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## collective bargaining

Issue 3/2013 | March

This newsletter presents up-to-date information on collective bargaining developments across Europe since February 2008. It aims to facilitate information exchange between trade unions and to support the work of the ETUC's collective bargaining committee.



AMSTERDAM INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED LABOUR STUDIES  
UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM



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## **European sources**

### **Labour share and economic growth**

*March 22, 2013*

The Global Union Research Network (GURN) has published a report from Stefan Kühn who uses the IILS Global Economic Linkages (GEL) model to have a closer look on the macroeconomic effects of a change in the labour share. Assuming that labour shares play a key role in economic growth, he finds that changes are the results of the dynamics of wages, employment and productivity growth. Vice versa they are affecting the dynamics by providing growth opportunities through higher domestic demand. Therefore, a change of current austerity policies imposed on Eurozone countries in favour of a wage-led approach is needed. This is what sustainable policies of releasing pressures on fiscal balances could look like as higher consumption, employment and real wages translate e.g. to higher tax revenues. An increase in labour shares would foster employment growth while avoiding a spiral of competitive wage reductions and slow demand.

English: <http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public...>

### **Day of action for a better future**

*March 14, 2013*

Ahead of the European Summit scheduled for 14 and 15 March, the European Trade Union organised a European Trade Union action on 14 March against austerity and for jobs for young people. On the same day decentralised actions took place all over Europe. The European trade unions are calling for a change of course with the emphasis on a sustainable recovery with more and better jobs, based on an investment plan equivalent to at least 1% of the European GDP each year.

English: <http://www.etuc.org/a/10843>

### **Women suffer from the crisis**

*March 8, 2013*

A report from the European trade union federation for the public sector (EPSU) shows that austerity measures have been particularly harmful to women, who in most countries make up the majority of those employed in the public sector. The report looks at eight countries where governments have pursued a policy of public sector cuts. EPSU therefore calls for reversing these negative trends in the advancement for equality and asks the European Commission to take meaningful measures.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/9357>  
[http://www.epsu.org/IMG/pdf/Impact\\_of\\_cuts\\_initial\\_drft\\_report\\_layout.pdf](http://www.epsu.org/IMG/pdf/Impact_of_cuts_initial_drft_report_layout.pdf)

### **Unemployment reaches high record**

*March 1, 2013*

According to figures published by Eurostat, unemployment in the 17-nation Eurozone rose to a record high in January with nearly 19 million people out of work, while inflation fell sharply. The data showed an increase to 11.9% in January from 11.8% in December 2012. Unemployment figures are coming in close to the official forecast of 12.2% for 2013; the Eurozone is not expected to return to growth until 2014.

English: <http://www.france24.com/en/20130301-eurozone-unemployment-reaches...>

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## **Austria**

### **Workers in religious hospitals strike**

*March 13, 2013*

Workers in several private hospitals in upper Austria that are run by religious orders went on strike over wages. In the negotiations of a new collective agreement the hospitals, who have refused a pay increase in the last three years, are attempting to cut down on pay for overtime and on-call time. Trade unions said the current wage offer is effectively a pay cut and demand a wage increase to at least match the inflation rate.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/9380>

German: <http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer ...>

### **Vocational training for temporary workers**

*March 8, 2013*

Adult education centres (Volkshochschule) in Burgenland are conducting a vocational training related project ('Du kannst was'). Vocational qualification is considered to give the participants new perspectives. Another advantage is the protection of the profession. The main target group is the part of the workforce that has no formal diploma. The project is open for temporary workers that have at least 5 years of experience.

English: <http://www.austriantimes.at/news/Education/2013-03-08 ...>

German: [http://www.vhs-burgenland.at/downloads/dkw\\_info.pdf](http://www.vhs-burgenland.at/downloads/dkw_info.pdf)

### **Income differentials between men and women decline only slightly**

*March 5, 2013*

Statistics Austria reports that the labour force participation of women has steadily increased. The employment rate of women aged 15 to 64 years rose from 59.9% (2001) to 66.5% (2011). The increase in female employment is mostly due to a rise in part-time work. In 2011, 44.0% of women in employment worked part-time (2001: 34.3%). Part-time work plays an important role especially for women with children. In 2011, 71.4% of women aged between 25 and 49 years who have children under 15 years of age worked part-time. Looking at the income situation, there has been only a slight decrease in the gender pay gap.

English: [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_en/press/070177](http://www.statistik.at/web_en/press/070177)

German (with more details and statistics): [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/presse/070176](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/presse/070176)

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## **Belgium**

### **Ministers lodge complaint on social dumping**

*March 25, 2013*

The federal Economy Minister and his counterpart, the Employment Minister in the Flemish government, have filed a complaint for social dumping in the meat sector against the German authorities before the European Commission. Workers from Eastern Europe, mainly Romanians and Bulgarians, work legally for extremely low wages, less than €5 per hour, in excess of 10 hours per day in the German abattoirs. They are not covered by social security or health insurance. According to the Belgian authorities, there is a huge amount of fraud and large numbers of Romanians and Bulgarians are there on a permanent basis and are subjected to deplorable conditions.

English: <http://www.equaltimes.org/news/allemande-le-social-dumping-en-chair-et-en-os>

French: <http://www.lesoir.be/210336/article/actualite/belgique/2013-03-19/vande-lanotte-et ...>

### **Strike notice at Caterpillar**

*March 7, 2013*

Trade unions at Caterpillar stand united in face of Caterpillar's announcement that it intends to lay off 1,400 workers (1,100 production workers and 300 administrative staff) at its plant in Gosselies. 'We favour social dialogue to find solutions that will ensure the sustainability of the plant but we will change gear and take strong action if we are not heard' warned a union representative.

