

# collective bargaining

Issue 12/2013 | December

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

### **A guide to Europe – also valid in 2014**

December 22, 2013

Newspaper *The Guardian* has listed some rules and tips that help you to understand the functioning of the European Union, and notably the British attitude towards the European cooperation. For instance ‘anything prime ministers agree to in EU institutions can later be attributed to something called “Brussels”, which is a sinister compound that erodes national sovereignty – often, but by no means exclusively found in the capital of Belgium’. Another tip is that British journalists should ignore whenever possible the possibility that Britain is itself a European country.

English: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/dec/22/etiquette-guide-to-europe>

### **Global decent work agreements at Solvay and Loomis AB**

December 17, 2013

IndustriALL and chemical group Solvay signed a social and environmental responsibility agreement, committing the company and its subcontractors to ILO international social standards and the UN Global Compact. The agreement includes two annual assessment missions by IndustriALL, Solvay and local trade union representatives to inspect safety policies and the application of the agreement. UNI Property Services, the Swedish Transport Workers' Union and Loomis AB signed a global agreement too, committing the company to the UN Guiding Principles on Human Rights, ILO Core Conventions and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. The agreement ensures freedom of association and collective bargaining in all Loomis AB subsidiaries.

English: [http://www.industrialunion.org/industrial-global-union-signs-worldwide ...](http://www.industrialunion.org/industrial-global-union-signs-worldwide...)

### **Europe's Americanisation of labour policy**

December 14, 2013

The *New York Times* describes how many European countries - especially those in southern Europe that have been tormented by the financial crisis - have been furiously dismantling workplace protections in a bid to reduce the cost of labour. The journal signals that the austerity policy has radically changed the nature of Europe's society with widening inequality and an unheralded erosion of worker protection that is likely to have a big and lasting impact on Europe's labour relations.

English: [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/04/business/economy/the-americanization ...](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/04/business/economy/the-americanization...)  
[http://dianeravitch.net/2013/12/14/crushing-labor-unions-and-the-middle-class ...](http://dianeravitch.net/2013/12/14/crushing-labor-unions-and-the-middle-class...)

### **Equal treatment for posted workers**

December 12, 2013

The European trade union movement protested against ‘social dumping’ and unfair competition during the meeting of the EU employment ministers, a meeting with on the agenda how to enforce the application of the posting rules. Improvement of the legal position of so-called posted workers is a long-time demand from the union side. Posted workers often work for lower wages and working conditions and the existing rules are often not respected. The unions call for the regulation of outsourcing and want to hold accountable the entire supply chain.

English: [http://www.equaltimes.org/news/social-europe-buried-as-eu-ministers-amend ...](http://www.equaltimes.org/news/social-europe-buried-as-eu-ministers-amend...)

### **Pay increase not enough to maintain purchasing power**

December 4, 2013

The European Restructuring Monitor 2013 annual report *Monitoring and managing restructuring in the 21st century* presents a retrospective of over a decade of measuring the impact of large-scale restructuring activity in Europe based on a database containing details of over 16,000 large-scale restructuring events and selected types of national statutory regulations related to restructuring, with a current focus on individual and collective labour law. As of August 2013, 350 regulations are described in the ERM database. Collective agreements, soft law or company practices are not included. However, there is some reference to concession bargaining. One of the main fears of workers and trade unions is that offshoring will have a downward

pressure on wages, as employers take advantage of opportunities to reduce labour costs by locating production in lower-cost economies, and/or using these lower-cost economies as a benchmark for labour cost calculations. Certainly in the late 1990s and early 2000s trade unions in countries such as Germany strove to ensure that major companies made a commitment to their manufacturing locations.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2013/80/en/1/EF1380EN.pdf>

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## Austria

### Machine manufacturer KBA is cutting jobs

*December 20, 2013*

Koenig and Bauer (KBA), manufacturer of printing presses, is to cut up to 460 jobs in Moedling and Ternitz, Lower Austria. This is part of a European-wide restructuring programme that includes the transfer of the sheetfed offset press programme to the German plant of Radebeul, where it is to be concentrated. Trade unions worry that the downsizing will lead to the complete closure of the Austrian sites within the next years.

English: [http://www.printweek.com/print-week/news ...](http://www.printweek.com/print-week/news...)  
[http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/emcc/erm/factsheets ...](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/emcc/erm/factsheets...)

### Minimum wages at kindergarten increase

*December 18, 2013*

The trade union *via* concluded an agreement with the ministry of social affairs regarding the minimum wage for assistants in kindergarten (5,000 workers, mainly women). For the lowest pay scale the wage will increase to 1,365 euro from 1 January 2014. Other improvements concern the paid parental leave (up to 18 months) and a new minimum for au pairs.

German: [http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer ...](http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer...)

### Treatment of teachers leads to protest

*December 18, 2013*

Some 40,000 civil servants have taken part in a demonstration on the Ballhausplatz in Vienna as part of a protest against the way pay negotiations are going and also over anger at changes in the regulations for teachers. As well as anger over the wage conditions and treatment of teachers there was anger over the plan to scrap the country's science ministry. The new government has decided to cut public spending by integrating the ministry of science and research into the economics ministry.

English: [http://austriantimes.at/news/General\\_News/2013-12-18 ...](http://austriantimes.at/news/General_News/2013-12-18...)

### Employment figures updated

*December 2, 2013*

The Labour ministry has published updated ambiguous (un)employment figures. The nominal employment data show a growth of jobs whilst also unemployment increased. Major insolvencies (*Alpine*, *Niedermeyer* and retailer *dayli*) have had a strong impact on the unemployment situation. Unemployment amongst males increased more dramatically than amongst females. From the 301,898 unemployed people 165,558 were men (a plus of 12.6%) and 136,340 were women (a plus of 10.5%). The highest rise in unemployment was amongst people with a disability (a plus of 25.3%) and also people over 50 (a plus of 22.8%).

English: [http://austriantimes.at/news/Business/2013-12-02 ...](http://austriantimes.at/news/Business/2013-12-02...)

German: [http://www.bmask.gv.at/site/Startseite/Topnews/Hundstorfer\\_zu\\_Arbeitsmarkt ...](http://www.bmask.gv.at/site/Startseite/Topnews/Hundstorfer_zu_Arbeitsmarkt...)

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## Belgium

### Poverty on the rise

*December 27, 2013*

Figures collected by the NGO Vlaams Netwerk tegen Armoede (Flemish Network against Poverty) show that, in Flanders, organisations providing help to the poor have seen a 20% increase in the number of people asking for help in 2013 compared to 2012. This increase comes after a 30% rise in 2012. A new trend is that

those asking for help are often partners that both have a job in the family. It means that people that earned enough money in the past and lost their well-paid job due to the crisis accepted a job that earns a lot less. However, the mortgage on the house and other costs in the household remain unchanged.

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

### **Alternative ranking of companies**

*December 18, 2013*

The trade union confederation ACV-CSC has developed an alternative benchmark for companies. Companies are listed according to social and workers criteria. The database is filled with information provided in annual accounts, especially the social paragraphs. Companies are ranked in a top ten in different categories. Golazo Sports is a company with the poorest pay record. Retailer Colruyt was a runner-up in the category employment. Katoen Natie Terminals scores high on the use of agency workers.

