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collective bargaining

Issue 9/2013 September

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

Trade union's challenges

September 16, 2013

Rebecca Gumbrell-McCormick and Richard Hyman presented the key findings of a study of trade unions in 10 Western European countries, in which they explored responses to the challenges which confront them. Governments profess their inability to resist the dictates of global economic forces; major companies are almost universally transnational in their ownership and production strategies; collective bargaining power has declined, as has the trade union influence on government and, in some countries, their public respect. But hard times can stimulate new thinking and hence provide new opportunities; the challenge is to review unions' purposes and priorities and to devise new ways of achieving these.

English: <http://column.global-labour-university.org/2013/09/trade-unions-in-western-europe ...>

Competitiveness report published

September 6, 2013

The World Economic Forum has published its Global Competitiveness Report 2012-2013 that assesses the competitiveness landscape of 144 economies, providing insight into the drivers of productivity and prosperity. Switzerland retains its first place. Besides Singapore (2nd) the ranking is dominated by Northern and Western European countries with regulated markets. Therefore, this report can hardly be a further argument for deregulation. Some of the presumptions are questionable: for instance in the pillar *Labour market flexibility* more points are allocated to wage bargaining at decentralised level than to centralised bargaining processes.

English: <http://www.weforum.org/reports/global-competitiveness-report-2012-2013>
http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GlobalCompetitivenessReport_2012-13.pdf

Internship poorly paid

September 3, 2013

Young people who flock to European capitals like Brussels each year for internships often face uncertain conditions as many are badly supervised, and poorly paid. A 2011 survey by the European Youth Forum (YFJ) found that three out of four interns receive no or insufficient compensation for their work. In July this year, about 200 interns held a Protest at Place du Luxembourg in Brussels outside the Parliament. The idea is now to develop a system, to rate employers who receive a label, certifying how they perform against certain criteria including remuneration and training.

English: <http://www.equaltimes.org/news/brussels-interns-demand-decent-work>

Austria

Part-time trap must come to an end

September 9, 2013

Reacting on a report on part-time work, the affiliates of the trade union confederation ÖGB have stated that the payment gap between fulltime and part-time workers needs to be challenged. The report indicates that part-time workers earn up to 25% less, a fact that strongly influences the pensions of these workers. With 84% women presented in the figures old age poverty becomes a serious threat for large parts of the population.

German: <http://zfzsalzburg.wordpress.com/2013/08/28/unfreiwillige-teilzeitbeschäftigung/>
<http://www.oegb.at/servlet/ContentServer ...>

New model for Saturday work in retail

September 6, 2013

An alternative to existing Saturday work rules was agreed by the social partners, the commerce section of the

Federal Economic Chamber (WKO) and the Union of Salaried Employees, Graphical Workers and Journalists (GPA-djp). The new model allows for regular work on Saturdays, but changes the emphasis for employees. It gives workers an entitlement to five prolonged bonus 'super weekends' in a 26-week reference period. These long weekends will last from Friday to Sunday or from Saturday to Monday, and must be set out either in works agreements or in individual agreements in companies with no works council.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2013/08/articles/at1308011.htm>

Belgium

Deal at Brussels airport

September 6, 2013

Management and the trades unions at Brussels Airlines reached a compromise that should help ease the workload on cabin crew. The unions representing the cabin crew announced in a joint statement that a strike has probably been averted. The agreement contains two elements. In the short term, pressure of work on cabin crew will be addressed by a number of concrete measures that will be taken over the coming months. In the longer term, a framework will be drawn up to spread the workload more equitably.

English: http://www.deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/Economy/130906_No_Strike

48 hours strike against work pressure ended

September 1, 2013

Workers at the chemicals company Tessenderlo Chemie in the town of Ham stopped working for 48 hours in protest against a planned production expansion and the work pressure that causes serious health and safety risks. According to the trade unions, the planned production increase would lead to higher work pressure which could put at risk employee safety. The unions stated that they are against the hiring of an external consultant in the coming restructuring process. The strike ended with better guarantees for workers' health.

English: <http://www.deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/videozone ...>

Bulgaria

Postal workers block crossroad

September 25, 2013

1000 employees of state-owned postal operator Bulgarian Posts EAD staged a protest in front of the government building in downtown Sofia. EAD is in a poor financial condition and the government is considering various options to stabilise the operator. The protesters demanded the transfer of the due compensation for 2011 by the state for the universal postal service and an increase in salaries. The employees of EAD do not want the company closed but would like to see a stabilisation program implemented so that the postal operator can keep functioning.

English: <http://www.novinite.com/articles/153938/Bulgarian+Posts ...>

Request for ban in public procurement

September 17, 2013

The Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CITUB) requests the banning of offshore firms from taking part in public procurement. CITUB is concerned that such a measure is absent from the current bill amending and supplementing the Public Procurement Act (PPA). The confederation insists that a ban on companies which fail to pay social security contributions is insufficient and the amended PPA should also prevent businesses which pay salaries irregularly from participating in public procurement tendering procedures.

English: <http://www.novinite.com/articles/153725/Bulgarian+Trade+Union+Calls ...>

No job cuts in state-owned companies

September 3, 2013

In reaction to trade union representatives that were to decide on the launch of a strike over plans to cut the workforce by 10% the government has stated that there will be no staff cuts at the State Railways company (BDZ) or the state-owned postal operator Bulgarian Posts EAD. It was added that the only job losses which could be expected concerned employees reaching retirement age.

