



The Union for University Teachers and Researchers in Finland (YLL)

**Letter from the Chair 1/2018**

13 March 2018

**Dear YLL member,**

This letter includes information on the completed negotiation process and voting in the OAJ's council elections that will take place 14–27 March 2018.

### **The negotiation process**

The negotiations were exceptionally long and challenging. The negotiations were prolonged due to the employer's requirement for salary system renewal according to the manner dictated by them. The employer wanted to have a considerably freer hand in determining the personal salary element, which would have meant an opportunity to drive salaries below the current salary level. Furthermore, the level of the offered salary increases was clearly below the general level. The third problem was a direct result of the first: for several months, the employer refused to discuss any issue other than the salary system, which meant the negotiations did not progress.

The outcome we now have would not have been achieved without the remarkably strong support of our members. The wave of strikes led the way: the strike at the University of Helsinki on 28 February, which would have been followed by strikes in all universities. Members were extremely well prepared for this. The expressions of support from other universities received by the University of Helsinki created a strong sense of solidarity between university employees. YLL members participated actively in organizing these demonstrations. The university employees formed a unified front against the employer's tough negotiation stance and this unified front is certain to hold also in future negotiations.

The general opinion found in different media also favored the employees. Social media, even the intranets of the universities, were filled with expressions of support for our negotiators. The measures of support taken by organizations were also exceptionally strong this time.

After JUKO issued the strike notice, the negotiations were transferred to the office of the conciliator. The first settlement proposal was made on 27 February. All employee organizations accepted it, although the proposal did not include anything especially favorable for employees; however, the more negative proposals of the employer were avoided. To everyone's surprise, the employer organization rejected the proposal. In their opinion, it did not offer a sufficient obligation to renew the salary system as dictated by the employer. The second settlement proposal was made on 5 March, and it was significantly more favorable for employees than the first proposal. In my view, the employer organization felt that it was not possible to reject this proposal, especially due to growing public pressure and the approach of supporting secondary strike action. The employee organizations were extremely pleased with reaching an



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agreement and pleased with its contents. For example, changes related to the salary system, which can even be interpreted as improvements, were achieved.

University Ombudsman Hanna Tanskanen from OAJ participated in the negotiations. OAJ's Organization and Communications department worked practically round the clock towards the end of the negotiations. We are extremely grateful to them and to our negotiation organization JUKO and its communications for this excellent outcome. It seems that member communications worked well and they were sufficiently informative. Furthermore, Olli Luukkainen, Chair of JUKO and OAJ, personally fought an intensive battle on the organizations' front line.

### **What changed and what will this agreement offer university employees?**

The new collective agreement is valid retroactively from 1 February 2018 to 31 March 2020. During the validity of the agreement it is not possible to target a strike against the new collective agreement. Agreed salary increases are:

A general raise for everyone:

- 1 April 2018 1.0%
- 1 April 2019 1.1%

For the salary system renewal and raises in personal performance:

- 1 January 2019 local installment 0.5% (0.3% of this will not be paid if the salary system's further development is not progressing in the working group)
- 1 June 2019 local installment 0.85%

The other contents of the agreement have been comprehensively communicated and, therefore, we present here only the most significant changes.

It is no longer necessary to conduct evaluations of personal performance related to the salary system every two years for all employees. They will be conducted as follows:

- In universities, supervisors conduct performance evaluations annually.
- The employee may request a re-evaluation of the personal performance two years after the previous evaluation.
- In any case, an evaluation discussion will be conducted with the employee five years after the previous evaluation discussion.



The Union for University Teachers and Researchers in Finland (YLL)

Other issues:

- A task is regarded as a changed task related to the requirement level if the task has gradually developed into a more demanding one. This applies, for example, to teaching tasks in which no actual new elements have been introduced, but the task itself has become more demanding due to the employee's growing competence.
- When the requirement level has changed, the salary is paid starting from the beginning of the next month according to the supervisor's written proposal—previously only after the evaluation group's decision.
- The employee can request an evaluation of the personal performance at the beginning of their employment, when starting in a new task or if the requirement level has changed, after six months.

The above changes will enter into force on 1 January 2019.

Furthermore, the working group including the parties will continue to develop the personal salary element on the following bases (if not realized, 0.3% of the salary increases will be withheld as described above):

- There will be 4–5 performance categories (currently 9)
- The lowest performance percentage of the current system will be increased to somewhere between 4–10% (currently 0%).

The compensation for shop stewards and occupational safety representatives will be increased by 3.45% as of 1 April 2018, and the compensation for shop stewards who represent more than 560 employees was revised upwards.

The employer was not able to realize its long-term objective of eliminating the maximum number of contact teaching hours. Taking into account the diversity of education (e.g. online teaching) to a greater extent, which was part of the negotiations, was moved to the working group for further preparation, but it is under preparation. For example, searching for measures to reduce the use of fixed-term contracts was also moved to working groups.

Adjustments related to other personnel's flexible working time were made. Furthermore, the parties recommend that, for example, the use of flexible working time arrangements should be promoted and the employee may be absent from work by self-reporting for a maximum of five days (currently three).



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**Voting in the OAJ's council elections for YLL members takes place 14–27 March 2018**

YLL has three actual members and three deputy members in the OAJ's council of 150 representatives. I encourage all members to use their vote in the electronic elections. High voter turnout gives the representative with an YLL background a strong mandate to use their vote on behalf of university employees.

Best regards,

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Chair  
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