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December 20th 2018

COMMENT: As red hits the green *

The eruption of yellow-vest (gilets jaunes) protesters in France during the last few weeks perhaps came across to most people as something of a surprise. However, it was just a threat waiting to happen and now the genie is “out of the bottle”, it is sure to have lasting reverberations around the planet and have serious and lasting knock-on implications for employee relations.

What is seemingly new about this development is that it is a largely leaderless movement. It is therefore difficult for the authorities to know who to deal with, or for the police and intelligence services to know where to infiltrate. It is an organisation born from the womb of social media – just as in 2011, the Arab Spring was born from a popular uprising against Middle-East dictatorships communicated via Facebook, Twitter, and even mass emailing. However, this time things have changed. For one thing, Facebook has helped its emergence by changing its algorithms to emphasize local news and links to friends and family. Localized and close personal events now loom larger for a generation that spends much of its spare time scrolling with their smart phones. Yet, although the message is local, it does not prevent wider overlapping networks from spreading messages quickly at a global level. Indeed, as they appear more localized and personal, such messages

– however fake or inflated – seem more powerful and credible.

Another characteristic of this movement is that although it started with a cause – rising fuel costs – it quickly diversified into being purely anti-establishment. Everyone with a grievance, personal agenda, or just a need for excitement and rebellion in their lives suddenly had an outlet for their ire or simply a relief from their malaise. There was no longer a shared focus for outrage, just a socialised conspiracy of anger or simply an excuse for wanton destruction.

What is special about France, and possibly the reason that this phenomenon emerged there, is that the country is run by a particularly distant, and yet easily identifiable, elite of people who all went to the same schools and universities and mix in their tight inner circles, where bureaucracy acts as a shield of indifference to the rest of the population. It is also a country where taxes and regulations stultify enterprise to such an extent that France’s many entrepreneurs choose to expand their operations abroad rather than at home. France, moreover, has a strong cultural orientation towards the individual, which makes the French very difficult to govern.

And the future scope for social negativity is infinite. This is especially as governments continue to pump an increasing amount of

investment into education, yet preside over an economy giving less and less opportunities for all but those with the greatest talent to thrive.

Labour-displacing technologies are only going to make things worse, especially for men – and not just in France. Already in the USA, the employment participation of men aged 21–60 has fallen over the last two decades from 96% to 85% and is now declining faster than ever. It is not only the “red necks” that got Trump into office or xenophobic “Little Englanders” that voted for Brexit, but a broader community of displaced people who are rapidly emerging into a powerful underclass. This can already be seen too in the trades union movement where France has the lowest level of unionisation in Europe, but whose unions – especially the CGT and FO – make up for shortage in members by using extreme militancy. The fact that they can survive with such low affiliation is also because employers – especially in the public sector – give them time off and other quasi-financial assistance, and because they have a huge, passive support network in the rest of the population.

So, as the impetus of “gilets jaunes” spreads to other countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands, what is the message for employers? To begin with, this is not just a time of inconvenience because employees are delayed coming to work due to road blocks and picket lines. It is a development that could even overwhelm organised labour. Companies can certainly no longer afford to live with their ever-persistent levels of poor employee engagement. Employees need to be persuaded to become involved, not only in the firm, but also the firm more heavily

involved in major issues of the day. Macron ironically lost control when he was espousing the cause of climate change, but all the people could see was higher fuel prices. Global warming is an issue that can engage employees, but only if it is dressed up in more colourful and less bourgeois clothing. The environment seems to be something for “sad types” or the rich alone to espouse, not an essential quest for planetary survival. Governments and employers must also address poverty, extreme wealth inequality and the ennui that goes with it. The “welfare state” is not alone the solution, but what we need now are new ideas about cultivating respect and the feeling of significance across and between all groups in modern societies.

President Macron has been trying to punish protestors with mass arrests whilst, at the same time, appeasing his more moderate opponents with tax breaks, fuel price freezes and a hike in the minimum wage. But this is all ultimately beside the point. What we all face is a seismic break with the past that just happens to have begun in France. Things may go quiet now for weeks or even months, but the global fault line has moved dramatically. So we must try to find a way ahead when all the maps we now have are wrong.