English: <http://www.industrial-union.org/strike-notice-at-caterpillar-belgium>

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## Bulgaria

### **Labour costs are extremely low**

*March 23, 2013*

The cost of labour in Bulgaria is by far the lowest among the EU 27 member states, according to data released by the German Federal Statistical Office. At €3.7 per hour in 2012, labour cost is more than 6 times lower than the EU's €23.5 average, and more than 7.5 times lower than the Eurozone €28.2 average (more details see the German section).

English: [http://www.novinite.com/view\\_news.php?id=148986](http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=148986)

### **3000 military plant workers on forced leave**

*March 23, 2013*

Due to lack of orders, workers at the Arsenal military plant in Kazanlak have been sent on forced leave. As many of the workers have exhausted their paid leave, most workers face a period of unpaid leave. The remaining workforce has switched to a four-hour work day.

English: [http://www.novinite.com/view\\_news.php?id=148907](http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=148907)

### **Miners rally in Sofia**

*March 5, 2013*

Several thousand thermal plant workers from the Maritsa East complexes protested the fact that even though the energy that they produce is cheaper than energy from other sources, it remains largely ignored by the state regulator allowing the three power utilities – CEZ, EVN, and Energo-Pro – to charge excessive prices for electricity, which in turn led recently to mass street protests across Bulgaria and the resignation of the Borisov Cabinet.

English: [http://www.novinite.com/view\\_news.php?id=148404](http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=148404)

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## Croatia

### **Labour statistics on women and men**

*March 1, 2013*

The Bureau of statistics published the 2012 report on women and men. The publication consists of sections dealing with several aspects (population, health, education, social welfare and pensions, administration of justice and political power). The report includes tables and graphs and additional statistical material. One section is dedicated to employment and earnings.

English: [http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv\\_Eng/menandwomen/men\\_and\\_women\\_2012.pdf](http://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/menandwomen/men_and_women_2012.pdf)

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## Cyprus

### **Bank employees threaten strike over loss of jobs and pensions**

*March 27, 2013*

Employees of the popular Laiki bank have marched in protest of the bail-out deal that will lead to the layoff of some 2,500 people and loss of pension funds. In order to avoid a bank-run, the banks have kept their doors closed while its government negotiated a bail-out package with the IMF, ECB and European Council. Banks have already been closed for nearly two weeks but the workers' union has announced that unless their pensions are saved, they will start a strike when the banks are due to re-open.

English: <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/130323/cyprus-bank-staff-protest ...>

## Greek teachers come over

March 4, 2013

With their pay cut of 30% or more, and the government curtailing the number of new hires, the number of Greek school teachers looking for work in Cyprus has doubled over the last five years, statistics from authorities show, even though the island has now been hit with an economic crisis too. According to the Educational Service Committee some 10,200 Greek teachers submitted applications to come over in the last year, which means 25% of the applicants for positions are from Greece.

English: <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2013/03/04/greek...>

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## Czech Republic

### Trade unions demand minimum wage increase

March 26, 2013

The CMKOS trade union confederation has demanded an increase of the minimum wage from 8000 crowns (€310) to 9000 crowns (€349) per month. An increase in the minimum wage, last raised in 2007, has been a long time union demand. Recently, the labour minister suggested an increase of around 600 crowns, which the trade union qualified as acceptable. The government's finance minister, however, has expressed himself violently against any raise. The national average monthly salary is currently 24.514 crowns (€950). Keeping the debate alive, president Zeman has vowed to lend support to a constructive tripartite dialogue, mentioning ambitions to reach a minimum wage increase in particular.

English: <http://praguemonitor.com/2013/03/04/trade-unions-want-higher...>

<http://praguemonitor.com/2013/03/26/zeman-vows-attend-tripartite-negotiations>

## Unemployment on the increase

March 11, 2013

The Labour and Social Affairs Ministry reported that unemployment grew to record-high 8.1% in February from 8% in January, with employment offices registering 593,683 jobless persons, 7,874 more month-on-months. Analyst said that the labour market increasingly reflects the domestic recession, adding the trend of growing unemployment might continue in the future.

English: <http://praguemonitor.com/2013/03/11/unemployment...>

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## Denmark

### Dispute over teachers' agreement

March 28, 2013

The trade union KTO does not want to approve the collective bargaining agreement agreed to with KL, the national association of local councils, last month unless KL changes its tune in the on-going negotiations with teachers. The teachers' union, Danmarks Lærerforening (DL), is pleased that KTO has decided to step in on its behalf. The approval of the collective bargaining agreement had been expected to be just a formality after it was originally agreed upon on 16 February. The agreement included a general wage increase of 1.97% complimented with an additional 0.25% increase for employees within certain areas. The negotiations between the teachers and KL have collapsed because of a disagreement concerning the teachers' work hours. KL has threatened to lock out the country's 52,000 teachers starting April 2.

English: <http://cphpost.dk/national/teacher-negotiations-see-another-twist>

<http://cphpost.dk/national/teachers-conflict-what-it%20%99s-all-about>

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## Estonia

### Energy sector workers accept 9% pay increase

March 28, 2013

Members of the Narva Energia trade union, who clashed with employer Eesti Energia's Narva Power Plants over a wage offer (see January newsletter), were contemplating whether to accept the offer or leave the conciliation process and resort to industrial action. Narva Energia joined the tabled deal that was already accepted by the Independent Union of Miners and Energy Workers. After the disagreement in January, the process moved into a mediation process. The public conciliator produced a wage offer with a 9% increase. The contract that is signed by the two unions and Narva Power Plants will run until the end of 2014.

English: <http://news.err.ee/economy/a1oafaa0-eddb-4dc7-8f27-8c3091d4b08a>

### **Is labour legislation applicable for foreign workers?**

*March 23, 2013*

In a legal blog the question is raised to what extent the labour legislation applies to foreign workers in the country. With more and more international corporations having established branches in the country it is apparent that the matter of applying the labour law to foreign employees needs to be explained. Recently the Supreme Court and the courts of lower instances unanimously declared that the Estonian labour law regulations apply also to foreign employees.

