



Press Release

Game Workers Unite International and the Solidaire Informatique union are joining forces in condemning the firing of 134 French Blizzard Entertainment SAS employees and are calling for affected workers and potential whistleblowers to come forward.

Out of almost 800 workers laid off by Activision Blizzard worldwide, 134 or one third of the subsidiary's workforce, were in France. The local industrial unions have good grounds for suspecting a breach of labour law surrounding these layoffs and are preparing to challenge them in an Employment Tribunal.

Activision Blizzard King is combined of companies which develop and edit successful video games like the Call of Duty Franchise, World of Warcraft, Diablo, Overwatch and Candy Crush. The group, traded in NASDAQ (ATVI), is the first video game publisher with a workforce of about 10,000 employees around the globe and with an operational revenue of \$7.5 billion U.S. dollars and net profit of \$1.8 billion.

After 15 years of healthy growth, the value of the Activision Blizzard King stock decreased towards the end of 2018 following the announcement of the departure of Blizzard CEO Mike Morhaime. Another reason that could be attributed to the stock price fall may be the vocal discontent by the community of players over the reveal of a mobile game based on the Diablo franchise.

Around this time, a layoff of 800 workers globally was announced and Game Workers Unite began the #FireBobbyKotick campaign. In France, the layoffs came in the form of the restructuring plan called "Plan de sauvegarde de l'emploi", which allows company layoffs for 'economic' reasons. This in turn has artificially raised the stock price once more.

It is now also public that some of the job positions removed in France, including Customer Services for instance, will be reopened in the Irish office, a move failing to signal a decrease in activity. So which one is it - are the layoffs really necessary in economic terms, or is it outsourcing, plain and simple?

No, according to French labour laws, companies are not allowed to fire employees simply to satisfy shareholders and without ensuring that people will be able to find a new work in the best possible conditions. No, according to French labour laws, a company cannot layoff employees without substantial severance pay, citing economic reasons and record profits at the same time.

Solidaires Informatique and Game Workers Unite International along with Force Ouvrière (another French Union) refuse to accept these layoffs are justified and will support any worker wishing to challenge this in French Labour Court, Tribunal or by any other means. If you have one of the workers affected or if you have any insider information, please contact sud.solidaires.blizzard@gmail.com, anonymity guaranteed.



Solidaires Informatique:
<https://solidairesinformatique.org/>

Game Workers Unite:
<https://www.gameworkersunite.org/>

Signatories

Sud Solidaires Informatique

Solidaires Informatique (Solidaires means united or connected – Informatique is French for computer science) is a union created in 2011 as a child of the union federation "SUD – Union syndicale Solidaires" (Unionized federation Solidaires) dedicated to workers from the software industry, including the videogame industry. Solidaires Informatique proposes to develop a democratic but combative way of unionisation in an industry that is traditionally scattered and poorly unionised. It gathers hundreds of members in order to defend individual and collective interests in this professional sector.

Solidaires Informatique unionize isolated workers, subcontractors in the data processing industry, and related fields. It is present in numerous French companies including Blizzard Entertainment.

Solidaires Informatique helps with the organisation and the unity of workers when they decide to act for their rights. The union respects the pluralism between all unions and works toward the development of the combining of alike unions, in the best interest of the workers. It is as such that Solidaires Informatique reached to Game Workers Unite and decided to share its resources with the international organisation.

Game Workers Unite

Game Workers Unite is a broad-reaching organization that seeks to connect pro-union activists, exploited workers, and allies across disciplines, classes, and countries in the name of building a unionised game industry.

To this avail, Game Workers Unite builds its movement through local grassroots organising because it understands that worker power comes from the bottom up, no one can speak for workers better than themselves, and every studio, community, region, and country is different and must be organised from within its own unique circumstances. To this end Game Workers Unite founds local chapters, aid community building, develop and provide organiser training, work with existing labor unions and organisations, and share resources on an international level.

In France, Game Workers Unite recognises two unions as sister organisations, the STJV and Sud Solidaires Informatique.