French: <http://www.csc-en-ligne.be/Actualite/Nouvelles/details/classement-alternatif ...>

Dutch: [http://www.acv-online.be/Actualiteit/Nieuws/Detail/sociale\\_benchmark ...](http://www.acv-online.be/Actualiteit/Nieuws/Detail/sociale_benchmark ...)

### **Central Economic Council predicts narrowing of pay gap with neighbours**

*December 12, 2013*

The Central Economic Council that has the task of submitting to the government and/or Parliament formal opinions on issues relating to the national economy and to issue twice per year a report and an opinion on the competitiveness of Belgian enterprises has predicted that the pay gap with the three biggest neighbours will fall to +3.8% during 2014. Normally these predictions serve as a basis for determining the so-called 'wage norm', or the percentage that private sector wages are allowed to rise. In 2013, the wage norm has not been applied, as an agreement between management and unions across the private sector did not allow for wage increases above the rate of inflation.

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

**Focus** on the Central Economic Council: [http://www.ccecrb.fgov.be/txt/en/2011182\\_1.pdf](http://www.ccecrb.fgov.be/txt/en/2011182_1.pdf)

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/emire/BELGIUM ...>

### **Agreement on Randstad restructuring plan**

*December 6, 2013*

Recruitment firm Randstad has reached an agreement over the restructuring of its operations in Belgium announced earlier this year and reported in the June 2013 newsletter. The restructuring will affect 114 jobs in management and support functions, as opposed to the 165 jobs that appeared threatened in June.

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

### **Demonstrations a fundamental right**

*December 6, 2013*

A researcher at the University of Antwerp has calculated that Brussels is one of the world demonstration capitals. The mayors of the concerned parts of the city are of the opinion that 'The right to peaceful assembly is a fundamental right in a democratic society'. However, the right to demonstrate is still defined by police regulations. A demonstration organiser must send a written request to the police that includes a number of elements: the name and address of the organiser, the purpose, the date and time planned for the assembly, the planned route, an estimate of the number of participants and the organiser's plans for maintaining order. Some places and areas are subject to restrictions and it is forbidden, without authorisation, to cover one's face in a public area by exaggerated makeup, masks, or any other means.

English: <http://blog.lesoir.be/lesoirinenglish/2013/12/06/two-demonstrations-a-day-in-brussels ...>

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## **Bulgaria**

### **Non-payment of salaries widespread**

*December 24, 2013*

The Labour Inspectorate registered nearly 124 000 violations of labour law in the period June – November

2013. The non-payment or delay of salaries was among the most serious problems found during the inspections at around 24 000 companies with a total staff of 990 000. Trade unions reacted with a list of legislative solutions, including a proposal to abolish the option of a company experiencing financial difficulties to be entitled to pay 60% of the salary.

English: [http://www.novinite.com/articles/156684/Bulgaria ...](http://www.novinite.com/articles/156684/Bulgaria...)

### **Youth unemployment discussed in tripartite council**

*December 3, 2013*

The National Council for Tripartite Cooperation (NTCT), made up of the government, the employers and the trade unions discussed amendments to the Labour Code concerning the regulation of internship contracts in order to put in place efficient tools against youth unemployment. The council also discussed proposals aiming to reduce administrative burden, including questions related to the termination of employment contracts, and several items related to the identification, investigation and registration of occupational accidents.

English: [http://www.bta.bg/en ...](http://www.bta.bg/en...)

[http://www.government.bg/cgi-bin ...](http://www.government.bg/cgi-bin...)

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## **Croatia**

### **Labour ministry intervenes at shipyard**

*December 28, 2013*

The Labour and Pension Ministry urged the management board of the Brodosplit shipyard and the trade unions active in that shipyard to establish a 'constructive dialogue' in order to normalise their relations, and appealed to the management to reconsider its decision to dismiss 13 workers who had taken part in the October protests (see our October Newsletter). 'Economic growth can be achieved only in the circumstances of social peace, both at the national level and in each company,' the ministry said in a statement.

English: [http://dalje.com/en-croatia/labour-min-appeals-to-shipyard-to-reconsider ...](http://dalje.com/en-croatia/labour-min-appeals-to-shipyard-to-reconsider...)

### **Airport strike**

*December 10, 2013*

Zagreb Airport has recorded its seventh consecutive month of passenger decline on the back of a two day strike staged by its employees. The airport welcomed 151.760 passengers in November, a decrease of 8.2% compared to the same month last year. The number of flights operating to and from the airport was also significantly down. In the meantime, the French led consortium, Zagreb Airport International Company (ZAIC) that has taken control over the airport has planned to build a brand new passenger terminal.

English: [http://balkans.com/open-news.php ...](http://balkans.com/open-news.php...)

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## **Cyprus**

### **Public sector workers protest against loss of shift allowance**

*December 12, 2013*

Public sector workers working shifts have gathered outside the Parliament to protest against a draft budget that proposes to cut half of their shift allowance. The workers, employed amongst others in power stations, ports, police stations, hospitals and telecommunications, say they work longer and more anti-social hours to keep vital services running. A trade union said the workers had already accepted a six day working week, acknowledging the worrying situation in the country, but said that losing the shift work compensation is a bridge too far.

English: [http://cyprus-mail.com/2013/12/12/public-sector-workers-protest ...](http://cyprus-mail.com/2013/12/12/public-sector-workers-protest...)

### **Planned privatisations contested**

*December 4, 2013*

Strike actions could intensify if the government's position on the privatisation of semi-state organisations



(SGOs) does not change. This was a message delivered by unionists and employees from the Cyprus Port Authority (CPA) and telecoms company CyTA, who carried out separate strikes. Strikers gathered outside Limassol port's entrance to protest against the plans which would see the privatisation of SGOs as part of the island's bailout programme. Also employees at the Electricity Authority (EAC) head offices, regional offices and at power stations stopped working as a way of expressing their opposition to the proposed privatisation of the organisation.

English: <http://cyprus-mail.com/2013/12/04/unions-threaten-more-strikes/>  
[http://cyprus-mail.com/2013/12/04/unions-demand-exemption ...](http://cyprus-mail.com/2013/12/04/unions-demand-exemption...)

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## Czech Republic

### **Change of sick leave benefits**

*December 27, 2013*

A three-year transitional period which saw the provision of salary compensation paid out by employers extended from 14 to 21 days due to austerity measures in the state budget ends on 31. 12. 2013. People that become ill after 31 December 2013 will be entitled to sick leave benefits from the 15th calendar day of their temporary sick leave period. During the first 2 weeks of sick leave employees pay their employees salary compensation in temporary sick leave.

English: [http://eu.cianews.cz/english-news/transitional-period-for-sick-leave-benefits ...](http://eu.cianews.cz/english-news/transitional-period-for-sick-leave-benefits...)