English: <http://balticbusinessnews.com/blog/2013/3/22/does-estonian-labour-law-apply ...>

### **Largest gender pay gap in the EU**

*March 8, 2013*

According to the latest figures released by Eurostat, the gender pay gap reached 27%, more than the double of neighbouring Latvia and Lithuania and well above the EU average of 16%. Among the reasons for this phenomenon researchers mention the concentration of women in underpaid professions, but also the confidentiality of salaries in the private sector, gendered patterns in occupation choices, the incompatibility between demanding careers and family life, the double burden of paid work and household chores and workplace discrimination.

English: <http://www.equaltimes.org/news/will-women-be-excluded-from-booming ...>

**Focus** on the gender pay gap: <http://www.sm.ee/fileadmin/meedia/Dokumendid ...>

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## **Finland**

### **Two-day strike at TeliaSonera**

*March 27, 2013*

Workers at telecommunications provider TeliaSonera have organised a two-day strike in protest against the company's poor personnel policies. Trade unions report TeliaSonera entertains practices of firing direct hires, making them switch jobs inside the company or re-apply for their own job. Next to that, the company has been continuously outsourcing jobs as well as hiring a large share of its workforce through temporary work agencies. The workers strike against the continuous job insecurity and the company's neglect of rights provided for in the collective agreement.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/Apps/uni.nsf/pages ...>

### **Finnair technical staff on strike to protest cuts**

*March 15, 2013*

Technical support staff at Finnair went on strike in protest against the start of negotiations over job cuts. Finnair announced that as a part of its restructuring plans, it intends to lay off 300 of its 900 technical support staff.

English: [http://yle.fi/uutiset/finnair\\_technical\\_staff\\_on\\_strike/6539862](http://yle.fi/uutiset/finnair_technical_staff_on_strike/6539862)

### **Municipal workers waiting for a new agreement**

*March 5, 2013*

The unions representing municipal employees are ready to agree, even at short notice, to a centralised labour market agreement. However, municipal employees are not prepared to negotiate on the proposal for a zero per cent salary rise, as offered by the leaders of the Confederation of Finnish Industries EK. There has

been no wage drift in the public sector, unlike in the private sector, the unions say. For this reason municipal salaries are de facto falling behind the general development of wages and salaries.

English: <http://www.jhl.fi/portal/en/news/archive?bid=2670&y=2011>

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## France

### **American media give unions a bad press**

*March 16, 2013*

It may be no surprise, but in the slipstream of recent labour disputes it has become clear which side they are on. After several clashes that showed the resistance tire producers face from trade unions and workers in efforts to rein in losses in the region prominent US press agencies have started to defend the executives that came up with plans for closures. In some articles the blame is given to the unions that are said to have 'rejected all labour offers made by executives'.

English: <http://www.digitaljournal.com/article/344912>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/17/world/europe/fates-of-2-factories-show-social-...>

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-03-04/labor-challenges-plant-closings-...>

### **Deal at Renault wins support**

*March 6, 2013*

Trade union Force Ouvrière said in a statement that it had decided by a large majority to sign the new agreement 'for a new growth dynamic and social development at Renault in France'. The decision follows a similar move by the CFE-CGC, last month, giving Renault enough support to validate the accord. The deal between the company and unions eliminating 7,500 jobs and freezing wages is expected to be officially signed following a works council meeting.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/06/us-renault-unions-...>

### **Controversial positions on labour deal**

*March 5, 2013*

The social pact that was signed by three unions in January after lengthy talks with employers has led to polarised position within the trade unions. The agreement should lead to more job security for workers on short-term contracts, but makes it also easier for firms to put staff on shorter hours if orders dry up and gives them new rights to dismiss any who refuse to participate. The trade union confederation CGT and FO staged protests in some 200 cities along with small, scattered strikes.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/05/us-france-protests-...>

<http://nz.finance.yahoo.com/news/french-unions-protest-loosening-labor-...>

### **Unions and employers discuss permanent contracts for agency workers**

*March 4, 2013*

Trade union and employer representatives have entered negotiations over the creation of a new type of contract that will aim to provide agency workers with more job security. If an agreement is reached, the derogation contract (contrat intérimaire) will be the third contract type in the country, next to the permanent contract and the fixed term contract. The new type of contract would allow temporary agencies to hire staff on permanent contracts, but still allow unequal payment between direct hires and agency workers as well as lower wages and fewer hours when no work is available.

English: <http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/content/view/full/100145>

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## Germany

### **Labour cost ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in the EU**

*March 26, 2013*

A report from the Federal Statistical Office (Destatis) states that employers of the private sector paid an average €31.00 per hour worked in 2012. In the report it is said that the labour cost level in Germany ranked eighth in the EU. Employers of the private sector paid 32% more per hour worked than the EU average, but 11% less than, for example, neighbour country France. Sweden recorded the highest labour costs per hour worked with €41.90 and Bulgaria the lowest with €3.70. In each year of the period from 2001 to 2010, the labour cost growth in the German private sector was below the EU average.

English: <https://www.destatis.de/EN/PressServices/Press/pr/2013/03 ...>

### **Pay deal at Deutsche Bahn**

*March 26, 2013*

The transport union EVG concluded a collective agreement at Deutsche Bahn that could give a wage increase of 6% overall and a further 1% rise in employer contributions to occupational pension schemes. A 3% increase will be effective from 1 May 2013, followed by a further 3% rise from 1 April 2014. Rail workers will also receive a one-off social component payment for the January to April 2013 period. Earlier this month workers had held short strikes during morning rush hour in reaction to a low wage offer by the railway company in the negotiations. The unions had demanded a 6.5% wage increase.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/8720>

### **More strikes at Lufthansa**

*March 23, 2013*

After a series of actions last year and in February, as reported in the December newsletter, Lufthansa personnel has organised another one-day strike in an on-going wage dispute. While Lufthansa continues to hold on to a pay freeze, trade unions continue to point out a pay raise is long overdue. The trade union Ver.di said in a statement that no agreement was reached in the latest round of talks and that another walkout was possible before the next round, which is due to start on 17 April, but not over Easter. Meanwhile, the Frankfurt labour court just rejected Lufthansa and Fraport compensation claims over costs incurred in previous walk-outs.