How does a "Plan de Sauvegarde de l'Emploi" work? Overview of the French Economic Redundancy Plan laws

The dismissal for economic reasons in France has to be done through a PSE which goal is to ensure that as many impacted employees as possible have a job at the end of the plan if they are dismissed. This plan is organised around measures guaranteeing:

- The best possible protection for the most fragile population. People cannot be randomly selected for dismissals, but will be let go after ranking every employees towards a set of criterias. Number of children, isolated parents, age, tenure in the company... are situations that can make finding a new job very difficult, and the most vulnerable people are shielded this way from the worst outcomes.

- A mandatory outplacement process conducted by a third party provider, to help workers assessing their skills and their opportunities for career changes, as well as help and advise regarding resumés, cover letters, job interview techniques... The provider will also have to provide several job offers for the impacted employees within the few next months following their dismissal.

- Monetary indemnities
- Financial support for business creation
- Training courses for career changes; the company has to pay the monthly wages of the employee during this period of time as well as the courses themselves.

All those measures have to be adjusted to the financial capabilities of the group.

The plan can be negotiated by trade union representatives of the company, and it can be only rolled out after validation from one of the French state service, the DIRECCTE.

Unions Role

The unions have a major role in a PSE: indeed, if the company manages to reach an agreement with the majority of the unions present in the company, the plan's verification by the DIRECCTE is quite minimal and superficial; the principle of this check is that the content of the plan which has been agreed upon is considered as sufficient by the people in the company to allow dismissals in decent conditions, and an easy return to employment.

If the management isn't looking for such an agreement, or if it doesn't reach an agreement with the unions, then the PSE is sent to the DIRECCTE as an "unilateral case file", and the French State will check the complete process, all remarks and information exposed by the unions and the employee representatives, the content of the plan, the matching of social and financial measures both with the employees' needs and the economic means at the disposal of the international group.

Because of such a careful investigation, it is in the best interest of the company to reach an agreement with the unions.

Employee Representatives Role

Employee Representatives in France are employees elected every 4 years to represent their colleagues and be the voice of the workers towards the management. Their primary role is to give their opinion on the strategic orientation of the company, raise awareness on the possible drawbacks of a reorganisation, investigate and alert on potential health and safety issues in the workplace, as well as help and advice employees under disciplinary actions, acting like lawyers for them during meetings if desired. They do not need to be unionised, but have to have a union endorsing them before elections.

Whether the unions obtain an agreement or not, the employee representatives are consulted about the content of the plan, and then try to highlight the facts behind this plan: Are the elements brought to demonstrate the economic difficulties valid? Does the proposed restructuring make sense and will it allow the company to still function correctly? Did the management take into account the specific needs of the workers and not generic measures that does not fit the sociology of the current workforce? Did the management plan the consequences of the PSE on the psychological and physical well being of the employees, in particular the ones who will stay? Did it assess the workload increase? Do the social measures reasonably allow employees to find another job? Will the financial measures compensate fairly the prejudice of losing a job and will be adjusted with the financial means of the group?

The opinion given by the employee's representatives will allow the DIRECCTE to have the contextual elements needed for its own reading of the document, should there be a disagreement. All propositions regarding the health of the employees that the management will bring to those meetings will be binding for the company, making this analysis of the psychological risks critical.

If the DIRECCTE probates the unilateral plan against the employee representatives' best judgement, they also have the opportunity to ask for an appeal from the administrative court.