### **Income of academics compared**

*December 23, 2013*

In a survey the median gross salary of people with university education was investigated. The outcome shows that academic workers earn CZK 176.30/hour (or 6.4 euro). This is roughly twice lower compared to Germany. On the other hand, the salaries of this type of specialists in Ukraine, Russia and Slovakia turn out to be significantly lower.

English: [http://eu.cianews.cz/english-news/mujplat-cz-median-hourly-gross-salary ...](http://eu.cianews.cz/english-news/mujplat-cz-median-hourly-gross-salary...)

### **Wage increase foreseen**

*December 2, 2013*

According to a survey by the Chamber of Commerce (HK ČR) only 7% of the companies plan to cut salaries in 2014. Twice as many domestic companies, i.e. 16%, plan to double their salaries. 56% of companies with 250+ employees plan to raise salaries in 2014. Manufacturing industry is most optimistic in the applied sector classification, as 36% of companies plan to raise salaries.

English: [http://eu.cianews.cz/english-news/comcham-16-of-firms-plan-to-raise-salaries ...](http://eu.cianews.cz/english-news/comcham-16-of-firms-plan-to-raise-salaries...)

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## Denmark

### **Reform of unemployment and illness benefit**

*December 19, 2013*

The reform of the illness-based unemployment benefits (sygedagpenge) has passed parliament. The government stated that the agreement, which is expected to generate yields of 385 million kroner and 1,700 new jobs when fully implemented, is important because it will help the thousands of sick people who lose their benefits every year. One of the central points of the agreement is the removal of the 52-week time limitation, which has led to thousands of people losing their rights to receive the benefit and has pushed many people completely out of public support.

English: [http://cphpost.dk/news/new-unemployment-illness-benefit-agreement ...](http://cphpost.dk/news/new-unemployment-illness-benefit-agreement...)  
<http://cphpost.dk/news/unemployed-have-difficulty-staying-in-work.8125.html>

### **New job cuts in banking**

*December 9, 2013*



The bank Nykredit announced its latest austerity plan entitled 'NyKredit 2015'; the aim is to save half a billion kroner. A substantial part of the savings will come at a human cost, with 300 managerial and staff positions being cut. Nykredit already cut 125 jobs in January 2012. The employees stated that they are suffering for corporate incompetence. Once again, less than two years after the last round of layoffs, the workers are penalised for a lack of due diligence and co-ordination within the company.

English: <http://cphpost.dk/news/nykredit-cuts-300-jobs.8054.html>

## **EU pressure on taxation of workers abroad**

*December 5, 2013*

Workers who pursue their work part of the year in nearby EU countries will be given the full tax deduction following pressure from the EU. Until now, Danes who earned some of their income in another EU member state had their annual tax deduction reduced for the time they spent working abroad. Individual member states are responsible for setting their own tax laws, but the European Commission argued that the rule made it less attractive for Danes to work in another country. According to the Commission the policy violates EU residents' right to free movement, and after pressure the tax minister has decided to change this policy.

English: [http://cphpost.dk/news/danish-workers-abroad-can-expect-lower-taxes ...](http://cphpost.dk/news/danish-workers-abroad-can-expect-lower-taxes...)

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## **Estonia**

### **Social Survey presents poverty figures**

*December 18, 2013*

In 2012 18.7% of the population lived in relative poverty and 7.3% in absolute poverty, according to the Social Survey conducted by Statistics Estonia among more than 5,700 households. The percentage of people living in relative poverty increased 1.2 percentage points in a year while the percentage of people living in absolute poverty decreased 0.8 percentage points. A person was considered to be at-risk-of-poverty if his/her monthly equalised disposable income was below 329 euros and in absolute poverty if his/her monthly equalised disposable income was below 196 euro. In 2012, the difference in income between the poorest and richest fifth of the population was 5.5-fold.

English: [http://balticbusinessnews.com/article/2013/12/18/25-of-estonian-population ...](http://balticbusinessnews.com/article/2013/12/18/25-of-estonian-population...)

### **No support for freeze of public sector wages**

*December 4, 2013*

The chairman of the parliamentary financial committee stated that the parliament will not support the latest ultimatum made by the finance ministry to cut costs of government ministries if his demands are not met in the parliament. The finance minister claimed that there is a 24m euro hole in the budget revenues and if proposals, for instance to restrict VAT refunds of company cars, were not accepted, he would have no option but to cut spending of government ministries by 1.2%.

English: [http://balticbusinessnews.com/article/2013/12/3/mp-freeze-of-public-sector-wages ...](http://balticbusinessnews.com/article/2013/12/3/mp-freeze-of-public-sector-wages...)

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## **Finland**

### **Nestle workers strike over contracts of temporary workers declared illegal**

*December 29, 2013*

Workers of the Turku Nestle baby food facility started a three day strike over the company's intention to employ its temporary workers through a third party. The workers asked Nestle to take its social responsibility and to hire all workers directly. Nestle has said the decision is a reaction to a lower need to temporary workers in the facility. The company went to court and the Industrial tribunal fined the union branch and workers' union three times for illegal industrial action. However, the trade union kept the strike justified and ignored the fine continuing the strike on 10, 16 and 20 December 2013.

English: [http://www.finnbay.com/ek-strike-of-nestle-finland-workers-in-turku ...](http://www.finnbay.com/ek-strike-of-nestle-finland-workers-in-turku...)  
[http://www.just-food.com/news/nestle-faces-strike-over-temporary-worker-status ...](http://www.just-food.com/news/nestle-faces-strike-over-temporary-worker-status...)

## **Union members willing to retire later**

*December 3, 2013*

Members of the trade union confederation Akava are prepared to remain longer in working life than before. Akava has been examining attitudes towards retirement for some time. Surveys aimed at sounding out members as to where they stand on this issue have been carried out in 2007, 2010 and 2013. The planned age for retirement has been moving steadily upward among Akava members. Right now it stands at 63.9 years. There has been a 0.7 year trajectory since 2010. And from 2007 the increase has been 2.7 years. Among non-Akava members the planned retirement age was on average 63 years. Even though the readiness to work longer than before has been on the rise 65% of Akava members and 75% of other wage and salary earners are unwilling to accept that the minimum old-age retirement age should be raised to 65 years.

English: [http://www.jokinen.kaapeli.fi/index.php/en/trade-union-news-from-finland/256-akava ...](http://www.jokinen.kaapeli.fi/index.php/en/trade-union-news-from-finland/256-akava...)

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## **France**

### **Total workers resume work after pay deal**

*December 27, 2013*

Workers at the oil refinery plants of Total went on strike to demand higher wages for all Total workers. Negotiations had been suspended over a disagreement of the appropriate level of negotiations; Total national management refused to enter negotiations, arguing pay raises should be agreed locally. Strikes started at sites in La Mede, Gonfreville and Feyzin, while workers at the Donges plant returned to work after signing a pay deal. Later on all of Total SA refineries resumed operations after employees at Gonfreville voted to return to work, the last to come back after a strike that took 2 weeks. The trade unions CGC-CFE and CFDT agreed to a pay deal with the company. CGT that called for the industrial action didn't sign.

