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collective bargaining

Issue 11/2013 | November

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

European Committee of Social Rights criticises the so-called 'Lex Laval'

November 21, 2013

The Council of Europe's European Committee on Social Rights (ECSR) came up with a position related to the 2004 Laval case in which construction workers' trade union Byggnads set up a blockade on a site with a construction team from Latvian company Laval. The European Court of Justice had judged in 2007 that the trade union actions restricted the freedom to provide services within the EU. The complainant trade unions alleged that following the ECJ judgment in the Laval case (C-341/05), subsequent amendments to Swedish legislation have restricted the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining. The ECSR supported the union's position, finding that foreign workers in Sweden should have the same rights as other workers. The ECSR rejected the restrictions of the right to organise and collective bargaining entailed by the Lex Laval. Trade unions' right to demand and pursue collective negotiations cannot be restricted by the legislator. LO, the Swedish Trade Union Confederation, said later on that it was high time to make sure the client has the responsibility for salaries and taxes – and that such a responsibility would extend down the line of subcontractors, no matter how long the list.

English: <http://www.coe.int/T/DGHL/Monitoring/SocialCharter/NewsCOEPortal ...>

http://www.lo.se/english/news/important_decision_strengthens_workers_rights_in_europe

<http://www.thelocal.se/20131127/opposition-to-tear-up-migrant-worker-law>

Focus on the ECJ-cases: <http://www.etui.org/Topics/Social-dialogue-collective-bargaining ...>

No pay rise for EU staff

November 20, 2013

The EU Member States have successfully blocked a 1.7% wage increase for EU staff. In line with general practice, the European Commission attempted to raise salaries in 2011 to adjust them to actual living costs in Brussels and civil servant salaries in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK. However, member states objected to the pay hike on the grounds of austerity policies implemented in the member states and advocated for by the European institutions. The European Court of Justice has now ruled that the member states have the right to block the wage increase.

English: <http://www.euractiv.com/euro-finance/european-top-court-blocks ...>

Nordic pensions for part-time work and gender (in)equality

November 7, 2013

A study of five Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden) has found that parents, who work part-time for less than ten years, will still receive 98 to 99 per cent of the maximum pension. The report, presented at the NIKK conference Part Time in the Nordic Region, explains that in the pension systems in all Nordic countries parents are compensated for their temporarily lower hours. The researchers also note that this is not the case for part-time workers who are not parents, people who work part-time for more than ten years and people who work very few hours. Almost in parallel with this study the World Economic Forum published a Global Gender Gap Report in which is described that, with strong trade unions present that tended to promote gender equality, the Nordic countries became modern social democratic states where wealth is more evenly distributed, education is typically free up through university, and the social safety net allows women to comfortably work and raise a family.

English: <http://www.nordiclabourjournal.org/i-fokus/november-2012 ...>

Focus on the Global Gender Gap Report: <http://www.weforum.org/news/increased-political ...>

<http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2013/>

Social inequalities in Europe

November 7, 2013

Using data from the European Quality of Life Survey (EQS), a report published by Eurofound builds up an evidence base on social inequalities in four critical areas of life: health, standard of living, productive and valued activities, and individual, family and social life. It examines the role of important determinants of social inequalities including gender, age, disability status, employment status and citizenship status, as well as other drivers. According to the authors there is enough evidence to determine clear benefits from reducing income inequalities within a country.

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

Focus on the European Quality of Life Survey: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/surveys ...>

Austria

Collective agreement for 130,000 workers

November 27, 2013

The negotiations in the crafts, services, information and consultancy branches led to a new collective agreement. The agreed pay increase will be 2.45% from 1 January 2014 onwards. The lowest wages increase with 2.6%. The 2015 increase will be based on the inflation plus 0.35% (plus 0.5% for the lowest wage levels. In other smaller branches (travel agencies, film industry and, for the first time since years, private health and rehabilitation centres) similar agreements were concluded.

German: <http://www.oegb.at/cs/Satellite ...>

<https://www.wko.at/Content.Node/iv/presse ...>

Unions demand €1,500 minimum wage for all full-time employees

November 18, 2013

Trade unions have put forward a proposal for a minimum wage of €1500 per month for all full-time workers. While many sectors already have agreed wages that exceed this amount, the unions are worried about workers in sectors where no collective agreements exist. Occupations that are worse paid at the moment include hairdressers, masseurs and cosmetic studio workers.

English: http://austriantimes.at/news/Business/2013-11-18/50107/Unions_want ...

Agreement for the trade sector concluded

November 13, 2013

Workers in the trade sector will receive from 1-1-2014 at least a minimum wage of € 1450; from 1-1-2015 onwards this wage increases to € 1500. This is the outcome of the collective bargaining in the trade sector between the trade union GPA-djp and the trade section of the Chamber of Commerce (WKÖ). The agreement covers two years (2014 and 2015) and includes a general pay increase in 2014 of 2.55% for wages below € 1850 and of 2.5% for wages beyond that level. In 2015 a general increase based on the price index will be paid with a 0.4% supplement for all workers.

German: <http://www.gpa-djp.at/servlet/ContentServer ...>

Belgium

Minister does not understand rail workers strike threat

November 22, 2013

Federal minister for public sector companies, Jean-Pascal Labille has said he does not understand why rail

workers unions would threaten strikes in the face of a 1,000 job reduction in the rail company until 2018. According to the minister, the reduction of staff has been part of the political discussion for a long time and will be achieved without involuntary dismissals. Rail workers, on the contrary, are concerned about the cuts and fear the restructuring may lead to job losses as well as worse working conditions.

English: http://www.deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/Economy/131122_Rail_jobs

Different treatment of blue and white collars comes to an end

November 14, 2013

The Federal act on a unified regulation of dismissals for blue and white collar workers has passed the council of ministers. Two years ago the Constitutional Court had already concluded that a different approach of both categories was unconstitutional (see the July Newsletter). The act has to be applied from 1 January 2014.