English: <http://www.novinite.com/articles/153342/No+Staff+Cuts+at+Bulgarian+...>

Croatia

Health care workers on strike

September 18, 2013

Health care workers went on strike on 17 September over budget cuts that have left them without overtime pay and pay for staff on call. According to the trade unions, 46,000 nurses and doctors joined the strike, which continued to guarantee emergency services. The nurses' union reported widespread intimidation of striking nurses by hospital managements, who demanded lists of nurses participating and made threats of dismissals. The benefits were scrapped earlier this year due to the state's budget deficit. This is the first time since 2005 that health care staff is on strike.

English: <http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=n315048>

<http://dalje.com/en-croatia/nurses-union-to-report-hospital-directors-over-pressure...>

Quality of life surveyed

September 3, 2013

Eurofound published profiles on the quality of life in seven EU enlargement countries based on the 3rd European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) that took place in 2012. The EQLS serves as a source of information on living conditions, housing, local environment, health, public services, social cohesion and quality of society, as well as subjective well-being. Some of the Croatian results are worth mentioning. The poverty rate of 21% is higher than the EU27 average (16%), while income inequality, a Gini coefficient of 31 in 2011, is similar to the EU27 average of 30.7. The perceived social exclusion index (2.4) is above the EU average (2.2).

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2013/501/en/1/EF13501EN.pdf>

Focus on EQLS: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys/eqls/2011/enlargementcountries...>

Cuts in salary announced

September 1, 2013

About 13,500 employees of the heavily indebted public company Zagreb Holding will face pay cuts and layoffs within the next year. The local government is preparing the restructuring of the Holding and putting some of its businesses on the market. This will be followed by drastic rationalisation of the number of the employees. Shortly before an extraordinary City Assembly session the mayor of the Croatian capital said either 20% of the 13,500 employees would be laid off or salaries would be slashed by 20%. He said the cuts would have to be negotiated with the unions, voicing confidence that an agreement with them was within reach.

English: <http://globserver.cn/en/europe/press/zagreb-cut-public-employees-salaries>

<http://daily.tportal.hr/280543/Zagreb-mayor-announces-20-in-layoffs-or-salary-cuts...>

Cyprus

Allowances in health care possibly abolished

September 25, 2013

A finance ministry proposal to abolish allowances for those working in state hospitals during afternoons, Sundays and on public holidays was brought to light during a meeting between civil servants union PASYDY and the finance ministry. It can bring to an end the extra pay given to all public professionals for working

outside standard working hours. These are allowances for shift work that were put in place in 1989 after a 17 day strike. Nurses already accepted a 30% cut on their wages and a 15% cut on the amount they receive for extra work on afternoons, Sundays and national holidays.

English: <http://cyprus-mail.com/2013/09/25/nurses-mull-strike-over-cuts/>

Guaranteed minimum income discussed

September 10, 2013

In a meeting of the National Council for the Economy the privatisations and other major issues concerning the forthcoming structural changes, especially on issues of health and social policy, were tabled. The Council studied in depth the government's proposal for a guaranteed minimum income and endorsed this social measure. Other suggestions that can be implemented will be discussed in depth with the Minister of Labour.

English: <http://famagusta-gazette.com/cyta-eac-and-others-face-privatization-talks...>

Czech Republic

Moravia miners protest against 20% wage – mine is closed down

September 17, 2013

Miners from North Moravia came together in Ostrava, to protest against impending wage cuts. Management of the indebted mining company OKD has announced it is seeking a 20% reduction in wage cuts. In a draft collective agreement for 2014-2018 it presented to the trade unions, the company is cutting all bonuses, 13th and 14th month salaries and contributions into private health insurance and pension plans. The miners are fighting to keep their wages and fear more cuts are to come. Management has already agreed to 30-50% cuts in their own wages while administrative staff was reduced by 250 people and accepted a 10% wage cut. On the same day as the protest ODK's parent company in Amsterdam, New World Resources (NWR) announced it is closing down one of the sites, the Paskov mine, laying off 3,000 miners. The Prime Minister reacted publicly to an ODK-request that the government does not intend to save the plant.

English: <http://www.lse.co.uk/macroeconomicNews...>

<http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/miners-draw-attention-to-their-plight...>

<http://praguemonitor.com/2013/09/06/okd-presents-new-agreement-draft...>

New minimum wage comes into force

September 17, 2013

In August, the minimum wage raised from CZK 8,000 (€310) to CZK 8,500 (€330). The minimum wage has been a hotly debate issue since trade unions started calling for an increase, that the then right wing government vehemently opposed. The new caretaker government that came into power just before the summer said maintaining purchasing power of the lowest paid workers was a priority and increased the minimum wage as one of its first actions in office. Roughly 3% of Czech workers earn the minimum wage and will see their wages increase due to the change. The minimum wage was raised in 2007 for the last time.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2013/08/articles/cz1308019i.htm>

Denmark

Controversy over advice to avoid unions

September 16, 2013

The trade union 3F reported that a Polish embassy manual, amongst other things, urged Polish companies not to inform trade unions about employee salaries and claimed that Danish unions could act illegally. The embassy has produced the 103-page manual, titled 'Manual for Polish Companies' with the aim to present the rules of the labour market in a clear and impartial way. While vehemently denying that they had undermined the unions, the embassy did concede that they could have taken some precautions in regards to the manual. 3F criticism is also towards the attorney that compiled the manual. This consultant has been

accused of cheating Polish workers out of their wages in a number of cases.