English: [http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-12-27/total-s-five-french-oil-refineries ...](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-12-27/total-s-five-french-oil-refineries...)  
[http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/12/27/uk-total-strike ...](http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/12/27/uk-total-strike...)

### **Endless dispute at H&M**

*December 27, 2013*

An industrial dispute at the logistics centre of H&M in le Bourget that started already on 5 November with a strike has not been solved yet. The Court has rejected the demands of the management to end a blockade by a picket line of strikers. The protest of the workers is against a downgrading of their working conditions. They also fear the transfer of their work to a Belgian subsidiary. After interventions from the local government a round table has been initiated.

French: [http://www.lefigaro.fr/social/2013/11/14 ...](http://www.lefigaro.fr/social/2013/11/14...)  
[http://www.leparisien.fr/espace-premium/seine-saint-denis-93/une-table-ronde ...](http://www.leparisien.fr/espace-premium/seine-saint-denis-93/une-table-ronde...)  
[http://www.leparisien.fr/espace-premium/seine-saint-denis-93/statu-quo-chez-h-m ...](http://www.leparisien.fr/espace-premium/seine-saint-denis-93/statu-quo-chez-h-m...)

### **Lufthansa interrupted by strike**

*December 26, 2013*

German airline Lufthansa cancelled four flights to and from Paris after most of its workers there called in sick. The company is in the midst of a cost-cutting programme that aims to improve profits by 1.5 billion euros. The trade unions fight for a social plan in a restructuring that threatens 199 jobs.

English: [http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/12/26/uk-lufthansa-strikes-paris ...](http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/12/26/uk-lufthansa-strikes-paris...)  
French: [http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-eco/2013/12/26 ...](http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-eco/2013/12/26...)

### **National rail strike over broken promises**

*December 12, 2013*

Rail unions went on strike on 12 December, saying the minister for transport has broken promises made last year. In October 2012, the minister promised to prevent the fragmentation of the network, to ensure that railways are financially viable, and to improve freight services. Unions, however, say national rail company SNCF is already implementing reforms ahead of a parliamentary debate about its future that will be held in the beginning of 2014.

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

### **Deteriorating working climate at Disneyland**

*December 4, 2013*

Disneyland Paris, located in Marne La Vallée, is losing millions of dollars despite an impressive number of visitors. A strict cost-reduction program implemented by the management has sown discontent amongst guests and employees. In late October, a child fell out of a water ride and was severely injured. Recent revelations of a suicide attempt have thrown an additional shadow over Mickey Mouse's cheerful kingdom. Shortly after being called in to meet with his superiors, a Euro Disney garden-worker doused himself in gasoline and took out a lighter. Trade union members argue that the park's 'demeaning' working conditions are responsible for the suicide and speak about a deteriorating working climate, a lack of dialogue and sharpening of disciplinary measures.

English: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/disneyland-paris-faces-criticism ...>

### **Criminal responsibility shifts from sex workers to clients**

*December 4, 2013*

The parliament has voted to impose punitive fines on prostitutes' customers as part of a controversial law aimed at helping sex workers throw off the shackles of pimps and organised criminal gangs. The proposals, introduced under a private members' bill, shift the criminal responsibility away from the estimated 40,000 prostitutes in France and on to their clients. The vast majority of sex industry workers are believed to be controlled by criminal gangs and international trafficking networks.

English: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/01/french-mps-fines ...>  
<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/dec/04/france-law-fines-prostitution-clients>

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## **Germany**

### **The food-processing industry and low pay**

*December 27, 2013*

According to the trade union NGG, which represents food industry employees, most workers in the meat industry are eastern European, employed under 'miserable' conditions. In recent publications also the 'hidden' costs of the sector are highlighted. The sector employs a vast underclass of low-paid workers – proportionately, the biggest such sector in Western Europe – who represent the underside of the country's admired economic success. As in other advanced economies, technological change and globalisation have weakened the bargaining position of workers in routine jobs. Research suggests that many others are also missing out on the benefits of the country's robust economy. About 24% of all workers are in a 'low-paid job', defined as earning less than two-thirds of the median salary. In 2006, the low pay sector accounted for less than 19% of all workers.

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

**Focus** on the environmental consequences:

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/analysis-of-the-hidden-cost ...>

### **Christmas strike at Amazon**

*December 20, 2013*

In an ongoing pay dispute, Amazon workers have organised a week long Christmas strike until 21 December. The strike, that was announced in advance, interfered with the company's Christmas shipments. Meanwhile, a delegation of trade unionists, including the American union AFL-CIO, went to Amazon global headquarters in Seattle. Global management, however, refused to negotiate with the unions, stating they 'feel it is best to work directly with our employees, not through an intermediary'. Amidst solidarity statements from AFL-CIO, Germany unions have announced the strikes will continue in 2014.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/german-amazon-workers-protest ...>  
<http://www.internetretailer.com/2013/12/19/german-workers-take-their-wage-protest ...>

### **Teachers, pupils, parents on strike for better working conditions**

*December 13, 2013*

Over 2,400 Berlin teachers went on strike on 4 December, which was the 16<sup>th</sup> strike since November 2012. The strikes are the result of the Berlin senate's refusal to negotiate a collective agreement, despite the labour court having appointed them as the responsible bargaining party. Teachers are asking for classification schemes for contract teachers in line with tenure teachers and measures on age-appropriate working conditions.

English: [http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/news\\_details/2802](http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/news_details/2802)

### **EADS cuts jobs**

*December 7, 2013*

EADS, the maker of Airbus, is set to announce a draconian restructuring plan to unions that may include thousands of job cuts and strain relations with shareholders Germany and France. The company's defence and space operations, both suffering a drop in orders, require urgent attention, not the successful Airbus business. In November 2013 trade union IG Metall held an industrial action as a warning against the company's plans. In a letter to the government, unions in France wondered why a company 'with a 650 billion euro order book was not able to maintain job sites.'

English: [http://www.thelocal.de/20131207/airbus-parent-eads-to-downsize ...](http://www.thelocal.de/20131207/airbus-parent-eads-to-downsize-...)

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## **Greece**

### **Protect the safety and right of journalists**

*December 11, 2013*

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) have condemned the latest brutal attack against a journalist by members of the Golden Dawn party, while also expressing their concern that police did not stop the incident. According to the IFJ/EFJ affiliate, the Journalists' Union of the Athens Daily Newspapers (JUADN), police were present at the meeting, but did not attempt to stop the attack. The trade unions stated that protecting journalists from such attacks is not just a matter of protecting individuals; it amounts to fortifying democracy itself.

English: [http://www.ifj.org/en/articles/ifj-efj-condemn-latest-attack-on-greek-journalist ...](http://www.ifj.org/en/articles/ifj-efj-condemn-latest-attack-on-greek-journalist-...)

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## **Hungary**

### **Increase of employment forecasted**

*December 27, 2013*

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MKIK) forecasted that the national economy's output could grow between 1.3% and 2.4% next year, while investment could increase by 2-3%. Employment could grow by as much as 1.5% and MKIK expects real wages to go up by about 2% in 2014, contributing to a 1.5% higher domestic consumption than in 2013.