French: <https://vbo-feb.be/fr-be/Dossiers/Concertation-sociale ...>

Dutch: <https://vbo-feb.be/nl-BE/Actiedomeinen/Sociaal-overleg ...>

Bulgaria

Unions demonstrate outside Parliament

November 20, 2013

The CITUB and Podkrega trade union confederations have organised a demonstration outside the Parliament houses on 20 November. The unions demand higher pay for the lowest earning workers, more action against the evasion of social security payments, guaranteed pensions, improved health care and an end to corruption.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/9947>

Tax breaks for minimum wage earners to alleviate poverty

November 19, 2013

After talks with trade unions and parliamentary coalition, the government announced it will instate a tax refund for workers earner less than the minimum wage. The tax refund will come into force in the beginning of 2015, applying to income earned in 2014, and aims to reduce poverty. The prime minister confirmed that, even at the increased 2014 level of BGN 340 (€173) per month, the minimum wage is not enough to lift people out of poverty.

English: http://www.novinite.com/view_news ...

Time not ripe for general strike

November 3, 2013

The two major trade union confederations do not believe that the current situation in the country necessitates a national strike. The unions have decided not to rush into nationwide protests unless they have a firm grassroots backing and have been prepared by the common people. A 180 degree turn may take place over the next weeks, with expected tensions in the spheres of coal mining, thermal power generation, and the Bulgarian State Railways (BDZ) company.

English: <http://www.novinite.com/articles ...>

Croatia

Figures on unemployment and migration

November 25, 2013

Recent figures on the unemployment show that after the tourist season ended the number of unemployed rapidly rose. In the meantime other data show that just four months after the country joined the European Union, 151 Croatian doctors have already moved abroad. The increase in the number of doctors leaving the

country is explained by better working conditions in the rest of the EU as well as better further education.

English: <http://www.croatiantimes.com/news/Business/2013-11-18 ...>

<http://www.croatiantimes.com/news/Business/2013-11-25 ...>

Focus on country data: <http://www.indexmundi.com/croatia/>

Zagreb airport employees on strike

November 19, 2013

Employees at Zagreb International Airport have announced strike actions against a worsening of their working conditions. The airport is in the process of being taken over by a French led consortium, which trade unions have said are refusing to uphold the terms of the current collective agreement. After reconciliation failed, the unions have announced three strikes. The first strike, on 21 November, will last from 10:00 to midnight; the second strike, starting on 25 November will last three days. If no solution has been reached until then, the airport employees will go on indefinite strike from 1 December onwards.

English: <http://www.balkans.com/open-news ...>

Cyprus

Mass rally against austerity

November 26, 2013

A broad coalition led by the trade unions announced their first mass demonstration against austerity policies, imposed by the Troika (EU Commission, IMF and European Central Bank) for 14 December 2014. Unionists from workers, farmers, teachers and students organisations PEO, DEOK, OELMEK, POED, OLTEK, POAS, EKYSY, PSEM, and EKA, motivated the decision to organise this mass demonstration by the fact that the strict austerity measures imposed by the Troika and those who abide by its policies lead to the destruction of the social rights they have secured.

English: <http://www.financialmirror.com/news ...>

Collective agreements not up for discussion

November 1, 2013

After the Cabinet announced a dialogue with stakeholders on labour conditions in the private sector the trade unions came out – one with strike action authorised – to say that whatever this dialogue may be, it better leave collective rights out of it. The dialogue, still expressed in vague terms, entails looking at overtime, holiday and shift allowances, wage increases and cost-of-living allowances, end-of-year and Easter bonuses, restructuring working hours, part-time employment, and newcomers' wages.

English: <http://cyprus-mail.com/2013/11/01/collective-agreements ...>

Czech Republic

Part-time work on the increase

November 27, 2013

The number of employees working only part-time increased by 59,500, or 22%, year-on-year to 326,700 in the first half of 2013, according to an employment analysis to be discussed by the government. In 2011, 5.4% of the employed worked part-time. In 2012, their share rose to 5.5%. As to gender, 11.3% of employed women and 3.1% of employed men had part-time jobs. These figures are still substantially lower compared to the EU: the share of employees with part-time jobs in the EU rose from 19.2% in 2010 to 20.4% in the first half of 2013.

English: <http://praguemonitor.com/2013/11/27/no-employees-part-time-jobs-grows ...>

Collective agreement for Moravia miners

November 14, 2013

After lengthy and rocky negotiations, Moravian mining company OKD and trade unions have reached a collective agreement that will be valid from 2014 to 2018. Days before the deal, employees of OKD voted in favour of strike action. At the heart of the dispute was a disagreement over the miners' pay. OKD argued that due to the company's difficult position, it wished to cut costs. In exchange for a 4% wage increase, the company wanted to terminate 13th and 14th month bonuses, as well as implement a plan for coal extraction and work safety. Unions have reacted outraged, claiming workers' salaries will decrease by 6% under OKD's proposal. The new collective agreement reduces the level of bonuses but guarantees their continued existence as well as current wages.

English: <http://praguemonitor.com/2013/11/12/okd-miners-go-strike ...>

Denmark

Survey on age discrimination

November 25, 2013

There is still age discrimination on the labour market. According to a poll, more than a quarter of people over 60 who retire do so unwillingly. Some of the employees surveyed said that they felt opportunities for older workers were so limited that they felt compelled to simply withdraw from the labour market. Only one third said they stopped working due to health reasons. Employers don't seem to bother for a higher share of older people in the workplace.

English: <http://cphpost.dk/news/message-to-older-workers-no-help-wanted ...>

Part-time work: better life but poorer

November 7, 2013

The Nordic Labour Journal has published an article putting into question the effects of part-time work. While reduced hours make it easier for parents to combine family and professional life, couples working part-time appear to have more difficulties making ends meet, especially if they work in lower paid sectors or occupations. Increasingly, jobs are also advertised as part-time and the choice to work full time is no longer available.

English: <http://www.nordiclabourjournal.org/i-fokus/november ...>

Estonia

Invest in jobs and people

November 28, 2013

The country needs to create jobs and make sure that young citizens, especially young women, remain instead of moving elsewhere, according to a businessman. He also made a plea for the improvement of the teachers' wages. Job creation is necessary as several multinational corporations including Schibsted, Dalkia E.ON and Unicredit have announced their decision to pull out of the country. The economy is still largely financed by Nordic banks. One wonders what will happen when, for instance, the Nordic property bubble is to burst.

