find employment for 200 controllers [...]. Unfortunately, the president reported to his political superiors that he would be able to cope with this situation, but he failed. It happened actually that we also tried to reach the Minister. Some letters have been sent. There were attempts to arrange a meeting. These letters describing the situation were also sent to the Prime Minister [...]. However, the reaction was as usual. [...] the authorities at the first moment, as with all other social groups, decided, in inverted comas, to run over, that is, they began to frighten us⁶". Despite such difficult beginning, the controllers did not give up. „In the meantime [...] an inspection of the Supreme Audit Office has been completed which exactly confirmed all the accusations that we have formulated⁷". The employees displayed a lot of good will. „The new president received a week-long welcome gift from the trade union. That means, people who were running out of their notice extended it by a week to avoid any delays. [...] That week passed by, and unfortunately the president did not manage to organize a meeting. She failed to start negotiations. Accordingly, we came to a dead end. At this time the opposition joined us. We are very grateful to Mr. Lasek and Mr. Joński (editor's note: Opposition MPs) for their assistance, for assembling the Parliament committee⁸". In view of the unfair attitude of the Ministry and the Government, the trade unions broke off the negotiations. However, they were restarted and a consensus was reached in the second round of negotiations. „In this case it was both change in negotiations, as well as a modification in work regulations and salary regulations. Additionally, of course, there were also safety related demands, and there were also social demands⁹".

Safety was discussed in two meanings: passenger safety and occupational safety, that also involved the belief in job security.

Air traffic controller's perspective

An interesting voice in the discussion was provided by a former flight controller. He evaluated the agreement as a failure of the government and an immense success of the Air Traffic Controllers Trade Union. „As a result of the talks (...) it turned out that the Polish sky was ruled not by the Polish state but by the Air Traffic Controllers Trade Union. A certain group of people (...) PANSAs is financed from the money of flight carriers, and the carriers are financed by the passengers who purchase tickets. That is 98-99% of income of PANSAs, consequently this agreement would mean an additional tool for passengers.¹⁰" Passengers of airlines are going to finance the increase of wages. The disparities between the different employees of the agency will broaden. The differences between the wages of technical, IT and HR specialists will differ significantly from those of the air traffic controllers. There will be disproportions between air traffic controllers employed in Warsaw and those at other local airports. In some cases, salaries will differ by two or three times. That means that „not everyone would be glad (...) all trade unions, with the exception of one, did not comment on the agreement or were against of it. The controllers' unions from the country also objected. The opposition of these organizations shows that there is dissatisfaction in the region with the proposed conditions.¹¹"

⁶ *The sky under control*, representative of Air Traffic Controllers Trade Union (ZZKRL)

⁷ *The sky under control*, representative of Air Traffic Controllers Trade Union (ZZKRL)

⁸ *The sky under control*, representative of Air Traffic Controllers Trade Union (ZZKRL)

⁹ *The sky under control*, representative of Air Traffic Controllers Trade Union (ZZKRL)

¹⁰ *The sky under control*, the former air traffic controller.

¹¹ *The sky under control*, the former air traffic controller.

Airlines' perspective

The negotiations did not resolve few issues:

- Is the Polish Air Navigation Services Agency able to afford these regulations?
- Will the Agency be able to finance the controller's wages in the upcoming years, which will continue to grow, as it has been guaranteed?
- Will other groups of aviation-related workers object to the working conditions and wages?

The narrative in the dispute between the air traffic controllers and the authorities has been shifted from money to safety. This change turned out to be extremely beneficial because the dominant narrative greatly affects the outcome or even the success of the negotiations. Therefore, when approaching the dispute, it is necessary to identify a socially important aspect and support the main argumentation on it. Well-chosen and socially important arguments determine who wins the dispute.