AFRICA AND MIDDLE EAST

JORDAN/TURKEY: The Jordanian government has suspended the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Turkey over unfair competition. The FTA was signed in 2011, but became void in November 2018. Jordan claimed that the deal harmed the nation’s industries by tipping the balance of trade in favour of Turkish firms. According to Jordan’s Department of Statistics, in 2017, Jordan’s

exports to Turkey reached JD65.8 million, whilst imports from the partner country amounted in value to JD484 million.

JORDAN: Last year we reported that slow progress was being made with plans to reform Jordan's income tax law. The two houses of parliament recently endorsed the 2018 amendments. The new law, which will come into effect next year, has set the threshold for taxable income at an annual JD20,000 (US\$28,208) for families (with JD2,000 (US\$2,820) exemptions on VAT medical and education receipts and loans) and at JD10,000 (US\$14,104) for individuals.

NIGERIA: The 12th of June each year has now been called "democracy day" and from next year will be a new Nigerian public holiday. In addition, the 29th of May will be celebrated every fourth year to mark the inauguration of a new president.

SOUTH AFRICA: The National Minimum Wage (NMW) Bill, which President Cyril Ramaphosa signed into law late last month, will officially take effect from the 1st of January 2019.

TURKEY: US-led trade sanctions are having a significant effect on the economy. Even the politically massaged figures from the Turkish Statistical Institute indicate that over the year to Q3 2018, the calendar-adjusted hours-worked index in the industrial, construction, and trade services sectors decreased by 2.0%, 10.0%, and 3.5% respectively.

UAE: The UAE government has further extended the country's visa amnesty for short-term migrants by one month and now it will end on the 31st of December 2018.

UGANDA: The NGO "CARE International" – which operates in Uganda – has called for stricter policies regarding gender-based violence in the workplace. The current provision requires protective workplace measures only in companies with more than 25 employees.

THE AMERICAS

CANADA: Women in Alberta may no longer be forced to wear high heels in the workplace, even if their employers require them to do so. An amendment to the province's Occupational Health and Safety Code prohibits employers from ordering the wearing of any footwear that may constitute a health and safety risk. This is the fourth province to pass such a law, following British Columbia, Ontario, and Manitoba.

CHILE: The state President has signed into law the right of any citizen aged 14 years or over to change their name and assumed gender on official records, although those under 18 must first obtain permission from parents or a guardian. The transgender law defines gender as a personal conviction rather than in physical terms.

COLOMBIA: Negotiations have commenced between trade union, business, and government leaders on readjusting the minimum wage for 2019. The first phase of the negotiation will close on the 30th of December, after which, if no agreement is reached, the decision will be made by the country's Presidency. Currently, the monthly minimum wage is 781,242 pesos (US\$247).

MEXICO: A Bill to legalise the medical and recreational use of marijuana has been tabled in the Mexican parliament. If passed, it

would allow every individual to grow up to 20 marijuana plants for personal use. This reform follows five Supreme Court rulings in favour of the right for adult citizens to consume the drug for recreational purposes.

PERU: A new law has been endorsed by the State President that entitles all citizens the right to be treated equally no matter what their physical or mental disability. Where an incapacity makes it difficult to make personal decisions, the individual may choose someone to make decisions for them, or a judge may be requested to designate a responsible person to take such a role.

USA: With effect from the 1st of January 2019, the minimum hourly wage for people in Montana will go up from US\$8.30 to US\$8.50. Currently, the federal minimum wage is US\$7.25 per hour.

USA: A federal Judge in Manhattan has ruled against the taking of a class action for discrimination by over 10,000 women employed, or formally employed, by the accounting firm KPMG. The refusal was on the grounds that no uniform explanation could be established for “the countless individual employment decisions they challenged”.

USA: Teva Pharmaceuticals has been ordered to pay \$6.3M to a former US manager for retaliation due to his making an internal complaint about age and “anti-American” discrimination by its foreign head office management. This happened even though the US HR Director of Human Resources had issued a report confirming the need for parent company managers to become aware of US employment legislation. The case escalated after the manager was

subsequently given a poor performance review. A formal complaint was made to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission, which led to the manager being dismissed and replaced by another manager 20 years his junior. The Philadelphia Federal Court Jury awarded \$200,000 for emotional distress damages, \$332,000 in back pay, \$450,000 in lost future pay, liquidated damages of \$332,000, and punitive damages of \$5,000,000.