English: [http://www.politics.hu/20131227/chamber-of-commerce-says-employment-may ...](http://www.politics.hu/20131227/chamber-of-commerce-says-employment-may-...)

### **Gross earnings in October 2013**

*December 19, 2013*

The Central Statistics Office (KSH) released figures on the average personal monthly income; the numbers show growth to gross and net earnings of 3.8% and 5.2%, respectively, year-on-year. Full-time employees' average gross earnings rose to 768 euro. Topping the list of highest gross salary per employee were financial and insurance activities, information & communication and utilities supply. At the bottom were food service and accommodation, human health and social work activities, and agriculture, forestry and fishing.

English: [http://www.bbj.hu/economy/average-gross-earnings ...](http://www.bbj.hu/economy/average-gross-earnings-...)

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## **Iceland**

### **Extra unemployment payment**

December 18, 2013

The government has proposed a directive for the payment of a 325 euro December bonus for the unemployed. Those who are confirmed as having sought employment from November 20 to December 3 are eligible. The unemployment rate in November 2013 was 4.2%, relatively unchanged to November 2012. According to Statistics Iceland, 3,900 men and 3,700 women were without a job in November.

English: [http://www.icelandreview.com/icelandreview/daily\\_news//Extra\\_for\\_the\\_Unemployed ...](http://www.icelandreview.com/icelandreview/daily_news//Extra_for_the_Unemployed ...)

## Ireland

### Teachers under pressure finally accept pay deal

December 19, 2013

Teachers in up to 30 schools faced losing their jobs next year if their union rejected the Haddington Road pay and productivity deal again. The Department of Education circulated a list of schools where teachers were at risk of redundancy if their union, the Association of Secondary Teachers Ireland (ASTI), did not sign up to the agreement. It covered up to 48 teaching posts in 29 named schools where ASTI has members. It would be the first time that compulsory redundancies would be imposed, not only on teachers, but among permanent and pensionable staff in the public service. The government believed that up to 550 schools where the Asti is either the dominant union or has a significant presence could have been affected by any escalated industrial action. Therefore, the outcome of the ballot by a margin of 57% for and 43% against was a relief for the government; as a result all public service groups have now signed up to the accord.

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/asti-ballot-result-a-relief ...>

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/strike-threat-removed ...>

<http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/teachers-could-be-first-public-servants-to-lose ...>

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/teachers-union-warns ...>

### Marks & Spencer strike suspended

December 19, 2013

In a dispute over the closure of a pension scheme at the retailer more than 2,000 workers went on strike having voted almost unanimously to take industrial action. According to the trade unions, management has attempted to open two of the smaller outlets in Athlone and Navan using temporary, seasonal staff. The company's defined benefit pension scheme was shut down by the company on October 31st with two weeks' notice to staff. Other workers concerns included plans to drop the Sunday pay rate, the elimination of a Christmas bonus and a reduction in numbers of section managers. After an emergency hearing at the labour court the labour court's recommendation was accepted by the unions and the actions were suspended.

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

<http://www.mandate.ie/News/Mandate/997/marks-spencer-workers-vote-overwhelmingly ...>

<http://www.rte.ie/news/2013/1211/492318-marks-and-spencer-strike/>

<http://www.irishtimes.com/business/sectors/retail-and-services/m-s-stores-close ...>

### Electricity blackout averted as pension fund hole is plugged

December 9, 2013

A strike at electricity provider ESB was averted after management and unions reached a deal over the company's pension fund deficit. The deal includes that classification of the scheme as defined benefit instead of defined contribution, contains a clause saying that workers and management will engage in negotiations when new deficits arise and law suits brought by several ESB employees will be dropped. Only days after the deal, however, a new row arose as management and unions has different understandings of the ESB capital injection into the fund in order to turn it into a defined benefit scheme.

English: <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/strike-averted-but-row-erupts-between ...>

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## Italy

### Poverty hits record high

December 30, 2013

The number of people living in absolute poverty has doubled between 2005 and 2012 and tripled in the

industrial north, up to 6.4% from 2.5%, according to an annual report on social cohesion by national statistics bureau Istat. Istat noted earlier that the percentage of Italian families with three or more children living in absolute poverty jumped to 16.2% in 2012 from 10.4% in 2011 while the number of single-parent families in absolute poverty jumped to 9.1% from 5.8% the previous year.

English: [http://www.ansa.it/web/notizie/rubriche/english/2013/12/30/Poverty-hits-record ...](http://www.ansa.it/web/notizie/rubriche/english/2013/12/30/Poverty-hits-record...)

Italian: [http://www.istat.it/it/files/2013/12/Volume\\_II\\_20131.pdf](http://www.istat.it/it/files/2013/12/Volume_II_20131.pdf)

### **Presentation of labour indicators renewed**

*December 18, 2013*

Starting from the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2013 the national statistical office Istat publishes the labour demand and labour cost short term indicators (hours worked, job vacancy; wages and labour cost) in a single press release, also in English. Moreover the indicators for some sections of economic activities are published for the first time: education, health and social work, artistic activities, sports, entertainment and recreation, other services. In the third quarter 2013 the seasonally adjusted index of labour cost per full time equivalent (fte) increased by 0.6% in business economy compared to the previous quarter (+0.5% in industry and 0.8% in services).

English: <http://www.istat.it/en/archive/107647>

### **Fatal accidents in unsafe textile plant**

*December 6, 2013*

Workers were trapped in an improvised dormitory built above a warehouse in the Macrolotto industrial district of Prato, known for its large number of garment factories. Seven people died and three were injured. The disaster prompted immediate questions about the conditions on the site and in a network of similar workshops operating in the area between Florence and Prato, which is noted for its large number of Chinese-owned textile manufacturing businesses, many operating on the fringes of legality. The trade unions stated that the disaster underlined the unsafe conditions in which the hundreds if not thousands of people are living and working in conditions of near-slavery.

English: [http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/02/italian-textile-factory ...](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/02/italian-textile-factory...)

[http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/08/world/europe/deadly-factory-fire-bares-racial-tensions ...](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/08/world/europe/deadly-factory-fire-bares-racial-tensions...)

<http://www.industrialunion.org/fire-kills-seven-and-injures-three-in-italy>

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## **Latvia**

### **Too many low wages**

*December 20, 2013*

An OSE-paper explores the economic situation. From 2004 to 2007, the GDP grew by 34%. In just a couple of years, the property prices increased fourfold, while nominal wages doubled. Increases in public wages were even higher than in the private sector, in 2007, reaching 40%. At the eve of the financial collapse the consumer price inflation reached 18%. By most measures, the country's credit boom outsized all other credit booms from 2000 to 2006, expanding annually from 37% to 64%. In the time period from early 2011 to mid-2013 the government secured compliance with the euro accession inflation target at the cost of (postponing) urgent reforms in social policy, as set out by the Country Specific Recommendations (CSRs). In two years the economy shrank by approximately 25%. Public wages were cut by 20%, then by another 5%. However, since the middle of 2012 the European Commission has expressed worries that the changes did not address the long-pending necessity to alleviate the tax burden on the poor. A Commission economist stated that there are too many low wages, and that the tax wedge on labour is highest for people with the lowest income.