The passengers' perspective

The research shows that the surveyed passengers had a relatively positive assessment of the legitimacy of organising protests and the role of trade unions in negotiations with employers. This statement is supported by the fact that in all analysed statements in this respect, positive evaluations exceeded negative evaluations, and in the opposite statement, about the predominance of individual negotiations, negative evaluations exceeded positive ones (Table 3).

Half (52%) of respondents felt that protest was the right way to put pressure on employers in conflict situations. Nearly half (47%) agreed with the statement that protests with consequences for customers were an acceptable form of negotiation. A similar percentage (48%) noticed a positive impact of trade unions on working conditions. The most positive response (as much as 80%) was the statement regarding the greater effectiveness of negotiating terms and conditions of employment when workers unite and designate their representation. Only 19% of the respondents were of the opposite opinion, i.e. convinced that the negotiation of terms and conditions of employment is more effective when each employee negotiates his/her terms and conditions individually.

Table 3: The legitimacy of organising protests and the role of trade unions in resolving conflicts with the employer.

Statement	Definitely disagree	Rather disagree	Difficult to say	Rather agree	Definitely agree	Negative rating	Positive rating
I believe that a protest/ strike is an appropriate way to put pressure on employers in case of conflict with workers.	5%	12%	31%	33%	19%	16%	52%
A protest by workers, with customers affected, is an acceptable form of negotiating working conditions.	14%	20%	19%	30%	17%	34%	47%
I believe that workers owe unions better working conditions.	3%	12%	37%	31%	17%	15%	48%
I believe that the negotiation of terms and conditions of employment is more effective when workers unite and designate their representation.	0%	7%	13%	39%	41%	7%	80%

I believe that the negotiation of terms and conditions of employment is more effective when each worker individually negotiates their working condition	21%	35%	25%	13%	6%	57%	19%
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Source: own development based on survey findings.

Another group of statements concerned the conflict between air traffic controllers and the PANSAs (Table 4). Based on the survey results, it can be concluded that the majority of travellers were aware of the conflict involving air traffic controllers. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents confirmed knowledge of its nature. This knowledge reached the majority without their active action. Only 18% of travellers admitted to following the conflict. The majority (61%) feared that the consequences of the conflict could affect them personally. Despite this, as many as 60% supported the demands of air traffic controllers. Nearly 90% of respondents confirmed the belief that the conflict was a manifestation of the employer's inadequate response to the needs of air traffic controllers. Almost half (48%) of the respondents believed that a protest by controllers was an appropriate method of negotiation with the employer. At the same time, more than half (51%) believed controllers should negotiate their terms of employment in such a way as not to disrupt air traffic. Only slightly more than one in five respondents (22%) supported banning controllers from protesting affecting travellers.

Respondents were unclear about the main purpose of air traffic controllers' protests. Nearly 40% confirmed that the essence of the dispute was mainly flight safety. The opposite opinion was expressed by 27% of the respondents, and as many as 34% had no opinion on the issue.

Table 4: The nature and legitimacy of the air traffic controllers' protest.

Statement	Definitely disagree	Rather disagree	Difficult to say	Rather agree	Definitely agree	Negative rating	Positive rating
I know what is at the heart of the conflict between air traffic controllers and their employer.	7%	13%	17%	36%	27%	20%	63%
I am following the conflict between air traffic controllers and their employer.	34%	27%	21%	6%	12%	61%	18%
I am afraid that the consequences of the conflict concerning air traffic controllers will affect me personally.	7%	16%	15%	33%	28%	24%	61%
I support the demands of the air traffic controllers.	3%	7%	30%	33%	27%	10%	60%
I believe that the conflict shows that the employer is insufficiently responsive to the needs of the air traffic controllers.	1%	2%	8%	38%	51%	3%	88%
In my opinion, a protest by air traffic controllers is a good method in negotiating with the employer.	5%	19%	28%	32%	15%	25%	48%
Air traffic controllers should negotiate working conditions in such a way that air traffic is not disrupted.	9%	15%	25%	28%	23%	25%	51%
I believe that air traffic controllers should NOT have the right to protest affecting air travellers.	34%	31%	14%	14%	7%	65%	22%
Air traffic controllers are mainly fighting for the safety of flights.	4%	23%	34%	29%	11%	27%	39%

Source: own development based on survey findings.