USA: The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has found an employer had not taken “reasonable care” to safeguard employee’s sensitive data from cyberattacks. This was in addition to their duty to notify employees of the breach and ensure the attack was frustrated. Those carrying out the attack against the University of Pittsburg Medical Center (UPMC) had sought to use the data to file fraudulent tax returns. The court also found that the offence by UPMC was not in any way eliminated by the fact that UPMC was itself a victim of the crime - as it had a duty to ensure that the breach could not take place. The court also used a complex (and not very credible) “common law” argument to sidestep Pennsylvania’s “economic loss doctrine”. This would otherwise have blocked a negligence claim, given the parties were seeking economic damages. ([Dittman v. UPMC](#)).

VENEZUELA: US Firm Goodyear Tire ceased all operations in Venezuela on the 10th of December. This is in line with many other foreign companies, such as Kellogg, that are permanently terminating their businesses in the country, due to US sanctions and poor economic conditions. Goodyear employees will be receiving ten

tires each as part of their severance package, an item of high value in Venezuela due to the acute shortages of almost all consumer goods.

ASIA AND PACIFIC

AUSTRALIA: New data recently released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) shows that in August 2018, 15% of employees reported being a member of a trade union in their main job. According to the Chief Economist at ABS, “Employees who are members of a trade union are more likely to be over 40, female, and working full-time.”

AUSTRALIA: An amendment to the Fair Work Act has brought into force a new right for all workers who are victims of domestic violence to take up to five days’ unpaid leave. Earlier this year, the Fair Work Commission introduced the same right for employees who were subject to wage awards. The current legislation widens the coverage to all workers.

CHINA: The State Administration of Taxation has recently reduced the threshold for major dishonest tax violation cases from 1 million yuan (US\$145,464) to 100,000 yuan (US\$14,546) as part of an ongoing overhaul of its tax system and a recent crackdown on tax evasion. The new law will take effect on the 1st of January 2019. Defaulters will not only have the names, gender, and ID card numbers published by the tax authorities as a punishment, but will also be prevented from leaving the country until they have settled the sums due, including the fine.

FIJI: The government is currently undertaking a review of minimum hourly wage rates at a national level (NMW) and for

ten key sectors. The 10 sectoral wage rates that already stand above the NMW will each be examined separately to determine whether they are correctly set.

JAPAN: Over the year to October 2018, total monthly gross pay per person, including regular and overtime pay (as well as bonuses), went up 1.5% to 271,333 yen (US\$2,407). Regular pay rose 1.3% to 244,509 yen (US\$2,169) and nonregular pay, such as overtime, increased 1.9% to 20,088 yen (US\$178.2).

JAPAN: Next year a 10-day so called “golden week” vacation will be celebrated as a national holiday to mark the accession of Crown Prince Naruhito to the throne. Celebrations will begin on Saturday the 27th of April. The 30th of May and the 3rd to the 6th of May are already public holidays, and both the 30th of April and the 2nd of May will be “bridging days” that are public holidays by law. The 22nd of October will also be a further national holiday next year, called to celebrate the enthronement of the new Emperor.

HONG KONG: A raft of potential changes to discrimination and harassment laws have been introduced through a single amendment Bill. It introduces some important new rights for breastfeeding mothers; freedom from discrimination due to the race of an “associate”; the extension of race to mean any racial characteristics that are “imputed” about an individual (whether true or untrue); the tightening up of workplace protection on the grounds of sexual, disability and racial harassment; special protection from harassment originating from customers; and the removal of the need to show “intent” when awarding damages for acts of indirect discrimination. The Bill is likely to have

passed through the legislature by early next year.

INDIA: Visitors applying for a business visa to India are now able to obtain a maximum visa for 15 rather than 5 years.

MALAYSIA: The Human Resources Minister is at variance with the Education Ministry over whether salary deductions from payroll can be made without the borrower's consent for loans under the National Higher Education Fund Act (PTPTN). The Minister believes that this would be contrary to the Employment Act 1955. However, PTPTN Chair Saiful Wan has said that deductions for those earning over RM2,000 (US\$480) a month would shortly begin, with or without consent.

NEPAL: A new official "Global Compact on Migration" has been launched to ensure – via bilateral agreements and partnerships – that Nepali migrant workers are subject to international labour standards. Nepal's economy is highly dependent on labour migration as the payments that are repatriated by Nepali migrant workers account for around 30% of the country's GDP.