English: [http://www.ose.be/files/publication/OSEPaperSeries/Eihmanis\\_2013 ...](http://www.ose.be/files/publication/OSEPaperSeries/Eihmanis_2013...)

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## **Liechtenstein**

### **Data on 2011 published**

*December 6, 2013*

The statistical office published complete figures for the year 2011. Though the country has been considered as relatively untouched by the crisis GDP in 2011 decreased by 2.7% (after an increase in 2010 of 8.1%). The



share of financial services in the economy is high (27%). Whilst the overall income increase of wage earners almost stabilised (plus 0.2%), the overall increase for capital owners was substantial (plus 78.1%).

German: [http://www.volksblatt.li/medienarchiv/pdf-llv-as-volkswirtschaftliche ...](http://www.volksblatt.li/medienarchiv/pdf-llv-as-volkswirtschaftliche...)

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## Lithuania

### Youth guarantee to be implemented from 2014

*December 13, 2013*

The minister of social security has announced that six billion euro will be allocated to increasing youth employment between 2014 and 2020. The scheme will start offering employment guarantees from 2014. The main aim is to ensure that all young people under 25 get a good-quality, concrete offer, including job, apprenticeship, traineeship, within four months of them leaving formal education or becoming unemployed.

English: [http://www.lithuaniantribune.com/59486/unemployed-youth ...](http://www.lithuaniantribune.com/59486/unemployed-youth...)

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## Luxembourg

### Partial unemployment with state compensation

*December 18, 2013*

The Economic Council has granted 41 requests to place employees under reduced working hours, with a total of 2,457 workers affected. The companies employ a combined 4,280 workers, meaning that well over half of them will work under partial unemployment starting January 2104. This means that companies can reduce costs, with the state compensating lost wages. Partial unemployment is granted to companies in a tough financial situation.

English: [http://www.wort.lu/en/view/over-2-400-workers-face-partial-unemployment ...](http://www.wort.lu/en/view/over-2-400-workers-face-partial-unemployment...)

**Focus** on the tasks of the Economic Council (in French): <http://www.cdc.public.lu/>

### Negotiations at ArcelorMittal fail

*December 14, 2013*

After nearly a year of negotiations, reported in this newsletter, the talks between steel giant ArcelorMittal and trade unions have ended without an agreement. Trade unions OBGL and LCGB rejected proposals by ArcelorMittal, which included a three-year freeze on wages, a restructuring of career advancement and the abolition of nine days of annual leave. A last-minute offer of financial compensation for the lost days of annual leave could not save the process and trade unions have made known that they will ballot their members over industrial action. Votes are expected to be held before the end of the year, paving the way for strikes in January.

English: [http://www.wort.lu/en/view/unions-reject-arcelormittal-proposals ...](http://www.wort.lu/en/view/unions-reject-arcelormittal-proposals...)

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## Malta

### Pharmacy workers in action

*December 4, 2013*

After months of negotiations, the trade union UHM has initiated industrial action among Pharmacy Technicians in the Health Sector. The protest started because of a delay in the implementation of benefits concluded in the sectoral agreement that was signed in November 2012. The poor implementation of the agreement resulted in waste of time, energy and great disappointments from the workers concerned.

English: [http://www.di-ve.com/news/uhm-orders-industrial-actions-over-pharmacy ...](http://www.di-ve.com/news/uhm-orders-industrial-actions-over-pharmacy...)

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## Netherlands



## **Plea for influx of young teachers**

*December 30, 2013*

As a shortage of primary school teachers is looming the trade union CNV says encouraging older teachers to retire early would free up space in schools for new graduates. While primary schools are currently shrinking, there will be a 'guaranteed' shortage of 2,000 teachers by 2017 with a wave of older teachers that are set to retire, the union says. The current shortage of jobs means fewer students are signing up for teacher training colleges and recent graduates are retraining for other jobs.

English: [http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2013/12/union\\_warns\\_of\\_looming ...](http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2013/12/union_warns_of_looming...)

## **Employers organisation says employers who can should give pay rises**

*December 23, 2013*

Employers' organisation AWFN has said the companies that are doing well should no longer hold on to a pay freeze. While AWFN does not agree with the 3% increase across the board demanded by trade unions, it is an acknowledgement that wages have lagged behind inflation since 2008.

English: [http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2013/12/employers\\_group\\_calls ...](http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2013/12/employers_group_calls...)

## **Row over paternity leave**

*December 12, 2013*

Employers have reacted enraged at a plan by Social Affairs minister Asscher to raise the unpaid paternal leave provisions from two to five days. Employers' organisation VNO-NCW said the minister is 'out of his mind' to add allowances while companies are struggling.

English: [http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2013/12/employers\\_furious\\_at\\_unpaid ...](http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2013/12/employers_furious_at_unpaid...)

## **Sharp increase in poverty in 2012**

*December 3, 2013*

The central statistical office CBS presented data on the rise of poverty in recent years. The economic crisis initially had only a modest impact on the extent of poverty. It was not until 2011 that the poverty rate began to rise substantially, and the increase was even greater in 2012. Based on the low-income threshold, 664,000 households (9.4% of all households) were at risk of poverty in 2012. This represents a sharp increase compared with 2011 and 2010, when 575,000 (8.2%) and 514,000 (7.4%) households, respectively, had a low income. A total of 1.329 million persons were on a low income in 2012.

English: [http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/themas/inkomen-bestedingen ...](http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/themas/inkomen-bestedingen...)

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## **Norway**

### **The impact money has**

*December 9, 2012*

In a survey it was noted that there is actually only a small rise in the country's happiness levels since 2003. Having studied people's economic habits, values, and happiness levels via the survey since 1985, the researchers conclude Norwegians (in the homogenous land of oil and money) also feel happier the more they earn. But, the authors think that the money=happiness pendulum is beginning to swing back more towards idealism than in the 90s.

English: [http://theforeigner.no/pages/news/norwegians-happiness-wage-level-connection ...](http://theforeigner.no/pages/news/norwegians-happiness-wage-level-connection...)

### **Dispute on applicable agreement**

*December 9, 2012*

In an ongoing conflict in the Risavika port the Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) and the Transport Workers' Union (NTF) demand that the framework agreement for cargo-handling work (dockers) is applied. The conflict stems from the Risavika operator's refusal to sign a new agreement that will give the dockers in NTF rights to all work carried out at the harbour. The NTF calls the harbour employer's refusal to sign 'a declaration of war' and claims the harbours and terminals like Risavika want to use 'underpaid foreign seafarers instead,' to help with the vessel loading and unloading. However, Industri Energi, another trade union affiliated to confederation LO notes that the work at Risavika is carried out by union members. The

key question is about which collective agreement that shall regulate wage and working conditions at the port.

English: <http://www.newsinenglish.no/2013/12/09/dockers-fail-to-win-much-support/>  
[http://www.industrienergi.no/modules/mo2/article ...](http://www.industrienergi.no/modules/mo2/article...)

