



UK plans to repeal law allowing agency staff to cover for striking workers

International Employment Lawyer

Constructive engagement the only solution

The government's proposed changes will be welcomed by some employers as it will provide greater freedom to try to ensure business continuity in the face of industrial action, said Raoul Parekh, a partner at GQ|Littler. "In particular, the historical potential criminal liability for companies and their directors in this area always felt at odds with the general direction of industrial relations law."

However, Parekh cautioned that, as the main industrial relations challenges at present relate to skilled public-sector labour, "it will never be possible to solve a tube or a train strike with agency workers because of the numbers of specialist staff required".

"The timing of the government's changes – on the eve of potentially disruptive transport strike action – suggests that they are trying to be seen to be doing something rather than doing what needs to be done."

Parekh added: "Ultimately, industrial relations issues will not be solved by strikes or by attempted strikebreaking via agency workers or otherwise, but only by constructive engagement between employers, unions, and employees. This change does not make that engagement any easier or more likely."

A majority of UK adults (58%) said that this week's rail strikes are justified, according to new polling from Savanta ComRes. The poll also found that six-in-ten Brits are generally supportive of the principle of industrial action. Seven-in-ten respondents believe the RMT strike makes other industrial action more likely this summer.

Today, hundreds of British Airways workers at Heathrow Airport have voted to strike in a dispute over pay. A total of 700 workers employed were balloted on industrial action by unions including GMB and Unite and around half said they were prepared to strike. Strike dates are set to be confirmed in the coming days but are likely to take place during the summer holidays.

Read the full article [here](#).