The last area surveyed concerned passengers' assessment of air traffic controllers' wages (Table 5). The results confirm respondents' lack of certainty about the substance of the dispute. The belief that controllers were mainly fighting for higher pay was expressed by less than half of the respondents (46%), nearly one in three (30%) were of the opposite opinion, and as many as 24% of respondents had no opinion on the issue. The majority (52%) of respondents supported the disclosure of air traffic controllers' salaries. Respondents found it difficult to assess the amount of wages received by controllers. Nearly half (47%) of respondents could not say whether controllers' salaries were adequate for the work they do. A similar percentage (50%) was unable to say whether they were too low. At the same time, as many as 60% of respondents denied the statement that they are too high. Nearly three quarters (74%) of respondents were against reducing controllers' salaries in response to the employer's difficult financial situation.

Table 5: Assessment of air traffic controllers' wages.

Statement	Definitely disagree	Rather disagree	Difficult to say	Rather agree	Definitely agree	Negative rating	Positive rating
In my opinion, air traffic controllers are primarily fighting for higher pay.	6%	25%	24%	34%	12%	30%	46%
Information about air traffic controllers' salaries should be public.	5%	12%	31%	28%	24%	17%	52%
I believe that air traffic controllers' salaries are appropriate to the work they do (scope of tasks, skills).	7%	20%	47%	14%	12%	27%	26%
I believe that air traffic controllers' salaries are TOO LOW for the work they do (scope of tasks, skills).	7%	12%	50%	23%	9%	18%	31%
I believe that air traffic controllers' salaries are TOO HIGH for the work they do (scope of tasks, skills).	29%	32%	34%	3%	2%	60%	5%
I support the reduction of air traffic controllers' salaries as a response to the difficult financial situation of their employer.	37%	37%	18%	5%	3%	74%	8%

Source: own development based on survey findings.

Conclusion (between 2-3 pages)

Polish industrial relations are characterised by low levels of unionisation and the treatment of trade unions as a 'necessary evil'. In Poland collective bargaining plays a marginal role. The pandemic exacerbated these tendencies by reducing the influence of trade unions on employers' decisions.

A key role in Poland is played by the three large trade unions, which bring together the majority of unions' members. Their members are mainly older workers. Our research shows that low unionisation in Poland is not the result of individualistic attitudes among workers. Young working Poles appreciate both the effectiveness of collective bargaining and the achievements of trade unions. This may imply that the reasons for low unionisation should be sought around the specificity of activities undertaken by nationwide trade unions.

The belief in the effectiveness of collective bargaining opens opportunities for alternative trade unions to the large nationwide ones. An example of effective unions whose actions were focused on the interests of their members were the Air Traffic Controllers' Trade Unions. By involving a wide range of stakeholders in the conflict between the controllers and the employer, they managed to convince

passengers of their own narrative and at the same time demonstrate and publicise the legitimacy of the creation of trade unions representing a specific professional group.

Polish industrial relations are characterised by the strong position of the state, accustomed to imposing its solutions. This mechanism was used in the attempt to impose on air traffic controllers less favourable employment conditions, introduced during the pandemic. Initially, negotiations with controllers were conducted from a position of power. As a result of the effective actions of the trade unions, PANSAs had to change its approach. The needs of the controllers were listened to and taken into account in the final agreement.