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## Poland

### **Pension reform act sent to constitutional court**

*December 30, 2013*

The law on a pension reform approved by MPs earlier in December will be transferred to the Constitutional Tribunal to examine some of its provisions, particularly the parts of the act seeking to ban investments of the private pension companies in the country's sovereign bonds. Under the new law, private investment companies that are part of the country's pension system will be forced to hand over about half of their assets to the state in order to reduce public debt.

English: [http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/157309,Parts-of-pension-reform-act-sent ...](http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/157309,Parts-of-pension-reform-act-sent...)  
[http://www.newpolandexpress.pl/polish\\_news\\_story-6136-green\\_light\\_for\\_pensions ...](http://www.newpolandexpress.pl/polish_news_story-6136-green_light_for_pensions...)

### **Fall from height investigated**

*December 5, 2013*

Four contract workers have lost their lives in an accident at the Kozenice, one of the country's largest power plants. The four were standing on a platform that came loose inside a chimney while carrying out maintenance. The local prosecutor and the Labour Inspectorate are trying to clarify the precise causes of the accident. Part of the investigation is whether all health and safety protocols have been correctly observed

English: [http://www.newpolandexpress.pl/polish\\_news\\_story-6122-four\\_killed ...](http://www.newpolandexpress.pl/polish_news_story-6122-four_killed...)

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## Portugal

### **Strike of garbage collectors**

*December 29, 2013*

According to a statement from the CGTP trade union confederation a strike that started 23 December was prompted by the city's use of outside contractors and the privatisation of essential services. The union said it would continue the strike until 5 January. In the meantime piles of garbage mount in the streets of Lisbon after the nearly week-long strike of the collectors. The strike is one of several to hit the public services in recent months as trade unions oppose the government's 2014 austerity budget, which is the harshest one adopted in decades.

English: [http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/12/30/342728/trash-piles-up-in-lisbon ...](http://www.presstv.ir/detail/2013/12/30/342728/trash-piles-up-in-lisbon...)  
<http://www.euronews.com/2013/12/29/rubbish-collection-has-taken-a-holiday-in-lisbon/>

### **Bank of Portugal forecasts private sector wage and employment growth**

*December 12, 2013*

The Bank of Portugal has released its winter economic outlook, forecasting a growth of both employment and wages in the private sector. The bank expects the economy to pick up due to increased foreign demand. The government has welcomed the report as positive, whereas opposition parties have reacted sceptically. The bank warns that the private sector employment growth will not offset the public sector decline.

English: <http://theportugalnews.com/news/more-jobs-and-more-pay/30129>

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## Romania

### **Gender pay gap widens**

*December 10, 2013*

Figures from the European Commission show the gender pay gap in Romania widened between 2008 and 2011. The pay gap, measured as the difference in average earnings by men and women, increased from 8.5% to 12.1%. The increase in Romania goes against a European trend of a slow diminishing of the gender pay gap. The gender pay gap in Romania remains smaller than the EU average, which was 16.2% in 2011.

English: <http://www.romania-insider.com/widening-of-romantias-gender-pay-gap-biggest ...>

### **Inspection finds 13,600 workers without contracts**

*December 3, 2013*

In the first ten months of 2013, the labour inspection found 13,600 workers without proper labour contracts during its inspections. The inspection applied 15.3 million euro in fines. Employment without the proper paper work was concentrated in Bucharest, Bihor and Constanta county.

English: <http://www.romania-insider.com/romanian-inspectors-find-over-13000-workers ...>

### **Strike at chemical producer Oltechim**

*December 2, 2013*

Some 100 employees of publicly owned chemical producer Oltechim went on strike after not receiving their salaries for 2.5 months. The company, which has been on the list for privatisation since last year, has been making large losses and is under judiciary administration. The workers said neither management nor the judiciary administration would talk to them over the unpaid wages.

English: <http://www.romania-insider.com/employees-of-largest-romanian-chemical-producer ...>

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## **Serbia**

### **Public sector wage and job freeze**

*December 9, 2013*

The parliament passed a new Law on the reduction of net wages for public sector employees. Other amendments provide for a two-year ban on employment of new workers in the public sector, in force until December 31, 2015. Under the adopted law, the total number of part-time workers will be limited to 10% of the total number of employees in an agency or institution that is directly or indirectly financed from the budget, and new workers can be employed only with the consent of a government body, on the recommendation by a ministry or other competent body.

English: <http://www.b92.net/eng/news/business ...>

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## **Slovakia**

### **Success of youth employment plan disputed**

*December 2, 2013*

Some observers question the sustainability of the jobs that are the result of a €70 million government plan for tackling youth unemployment. The government proudly presented that it had created 11,000 new jobs in less than a year and that the success of the projects will soon be reflected in jobless statistics, which should decrease by 7,000 among people younger than 29. But several analysts are less optimistic and note that the government youth employment stimulus projects are overpriced and ineffective.

English: [http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/52231/3/youth\\_employment\\_stimulus ...](http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/52231/3/youth_employment_stimulus ...)

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## **Slovenia**

### **Shadow economy audited**

*December 27, 2013*

The Market Inspectorate and the Labour Inspectorate, who watch over undeclared work and undeclared employment, respectively, are looking forward to the confirmation of new legislation, which was sent to

parliament recently. Inspection services are registering results in a campaign to raise public awareness about the shadow economy. They have recorded additional taxable income based on audits in the first nine months of 2013. The Labour Inspectorate found a total of 752 violations of the applicable legislation in 2013, which is more than in 2012. It represents 7.8% of all violations in the field of labour relationships; most violations were related to undeclared employment in the hospitality sector, construction, commerce and transport.

English: <http://www.sloveniatimes.com/campaign-against-shadow-economy ...>

### **Social dialogue on minimum wages**

*December 24, 2013*

Minimum wage will be at the centre of the talks of the social partners in their attempt to negotiate a new social pact in 2014. The theme remains one of the toughest issues of social dialogue. Employers want the system to change so as to ensure greater competitive edge and some business representatives even called for abolishing the minimum wage in 2013. The calls died down somewhat after trade unions responded with threats of massive protests. The unions insist minimum wage is a basic human right and should be adapted to inflation also in the future. Abolishing the adaptation of minimum wage to inflation would further reduce purchase power.

English: <http://www.sloveniatimes.com/minimum-wage-in-focus-of-social-dialogue-in-2014>

### **Layoffs before privatisation**

*December 23, 2013*

Coatings maker Helios, the first from a list of 15 companies doomed for privatisation, is facing first layoffs even before the new owner, Austria's Ring International, has taken over. Concrete figures are not available, but it is suggested that between 100 and 170 employees stand to lose their jobs; figures that have not yet been confirmed. The trade union stated that the arrival of a private partner entails a risk that business decisions taken will not benefit people and underscored that 'the benefit the state will obtain through the sale of its stake will obviously be negligible as the proceeds will be spent the next moment to fill up holes at banks'.