English: <http://cphpost.dk/business/polish-embassy-denies-undermining-unions>

<http://cphpost.dk/business/polish-embassy-hot-water-over-anti-union-manual>

Pay cuts in exchange for investment

September 4, 2013

Meat packer Danish Crown and trade union representatives put forward an agreement that would see slaughterhouse workers accept pay cuts in exchange for the company investing an equal amount in domestic pig farming in order to promote increased production. Labour market experts call the pending agreement that would take a pay cut in exchange for the employer investing in the company a precedent that could become common practice among businesses seeking a way to deal with high wages and low productivity.

English: <http://cphpost.dk/business/pay-cut-deal-could-set-precedent>

<http://cphpost.dk/business/political-praise-pay-cut>

Estonia

Wage increase and expectations surveyed

September 12, 2013

A nationwide annual salary and market forecast survey by Fontes shows that wages have been increasing this year faster than in any of the past five years. The study shows that basic monthly wages have increased in average 9%. Wage expectations of people are growing, regardless of whether they are earning lower and higher wages. A survey of job advertisements made in the 2nd quarter of 2013 shows that in average, enterprises offered employees €963 a month, an increase of 24.4% year compared to the corresponding period a year ago. It's also 13% higher than in the 1st quarter. Analysts say that that the growth in the 2nd quarter was financed mainly by the increase in corporate profits. According to Wages and Salaries Statistic Survey published by Statistic Estonia the wages and salaries in the 2nd quarter increased 8.5% on year.

English: <http://news.postimees.ee/1371042/survey-pay-offers-increase-24-pct-on-year-in-q2>

<http://balticbusinessnews.com/article/2013/9/4/estonian-analyst-wage-growth-funded...>

<http://balticbusinessnews.com/article/2013/9/12/expert-wage-expecations-higher-than...>

Finland

Seven hundred jobs to lose at cruise liner yard

September 17, 2013

Ship builder STX Finland has announced it will be closing down the Rauma cruise liner yard in 2014 and move operations to Turku shipyard. The move is made due to low demand and STX hopes to make the company profitable again. The closure of the Rauma yard is expected to cost 700 jobs.

English: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/09/17/finnish-cruise-liner-yard...>

Central agreement concluded

September 6, 2013

The trade union confederations SAK, STTK and Akava reached a central agreement on wages and salaries with the employers' organisations on Friday 30 August. The agreement offers a modest rise in pay across the board over the next two years. All monthly salaries will be raised by a flat rate of €20 beginning four months after the agreement is valid. A year later salaries will be increased by 0.4%. The agreement covers two years with an option to extend it for a third year. The fate of the national agreement is now in the hands of the different unions and employer organisations that have until 25 October to bargain for new collective agreements within their branches. If there are enough unions and branches willing to accept the national agreement, it will become valid.

English: <http://www.jokinen.kaapeli.fi/index.php/en/trade-union-news-from-finland...>

France

Agency workers Park Hyatt Paris Vendôme Hotel on strike

September 24, 2013

Workers at the five-star Park Hyatt Paris Vendôme Hotel went on strike for pay rises, better working conditions and direct employment. The majority of the 60 housekeeping staff and valets who participated in the industrial action are employed via service agency La Française de Service. CGT representatives said the direct hired staff of Hyatt supports the action but fears repercussions if they participate. The Paris Hyatt management said to be 'in no way involved' and referred to the maintenance subcontractor.

English: <http://cms.iuf.org/?q=node/2783>

<http://www.france24.com/en/20130920-paris-hyatt-hotel-housekeepers-go-strike>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/french-chambermaids-strike-over-pay ...>

TUI group restructures

September 7, 2013

The tourism and travel company TUI announced a restructuring of its activities (the travel agencies and tour operators Nouvelles Frontières and Marmara, the airline company Corsair) with over 300 job losses. According to the management, 306 jobs will be cut, however data are disputed between unions and management. A voluntary departure plan affecting 247 employees with the closure of about 26 agencies (129 employees) and job cuts in headquarter (118) was confirmed by both unions and employers during an extraordinary works council meeting. The trade unions have planned a mobilisation against the overall restructuring plan and ask for meetings with the main shareholders in London and Hannover.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/emcc/erm/factsheets/25161>

French: <http://www.lesechos.fr/entreprises-secteurs/service-distribution/actu ...>

<http://www.liberation.fr/societe/2013/09/06/le-voyagiste-tui-france-supprime ...>

Germany

Siemens plans giant job cuts

September 29, 2013

Siemens is to shed 15,000 jobs over the next year, a third of them in Germany, as part of a 6 billion euro cost cutting program. Siemens and the trade unions have negotiated an agreement over about half of the job cuts and a deal on the other half will follow, according to a company spokesman. No workers have been laid off so far and Siemens has said it does not intend to make enforced redundancies, relying instead on attrition and voluntary severance deals. In Germany, about 2,000 jobs will be cut at the company's industrial unit and another 1,400 at its energy and infrastructure business.

English: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/09/29/business-us-siemens-jobs ...>

German: <http://www.handelsblatt.com/unternehmen/industrie/abbau-von-15-000-stellen ...>

<http://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/unternehmen/siemens-streicht-weltweit-15-000 ...>

Workers protest at IKEA headquarters

September 27, 2013

Workers from fourteen IKEA stores and one call centre have rallied in front of the IKEA headquarters in Wallau, near Frankfurt. The workers are protesting against deteriorating pay and working conditions since IKEA broke away from the sector-wide collective agreement earlier this year. IKEA management's attempt to curb the protests by increasing salaries by 2.5% in August has not avoided further strikes by workers demanding better pay, more say over working hours and fewer overnight and late work shifts.