English: <http://www.foxbusiness.com/news/2013/03/20/strike-prompts-lufthansa-to-cancel ...>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/23/us-lufthansa-wages-easter ...>

<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/130325/german-court-rejects ...>

### **Security workers strike at Düsseldorf airport**

*March 11, 2013*

Security workers at Düsseldorf airport went on strike over a wage dispute in the on-going collective agreement negotiations. Most of the workers currently earn around €8.25 per hour, which trade unions have demanded be increased by 30%. A union spokesperson said that maximum pressure will continue to be applied until a new wage offer is on the table.

English: <http://www.dw.de/delays-cancellations-as ...>

### **Pay deal for regional public workers**

*March 9, 2013*

Regional public service workers have won a 5.6% pay hike over two years. Under the deal, salaries will rise by 2.65% in 2013 and by a further 2.95% from January 2014.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/09/germany-workers-pay ...>

### **Think tank summarises minimum wage debates**

*March 7, 2013*

Germany does not have a national minimum wage even though specific industrial sectors have one. The upper chamber of parliament, the Bundesrat, has proposed a minimum wage of €8.5. The debate over introducing a general minimum wage has therefore emerged and the economic think tank Bruegel has

summarised this debate.

English: <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/blog/detail/article/1036-a-review-on-germanys-minimum...>

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## Greece

### **Banking sector collective agreement may be automatically cancelled**

*March 14, 2013*

As new troika-led legislation comes into force, banking trade union OTOE has found that its sectoral collective agreement might be automatically cancelled in May. In accordance with the new laws, any sectoral collective agreement will be automatically cancelled three months after its expiration if the parties concerned fail to reach a new agreement. If the banking sector collective agreement is cancelled, employees will have only the national minimum wage to fall back on.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/Apps/uni.nsf/pages...>

### **Vio.me occupation**

*March 5, 2013*

A Viomichaniki Metaleftiki (Vio.me) factory in industrial mining is currently under occupation and run by the workers themselves. Vio.me was part of a group of companies. They belonged to the same owners and the trade unions always wanted the three companies to become independent from each other, but the owners insisted on keeping the three companies together. The parent company had financial difficulties and while the two other companies were profitable, the downfall of the parent company dragged them along.

English: <http://rdln.wordpress.com/2013/03/05/workers-self-management-only-solution...>

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## Hungary

### **Steel workers reach agreement**

*March 5, 2013*

A seven day strike ended in the signature of an agreement at the steel maker ISD Dunafer. Trade union VASAS signed a wage and social contract for 2013 that includes a 3.5% increase in personal basic wages from January 2013, 1% increase in personal basic wages from July 2013 and a 5.3% increase in social benefits from January 2013, a 1% increase in social benefits from July 2013 and a Christmas salary (14th month salary) for 2013.

English: <http://www.industrialunion.org/dunafer-dispute-ends-in-agreement>

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## Iceland

### **Average wage increase 0.8% in 4<sup>th</sup> quarter**

*March 8, 2013*

Statistics Iceland has reported on wages in the private sector by economic activity and occupational group in the fourth quarter of 2012. Wages increased by 0.8% on average from the previous quarter according to the quarterly wage index in 4th quarter 2012, with wages increasing by 1.3% in the economic activity of financial intermediation. During the same period wages in construction increased by 0.8%. Wages increased by 4.8% on average from previous year, 5.1% in the private sector and 4.0% in the public sector. The annual change of wage index ranged from 4.1% in wholesale to 9.0% in the economic activity of financial intermediation.

English: <http://www.statice.is/Pages/444?NewsID=9458>

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## Ireland

### **Tara Mines deal accepted**

*March 25, 2013*

Members of trade union SIPTU at Tara Mines, Co. Meath have voted to accept proposals aimed at bringing to a conclusion a long running dispute at the company. Among the key clauses contained in the proposed agreement is a commitment by the owners of Tara Mines, multinational Boliden, to provide future capital investment of €110 million which is needed to maintain the mine's operation to 2018 and beyond. The proposals also envisage the establishment of a monthly industrial relations forum consisting of worker and management representatives that will discuss changes in work practices arising from the agreement and will be attended on an annual basis by the Boliden President and Chief Executive Officer.

English: <http://www.siptu.ie/media/pressreleases2013/mainnews/fullstory...>

### **Pay cuts and voluntary redundancies**

*March 23, 2013*

695 workers at ESB's Powergen section are to have their pay cut by up to 17%. The ESB's internal joint industrial committee decided that tiered pay cuts should be introduced. The cuts will start at 11% for those at the lower end of the pay scale and will rise to 17% for those at the top. The pay cuts are part of an overall €140m cost saving programme at ESB that was agreed by management and unions. The plan was that €56.4m was to come from cuts to non-core pay elements such as profit share, overtime, and performance payments. The largest portion of the overall savings — €83m — was to come from a voluntary redundancy programme. In Powergen, only 160 people applied to take the severance package where 250 were needed.

English: <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/esb-to-cut-pay-of-695-staff...>

### **Pharmaceutical plant closed**

*March 7, 2013*

Pharmaceutical company MSD is to close its plant at Rathdrum in Co Wicklow by the end of 2015, resulting in the loss of 280 jobs. The company told workers that operations at the site will be ceased in two years' time. Manufacturing activities will start to be phased out in 2014, but no staff reductions are expected until the end of next year. Unions have the intention to secure agreement with the company that this time is used to ensure that each and every member receives the opportunity to train up so that they will be in a position to secure employment elsewhere.