English: <http://balticbusinessnews.com/article/2013/11/28/opinion-estonia-needs-to-borrow ...>

Statistical office presents wage data

November 26, 2013

In the 3rd quarter of 2013, the average monthly gross wages were €930 and the average hourly gross wages were €5.58. Compared to the 3rd quarter of 2012, the average monthly gross wages increased 8.8% and the average hourly gross wages increased 7.1%. Real wages, which take into account the influence of the change in the consumer price index, increased 5.8% in the 3rd quarter of 2013. Compared to the same quarter of 2012, real wages increased for the ninth quarter in succession. The average monthly labour costs per employee increased the most in information and communication (13.9%) and the average hourly labour costs increased the most in transportation and storage (11.0%), whilst these costs per employee decreased

the most in arts and entertainment (2.9%) and recreation (6.0%).

English: <http://www.stat.ee/65318>

OECD preaches flexibility

November 4, 2013

According to the general secretary of the OECD the country must be more flexible than others if it wants to remain successful. This means education, innovation, competitiveness, regulation, decentralisation, labour market flexibility, flexible market of goods and services, taxation, healthcare system, R&D, etc.

English: <http://balticbusinessnews.com/article/2013/11/4/head-of-oecd-estonia ...>

Finland

Aviation strike averted twice

November 18, 2013

Following difficult negotiations that left Finnair outside of the national wage agreement reached last month, management, the Finnish Flight Attendants Association (SLSY) and the Finnish Aviation Union (IAU) reached an agreement over pay and working conditions. Only hours after the agreement was signed, however, another strike already loomed for Finnair. Members of SLSY and IAU announced they were prepared to join a solidarity strike for their catering colleagues, who had not yet reached an agreement with subcontractor LSG Sky Chefs. LSG Sky Chefs and catering staff unions were still in a major dispute over pay and working conditions, due to the company's attempts to move its workers out of the aviation workers' collective agreement. With the help of a national conciliator, the two parties reached an agreement on the eve of yet another Finnair strike.

English: <http://atwonline.com/labor/finnair-still-faces-strike-threat ...>

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

http://yle.fi/uutiset/airline_caterers_reach_agreement_to_avoid_strike ...

New collective agreement for state employees

November 4, 2013

A collective agreement was closed for all central government employees in line with the national wage agreement that was validated last month. The collective agreement includes a €20 pay hike and a 0.73% increase of bonuses from 1 August 2014 and a 0.30% from 1 August 2015. Those increases will run until 31 January 2016. In a further negotiation round, scheduled for mid-2015, the partners will bargain about wage increases for the second half of the collective agreements period that will run from 1 February 2016 to 31 January 2017.

English: http://www.pardia.fi/in_english ...

Income gap widens

November 1, 2013

According to Statistics Finland the highest earning 10% receive about five and a half times the income of the lowest paid. Furthermore, the gap between the top earners and those worst-off continues to grow, despite many claims to the contrary. Nevertheless, by global standards, Finland can still boast that it is the most egalitarian nation in terms of the wage gap between rich and poor.

English: http://yle.fi/uutiset/finnish_income_gap_creeps_wider ...

France

Easyjet pilots to strike over company's failure to share profits

November 24, 2013

Pilots at Easyjet's French airports have announced a strike action on 25 November to protest the lack of internal profit sharing practices in the company. Earlier this month, Easyjet reported record profits and special dividends for shareholders. Trade union SNPL, which organises 90% of the French Easyjet pilots, said it had requested management to instate internal profit sharing practices as well, but had been ignored. The pilots are now taking industrial action to protest against the lack of wage increases for workers, while shareholders reap the benefits of their labour.

English: <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/nov/24/easyjet-strike-french-pilots ...>

Spying at IKEA investigated

November 20, 2013

An investigation started over allegations that IKEA illegally spied on staff and customers. The investigation into the spying at the French subsidiary of the furniture giant began in April 2012 when satirical weekly *Le Canard Enchaîné* published emails between IKEA's Paris office and a security company Surete International. The emails revealed that IKEA was seeking access to police STIC files, kept in a database with millions of names and personal information about crime perpetrators, victims and even witnesses. IKEA allegedly asked for information on employees, including union members. The trade unions have since filed complaints against IKEA, accusing them of spying on hundreds of employees and customers over at least five years.

English: <http://www.france24.com/en/20131119-france-ikea-execs-police-custody-spying ...>

Midwives demonstrate to pressure sluggish wage negotiations

November 19, 2013

Following a disappointing lack of progress in the public sector hospital negotiations on 13 November, midwives took to the street on 19 November to demand higher wages and better working conditions. Next to wage increases, the midwives are also asking for a revaluation of their position in the pay structure, which is more in line with the skills and responsibilities.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/9945>

French: <http://www.cgt.fr/Appel-a-une-manifestation.html>

Germany

Coalition plan includes minimum wage

November 27, 2013

The country's provisional government program introduces a minimum wage of €8.50 an hour from 2015. Some 17% of the workforce can profit from this statutory national minimum, mainly in the service sector. Planned are also improved pension benefits. From July 2014, workers who have paid social security contributions for 45 years will be able to retire on a full pension at 63, two years earlier than currently. The business community speaks about 'election gifts'.

English: <http://money.cnn.com/2013/11/27/news/economy/germany-coalition-economy/>

<http://www.euronews.com/2013/11/27/german-businesses-criticise-minimum-wage/>

Amazon strikes continue

November 26, 2013

Amazon workers in logistics centres in Leipzig and Bad Hersfeld have walked off the job in an ongoing protest over collective bargaining, wages and working conditions. Trade unions have announced more actions. Amazon management is still refusing to talk, stating it refuses to 'be blackmailed in to cooperating with an organisation that threatens to ruin Christmas for German children'. Other frolicsome statements by the management, 'snowfall is a bigger problem than worker strikes', testify their dismissive attitudes.