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

More strikes at Amazon

September 19, 2013

After months of action, Amazon staff continues to fight for higher pay and has organised strike actions in Leipzig and Bad Hersfeld. The workers, whose struggle has been documented in these newsletters, demand that Amazon apply the regular collective agreement of the sector and the start of full-fledged collective bargaining at the company.

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

<http://www.thenewstribune.com/2013/09/20/2794768/amazon-workers-strike-at-german...>

Metal agreement increases minimum wage temp workers

September 18, 2013

IG Metall has concluded a new agreement with employers' associations IGZ and BAP to increase the pay of temporary workers. The agreement will come into force on 1 January 2014 and will be valid until the end of 2016. In three steps, the wages of temp workers will increase with 9.6% in West Germany and with 12.8% in East Germany. The agreement sets a minimum wage of €8.50 per hour and prohibits companies from employing temporary workers as strike breakers. IG Metall has called for more actions to curb precarious work.

English: <http://www.industriall-union.org/german-unions-curb-precarious-work>

Greece

Public sector strike

September 24, 2013

ADEDY, the public sector umbrella union, organised a 48-hour strike against plans to cut thousands of public sector jobs. The trade union said government efforts to reduce the 600,000 strong civil services was 'the most merciless plan' to eliminate workers' rights. The government is firing workers indiscriminately at a time when the country is enduring its worst peacetime crisis and record unemployment. The labour action also turned into a protest to mark the killing of an anti-racism rapper by a self-proclaimed supporter of the far-right Golden Dawn.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/24/us-greece-strike...>

Health care workers on strike as hospitals are turned into health centres

September 15, 2013

Health care workers organise new industrial actions as reforms lead to eight Athens and Thessaloniki hospitals are turned into health centres and 1,618 employees are to be transferred. In the latest reform aimed at reducing the public health care budget by 25%, the government is reducing small hospitals to health centres or rehabilitation centres. Health workers say the cuts are jeopardising the quality and availability of public services, and will lead to a growth in private hospitals.

English: <http://www.ekathimerini.com/4degi...>

Teachers go on strike

September 10, 2013

The high school teaching trade unions have voted to hold long-term strikes against public sector staff cuts ordered by the government as part of its bailout agreements. University staff has suspended all operations for one week in protest at the staff cuts. Other universities are considering similar action. Hundreds of administrative staff members held a protest march through central Athens.

English: <http://www.independent.ie/world-news/greek-teachers-strike-over-job-cuts...>

Hungary

Union wants compensation for transaction fee

September 10, 2013

According to a trade union spokesperson companies should be able to pay compensation to employees without incurring any related costs for the tax on bank transactions that is calculated for the payment of wages. If a solution is not forthcoming, the unions demand that employees should be paid their wages in cash to avoid the transaction fee.

English: <http://www.politics.hu/20130910/union-initiates-compensation-for-transaction-fee ...>

Iceland

Life satisfaction and income

September 3, 2013

The European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) is a survey that serves as a source of information on living conditions, housing, local environment, health, public services, social cohesion and quality of society, as well as subjective well-being. In the country profile on the quality of life based on the third EQLS and published by Eurofound the conclusion is drawn that in Iceland income is by far the most important predictor of life satisfaction. The employment rate for women in Iceland (77%) is the highest in Europe. Work-life conflict is experienced by 54% of people, a similar level to the EU27 average of 56%.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2013 ...>

Ireland

Bargaining powers restored?

September 19, 2013

The government is expected to consider reforms to give trade unions greater rights to collectively bargain on the part of workers later in 2013 and to introduce legislation to restore registered employment agreements as a mechanism for setting pay and conditions for thousands of workers. The system of wage determination was struck down by the courts early in the summer of 2013.

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/government-to-grant-unions-greater ...>

Strike action averted at EBS

September 11, 2013

Head office staff at the state-owned bank EBS could begin strike action after talks between trade unions and management at the Labour Relations Commission broke down. At the heart of the dispute is a bonus payment known as the '13-month' that was paid to staff at the EBS Building Society before it was bailed out by taxpayers and the merger with AIB. The strike was called off after EBS agreed to pay the 13th month bonuses dating back to 2011 along with the October salaries. The EBS workers will receive at least €789 in bonuses now.

English: <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/ebs-strike-averted-as-bank-pays-bonuses ...>

<http://www.independent.ie/business/irish/ebs-staff-could-strike-tomorrow-over-loss ...>

Marks & Spencer deal averts strike

September 9, 2013

A planned strike at Marks & Spencer stores has been averted after the union representing workers reached an agreement with store bosses. Trade union Mandate and Marks & Spencer negotiated a settlement which was balloted on and accepted by the members in the four stores.

English: <http://www.independent.ie/business/irish/marks-spencer-strike-averted ...>

Italy

Banking sector collective agreement is cancelled

September 17, 2013

The Italian Banking Association (ABI) has cancelled the collective agreement for the banking sector, which was supposed to be valid until June 2014. Unions have called for a general strike on 31 October. Banking sector unions have judged the repealing of the collective agreement as an attack on workers' rights and have demanded banks cut the pay of their executives instead of that of 330,000 employees.

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

<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/09/16/uk-italy-banks-strike...>

Union representation at FIAT

September 11, 2013

Carmaker FIAT has invited the trade union FIOM to appoint their representatives at the enterprise after the Constitutional Court's corner stone decision, which declared that unions should not be discriminated based on their decision to refuse signing a collective agreement (see also the July/August Newsletter). The decision resulted from a continuous fight by the FIOM in numerous court cases for nearly three years.