English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/business/2013/0307/374559-msd-to-close...>

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/unions-hopeful-over-msd-workers...>

### **Mixed feelings about Croke Park II - Fire fighters and prison officers have a deal**

*March 5, 2013*

The Croke Park II arrangements (see the February Newsletter) will have serious consequences for the public sector. Groups such as nurses and doctors will face cuts to Sunday premium rates and the abolition of 'twilight' payments under the proposed new agreement. Therefore, four unions, the trade union for nurses and midwives INMO, the Irish Medical Organisation (IMO), the Civil Public and Services Union (CPSU) and Unite are to launch a joint national campaign for a No vote against the Croke Park proposals. It looks as if more unions will join (trade unions ASTI, GRA and AGSI). Fire fighters and prison officers have concluded deals with the government which will protect their premium payments. In a letter to the unions it is said that the totality of the pay structure in respect of full-time fire fighters will not be affected by the proposals in the agreement. Later on a similar deal was made for prison officers. SIPTU President Jack O'Connor described the Croke Park proposals as the most controversial proposition that trade unions have ever had to consider.

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/firefighters-prison-officers-in-deal-over-pay...>

<http://www.rte.ie/news/2013/0305/372758-croke-park-extension/>

<http://www.thejournal.ie/croke-park-talks-unions-821872-Mar2013...>

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## Italy

## **Trouble at ILVA plant continues**

*March 20, 2013*

The ILVA steel mill in Taranto, the factory with the highest number work-related deaths in Europe (see also the February Newsletter), has registered the death of yet another worker, the third person to die at the factory in the space of a mere four months, while a colleague is in a serious condition. The future of the plant is uncertain and ILVA has ordered 6417 workers to be laid off and put on a reduced, public compensatory wage. In this way, ILVA forces the state to pay the workers' salaries, even though the production stoppage was directly caused by negligence of its board.

English: [http://www.steeltimes.com/international\\_news/Railway\\_workers\\_union\\_calls...](http://www.steeltimes.com/international_news/Railway_workers_union_calls...)

<http://strugglesinitaly.wordpress.com/2013/03/01/en-taranto-and-turin-the-war...>

## **Transport strikes**

*March 8, 2013*

Workers of trains operating in Lazio held a strike on Friday 8 March. The strike action was organised by the Lazio branches of the FILT, FIT, UILT, UGL and FAST trade unions. The protest only involves regional trains; national services are not affected. Other strikes are announced for local transport and airline workers.

English: <http://www.wantedinrome.com/news/2002094/train-strike-in-rome-and-lazio...>

<http://www.summerinitaly.com/planning/strike.asp>

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## **Latvia**

### **More attention needed for safe workplace**

*March 6, 2013*

The number of people killed in workplace accidents in Latvia is twice as high as the average number in Europe. An expert on occupational safety of the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia stated this during the opening a new occupational safety campaign. Between the beginning of January and Feb. 11 of 2013, twelve persons were killed in work-related accidents, a threefold increase when compared to the same period last year, according to information from the State Labour Inspectorate.

English: <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/32641/>

### **Employers object increase of minimum wage**

*March 6, 2013*

The call by the national ombudsman to increase the monthly minimum wage was rejected by the Prime Minister as a target amount that was not realistic. Speaking about the minimum wage the ombudsman referred to the ratification of Article 4 of the European Social Charter in full. Article 4 speaks about just wages. His plea led to proposals to increase the minimum wage with 100 lats to 303 lats (€428). The government received objections from the Latvian Employers' Confederation and has said that a system of gradual increase in the minimum wage must be implemented in the future, balancing this in the interests of social partners, as well as the minimum wage in neighbouring countries.

English: <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/32619/>

<http://www.accessmylibrary.com/article-1G1-319595194/latvian-ombudsman-interviewed...>

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## **Lithuania**

### **Report on economic and social development**

*March 19, 2013*

A new report of the official statistical bureau comes up with graphs and figures over the period 2005-2012. Unemployment decreased in 2012 to 13.2% (from 15.3% in 2011). Compared to the situation in other EU countries the average wage is very low. Average wage decreased sharply in 2009 and remained relatively stable throughout 2010 and 2011. Gross wage growth in 2012 remained modest, and net real wage growth

was still negative, although in absolute terms the 2008 level of the gross wages was almost reached.

English: <http://www.stat.gov.lt/uploads/blog/1364550785.pdf>

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## Luxembourg

### **Investment banker signs social plan**

*March 29, 2013*

Negotiations that took around one month, following the announcement that the company would axe over 200 jobs, have led to a social plan at RBC Investor Services. A joint monitoring committee will supervise the implementation of the social plan. Whilst up to 288 jobs were threatened under cost-cutting measures at this branch of the Royal Bank of Canada, unions managed to reduce the number to 210. Unions, staff representatives and the management agreed compensation payments for employees based on their age and the duration of their time at the company. Additionally, benefit payments will take into account the family situations of employees.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/view/rbc-investor-services-signs-social-plan ...>

### **Strike at Luxair averted**

*March 15, 2013*

A picket line announced by the joint trade unions at Luxair was cancelled after an agreement on the information policy of the company was reached. The aim of the protest was to criticize the non-respect of the information and consultation rights of the workers with regard to the planned decision-making over a new company strategy. Delegates had also asked that a March 18 board meeting should be postponed so that they could analyse the business model in full; however, this request was not granted.

English: <http://www.aws-spn.net/en/view/luxembourg-unions-to-protest-against ...>

German: <http://www.ogbl.lu/de/blog/piquet-de-protestation-du-18-mars-2013-annule/>

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## Malta

### **Fatigue is high**

*March 11, 2013*

According to a Regus report 29 per cent of workers are sleeping less than they wish to fit all their commitments and 42 per cent of workers are sacrificing sleep to fit in work and personal commitments, while over a quarter (27 per cent) feel they have to overcompensate for time taken off for personal matters. The authors say that allowing employees to work closer to home in professional and fully efficient environments can have an important impact on family life and provide workers with a few more minutes' kip each morning. But the benefits are not just for workers, and firms can also improve productivity and retention by introducing flexible working.