English: <http://www.dw.de/strike-hits-amazon-logistics-centers-in-germany ...>

<http://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/nov/25/german-amazon-employees-strike-pay>

http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023_3-57614091-93/amazon-snowfall-is-a-bigger-problem ...

Increase in inequality

November 14, 2013

Analyses of personal income distribution based on data from the Socio-Economic Panel Study (SOEP) and used in two separate studies, show that the disparity in income distribution in Germany increased noticeably in the first half of the new millennium. It decreased in the period 2006-2010. However, this decline came to a halt in 2011. The most influential forces for this development in 2011 is the anew increase in inequality of capital and labour income. Alongside, the relative poverty risk has reached a record high in 2009 with a rate of 15%. For the following two years this proportion is still rather high with about 14%. More importantly income mobility decreased since the German reunification. The chance to escape from relative poverty within a four years period has come down by 10 percentage points to only 46% in the last years.

English: <http://www.boeckler.de/pdf ...>

German: <http://www.diw.de/documents ...>

Job cuts at RWE

November 6, 2013

The newspaper Rheinische Post reported that the country's second-largest electricity and gas company was about to lay off 2,500 people employed in its power plant division in the country. The management so far only said it would provide details about possible job cuts on November 14 when the company was due to present third-quarter and nine-month results.

English: <http://www.dw.de/german-utility-company-rwe-to-cut-thousands-of-more-jobs ...>

Federal employees get a new pay structure

November 1, 2013

The 140,000 employees of the federal government have a new pay structure. After several years of negotiations, trade union Ver.di reached an agreement with the federal government. The agreement revises the job classification and modernises the pay structure. In the new structure, skilled technicians, IT workers, clerical and administrative staff and forest workers have been upgraded. Ver.di continues to be in negotiations over the pay structure of local government employees and both local and federal collective agreements will need to be negotiated in the beginning of next year.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/9867>

German: <http://www.verdi.de/themen/nachrichten ...>

Greece

Universities continue resistance

November 29, 2013

Administrative staff in universities went on strike three months ago against government austerity plans that include suspending 1,349 staff, a precursor to large-scale redundancies. The strike brought eight major universities to a standstill, and rectors warned that they would not be able to function effectively with the staff cuts demanded. Most universities are now back operating but although only three universities continued active resistance to the government's higher education actions, a high degree of opposition exists across the entire academic community.

English: <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article ...>

ERT headquarter raided by riot police

November 7, 2013

Hundreds of riot police forces, along with a public prosecutor, raided the headquarters of ERT, the national television and radio broadcast station, demanding that employees immediately vacate the premises. Four workers were briefly detained, including the head of ERT staff trade union. Refusing to accept their dismissal, former employees have been maintaining rogue broadcasts from the occupied headquarters, while an interim TV station, DT (Public Television), has been airing from a nearby studio since mid-July 2013.

English: <http://www.psi-can-greece.org/news/riot-police-raid-ert-headquarters>

<http://www.ifj.org/en/articles/ifj-ejf-strongly-condemn-violent-overnight-police-raid ...>

Hungary

Social sector workers demand pay rise

November 16, 2013

Social workers held a demonstration in front of the Ministry of Human Resources on 12 November, the Day of Social Work. The leader of the Independent Health Care Trade Union said that while wage talks in the health-care sector had been successful, employees in the social services faced deteriorating conditions. A workers' committee in the social sector (SZADB) announced to take action after their demands presented at the demonstration went unnoticed. Their most important demand is that newly raised pay grades set for the health-care sector should be extended to include social work, too, but the government has not responded. Workers in the sector demand a wage rise of 20% on average.

English: <http://www.politics.hu/20131115/social-sector-workers...>

<http://www.politics.hu/20131113/unions-demonstrate-for-recognition...>

Iceland

High ranking on gender equality

November 25, 2013

The Global Gender Gap Report ranks countries based on where women have the most equal access to education and healthcare, and where they can participate most fully in the country's political and economic life. The Index benchmarks national gender gaps on economic, political, education- and health-based criteria, and provides country rankings that allow for effective comparisons across regions and income groups, and over time. According to the 2013 report, Icelandic women pretty much have it all.

English: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/features/article/why-scandinavian-women...>

<http://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2013>

Ireland

Marks & Spencer workers vote for strike

November 29, 2013

Marks & Spencer workers voted by a margin of 94% in favour of strike action following the closure of the workers' pension scheme without agreement. Trade union Mandate announced that strike action, together with SIPTU, will take place across 17 stores nationally on Saturday 7 December, with two further days planned before Christmas. Negotiations with the management over the workers' defined benefit pension scheme failed. Management informed the workers that the retirement fund is a 'discretionary benefit', whilst the trade unions said the scheme is performing and is in surplus to the tune of approximately €17m.

English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2013/1129/489941-marks-and-spencer-strike/>

Collective bargaining compulsory

November 27, 2013

Plans to introduce compulsory collective bargaining for all companies will be presented by the Minister for Jobs in December. At present workers have a legal right to join a trade union, but employers are not obliged to negotiate with them. The proposal has been agreed by the coalition parties and will oblige companies to negotiate with workers, but not necessarily with trade unions. A provision will be made in the collective bargaining system for firms that engage with works councils rather than trade unions. Part of the process are a standard for the kind of works councils that will be recognised and an anti-victimisation code for those who engage in trade union activity.

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/firms-to-be-forced-to-negotiate ...>

Aer Lingus cabin crew accept conciliation proposals

November 20, 2013

Aer Lingus and its Shannon cabin crew have agreed on new transatlantic crewing levels proposed by the Labour Relations Commission. Air Lingus and trade unions came into conflict after unions refused to lower crewing levels on transatlantic flights from Shannon, whereupon the airline threatened to outsource the jobs. After talks with the LRC the parties agreed to keep operating the flights with direct hire employees. The initial flights, from 1 January 2014, will be operated by a crew of five. From March to July the crews will be reduced to four members, after which a review will be conducted.

English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2013/1120/487959-aer-lingus-cabin-crew-accept ...>

Lufthansa to close Rathcoole plant

November 18, 2013

Lufthansa has said it is considering closing its Rathcoole plant and has invited trade unions for talks. The plant, which specialises in overhauling jet engines, employs about 400 workers. Trade unions will start talks with Lufthansa but fear that the decision has already been made and the plant will be shut down by the end of the year.