English: <http://www.industriall-union.org/fiom-representatives-are-back-at-fiat>

Latvia

Increases in wages

September 5, 2013

An annual remuneration study by Fontes company shows that monthly salaries increased by 2.8% in the last year, while yearly salaries increased by 3.8%. The study also shows that 78% of Latvians still earn exactly the same wage as a year before, whereas 20.5% earned on average 11.1% more and 1.5% experienced a decrease in their wages.

English: <http://bnn-news.com/51-latvias-working-population-received-bonus-money-year...>

Lithuania

Collective agreement for healthcare workers in the making

September 9, 2013

The tripartite council of the National Health System (L NSS) agreed to prepare a sectoral collective agreement in the nearest future. It will regulate core obligations of the L NSS employers and employees, labour relations, holidays, payment, working conditions and other matters. A working group has been formed to draft the L NSS collective agreement. Trade unions of medics, employers and governmental representatives will delegate three persons each to the working group.

English: http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/markets_and_companies...

Wage development published

September 9, 2013

According to data presented by Statistics Lithuania, average monthly gross salary increased in companies, institutions and organisations (sole proprietorships excluded) in all districts in the second quarter of 2013 compared to the first quarter. In the second quarter of 2013 highest average monthly gross salary was in Vilnius district (LTL 2,515 or € 728). Among other factors, the increase of salaries in the second quarter was influenced by seasonal fluctuations and greater volume of work.

English: <http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/50016/average-monthly-salary-rises-in-lithuanian ...>

Luxembourg

Bankruptcy reveals web of management structures

September 6, 2013

Trade union OGBL and workers representatives at the bankrupt FCPE group, which ran shops that suddenly closed their doors, have started to untie the puzzle of the complex web of management structures of the group. Seventeen companies running around 20 stores are tied to FCPE. The OGBL was not able to give an exact number of employees affected by the closures, though reports indicate that at least 70 members of staff are affected. Employees had not been paid their wages for August and the group had not paid social contributions for its employees for some time.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/view/efforts-to-help-sales-staff-underway ...>

Social plan talks postponed

September 2, 2013

ABN AMRO plans to lay off a fifth of staff at its offices, according to the banking trade union. The branch, which has offices in Kirchberg, plans to axe up to 30 jobs from its 153-strong workforce and intends to negotiate on a social plan with the unions. The trade unions have asked more time to gather certain documents regarding working hours in an effort to lower the number of redundancies required and avoid creating a new social plan.

English: <http://delano.lu/news/dutch-bank-plans-double-digit-staff-cut>

<http://www.wort.lu/en/view/negotiations-with-abn-amro-put-back ...>

Malta

Tighter regulation of public contracts

September 6, 2013

The government has introduced new conditions for employers who win government contracts. The measures to combat precarious work have been particularly welcomed by the General Workers' Union which has been campaigning for some time for tighter regulation of government contractors. Employers, however, say the government has not consulted them properly, and the strict new rules will damage the private sector, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2013/07/articles ...>

Netherlands

Sudden bankruptcy tour operator means giant loss of jobs

September 27, 2013

The bankruptcy of OAD (Overijsselse Autobusdiensten), a leading tour operator that owned over 140 travel shops, has caused a stir among the other EU and especially Dutch travel companies. Even though OAD had previously announced in March to start with a new on-line strategy this has been too little and too late. The legal curator for OAD has informed the trade unions that all 1750 OAD employees will be laid-off because the administrator cannot meet salaries payments for September.

English: <http://www.germany-north.com/blog/2013/09/27/dutch-oad-company-files-for ...>

Unprecedented cuts expected at publisher Sanoma

September 20, 2013

Finnish based media company Sanoma is looking at major layoffs in its Dutch publications with editors asked to submit cost-cutting proposals as part of a strategic review. The number of jobs to be cut is still

unclear, but Sanoma has already applied for collective redundancies and invited unions for consultations in November for what insiders call a restructuring at an unprecedented scale. Sanoma is also looking for savings and possible divestments in Russia, Hungary and Belgium.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/20/sanoma ...>

Unions announce wage demands

September 16, 2013

The biggest trade union of the country, FNV, has antagonised employers by announcing it will be seeking a 3% wage increase across the board in this year's collective agreement negotiations. The second biggest union, CNV, followed shortly after and will be aiming for wage increases between 1.5% and 3.5% depending on the sector.

English: http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2013/09/a_hot_autumn_ahead ...

Dutch: <http://www.metronieuws.nl/nieuws/cnv-wil-1-5-tot-3-5-procent-meer-loon ...>

Labour migration and social dumping

September 9, 2013

The ministry of Social Affairs and Employment is setting up a research project to look at claims that people are being squeezed out of jobs by cheaper workers from eastern Europe. At the same time, the ministry is pressing ahead with controversial plans to force EU 'labour migrants' to sign 'participation contracts' pledging to obey the existing laws when they arrive. The ministry also made agreements with supermarkets and the agricultural sector to ensure workers are not exploited. This means making sure they are paid in line with sector-wide collective agreements, do not work longer than allowed by law and are not employed via dummy jobs agencies.

English: http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2013/09/eu_labour_migration_in_spot ...