Key to the trade unions' efforts in the dispute with PANSAs was adequate communication with passengers through the media. The results of our research indicated its effectiveness. Passengers were aware of the conflict, despite not actively gaining knowledge about it. They supported the protesters, despite the fact that they would have preferred a protest with no impact on travellers. With the right narrative present in the media throughout the conflict, the Air Traffic Controllers' Trade Union successfully expanded the perception of the conflict's essence to include concern for passenger safety. The survey indicates a lack of clarity on the substance of the conflict. On one hand 39% of travellers were convinced that the main substance of the dispute was safety issues. On the other hand higher pay was pointed by 46% of respondents as the main focus of the protests.

One of the consequences of the lack of collective agreements in Poland is the individualisation of wage negotiations. The role of the state is limited to setting the level of the minimum wage. According to Polish case law, employers are free to set wages, provided they are at least at the minimum level. Under such conditions, it is in the employer's interest to keep wages secret. This allows them to differentiate the wage levels of employees performing work of similar value. The consequence of keeping salary levels secret is that employers are forbidding employees talking about the salaries they receive. As a result, Polish employees are unable to talk about salaries and assess their adequacy to the work they do. This is confirmed by our research. They point to considerable challenges in having public discussions about wage levels. Respondents supported the openness of air traffic controllers' wages. During the conflict, information about wage levels was present in the media. Despite this, respondents were unable to assess whether the salaries received by controllers were adequate for the work they were doing. They were also unable to assess whether they were too high. At the same time the vast majority expressed the belief that they are certainly not too low and should not be reduced in response to PANSAs' financial difficulties.

Case-study evaluation

Please, evaluate your case study by using the following indicators and give a brief explanation of your evaluation.

Criteria	Evaluation on a scale of 1-5 (1=minimum, 5=max)	1	2	3	4	5
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Innovation	<p>The case study is an example of the effective use of passenger support in negotiations with an employer. Air traffic controllers, by rejecting a change in their terms and conditions of employment, threatened a shortage of staff in air traffic towers, which would have jeopardised the smooth flow of air traffic during peak periods. Passengers should implicitly oppose such a situation. Thanks to the unions' active shaping of the media narrative, passengers were convinced that the dispute was not only focused on wages, but also on safety. As a result, they supported the controllers' protests.</p> <p>Explanation: to what degree does the topic/subject analysed in the case study deviate from existing practices and legal frameworks? Why the case study is innovative?</p>					

Criteria	Evaluation on a scale of 1-5 (1=minimum, 5=max)	1	2	3	4	5
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Transferability	<p>The way (changing the narrative and gaining the support of passengers) trade unions operated in the negotiation process can be successfully used in other countries and along the value chain. A challenge to the use of media narrative framing of the conflict is the need to ensure media access, which requires adequate competences in trade unions or acquired from experts.</p> <p>Explanation: to what degree can the results/lessons learnt in the case-study be transferred along the air transport value chain? other sectors? other countries?</p>					

Criteria	Evaluation on a scale of 1-5 (1=minimum, 5=max)	1	2	3	4	5
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inclusiveness	<p>The essence of resolving the described conflict between air traffic controllers and their employer was to make the public intrigued by the conflict and to moderate the narrative favourable to gaining their support. It can therefore be concluded that the inclusion of public actors was crucial in the case described. On the other hand, the public played the specific role in which it was cast. Their participation was not spontaneous and was not directed towards ensuring the realisation of their interests.</p> <p>Explanation: to what degree does the topic/subject analysed in the case-study see the involvement of partners and public actors?</p>					

Criteria	Evaluation on a scale of 1-5 (1=minimum, 5=max)	1	2	3	4	5
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p>Covid-19 causality</p>	<p>The conflict between air traffic controllers and their employer was a direct result of the pandemic, during which wages were cut and staffing in air traffic control towers reduced. The employer sought to make permanent the conditions of employment in force during the pandemic. The specifics of how the conflict was resolved, particularly in terms of using passenger support and changing the narrative, are not directly related to Covid-19 and can be used in the post-pandemic era.</p> <p>Explanation: to what degree is the topic/subject analysed in the case-study directly related to the Covid-19 outbreak?</p>
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