English: <http://www.newstalk.ie/reader ...>

Bus workers action rejected

November 6, 2013

Commuters were anxiously awaiting the result of the bus workers' vote on whether the membership supports strike action should Dublin Bus attempt to implement its cost-cutting proposals. Drivers at Dublin Bus belonging to SIPTU finally voted not to take industrial action. A week earlier, the drivers narrowly rejected the cost-reduction measures. The measures had been accepted by all other grades, including the half of the drivers represented by the National Bus and Rail Union. SIPTU held another ballot to see if members were prepared to take industrial action. It said 72% of those who voted said they were not prepared to do so.

English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2013/1106/485059-dublin-bus/>

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/siptu-bus-workers-vote ...>

Italy

All out Genoa bus strike ends with deal

November 23, 2013

After a five day all out strike of Genoa bus services, crippling public transport in the city, trade unions and the municipality reached an agreement. The strike started when the municipal council was set to discuss a bill to fix the bus services that are operating at a loss, requiring at least an 8 million euro investment. Fearing privatisation, its 2,400 employees initiated a wild strike that lasted five days and made national coverage as a 'Greek-style strike'. Following intensive talks, trade unions and the municipality reached an agreement that guarantees there will be no pay cuts and that foresees European funding to square the budget.

English: <http://en.europeonline-magazine.eu/lead-strike-ends-bus-services-resume ...>

Restaurant and catering workers demonstrate

November 2, 2013

In a protest against the employer associations' plans to withdraw from the national collective agreement in the tourism industry, which includes restaurants and catering, thousands of restaurant and catering workers joined demonstrations in Rome and Milan and then held a picket line in front of the employer associations' headquarters. The three trade union confederations denounced the plan as irresponsible and dangerous for workers and the entire sector.

English: <http://cms.iuf.org ...>

Women pushed into work

November 1, 2013

The harsh recession that followed the 2007-08 global financial crisis swept away many of the blue-collar jobs traditionally filled by men in Italy, the U.S. and other countries as well. But the trend is having a surprising side effect: Not only were women more likely to keep their jobs, but tens of thousands more are heading back into the workplace. The economic downturn is starting to push women into the workplace, even as traditionally male-dominated jobs disappear.

English: <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles ...>

Latvia

Teachers ready to strike

November 6, 2013

Around 2,000 teachers and scientists from all over the country participated in a rally at the Saeima building on 24 October to protest the 2014 budget bill and demand respectable salaries. The teachers have now announced plans for a strike over their low salaries. A trade union spokesperson said teachers are ready for reforms and changes, but their salaries remain the lowest in Europe. Due to low salaries and teacher overwork, the country is close to losing education quality.

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

Liechtenstein

No significant changes in labour force statistics

November 13, 2013

In updated figures over the 1st half of 2013 no significant changes in the total workforce or labour migration can be found. The slow, but steady, growth of the services sector is illustrated by a 68.6% share in the labour force, against 59.9% in 2012.

German: http://www.llv.li/pdf-llv-as-bevoelkerungsstatistik_30._juni_2013

http://www.llv.li/amtsstellen/llv-as-3_arbeit_und_erwerb ...

Lithuania

Youth unemployment still increasing

November 15, 2013

Overall unemployment decreased to 10.9% in the third quarter of 2013, 0.8 percentage points lower than in 2012. However, youth unemployment increased slightly to 23.1%. Employment improved in construction and transportation and storage sectors and decreased in administrative and service activities and in the industry sector.

English: <http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/57030/swedbank-unemployment-in-lithuania ...>

Luxembourg

Another chance for negotiations at ArcelorMittal

November 29, 2013

Only 24 hours before the end of the national conciliation office process, ArcelorMittal and trade unions OGBL and LCGB had still not reached a deal on the next collective agreement. The largest open issue is the number of annual leave days. ArcelorMittal wants to reduce annual leave from 37 to 28 days in order to boost productivity. Unions, however, said they have already compromised on end-of-the-year bonuses and will not make concessions regarding wages or leave days. Both LCGB and OGBL consulted their members about possible industrial action. The LCGB and OGBL delegates decided to give talks for a new collective working agreement another chance, but also said that strike action remains an option.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/view/ogbl-to-give-arcelormittal-talks-another-chance ...>
<http://www.wort.lu/en/view/arcelormittal-and-unions-have-24-hours-to-reach-agreement ...>

Malta

Arrow Pharma to downsize

November 23, 2013

Pharmaceutical manufacturer Arrow Pharma has announced it intends to downsize its packaging section by 50% while maintaining production volumes. The company management and trade union UHM have started talks about the restructuring, which is expected to cost 20 employees' their jobs.

English: <http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2013-11-23/news/arrow-pharma-to-cut ...>

Netherlands

Sick pay for flex workers disputed

November 28, 2013

Employers are campaigning against new laws on sick pay aimed at giving more rights to people on flexible contracts. Companies which employ large numbers of people on flexible contracts are worried they will be saddled with large bills if their temporary workforce becomes ill. While companies which employ staff through an agency will not have to foot the bill, employers who employ temporary staff directly, or have staff on zero hour contracts, may be liable. The new act is back-dated to January 2012.

English: http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2013/11/employers_worried ...

Building firms accused of exploitation

November 23, 2013

Polish and Portuguese construction workers who are building a motorway tunnel near Maastricht are being exploited by the consortium in charge. Trade union FNV says it is holding chief builders BallastNedam and Strukton responsible for the way sub-contractor Rimec is systematically underpaying staff. Rimec, known as staffing agency Atlanto Rimec, was also involved in the breaches at the famous Flamanville site in France. The trade union claims Rimec has for almost 18 months wrongly withheld €1,000 a month from the salaries of Polish and Portuguese workers to pay for housing and transport costs. In addition, the workers are not paid in accordance with official pay scales, nor do they get holiday pay, overtime and other benefits, the union says. The two main contractors are prepared to compensate the workers after 'heavy pressure'.

English: http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2013/11/construction_firms_accused ...
http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2013/11/portuguese_tunnel_workers ...