NEW ZEALAND: Latest figures released from Stats NZ show that the work-related, serious, non-fatal injury rates rose to 16.9 injuries per 100,000 full-time equivalent employees (FTE) in 2017. This was higher than the government's 2020 target (14.3 injuries per 100,000 FTEs). The rise in non-fatal injuries in the construction sector has significantly contributed to the overall increase.

SOUTH KOREA: The National Assembly has proposed several amendments to the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) in an effort to obtain an adequacy decision from the EU. The adequacy decision ensures that data protection compliance measures in non-EU countries are comparable to those set out in the EU GDPR measures and, as such, personal data may be transferred between EU and non-EU countries without additional authorisation processes. Although South Korea has strict data protection laws, it does not currently quite meet the EU supervision and compliance standard, as PIPA's independent body, the Personal Information Protection Commission (PIPC), does not have the authority to supervise and ensure compliance of data protection regulations. The proposed amendment is set to change that, as it will give PIPC the power to enforce compliance with data protection laws.

TAIWAN: The State Premier, William Lai, has announced that his Cabinet has agreed to a plan to make Taiwan bilingual by 2030. This will require a huge investment in English language tuition and the translation of official documents. According to Lai, the strategy will massively boost economic competitiveness.

TAIWAN: Uruguay has suspended visa-free entry for visitors from Taiwan. Until further notice, Taiwanese who are planning to visit Uruguay will have to apply for a visa at the Uruguayan embassy in Japan.

THAILAND: It is now just over a year since the Labour Protection Act (BE2560) came into force, obliging employees to retire at 60, unless they voluntarily agree to continue working. What some employers have not realised is that if an employee does decide to retire later, the subsequent employment

period will potentially earn them special compensation. They will be entitled to a minimum of 30 days' notice and a severance payment that ranges from 30 days' pay for periods of 6 months to a year of service beyond 60, to 300 days' pay for employment periods in excess of 10 years. These rates apply to all late-retiring employees in companies of all sizes and sectors.

UZBEKISTAN: President Mirziyoyev has signed a law that simplifies the procedure for employment of foreign workers with higher qualifications. Although such workers still require a permit, employers will be able to employ them without the need to obtain a licence and for three-year periods, with unlimited renewals. A residence permit for them and their families will be available from the 1st of January 2019, plus an income tax reduction of 50% on the normal applicable rates.

VIETNAM: The government has issued a decree requiring the compulsory payment of social insurance in respect to foreign workers working for foreign companies in Vietnam. This immediately covers occupational and labour accident, illness, and maternity benefits, with contributions for survivor and retirement benefits following in January 2022. The contribution rates will be the same as for Vietnamese employees, meaning foreign employers will contribute 17.5% and foreign employees 8% by 2022.

EUROPE

ALBANIA: Universities are at a standstill due to widescale protests by students over an increase in University fees. Fees have risen ten-fold in as many years, professors require students to read their own published books,

and a new fee has been introduced for retaking examinations to improve grades. At first, the Prime Minister, Edi Rama, was dismissive about the protests, but as the protests dragged on he has sought to make concessions.

BELGIUM: According to the Belgian Statistical Office, in 2017, 9% of the population aged between 15 and 64 had a disability or health problem that severely limited their daily activities. 23% of them were employed and for 51% of them, their jobs were adapted to their specific needs.

CROATIA: With effect from the 1st of January 2019, the net minimum wage will be increased by 248 kuna or by 9% from 2,752 kuna (US\$421.8) to 3,000 kuna (US\$460). The gross amount, that now totals 3,439 kuna (US\$527.5), will be increased to 3,750 kuna (US\$575).

CYPRUS: Early retirement is a major issue for many employers because of aging populations and legal difficulties in forcing workers to retire. One recent example of such a scheme is the "voluntary exit plan" organised by the Cyprus Tourism Organisation (CTO) for both permanent and hourly staff. To qualify, applicants must have - by the due date - at least five years of service in the organisation and at least 19 months of service until the date of compulsory retirement. The maximum percentage of all staff who may take this option is capped at 40% and the decision for selecting people to leave will be based on a combination of three factors: the number of remaining service hours, the number of years in service, and the benefit to the organisation.