English: <http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2013-03-03/news/42-of-maltese-workers ...>

<http://theforum.sph.harvard.edu/events/sleep-deprivation-fighting-the-clock>

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## Netherlands

### **Deal after actions at Albert Heijn distribution centres**

*March 22, 2013*

Workers at Albert Heijn distribution centres went on strike for higher wages and more job security. The members of the FNV union refused the 1.76% pay offer, while trade union CNV had accepted. The FNV was demanding a wage increase of at least 2.5%, in line with inflation, as well as more job security and a regular contract as direct hires for temp agency workers who have been with Albert Heijn for at least 18 months. The company has now agreed that people who worked regularly for the company on agency contracts will be

offered a formal job after three years. Also the redundancy packages for staff that lose their jobs up to 2016 will improve.

English: [http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2013/03/albert\\_heijn\\_fnv...](http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2013/03/albert_heijn_fnv...)  
[http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2013/03/union\\_steps\\_up\\_strikes\\_at\\_albe.php](http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2013/03/union_steps_up_strikes_at_albe.php)

### **Ambulance workers strike**

*March 7, 2013*

Ambulance workers are taking industrial action after negotiations for a collective agreement broke down in February. The workers are taking more time to explain medical issues to patients, cleaning the stretchers and keeping to the regular speed limit and traffic rules. The actions, which are limited to non-emergency services, amongst others point out that the ambulance workers are under too much time pressure. Trade unions have stated that the negotiations have not yielded any agreements in the area of wages, scheduling, work guarantees and retirement schemes.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/9381>

Dutch: <http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/nieuws/nieuws/ambulanceacties-breiden-uit>

### **Unilever workers walk off their jobs**

*March 7, 2013*

Trade union FNV Bondgenoten has embarked on a series of actions following a breakdown in negotiations to secure decent transfer conditions for Unilever workers scheduled to be outsourced to the catering/services giant Sodexo. Unilever has rejected the trade union demands. Under the terms of a Unilever/Sodexo deal struck in 2012, all Unilever 'facility management services' employees in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, Italy, the Nordic countries, the UK, Ireland and Poland directly employed by Unilever or already outsourced to a service provider will be transferred to Sodexo. These include cleaners, catering workers, security, receptionists etc.

English: <http://cms.iuf.org/?q=node/2265>

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## **Norway**

### **Actions against social dumping**

*March 26, 2013*

The trade union confederation LO sent the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise NHO a letter, warning 90 Industri Energi members at Subsea 7 will go on strike in protest against social dumping from 23 April if the oil giant does not comply with demands for equal pay and working conditions for employees. It applies to personnel on multipurpose vessels operating on the Norwegian Continental Shelf.

English: <http://www.aftenbladet.no/energi/aenergy/Norway-union-threatens...>

### **Union wins major court victory for foreign shipyard workers**

*March 6, 2013*

A long lasting legal battle over equal pay for foreign workers in Norwegian shipyards was won by the trade union movement, as the country's supreme court rules that foreign workers have the right to all entitlements in the collective agreement on equal terms with Norwegian workers. Shipyard employers have been hiring foreign, mainly central eastern European workers to perform work for lower wages. The current ruling foresees both in equal wages, as well as equal rights to other allowances like free board, housing and travel.

English: <http://www.newsineenglish.no/2013/03/06/labour-unions-hail-court-victory/>

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## **Poland**

### **Workers in Silesia region strike against government policy**

*March 26, 2013*

Work in the Silesia region came to a standstill as trade unions Solidarity, August 80 and OPZZ organised a regional two-hour 'general strike'. Up to 100,000 transport workers, miners, steel mill and electricity plant workers walked off work, while hospital personnel protested by taking longer to register new patients. The workers are protesting against a change in the labour code toward flexibilisation, as well as against the government's health and education policies.

English: <http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/131142,Silesian-workers-in-general...>  
<http://www.thenews.pl/1/6/Artykul/131211,%E2%80%98General-strike-paralyzes-Silesia>

### **Unions startled by unexpectedly early dismissal round at LOT**

*March 26, 2013*

Unions were shocked by a first round of dismissals at national airlines LOT, which the company aims to finalise before Easter. As reported in the January newsletter, LOT aims to reduce its staff as well as planes by one third in order to turn the tide on heavy losses. While dismissals were expected and have been part of trade union – employer negotiations, the agreed deadline for the layoffs had been November. Up to 230 employees are expected to be laid off in this first round of dismissals.

English: <http://www.wbj.pl/article-62292-lot-to-fire-hundreds-before-easter...>

### **Wages and unemployment increases in parallel**

*March 25, 2013*

Both private sector wages and the unemployment rate increased in the first quarter of 2013, while consumption, price growth and industrial production slowed down. The unemployment rate is currently 14.4% and the average gross salary was zł. 3,709.99 (€886.22).

English: <http://www.wbj.pl/article-62272-wages-rise-sharply-in-february...>  
[http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbrf/gus/AS\\_info\\_socio\\_econo\\_situ\\_country...](http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbrf/gus/AS_info_socio_econo_situ_country...)

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## Portugal

### **TAP workers agree – ground handlers strike**

*March 29, 2013*

Transport workers at airline TAP as well as the railroads had planned to strike from the 21 to 23 March, protesting against the budget cuts and demanding the resignation of the government. Following a range of emergency meetings, however, TAP management and the eight unions representing its workers came to an agreement that led to the cancellation of the strike. In the meantime the employees of the ground-handling unit of Azores regional airline SATA decided to strike in a protest against cuts in overtime and holiday pay, which they say violates existing accords between the company and its workers.