Norway

Unions take state to court over forced arbitration

September 23, 2013

Trade unions SAFE, Industri Energi, the Confederation of Vocational Unions (YS) and the Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) have initiated a lawsuit against the state in front of the ILO. The unions claim that the forced arbitration process that the government imposed on the Norwegian Continental Shelf collective agreement last year was a breach of fundamental trade union rights. The trade unions argue that the strike at Norway Continental Shelf was deliberately set up in such a way that it would not compromise gas supplies to Europe and therefore posed no threat to the general welfare or to economic prosperity. The forced arbitration occurred when Norway Continental Shelf threatened a full lock out in response to the limited strike, in so doing 'ordering compulsory arbitration from the government', trade unions say.

English: <http://www.aftenbladet.no/energi/aenergy/Four-unions-file-suit-against-Norway ...>

Dispute unions and employers over equal treatment of agency workers

September 20, 2013

Trade unions and employers' organisation Norsk Industri have started a row over the equal treatment of agency workers. The disagreement originates in the interpretation of the temporary agency Directive that came into force on 1 January 2013. Norsk Industri has argued that the equal treatment legislated in the directive is limited to wages, whereas trade unions argue that the Directive gives agency workers the right to travel reimbursement, room and board and the so-called 'town allowance', which is a 20% above base salary allowance for working away from home. If unions and employers fail to come to an agreement, the matter will be settled in court.

English: <http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/Research-Publications/Daily-News/Norway ...>

Poland

Unions united against precarious work and pension reform

September 11, 2013

The three largest trade unions, Trade Unions Forum (FZZ), the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ) and the NSZZ Solidarnosc, have organised a four-day demonstration against the government's labour market policies. The unions demand a withdrawal of a law that will make more flexible contracts possible, the rejection of the pension reform that will increase the retirement age to 67 and a higher pay for workers across the board. The demonstrations are estimated to have mobilised up to 100,000 people.

English: <http://www.industrialunion.org/polish-unions-in-mass-demonstrations-condemning-government-policy>

<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/wireStory/polish-unionists-march-government-policy-20256309>

<http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/147250,Unionists-hold-protest-finale-in-Warsaw>

Portugal

Unions to challenge longer working hours in court

September 5, 2013

The Tax Office Workers Trade Union is taking the Government to court over rising of the civil servants' working week to 40 hours. The union states the austerity measures are in violation of the constitutional right to decent working condition.

English: <http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/first-40-hour-week-legal-challenge...>

Court rejects labour bill

September 1, 2013

The Constitutional Court dealt a blow to government efforts to cut spending and keep the country's EU/IMF bailout on track, rejecting a bill that would have effectively allowed the state to fire public sector workers. The court decided to deem the norms of the bill unconstitutional 'due to the violation of guarantees of secure employment'. The court has rejected large parts of the government's deficit-cutting plans twice since the country accepted a bailout in mid-2011, each time forcing it to come up with alternative measures.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/29/portugal-austerity-court...>

<http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/business/portugal-reels-after/796600.html>

Romania

Ford employees on technical unemployment to compensate low demand

September 23, 2013

Car manufacturer Ford will send 2,500 employees working on the B-Max model into technical unemployment for 13 days. This is the second time the division is send into technical unemployment, after having been so for a week earlier this year. During technical unemployment, the workers receive 80% of their normal pay. Workers in the engine division will continue to work normal schedules.

English: <http://www.romania-insider.com/ford-to-send-2500-employees-in-romania-into...>

Protest against gold mining successful

September 10, 2013

Thousands of people marched through the streets of Bucharest in one of the biggest protests against the Rosia Montana mining project since demonstrations against the use of cyanide and its impact on the environment began. Protests across the country began after the Government backed a draft bill that will

allow Rosia Montana Gold Corporation (RMGC) to begin extracting gold in central Romania. By classifying the project as a 'special national interest', the law aims to smooth what would otherwise be a complicated legal path for the company, which is majority owned by Canadian firm Gabriel Resources. After a week of protests, a majority against the law appeared to be emerging in Parliament and members of the Government withdrew their support for the law, advising MPs to vote against it.

English: <http://www.romania-insider.com/thousands-take-to-the-streets-in-bucharest ...>
<http://www.romania-insider.com/romanian-pm-says-rosia-montana-gold-mine-is-case ...>

Layoffs at Posta Romana

September 4, 2013

Romanian Post has laid off 11% of its workforce in an attempt to halt rising debts and adjust to greater competition since the liberalisation of the market on 1 January 2013. In total, 3650 employees were laid off. Of the former employees, 2392 chose to enlist in the collective redundancy scheme, whereas 1268 were singled out after professional tests.

English: <http://www.romania-insider.com/romanian-post-lays-off-over-3600-employees ...>

Serbia

Life satisfaction below average

September 2, 2013

The country profile on the quality of life published by Eurofound and based on the third European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) reports on living conditions, housing, local environment, health, public services, social cohesion and quality of society, as well as subjective well-being. Life satisfaction scores at 6.3 on a scale of 1 to 10. This is far below the average of 7.1 for the EU27, where life satisfaction levels range from 5.5 in Bulgaria to 8.4 in Denmark. Around 31% of Serbians have difficulties making ends meet, placing the country in the lowest third of countries surveyed according to this indicator. Moreover, it has the highest proportion of people suffering from work-life conflict (80%) of all the countries surveyed.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2013 ...>

Slovakia

Second pillar pension funds underperforming

September 11, 2013

According to an analysis by the Financial Policy Institute (IFP) which runs under the Finance Ministry the clients of the companies managing funds within the country's second, privately administered pension pillar have not earned as much money as they could. The analysis compared profits in the second pension pillar scheme with the performance of similar investments abroad.