EUROPEAN COURT OF JUSTICE (ECJ):

A recent ECJ case has overturned the whole way that EU law will, in future, need to be interpreted within EU member states. The decision means that where an EU Directive or Regulation is not implemented into EU law correctly, all country courts and official advisory and regulatory authorities will have to apply EU law by “direct effect” to private sector employers without the need for there to be any ruling by a country High or Supreme Court. This will apply especially to measures such as the Working Time Directive, as there are also EU treaty obligations in this field. Although a labour court or tribunal would be able to refer an issue to a higher court for interpretation, a regulatory body such as ACAS in the UK, WRC in Ireland, Inspection du travail in France, or UWV in the Netherlands would have no such facility and would be obliged to assume direct effect without further clarification. However, such bodies do not usually have in-house expertise in the field of EU law and will have to gear up considerably to achieve it in order to avoid long delays.

Comment: At FedEE, we have identified numerous instances where EU member states have wrongly implemented EU measures – this will therefore be a minefield for multinational employers. If you are uncertain about the legality of any national measure, our Employment Standards Institute (E-SI) are always on hand to give its expert opinion. *Case C-378/17*, Minister for Justice and Equality, Commissioner of An Garda Síochána v Workplace Relations Commission.

EU: Over the year to October 2018, total unemployment amongst those aged under age 25 decreased by 215,000 across the European Union to 3.468 million. 15.3% of

young workers across the EU remained unemployed. The Czech Republic had the lowest rate (5.2%), followed by Germany (6.2%) and the Netherlands (7.2%), whilst the highest rates were observed in Greece (36.8% in August 2018), Spain (34.9%), and Italy (32.5%).

EU: Draft [guidelines](#) have now been issued by the European Data Protection Board on the territorial scope of GDPR. These confirm that both data controllers and processors who target data subjects in the EU/EEA will be subject to GDPR even if they are not in a EU/EEA country, and that if an organisation is based in the EU/EEA and processes data for a US company exclusively about the personal data of US subjects, they will still have to comply with GDPR for such processing. The guidelines are open for public consultation until the 18th of January 2019.

EU: The latest developments in pay across Europe may be viewed [here](#).

FINLAND: According to the latest figures from Statistics Finland, slightly under 132,000 occupational accidents took place in Finland in 2016; 17% of work-related accidents occurred whilst an employee was commuting.

GERMANY: Although working time is rising, the level of productivity in Germany is falling. Germans worked a record 15.64 bn hours in Q3 2018, but productivity fell by 0.4%. GDP in Q3 also fell by 0.2%. Meanwhile, Germany’s aim to cut state bureaucracy in recent years has largely failed. The cost of sustaining bureaucracy compared to January 2012 had fallen by September 2018 by less than 1%.

GREECE: The head of the Greek government's initiative for combatting corruption has announced that the Ministry of Justice will be taking steps to further strengthen the legal framework for the protection of whistleblowers. The announcement was made during a conference taking place to mark World Anti-Corruption Day. A number of key-note speakers addressed the need for whistleblower anonymity, as well as ensuring protection to those making a "public-interest disclosure" from unfair dismissal, detrimental treatment, or other forms of retaliation.

HUNGARY: Employers and trade unions have been unable to conclude an agreement about the level of national minimum wage next year, even though employers raised their offer from 5% to 8%. Currently, the minimum monthly wage is 138,000 HUF (US\$486.00) for unskilled workers and 180,500 HUF (US\$634.00) for skilled workers. If no agreement is reached by year-end, then the government has already made clear that it will impose its own minimum wage. Relations between the unions and government are already souring over proposals to lift the maximum overtime limit from 250 to 400 hours per year.

ICELAND: Over the year to the 1st of January 2018, the proportion of immigrants in the population increased by 2% to 43,736, bringing the overall proportion to 12.6%. Those born in Poland were the most numerous group of immigrants in 2018, as in previous years, and accounted for 16,970 immigrants— or 38.8% of the total immigrant population. These were followed by Lithuania (2,420) and the Philippines (1,754).

LUXEMBOURG: In order to combat pollution and reduce congestion, the newly elected coalition government has declared that from next summer, all public transport in the country will become free. This is the first country in the world to introduce such a scheme. Travel is already free for those under the age of 20 and most travel by trains, trams, and buses can be made for a low flat-fee.