English: <http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/tap-saves-face-after-strike-is-scrapped...>  
<http://www.euronews.com/2013/03/06/portuguese-transport-workers-to-strike...>  
<http://theportugalnews.com/news/tap-cancels-azores-flights-for-friday-sunday/28096>

### **Business leaders call for increase of minimum wage**

*March 8, 2013*

Trade unions and employer confederations disagree with the government's claim that any increase in the national minimum wage would be an extra cost for business and that, in the current context of the economy, it would act as a barrier to employment. The national minimum wage, currently at €485 per month, is the lowest in the Eurozone. Social partners argue that the minimum wage should have been increased towards European rates.

English: <http://algarvedailynews.com/news/9124-portugals-business-leaders-call-for-rise...>

## Romania

### **Romanians in Germany cry out over slavery-like working conditions**

*March 30, 2013*

Fifty Romanian workers at a construction site Nohfelden, near the Luxembourgish border, started a protest over working conditions approaching slavery. Their employer, a subcontractor involved in the building of a holiday village, has not paid the workers in time. They work up to 170 hours per month, do not get regular breaks and sleep with fifteen people in the same room. The workers have contacted both media outlets and the local branches of the building trade union IG Bau. A spokesperson of IG Bau has reacted outraged at information on the working conditions. The union took up immediate action and negotiations with the main contractor led to compensation pay. According to the main contractor the workers' wages were paid to the subcontractors but never transferred to the workers. Workers will be directly engaged as of 1 April and the service contracts with the subcontractor are dissolved.

English: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/romanian-workers-deceived-and?lang=en>

German: <http://www.saarbruecker-zeitung.de/aufmacher/Bostalsee-Skandal-Nohfelden ...>

### **Chemical workers protest**

*March 28, 2013*

Employees of the country's largest chemical producer Oltchim started a protest outside the production unit in Ramnicu Valcea, as they were unhappy with their unpaid salaries and the news that they would be laid off. Over 1,000 workers are affected. Trade unions stated that the production facility in Ramnicu Valcea is working at only 6% of its capacity, and the €45 million promised as working capital never came. The money would have allowed an increase in production to 65%, which would have also kept employees working.

English: <http://www.romania-insider.com/employees-of-romanias-insolvent-chemical ...>

### **Strike at car manufacturer Dacia**

*March 20, 2013*

Over 5000 workers walked off work at car manufacturer Dacia due to anger over a too low wage offer. Trade unions had demanded a 25% pay rise, but Dacia returned a 5% final offer. The new collective agreement is due to be signed on the 31 March and according to a Dacia spokesperson, negotiations are on-going.

English: <http://www.romania-insider.com/workers-at-car-manufacturer-dacias ...>

### **Self-employment popular**

*March 6, 2013*

Around 50% of younger Romanians say self-employment is important for the future, while the European average is 3%. This is the outcome of a study conducted by GfK Nuremberg, Germany. The most important reasons to start up an own business are: second income prospects – 55%, independence from an employer – 30% and self-fulfilment, possibility to realise own ideas – 23%.

English: <http://www.romania-insider.com/more-romanians-deem-self-employment ...>

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## Serbia

### **Wage cut leads to restart**

*March 6, 2013*

The second largest trade union agreed to a 20% wage cut at the country's sole steel plant, which the government wants to restart more than a year after it bought it back from US Steel Corp.

English: [http://www.steeltimes.com/international\\_news/Serbian\\_trade\\_union\\_agrees ...](http://www.steeltimes.com/international_news/Serbian_trade_union_agrees ...)

## Slovakia

### **Salary gap between men and women**

*March 12, 2013*

Women tend to have jobs that are worse paid, and even if they do hold the same posts as men, their salaries are 7% lower. These are the findings of an on-line survey on salaries on the platy.sk ('salaries') web site.

English: [http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/49383/10/survey\\_salary\\_gap...](http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/49383/10/survey_salary_gap...)

### **New labour code reverses decisions of previous government**

*February 25, 2013*

The newly elected left-wing government has passed a labour code that largely reverses all decisions made by the previous government to increase flexibility in the labour market. Prime minister Fico has explained the new labour code restores the balance between workers and employers. The amendments to the labour code give employees who have worked for an employer for less than two years the right to severance pay and increase the pay for other workers, up to 4 months salaries for employees who have worked for an employer for more than 20 years. The law closes loopholes that were used to push people into false self-employment, limits the number of fixed term contracts that can be chained to two within a two-year period and is stricter on equal pay and working conditions. Trade unions have welcomed the new labour code; employers have condemned it, warning that unemployment will increase further due to the new bill.

English: [http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/49213/19/revised\\_labour\\_code\\_gets...](http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/49213/19/revised_labour_code_gets...)

**Focus** on Slovakian industrial relations:

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/country/slovakia.htm>

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## Slovenia

### **Stronger limitations on temporary and agency work**

*March 5, 2013*

On 5 March a law passed to make temporary work more expensive, and therefore less attractive, for employers. Currently, workers in the same position for 2 years must be given an on-going employment contract. The new law means that an employer cannot have a position that is temporary for more than 2 years, regardless of how many people have occupied that position. If the employer does not convert the position to permanent after a 2 year period, severance pay must be paid to the worker. The second legal change introduces a quota for agency work. Temporary agency work must now not exceed 25 per cent of an employer's total workforce.

English: <http://www.industrialunion.org/slovenian-law-changes-to-restrict-precarious-work>

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## Spain

### **Unions and airline come to a deal**

*March 13, 2013*

After accepting a compromise proposal put forward by a government-appointed mediator which would save 666 jobs the IAG-group, owner of Iberia, and the trade unions were working towards a compromise that could end the strikes. The trade unions said they were largely in favour of the proposal, which increases pay-outs for the 3,141 who face redundancy. Further strikes were called off.