English: http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/51307/10/second_pillar_pension_fund ...

Slovenia

Unions prepare protest as attack on minimum wage is rumoured

September 23, 2013

As rumours of a possible cut in the minimum wage through the 2014 budget process are spreading, trade unions have announced they will defend the currently level of minimum wage (€599.73 net), whatever it takes. While the date of a protest has not been set yet, unions have already announced that there will be a large protest if attempts are made to cut the minimum wage.

English: <http://www.sta.si/en/vest ...>

Social partners support more controls on job agencies

September 14, 2013

In the Economic and Social Council, both employers' organisations and trade unions have expressed support for amendments to the labour market act, aimed at regulating job agencies. The amendment introduces new criteria for temping and recruitment agencies, which are supposed to avoid bogus constructions. Agencies will be obliged to conduct recruitment as their main activity, will have to be Slovenian or have fully fledged subsidiaries in Slovenia and will be required to have greater capital shares. Fines for abuse are increased.

English: <http://www.sloveniatimes.com/social-partners-back-tighter-rules-for-job-agencies>

Spain

Teachers strike on Balearic islands

September 23, 2013

Schools have not yet started on the Balearic islands (Mallorca, Menorca, Ibiza and Formentera) as 6,000 teachers have gone on indefinite strike. The teachers are protesting against cuts, which have increased working time from 35 to 37.5 hours per week, reduced salaries by 25% and left them with 1000 teachers less than last year to educate the same number of children. The strike, however, is further fuelled by a language reform which downgrades the status of the Balearic language (a version of Catalan) to the same level as Spanish and English in the school curriculum. University lecturers have walked off the job to support their colleagues in primary and secondary education.

English: <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/55002>

Hotel Mercure Plaza housekeepers protest against job losses

September 18, 2013

Housekeeping staff of the Hotel Mercure Plaza has organised a strike against announced layoffs. The hotel is planning to dismiss the staff in what unions suspect is an attempt to hire cheaper external staff instead. As the hotel has not announced any other reorganisations or closure, rooms will still need to be cleaned and therefore the cleaning jobs will continue to exist. Housekeepers fear they may end up being re-hired under worse pay and working conditions.

English: <http://cms.iuf.org/?q=node/2768>

Spanish: http://www.fecoht.ccoo.es/fecoht/Inicio:517318--CCOO_se_opone ...

Catalan ambulance workers strike against wage cuts of 9.2%

September 9, 2013

Ambulance workers in Catalonia went on a four-day strike against wage cuts of 9.2%. The wage cuts are a consequence of the budget cuts, but are considered by unions to be illegal because the public framework contracts under which the ambulance companies operate do not provide for wage reductions. Disagreement exists over the level of mobilisation in the strike; government spokespersons said that only 7.74% of the staff joined the strike, whereas trade unions stressed that 90% of the staff that was scheduled and not obliged to maintain essential services participated in the action.

English: <http://www.catalannewsagency.com/society-science/item/ambulance-workers ...>

Spanish: http://ccaa.elpais.com/ccaa/2013/09/06/catalunya/1378462210_028252.html

Sweden

Volvo restructuring

September 24, 2013

Volvo Group, the world's second biggest lorry manufacturer, announced a 5 billion kronor (580 million

euro) restructuring plan over two years. The programme encompasses both reduction of white collar employees and consultants and efficiency enhancements in the global industrial system, the company wrote in a statement, without indicating the number of jobs affected. The group employs 112,000 worldwide, including 16,000 consultants and temporary workers.

English: <http://www.thelocal.se/50412/20130924/>

Postal strike averted last minute as flat rate wage increase is accepted

September 18, 2013

A strike at Sweden Post and the Swedish branch of Norway Post was averted hours before its start when an agreement was reached on pay increases. The pay dispute focused not so much on the total pay increase, but on its distribution among the employees. While employers proposed a percentage increase, unions demanded a flat rate increase. Where the former would grant a greater increase to more highly paid employees, the flat rate targets a greater share of the pay rise to the lowest paid workers. Just hours before the announced strike, employers and unions reached an agreement on a flat rate increase of SEK 1,700 (€197) for 16,000 staff. This means a minimum 6.8% increase across the board, while the lowest paid employees earn an increase of up to 10%. The deal will run from 1 June 2013 to 31 July 2016.

English: <http://postandparcel.info/58015/news/human-resources/swedish-postal-strike ...>

<http://postandparcel.info/57985/news/human-resources/swedish-union-gives-notice ...>

Switzerland

Referendum opens door for 24-hours economy

September 14, 2013

A referendum on 22 September 2013 has resulted in a 55.8% backing of the proposal to change the labour laws by opening the possibility for night shopping at petrol stations. As reported in the July/August 2013 Newsletter the trade unions acted against the proposal in a coalition with medical experts and the churches because they see it as a further step in the direction of a 24-hours economy. In their view a minority of 44% no-voters demonstrates that the resistance to further liberalisation of working hours and to an introduction of work at night is strong. The fear is that the door is now open for further liberalisation of working hours in the retail sector.