Change of pension after retirement allowed

November 13, 2013

The Supreme Court has ruled that pension conditions can still be changed if people are already drawing their pensions. Employees of insurer Delta Lloyd had a generous scheme for years, under which the pension was guaranteed to go up with inflation. In 2011, the insurer halted the construction, including for those who were already pensioners. The pensioners went to court. An appeal court in Amsterdam ruled in 2012 that the change was not against the law. The highest court has confirmed the opinion of that verdict.

English: <http://www.nisnews.nl/companies-allowed-to-change-pension-conditions...>

Norway

Dockers boycott Risavika terminal

November 21, 2013

The Norwegian Transport Workers Union (NTF) has started industrial action at Risavika terminal. The terminal's management has refused to sign up to the sector wide collective agreement and is reported to contract seafarers to perform tasks normally done by dockers. The outsourcing of any tasks 'historically or traditionally done by dockers' is prohibited by the dockers' clause.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online...>

Insulation and maintenance workers oil sector on strike

November 20, 2012

Onshore and offshore oil workers from Statoil subcontractors Kaefer, Bilfinger and Beerenberg have gone on strike in a wage dispute. The subcontractors are responsible for insulation and maintenance works; their shutdown may disrupt oil production. The 1,400 employees are currently working 45% of their normal hours.

English: <http://www.pennenergy.com/articles/pennenergy/2013/11/norway-oil-workers-strike...>

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-11-18/norway-oil-service-strike-may-hurt-production...>

Pilot strike called off

November 4, 2012

600 pilots of budget airline Norwegian Air Shuttle called off a planned strike after four days of government mediation yielded a deal that secures their current work agreements. The trade union Parat stated that as part of the deal, pilots will have joint collective agreements in Scandinavian countries, which still form the core of the firm's operations, and pilots elsewhere will get equal career opportunities.

English: <http://kdal610.com/news/articles/2013/nov/04/norwegian-air-pilots-call-off-strike/>

Poland

Struggle over pension reform

November 28, 2013

A draft bill prepared by the government, variants of which have been debated in recent months, could reduce public debt. The bill aims to transfer to the state many assets held by private pension funds, in an attempt to slash public debt as it will allow for a portion of the private Open Pension Funds (OFE) invested in Treasury bonds to be channelled back into the country's social security system.

English: <http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/154319,Komorowski-Pension-reforms-essential>

Portugal

Postal workers protest

November 30, 2013

Postal workers organised a protest against the national mail company's privatisation. Portugal is privatising companies to reduce its debt as part of a 78 billion-euro bailout it received in 2011. The government hopes to raise more than 400 million euro from the sale of a 70% stake in postal service CTT-Correios de Portugal SA.

English: <http://www.boston.com/news/world/europe/2013/11/29/portuguese-postal-workers...>

Employees of Lisbon multinationals count themselves lucky

November 21, 2013

Lisbon was voted third out of 25 as Best European Capital to Work in a survey among employees of multinational companies, only Madrid and Copenhagen received higher evaluations. Workers from 25 companies in each capital were asked about satisfaction with their employer and work regarding credibility, respect, fairness, loyalty and community relations. The Portuguese employees were especially happy about their employers' community involvement and reputation. They were more critical about fair wages and favouritism in promotions.

English: <http://theportugalnews.com/news/lisbon-multinational-companies-among-best...>

Transport strikes every second day since installation of government

November 21, 2013

Since the installation of the current government in June 2011, 473 days out of a total 887 saw industrial action in the transport sector. There seems little hope of a trend reversal, as unions of the Lisbon metro, national railways, ferry service and bus drivers all announced new strikes and overtime bans for the remaining months of 2013. The workers are protesting against more salary cuts in the 2014 budget, applying to all employees with monthly salaries over €675. They also object to the suspension of pension supplements for companies registering losses and cuts in allowances for meals, overtime and night shifts. Illustrating the poor relationship between the government and the transport sector, the former has announced it will not negotiate with trade unions using strikes as a pressure method.

English: <http://theportugalnews.com/news/transport-turmoil/29961>

General strike against policies that rob workers and ruin the country

November 7, 2013

Another general strike against austerity policies is organised on 8 November. Public sector employees are protesting against the impending loss of 2.5% of all salaries from €600 per month and 12% of salaries above €2000 per month. The 2014 budget furthermore includes higher taxes, higher contributions and lower pension payments. Unions are protesting against policies they say 'rob workers and ruin the country'. The unions demand the resignation of the government and call for decent work policies.

English: <http://www.world-psi.org/en/8-november-general-strike-portugal>

Romania

Up to 2,500 layoffs at railway company CFR Marfa

November 21, 2013

The state owned railway company CFR Marfa has announced a round of dismissals to prepare the company for privatisation in 2015. After two failed attempts at privatisation, the government agreed with the IMF to restructure the company, cutting expenses drastically. Up to 2,500 workers are expected to be dismissed, with 6,300 keeping their jobs. CFR Marfa will also be forced to sell its old wagons as metal scrap and to halt deliveries to any clients with outstanding payments.

English: <http://www.mondonews.ro/en/romanian-state-owned-railway-company-cfr-marfa...>

Nurses and doctors march to mourn death of the health care system

November 11, 2013

Doctors and nurses marched through Bucharest on 2 November to protest against their low salaries and lagging investment in the health care sector. Symbolising the system's 'death by underinvestment', the doctors and nurses carried crosses, coffins and wreaths. The College of Doctors said over 3,000 doctors leave the country every year in search of more gainful employment. Newly qualified doctors receive less than €200 per month, an amount the unions have demanded be doubled. Trade unions also demand that at least 6% of

GDP be spent on health care and have threatened a general strike may still follow this month's protest march. In reaction to the petition for a general strike, the government has announced it will create a state-funded scholarship of €150 per month for all resident doctors, which will be added to their salaries.