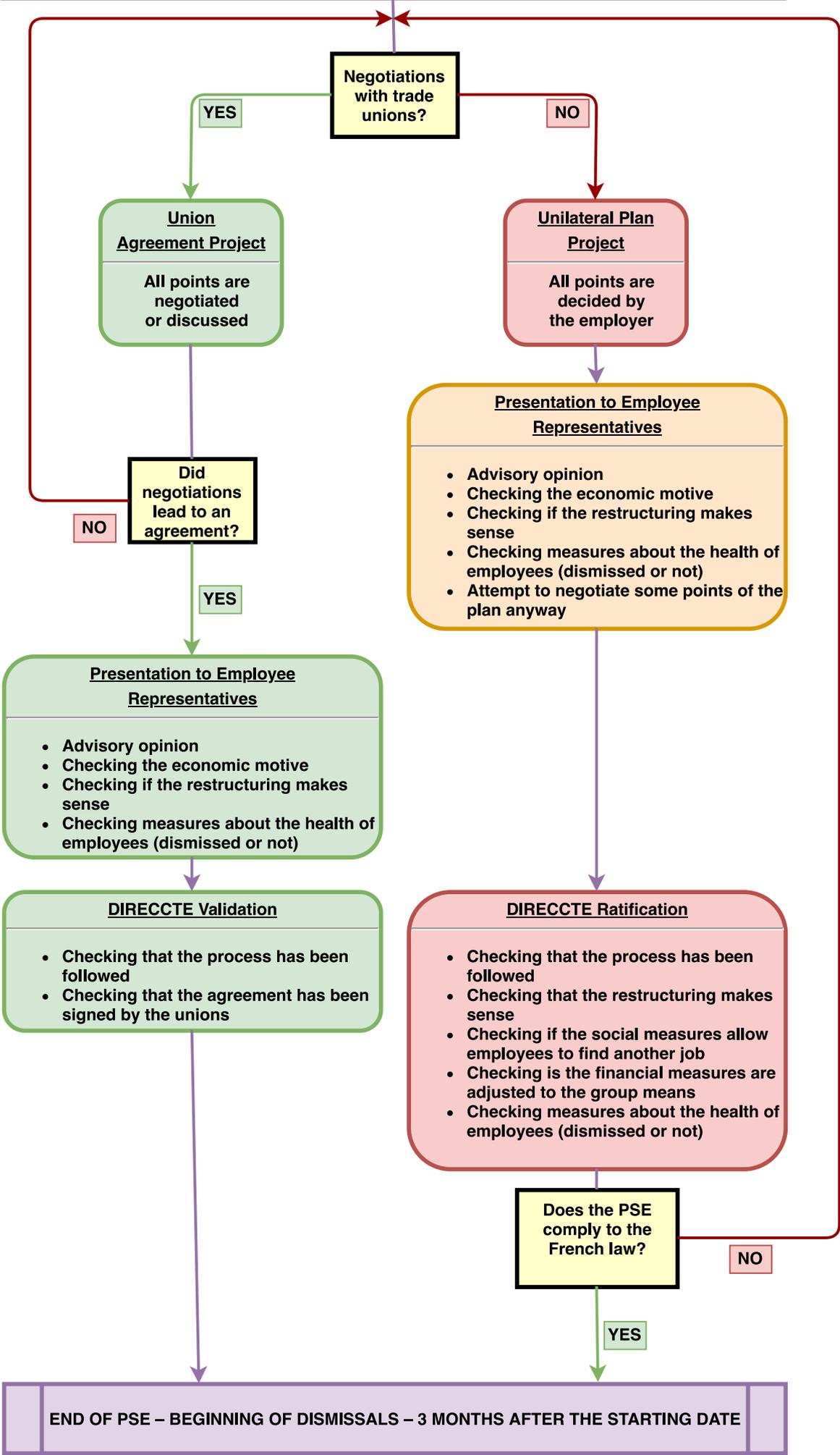
A simplified diagram is present in the next page to understand the whereabouts of a PSE.

Game Workers: Unite!

Solidaires Informatique and Game Workers Unite International hope that even if Blizzard Entertainment is making this process difficult for its employees in France, this insight about how a reduction in force is dealt with here will inspire people around the globe, and encourage them to unionize.

Even if it is currently under attacks from opportunistic politicians, the French labour code still holds, the result of a constant and tireless fight from Unions for the last 150 years. We can achieve a lot together!

START OF A PSE



END OF PSE – BEGINNING OF DISMISSALS – 3 MONTHS AFTER THE STARTING DATE