English: <https://www.ch.ch/en/results-vote-22092013/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Swiss_referendums,_2013

German: <http://www.admin.ch/ch/d ...>

<https://www.ch.ch/de/resultate-abstimmung-22-september-2013/>

<http://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/abstimmungen ...>

French: <http://www.admin.ch/ch/f ...>

<https://www.ch.ch/fr/resultats-votation-22092013/>

http://www.travailsuisse.ch/medias/communiques_de_presse

Turkey

School instead of seasonal work

September 28, 2013

The teachers' trade union Eğitim-Sen distributed notebooks and school supplies to dozens of children working in cotton fields in the south-eastern province of Şanlıurfa in an attempt to raise awareness about the thousands of pupils who work on farms, particularly during harvest periods. For years, many nongovernmental organisations have carried out campaigns in rural parts of the country to encourage families to send their children, particularly their daughters, to schools instead of setting them to work.

English: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/union-raises-awareness-about-children-skipping ...>

Workers of Turkish Mint get a new collective agreement

September 2, 2013

After 68 days of strike at Turkish Mint, reported in last month's newsletter, Basin-Is and Kamu-Is agreed on changes in the collective agreement for the Turkish Mint & Stamp Printing House. The collective agreement includes better provisions on health and safety, trade union rights and a 3% increase in social premiums.

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

Income equality and risk of poverty

September 2, 2013

The country profile on the quality of life published by Eurofound and based on the third European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS, 2012) reports on living conditions, housing, local environment, health, public services, social cohesion and quality of society, as well as subjective well-being. With 23% of the population living at risk of poverty in 2011, as reported by the official statistics, the country comes second worst in this respect among the 34 countries covered by the EQLS. The Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality, was 40.4 according to the country's national statistical office (and 42 using income information from the EQLS, 2012). This is well above the EU27 average of 30.7 reported by Eurostat.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs...>

United Kingdom

Strike and petition on firefighters pensions

September 27, 2013

Firefighters went on strike over pensions as almost 80% voted in favour of industrial action in a ballot that ended earlier in September, although union officials had left the strike to the last possible moment to allow for the possibility of a negotiated settlement. Government figures have shown that thousands of firefighters could face the sack without access to a proper pension simply because they are getting older. A recent review found that over half of current firefighters between the ages of 50 and 54 are no longer able to meet fire and rescue service fitness standards for fighting fires. Beyond the age of 55, two thirds fail to meet the standards. And although the government has previously claimed that older firefighters could be moved to less physically demanding roles, research by the Fire Brigades Union found only a handful of 'redeployment' opportunities in fire and rescue services, meaning mass sackings would be inevitable.

English: <http://www.fbu.org.uk/?cat=11>

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/industrial...>

Blacklisted electrician reinstated

September 23, 2013

An electrician who was blacklisted for raising health and safety concerns has been reinstated to his job. Within weeks of starting work he was identified as a union man and the company he was working for had its contract withdrawn. The 12 month dispute rallied thousands of union members to new tactics unseen in industrial disputes and led to questions being asked in parliament and the London Assembly. In a joint statement the management of the Crossrail consortium Bam Ferrovial Kier and trade union Unite have agreed to work together to continue the provision of transparent working practices including safeguarding the right of workers to choose whether or not to join a trade union. In the meantime campaigners are asking for a broadening up of the blacklist inquiry that started in the construction sector to what they say is continuing anti-union discrimination in the North Sea oil industry.

English: <http://union-news.co.uk/2013/09/shout-this-from-the-rooftops-high-hopes...>

<http://union-news.co.uk/2013/09/blacklist-inquiry-to-hear-from-hr-boss/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-23947650>

<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/sep/23/construction-blacklisting...>

Ballot over higher education pay offer

September 23, 2013

UCU, UNISON and UNITE are balloting for strike action in higher education. The workforce has not

received a meaningful pay increase since October 2008. Since 2009, they have suffered four consecutive years of pay cuts and seen their pay drop by 13% in real terms. The squeeze on staff pay comes at a time when the cumulative operating surplus in the sector was over £1 billion, while many higher education institutions have built up cash reserves, and overall student numbers have held up in the face of higher tuition fees. Overall staff costs in higher education as a proportion of income have fallen from 58% in 2001/02, to 55.5% in 2011/12, although a minority at the top have enjoyed generous increases.

English: <http://union-news.co.uk/2013/09/ucu-members-ballot-for-strike-action ...>

<http://www.unison.org.uk/news/unison-ballots-higher-education-members ...>

<http://www.unitetheunion.org/news/university-staff-in-strike-ballot ...>

Dispute as NHS cuts 25% off ambulance workers' sick pay

September 2, 2013

Emergency talks between trade unions and ambulance employers have started after the latter cut 25% off ambulance workers' sick pay. Trade unions have reacted outraged, but ambulance employer said the cuts were made to bring the ambulance drivers in line with other personnel. Some 35,000 ambulance staff, who have traditionally been treated differently in the national agreement, are affected by the cuts.

English: <http://www.unison.org.uk/news/ambulance-service-too-vital-to-play-games ...>

<http://www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/talks-to-avert-ambulance-dispute>

Equal treatment for agency workers challenged

September 2, 2013

The TUC has lodged a formal complaint with the European Commission against the UK government for failing to implement the Temporary Agency Workers Directive properly, leading to tens of thousands of agency workers being paid less than permanent staff despite doing the same job. The government's flawed implementation of the EU Directive has allowed the abuse of the so-called 'Swedish derogation' - where employment agencies routinely pay agency workers far less than permanent staff doing the same job. The TUC gathered evidence from workplaces where agency staff are paid up to £135 a week less than permanent staff, despite working in the same place and doing the same job.

English: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace/tuc-22536-fo.cfm>

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You may find further information on the ETUI at www.etui.org, and on the AIAS at www.uva-aias.net.

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