ROMANIA: The government has signed a memorandum with Vietnam's Labour Ministry to bring Vietnamese workers into the country. There is a shortage of unskilled and semi-skilled workers in Romania and the previous supply of young Moldovan workers able to claim ancestral links is drying up. The main labour market gaps are in the tourism, construction, manufacturing, and agricultural sectors. The Vietnam embassy in Bucharest has a special section on its website – "[Vietnam Manpower: Your partner for success](#)" – directed towards employers in Romania giving average local salaries earned, contractual terms, necessary working conditions, and the expenses to be met by employers.

SPAIN: The Navarre High Court in Spain has found, on appeal, that it was lawful to dismiss a foreign employee for taking leave outside the period their employer had given them. The leave taken had initially been agreed by the employee's manager, but had been rescinded by the company owner. Moreover, the same period of leave had been taken the year before. Nevertheless, in the court's view, an employee in dispute over their leave period should take the matter to court to have it resolved, as if (in the real world outside the courtroom) an employee dealing

with such a matter would ever consider taking such a drastic step.

UKRAINE: According to Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, the average salary in the country is likely to grow to UAH 10,000 (US\$356.5) by Q1 2019. The minimum wage in Ukraine was increased from UAH3,200 (US\$114) to UAH3,723 (US\$132.7) on the 1st of January 2018.

UNITED KINGDOM: The British government has suspended its “golden visas” programme – the Tier 1 investor visas – as a move to crack down on money laundering. The programme was introduced in 2008 and was popular with Russian oligarchs and other wealthy foreign nationals. The visas are likely to be re-launched next year under stricter regulations.

UNITED KINGDOM: The British Prime Minister, Theresa May, has now decided to postpone the parliamentary vote on her Brexit plan. The vote was due to take place on the 12th December, but now may not take place until the New Year. As things stand, the opposition to the plan is so great – even in her own Conservative party – that a “No deal Brexit” seems almost inevitable. UK employers should therefore brace themselves for what could be a rough ride through the spring and summer months of next year.

UNITED KINGDOM: There seems to be some confusion about the validity of advice available to British citizens living in the EU outside the UK concerning Brexit. For instance, the British Embassy in Paris is holding briefing meetings at numerous centres around France to inform British citizens living in the country about their rights

after the 29th of March. The problem is that officials do not know – and cannot know – what is going to happen after the 29th of March 2019 and would be misleading citizens if they claimed to know. What is of greater importance for UK citizens living across the EU is to know what the government in the state they live in is saying about Brexit. The UK government can promise as much as it likes, but it can only deliver an outcome on the ground if it has reached agreement with the country concerned in respect to the precise circumstances of the UK’s departure from the European Union. This is a time for caution and not blind reassurance. In some circumstances it may be necessary to repatriate key executives and their families because of bureaucratic barriers or governmental hostility in some EU countries next year.

GLOBAL

GLOBAL: As 2018 draws to a close, it is a sobering thought to reflect on a year where 60 significant armed conflicts have raged around the world, resulting in a total of around 133,500 fatalities. This is broadly in line with the global loss of life due to fires. Curiously, although we fear the risk of it, terrorism only accounts for around 30,000 deaths per year (the same as homicide victims each year in Mexico alone) and natural disasters around 7,000. A much higher risk are road accidents (1.5m) and suicide (850,000). In fact, the pattern of suicide follows a fairly unpredictable pattern, with the highest levels in Lithuania and Russia and the lowest levels in the West Indies, where it is virtually unknown. In Europe, by far the lowest rates of suicide are in Cyprus and Greece.

Dates for your diary:

January 1st 2019: New individual income tax law becomes effective in **PR China**.

January 1st 2019: **Netherlands** – expat 30% tax ruling – 8 years to 5 years.

January 1st 2019: **Uruguay** – new job creation system launched.

January 1st 2019: **Germany** – New national minimum wage.

January 1st 2019: **Malaysia**'s new redundancy fund due to come into force.

March 29th 2019: **UK** Brexit deadline.

March 31st 2019: New DOL FLSA overtime rules will be issued in the **USA**.

January 1st 2020: **Washington State (USA)** Paid family leave law will take effect.

Travel Warnings

AUSTRALIA: Expect possible flight disruptions as Tigerair Australia pilots say they will take industrial action beginning the 21st of December 2018.

BRAZIL: Exercise a high degree of caution in the country due to high crime rates and regular incidents of gang-related (and other) violence in urban areas.