English: <http://www.romania-insider.com/doctors-and-nurses-take-to-the-streets ...>
<http://www.romania-insider.com/amidst-threats-of-a-doctors-strike-romanian-govt ...>

Teachers demand better wages

November 6, 2013

Over 10,000 teachers joined a protest march against the underfunded educational system on 6 November. The teachers demand higher wages, fair employment policies and more investment in education. In front of the Parliament, the teachers presented a petition calling on the government to allocate at least 6% of GDP for education. Teachers unions also announced that if the government fails to react to the petition, a general strike will be the likely result.

English: http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/news_details/2758

Serbia

Human trafficking of workers

November 21, 2013

With only a few months ahead of the Winter Olympics in Sochi, construction companies continue to abuse migrant workers who are building for the big event. A group of Serbian workers who had returned from their precarious situation in Sochi turned to the trade union Nezavisnost for help. The workers told the union that they had been working for 10 to 14 hours a day, seven days a week and were not provided with the appropriate documentation by the company Novi Gorod. The Serbian anti-trafficking organisation ASTRA has received many calls for help after being abused by Novi Gorod and other companies in Sochi, working for little or sometimes no pay at all. The workers are recruited through brokers and they are promised that the work and residence permit and employment contract will be settled in Russia. However, upon arrival the employer often refuses to process their visas and they are forced to work undocumented in the country.

English: <http://www.bwint.org/default ...>

Slovakia

Opposition to revised law on collective bargaining

November 29, 2013

Employers, the American Chamber of Commerce (AmCham) and other foreign chambers of commerce successfully opposed the amendment of the law on collective bargaining that parliament passed at the end of October. The revision planned to widen the general extension and to strengthen the position of trade unions. The president of the country has vetoed the proposal, but parliament can easily override the presidential veto. The binding nature of higher level collective agreements should be automatically extended to additional firms employing more than 20 people in a given sector without the consent of the individual firms. A tripartite commission, composed of representatives from unions, employers and the state and set up by the Labour Ministry, will have a final say on the proposals as well as the objections from employers.

English: http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/51937/10/us_businesses_call_on_president ...
http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/52148/3/president_vetoes_collective_bargaining_law ...
http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/51877/3/unions_gain_power_firms_cry_out ...

Slovenia

Regulation of recruitment agencies

November 28, 2013

The National Assembly passed proposals to tighten the regulation of recruitment agencies with the purpose of preventing the exploitation of workers. The changes that aim to prevent violations of the rights of workers hired by temping agencies have been agreed with the social partners, including the association of employment agencies. The proposals look to limit precarious forms of work and improve the quality of job agencies' services. Key changes include a clearer distinction between the activity of recruiting workers for companies and providing services on the basis of temporary contracts.

English: <http://www.sloveniatimes.com/tougher-regulation-for-employment-agencies>

Talks on social pact reopened

November 8, 2013

Talks on a new social pact will restart at the Economic and Social Council after a hiatus lasting a year and a half. The social partners represented on the labour relations body agreed to give themselves two weeks to submit remarks to the guidelines they last dealt with in the spring of 2012.

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

Spain

Controversial dismissals

November 20, 2013

Freiremar, a company with several plants in Vigo and a staff of 114 employees, has decided to postpone the payment of wages and redundancy compensation for January 2014. One hundred employees working in Vigo received the redundancy letters. Meanwhile, the laid off workers remain concentrated outside the premises of the factory of Bouzas in order to prevent the withdrawal of goods or machinery from the place. The trade unions that agreed to negotiate some downsizing have seen no willingness from the management side to negotiate. The unions will sue Freiremar to declare the redundancies invalid and will work to ensure the workers' rights in the plants. In addition, they consider calling for strikes in the affected workplaces.

English: <http://www.fis.com/fis/worldnews ...>

<http://www.fis.com/fis/worldnews ...>

Street sweepers' strike ends with deal

November 17, 2013

Street-sweepers and the Madrid municipality have reached a deal ending an eleven day strike and averting 1,135 dismissals and a 40% wage cut. Street sweepers and gardeners started an indefinite strike over proposed lay-offs and wage cuts. Some 6,000 outdoor maintenance workers joined the walk-out after private companies, contracted by Madrid's city hall, proposed slashing salaries by up to 40% and laying off 1,134 people. Among the companies with garbage, street cleaning and park maintenance contracts in Madrid are units of infrastructure firms and builders including Ferrovial, Sacyr, OHL and FCC. On 17 November, a deal was reached that guarantees there will be neither job losses nor wage cuts.

English: <http://www.expatica.com/es/news/spanish-news/madrid-street-sweepers-agree ...>

<http://www.businesstimes.com.sg/breaking-news/world/madrid-garbage-collectors-strike ...>

Collective deals contributed to industry recovery

November 4, 2013

In the automotive sector the employment outlook has improved. The general feeling is that the decision to conclude long-term labour deals with the motor industry has served companies and workers alike. Car executives and union leaders agree that the shift towards wage moderation and flexible working practices that was enshrined in a series of collective deals in the early years of the crisis was instrumental in luring more production. Ford, for example, struck a five-year deal with its unions in 2009.

English: <http://www.ft.com/intl ...>

Health ministry agrees collective agreement with unrepresentative union

November 1, 2013

Trade unions in the health sector are taking the ministry to court over its decision to close the sector's collective agreement with the unrepresentative employees' organisation Forum of Nurses and Medical Professionals. The unions, who did not accept the conditions of the new collective agreement, argue that the right to collective bargaining has been violated by the ministry and have mounted a legal challenge.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/9868>

Spanish: http://www.fspugt.es/Admitido_a_trmite_el_recurso_interpuesto_contra ...

Sweden

Commuters blocked by strike

November 6, 2013

Disagreements over pay scales have led to a complete breakdown in communication between the trade union Seko and the employers' organization Almega. 1,500 commuters have been left stranded in the wake of the public transport strike that started in the Stockholm archipelago.

English: <http://www.thelocal.se/20131106/archipelago-strike-moors-swedens-island ...>

Switzerland

Proposal to restrict top pay rejected

November 24, 2013

According to final results, all of the country's 26 cantons and a full 65.3% of all voters rejected an initiative in a referendum (see our July and October Newsletters) that would have capped excessive salaries. The '1:12' initiative that would have set strong limits between the top and bottom salaries in a firm met with stiff opposition from the business community and the political right. Although this proposal has been defeated, public anger at revelations that some of the chief executives are earning more than 200 times what their employees take home is still widespread and the issues of high salaries and a widening wage gap have not gone away.