English: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/03/13/uk-iag-strike...>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2013/mar/11/iberia-strike-iag-unions>

<http://www.euronews.com/2013/03/11/compromise-over-job-cuts-may-end-iberia-strikes/>

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## Sweden

### **Money raised for stranded guest workers**

*March 7, 2013*

Cameroonian workers that came to Sweden to work for an afforestation company in the northern parts of the country had been promised a monthly salary of €2,150 (see the January Newsletter). Many of the men took big loans to afford going to Sweden and paying for visas. When they arrived, it was no longer a monthly salary but instead a piece rate of €0.02. As a result, the men stranded without work permits. Several fundraising initiatives were launched and together over 900,000 kronor were raised.

English: <http://www.goteborgdaily.se/news/close-to-a-million-raised-for-stranded...>

### **Union demands against split shifts in care sector**

*March 11, 2013*

Municipal union Kommunal has said that in its negotiations in the care sector, it will be putting measures against split shifts at the core of its demands. Many care workers make long days with four hour breaks in between shifts, which are unpaid but do not allow them to go home to really be off work.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/9377>

Swedish: <http://www.kommunal.se/Kommunal/Nyheter/2013/100-000-anstallda...>

### **Equality law on salary surveys ignored**

*March 7, 2013*

Companies with more than 25 employees are required by the Swedish discrimination law to perform salary surveys at least once every three years. In a published review, the trade union Akademikerförbundet SSR warned that public sector employees were increasingly falling behind in their duty to map out incomes. The trade union Unionen has gone so far as to report Halmstad municipality to the Anti-discrimination board for failing to register its employees' salaries.

English: <http://www.thelocal.se/jobs...>

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## Switzerland

### **No to bonuses**

*March 4, 2013*

The vote to wholeheartedly back proposals to impose tough limits on executive pay and ban huge pay-outs to new and departing managers has been both praised and damned in Europe. The initiative proposed by Thomas Minder, the head of a herbal toothpaste company, was backed by all 26 cantons in the country. The plan gives shareholders a veto on compensation as well as banning big so-called 'fat cat' managers' pay-outs.

English: <http://www.euronews.com/2013/03/04/swiss-anti-fat-cat-vote...>

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## Turkey

### **Another raid hits trade union offices**

*March 27, 2013*

Offices of Liman-Is, the National Port and Land Stevedores Union, were raided by security forces on 25 March. Liman-Is reports in a statement that its offices have been severely damaged. The security officers entered the building under the premise of looking for a former unionist who has not worked for Liman-Is since 1999. Liman-Is also stated the real purpose was to damage the union's reputation and perform illegal searches of the offices.

English: <http://labourstartnews.wordpress.com/2013/03/27/security-forces-raid...>

## United Kingdom

### **Post office strike**

*March 30, 2013*

In a dispute over jobs, pay and closures thousands of staff in the country's biggest post offices have decided to go on strike. In around 370 so-called 'crown' offices workers will walk out in protest at plans to close or franchise 70 sites. The Communication Workers Union (CWU) said hundreds of jobs would be affected by the proposals, which it warned could cause further problems for struggling high streets already suffering from shop closures.

English: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2013/mar/29/post-office-staff-strike ...>  
<http://union-news.co.uk/2013/03/post-office-workers-deliver-strike-message ...>

### **Government attempting to curb right to strike**

*March 25, 2013*

The TUC has called on the House of Lords to reject a bill that would prevent 3000 employees of the National Crime Agency from taking industrial action in the future. The Crime and Courts Bill contains clauses against the right to strike, which the TUC points out is a fundamental right. In a press release, the TUC calls the bill the start of yet another attack on public sector workers.

English: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace/tuc-22046-fo.cfm>

### **Yorkshire Ambulance Service de-recognises Unite in midst of industrial dispute**

*March 19, 2013*

In the middle of an industrial dispute over patient safety, the Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust has de-recognised Unite. Paramedics have reacted to this de-recognition by voting to strike. The paramedics are instating an overtime ban and will strike on 2 April. The conflict originates from the trust's plans to replace some fully-trained paramedics by 'emergency care assistants', who will have had only six week training. The ambulance service plans to cut costs by teaming up a fully trained paramedic and an emergency care assistant in each ambulance, rather than sending two paramedics.

English: <http://union-news.co.uk/2013/03/paramedics-vote-for-strike-action-after ...>

### **Local council jobs down by 380,500 since 2010**

*March 11, 2013*

GMB, the union for public service workers, conducted an analysis of official data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and found that the number of employees in Local Authorities fell from 2,559,000 in Q1 2010 to 2,178,500 in Q3 2012. This is fall of 380,500 or -14.7% in numbers employed by the councils since the general election in 2010. Most of these are job losses arise from freezing vacancies, redundancies and natural wastage resulting from budget cuts. Some of the fall in numbers arises due to movement between public and private sectors. Meanwhile, the remaining local government employees are fighting for a wage increase, with employers refusing to exceed a 1% increase offer.

English: [http://www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/latest\\_news/council\\_jobs\\_down ...](http://www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/latest_news/council_jobs_down ...) ;  
<http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease ...>

### **Skanska director checked every worker**

*March 5, 2013*

The scandal around the blacklisting of trade union activists reveals every day new facts. In a recent evidence session it came out that Skanska's former director of Industrial Relations blacklisted every electrician employed on the Jubilee Line project. In one example a worker was subsequently denied work on 15 occasions due to having been blacklisted. Blacklisting activities were specifically targeted at workers employed by sub-contractors rather than those who were employed directly by Skanska. Workers for a sub-contractor completed a 'pre-induction questionnaire' which was then sent to the Consulting Association. If a name was flagged up, 'a decision was made whether to let the person on [site] or not'. If Skanska's decision was not to allow the person on to the site the sub-contractor was phoned and told of the decision. In the final

years of the Consulting Association's existence Skanska made 66,000 blacklisting checks and 8 of the company's 12 units used the Consulting Association.

English: [https://www.ucatt.org.uk/article.php?group\\_id=1915](https://www.ucatt.org.uk/article.php?group_id=1915)

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