CHAD: Avoid non-essential travel to Chad, including the capital, N'Djamena, due to incidences of violent crime and the threat of terrorism.

DR CONGO: Do not travel to Eastern DRC and the three Kasai provinces due to armed conflict. The Ebola outbreak in the country is now the second largest in history, with 489 people diagnosed with the disease and 280 deaths.

GABON: The safety and security situation is calm, but tense. Stay vigilant - as the situation could degrade rapidly.

GHANA: Exercise great caution as localised outbreaks of civil unrest can occur at short notice, particularly in the north.

INDIA: 130 trains have been cancelled by Indian Railways until February the 15th, 2019, due to foggy weather in the coming months. Make sure you are up-to-date on routine vaccines before visiting India as Zika continues to be a risk throughout the country.

JAPAN: Make sure your vaccinations are up to date whilst visiting Japan (especially if pregnant) as there are than 2,000 people in the country have been diagnosed with rubella, or German measles.

MADAGASCAR: Visitors to Madagascar should ensure they are vaccinated against measles with the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine as there is a large measles outbreak on this island country.

MALAYSIA: There is a rabies outbreak in Sarawak. Thus far, the State Government of Sarawak has declared 54 areas in 11 Divisions in Sarawak as a region of rabies infection among animals. Only Limbang is a rabies-free area.

NEPAL: The Nepal government has banned the use of Indian currency notes of higher than Rs 100.

SOUTH AFRICA: More than 16,000 malaria cases with 110 deaths were reported by the late Autumn. Make sure you take the anti-malarial tablets whilst visiting the country, especially in the northern areas.

SOUTH SUDAN: Do not travel to the country due to crime and widespread armed conflict.

THAILAND: General elections are scheduled for February the 24th 2019. From January the 1st 2018 through December the 10th 2018, 80,065 dengue fever cases have been recorded from all 77 provinces. 107 fatalities have been reported.

TOGO: Exercise a high degree of caution in the country due to an increase in violent crime, social unrest and politically motivated demonstrations.

UK: The homicide rate has reached its highest level in a decade, with 125 murders recorded in the capital during 2018. The majority of the killings (73) were carried out using knives, with 14 using guns and one using a crossbow. Many of them are gang-related. Visitors should also be vigilant about the high incidence of public order offences and bag snatching by motor scooter pillion riders (especially during evenings and at night). Members of the Rail, Maritime and Transport union will walk out for 24 hours on December the 27th and 31st, in addition to a previously announced strike on December the 22nd.

FedEE News

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR BREAK: As is customary at this time of the year, the FedEE Newswire will be taking a one-issue break over the Christmas and New Year period. The next issue will be published on Thursday, 17th of January 2019.

HR COUNSEL COURSE: Our modular course is a must for all those involved in giving legal guidance to colleagues in multinational HR Departments. Course participation has recently increased by 30%, which is a recommendation in itself. So why not give your career a boost this Christmas and set yourself on the path to becoming an HR Counsel? The advanced employment law qualification designed especially for HR professionals in multinational organisations. A brochure setting out the full syllabus for this Advanced Diploma Programme may be viewed [here](#).

FEDEE KNOWLEDGEBASE: We have just completed a full review of the remuneration sections in the country legal section of the knowledgebase. We are now moving on to enhance our coverage of court structures and procedures in the key jurisdictions. In order to improve access to recent news relating to countries not covered by detailed legal guidance we are listing each of them under our “country section” and marking them with an asterisk to indicate that such reports contain news items only, listed by date. The next country to be covered by us in depth will be Egypt.

FEDEE REFERRAL SCHEME: Reduce membership costs for the coming year. The Federation of International Employers (FedEE) operates a highly attractive membership referral scheme. Therefore, if you know an HR professional in another organization and you think that their department may benefit from corporate FedEE membership please either let us know - or encourage them to get in touch with us at membershipservices@fedee.com. Should the referred organisation take up membership within a 3-month period, we offer a **€125 discount** on the annual subscription fee to the new corporate member for the first year, **and also the same discount** to the referring organisation when they renew – meaning there will be a **total shared discount of €250**. There is no limit to the number of referrals that can be made, so that your next FedEE annual renewal could be entirely without cost.

JEAPS: Due to a technical error, an emergency version of our Job Evaluation and Pay System (JEAPS) shall be online over the Christmas period. Please do not use the system for data on the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) as this is not functional under the temporary system.

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