English: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-25076879>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/24/switzerland-votes-against ...>

Modest collective agreement for federal employees

November 13, 2013

Despite gloomy economic forecasts, federal employees will receive a 0.7% wage increase. Trade unions PVB, VPOD, Garanto and PVfedpol had originally demanded a 1% increase, whereas the government wanted to increase salaries by no more than 0.5%. The trade unions stress that while the 0.7% is a modest increase, it was the best possible result in the current circumstances that still guarantees a small hike for the 50% of federal employees who have already reached the end of their pay scale.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/9985>

German: <http://www.vpod.ch/aktuell/nachrichten/ansicht/article/07-prozent-mehr-lohn ...>

Turkey

Poor quality for women employment

November 25, 2013

Trade union confederation DISK has commented on recent statistical analyses regarding women's participation on the labour market. All indicators show that women's participation in the work force and employment is rising year by year. Women's economic independency is in progress but despite quantitative developments, a qualitative jump can be questioned. A report on the rate of participation from women and men in companies' executive boards based on research conducted among 3002 chair persons in 427 companies showed that only 8.5% of board members are women. While the female director rate in supervision committees is 8.2%, the rate of female directors is 7% in corporate management committees.

English: <http://www.disk.org.tr/2013/11/women-employment-in-turkey-shows-high-rise-but...> ...

Dismissed Punto Deri workers struggle for union recognition

November 21, 2013

Twenty-eight workers of shoe leather company Punto Deri, who were dismissed for their activities as union organisers, continue to fight for the reinstatement of collective bargaining in the firm. Earlier this year, trade union Deri-Is organised the majority of workers of Punto Deri, statutorily allowing them to bargain on their behalf. Amongst other things, the union protested against long working hours, non-payment of overtime, low premiums and obstructions to the taking up of holidays. Rather than bargaining, Punto Deri fired the 28 original union activists three months ago and another 22 will be terminated by the end of the year. Deri-Is is working with global union IndustriALL to address the client companies of Punto Deris.

English: <http://www.industriall-union.org/dismissed-turkish-workers-at-punto-deri-continue...> ...

United Kingdom

Outsourced workforce wins major concessions on pay

November 29, 2013

Caterers, cleaners, security and porters that were demanding the same working conditions as in-house employees called for the first official strike by outsourced staff in the London University's 170 year history. Negotiations fell through after the employers failed to make any concessions to the trade unions. The outsourced workers only have statutory sick pay, which means they are not paid for the first three days they're sick. On the second day of a 48-hour walkout, Balfour Beatty Workplace, which delivers outsourced cleaning services, signed an agreement with trade union Unison announced that improves sick pay entitlement, increases holiday pay and gives access to its pension scheme to all its employees.

English: <http://www.independent.co.uk/student/news/victory-cleaning-staff-strike...> ...

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/abby-and-libby-blog/2013/nov/27/university...> ...

<http://3cosascampaign.wordpress.com/2013/11/27/press-release-ground-breaking-strike...> ...

Consultations on minimum pay

November 29, 2013

The Low Pay Commission, which advises the government on the level of the minimum wage, has been criss-crossing the country speaking to low-paid workers – from chicken factory operatives to corner shop staff – and to the firms who pay their wages. The commission, made up of employer and employee representatives and academics, will gather in January 2014 and, after two or three days of analysis, decide what they think the minimum wage should be. Since the measure was introduced in the late 90s the government has always followed the commission's advice. The founding chair of the commission has argued that the UK is at risk of creating a two-tier labour market in which growing numbers of workers earn very low wages partly because some employers use the minimum level as a starting point.

English: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/nov/29/low-pay-commission-tours...> ...

University graduates increasingly underemployed and underpaid

November 19, 2013

An increasing share of university graduates are working in jobs that do not require an academic education. University graduates are unemployed less often than their lower educated peers; however, in 2013 up to 47% of them worked in non-graduate jobs (compared to 37% in 2001). Despite tuition fees tripling to £9,000 per year, recent graduates also earn 12% less than their colleagues who entered the labour market just before the

crisis.

English: <http://www.studenttimes.org/article/news/graduate-news/graduates-more-likely...>

More large firms must commit to living wage

November 4, 2013

The trade union confederation TUC has welcomed the increase in the living wage rates but warns that too few large employers have committed to paying it. The living wage is a voluntary rate of pay designed to help low-paid workers to afford a basic standard of living. It is set in London by the Greater London Authority and for the rest of the UK by the Living Wage Foundation. The rate is £7.65 an hour, and £8.80 an hour in London. The adult minimum wage rate is £6.31 an hour. Figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that the biggest companies increased their cash reserves by £83bn between 2007 and 2012. But some employers are refusing to use these rising cash reserves to offer decent wage rises that would increase demand in the economy. Instead, workers are suffering the longest wage squeeze in over a century and in-work poverty continues to grow.

English: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/social-issues/poverty-social-exclusion/more-large-employers...>

Focus on the Living Wage Foundation: <http://www.livingwage.org.uk/>

Higher education support staff on strike

November 1, 2013

Support staff from higher education institutions walked off the job on 31 October to protest against falling real wages and a meagre pay offer in the current round of collective bargaining. Trade unions Unison, Unite and UCU commented that real wages have fallen by 13% since 2008. The workers, including cleaners, security, administrative and catering staff, have rejected a 1% pay rise offered by the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA).

English: <http://www.unison.org.uk/news/strike-over-phantom-pay-rise...>

<http://www.unite.theunion.org/news/unite-university-staff-strike-tomorrow...>

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For more information, please contact the editor Jan Cremers, Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies (AIAS) cbn-aias@uva.nl or the Head of communications at the ETUI, Willy De Backer wdebacker@etui.org. For previous full issues of the *Collective bargaining newsletter* please visit www.etui.org/E-Newsletters/Collective-bargaining-newsletter. Since June 2013 readers can consult our archive and search through all articles in our database at www.cbnarchive.eu.

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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