English: <http://www.sloveniatimes.com/layoffs-at-helios-before-arrival-of-new-owner>

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## **Spain**

### **Minimum wage freeze in the pipeline**

*December 26, 2013*

The trade union confederations CCOO and UGT made a government's proposed minimum wage freeze for 2014 public in joint statements in which they rejected the government's plan. The unions said they had not been informed until a few days before the planned approval. The plan would mean that salaries will remain at a monthly minimum of 645.30 euro in 14 payments. In other words, workers who put in a full day's work will earn at least 9,034.20 euro annually. CCOO and UGT said that the purchasing power continues to fall since 2007 and many workers cannot make ends meet at the end of the month. For 2013 the Rajoy government had decided to increase the national minimum wage by a slight 0.6% after a freeze for 2012.

English: <http://elpais.com/elpais/2013/12/26/inenglish ...>

### **Training program for Turkish trade unionists**

*December 18, 2013*

A Global Labour Column, written by Emre Eren Korkmaz, focuses on the importance of International Framework Agreements (IFAs). Korkmaz draws on a case study of how Spanish trade unions support Turkish trade unions, in order to unite with workers of unorganised companies in the Inditex supply chain. Their International Framework Agreement is one of the first IFAs in the textile sector. It was developed through protocols that could empower local unions to play a more active role in monitoring the application of the IFA. Inditex accepted its responsibilities over its supply chain and agreed to collaborate with the Global Union on problems with regard to labour rights in its supply chains. Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining have a central role in the agreement.

English: <http://column.global-labour-university.org/2013/12/emre-eren-korkmaz ...>

### **Stolt Sea Farm workers on strike to demand collective bargaining**

December 13, 2013

Workers at the Galician Stolt Sea Farm went on strike over management's refusal to negotiate a new collective agreement. A union representative said the company is seeking to take advantage of recent labour law reforms, outlined in the July newsletter, which limits the extension of collective agreements. The workers fear that if they do nothing, the company will let the collective agreement expire and reduce annual wages by 3,000 to 5,000 euro.

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

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## Sweden

### **Debate universal applicability of collective agreement re-opened**

December 11, 2013

Trade unions and employers organisations in the transport sector have made known they will embark on a study visit to Norway and Finland to investigate their respective systems of declaring collective agreements universally applicable. Like the Danes, Swedish social partners have traditionally been against universal applicability, preferring to leave participation in collective agreements voluntary. In the transport sector, however, increased competition has prompted fears that the current system will undermine employers who offer decent working conditions. The social partners note that foreign transport companies, registered in other EU member states, are running domestic routes while paying inferior wages and disrespecting working hours in the collective agreement. Officially, cabotage rules only allow foreign companies to run limited domestic routes to avoid empty trucks returning home, but social partners report that these rules are often ignored. Unions and employers also report falling collective agreement coverage in the taxi business, as contacts for publicly funded transport (amongst others for people who are ill or disabled) are only awarded to the lowest bidder.

English: <http://www.nordiclabourjournal.org/nyheter/news-2013/article.2013-12-10 ...>

### **Higher prices for better wages**

December 9, 2013

Fashion giant H&M announced that it could raise retail prices in the future in order to pay better wages to some of the world's poorest textile workers. The announcement came at a meeting with pressure groups in Stockholm where H&M unveiled plans to improve pay rates for textile workers in countries such as Bangladesh where the minimum wage is less than \$70 (50 euros) a month. The company will use its size and influence with suppliers to push for fairer wages, training for workers, and recognition of the role of trade unions in pay negotiations.

English: <http://www.france24.com/en/20131209-hm-may-raise-prices-pay-workers-more/>

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## Switzerland

### **Christmas protest against Migros and Coop refusal to sign Bangladesh Accord**

November 20, 2013

Trade union leaders came together in a protest against Migros and Coop, two large supermarket brands that have refused to sign the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety. While CEOs from more than 120 global brands have signed the accord, Switzerland's biggest chains have so far refused. Protesters said they are calling on Migros and Coop to take the last opportunity of the year to join the employers who care about workers.

English: <http://www.industrialunion.org/final-call-before-christmas-for-swiss-supermarkets ...>

### **Gourmet workers want improved collective agreement**

December 6, 2013

Gate Gourmet workers at Geneva Airport have their pay and working conditions governed since 1997 by a collective agreement negotiated by their trade union, the Public Service Workers Union (SSP). Despite improving profits at Geneva Airport, the company proposed salary cuts and fewer benefits in collective bargaining in 2013. Gate Gourmet skyjacked the bargaining process by summoning workers to one-on-one

meetings to press them to sign new contracts. With 86 workers refusing to sign, the company upped the pressure by giving notice of termination effective December 30 with the possibility of re-engagement on new, poorer wages and conditions effective 1 January 2014. In reaction workers went on strike.

English: <http://cms.iuf.org/?q=node/2974>

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## Turkey

### **Turkish Airlines re-hires 305 sacked employees**

*December 24, 2013*

The 305 workers that were fired after a strike in May 2012 will be reinstated following a deal between Turkish Airlines and the civil aviation union (Hava-Is). The deal includes the reinstatement of the 305 workers, a collective agreement covering the period 2013-2015 and an agreement not to hire part-time cabin crew and to shift existing part-time cabin crew contracts to full time jobs.

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

### **One day strike of public workers**

*December 19, 2013*

Members of the trade union confederation of Public Workers Unions (KESK) and affiliated unions went on strike under the slogan: 'We do not accept the sales contract! We want our rights from the budget!' Public sector workers answering to the call assembled in Istanbul at Çapa and Sirkeci. The protesters carried empty shoe boxes, in reference to the shoe boxes full of dollars discovered during the corruption operations.

English: <http://www.diclehaber.com/2/25/1/viewNews/376186>

### **Trade union rights examined**

*December 4, 2013*

The EU-Turkey Joint Consultative Council has discussed the trade union rights situation in Turkey several times. During the last mandate, legislation was enacted by the Parliament starting with amendments to the constitution. Accordingly, in September 2010 the amendment to the constitution cleared the way for replacing the Act on Public Servants' Trade Unions and Collective Agreement (Act No 4688) by Act No 6289 in April 2012. Furthermore, in October 2012 the Grand National Assembly adopted the Act on Trade Unions and Collective Labour Agreements No 6356, replacing the two previous Acts. A report is now available.

English: <http://www.disk.org.tr/2013/12/eu-turkey-joint-consultative-committee ...>

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## United Kingdom

### **New Year's Eve police strike**

*December 31, 2013*

In protest against a below-inflation 1% pay increase the Public and Commercial Services (PCS) trade union called a London strike. As a consequence, thousands of police civilian staff, including handlers of 999 calls, will probably strike on New Year's Eve to coincide with a fresh walkout by firefighters. About 7,500 civilian police workers will take action for 24 hours in a row over pay while members of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) in England and Wales will stop work for six hours from 6.30pm. It will be the eighth strike by the firefighters since September 2013 in a bitter dispute over pensions and the retirement age.

English: <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/dec/31/new-years-eve-police ...>

### **Employers' spokesperson: too many people in minimum wage jobs**

*December 30, 2013*

The director-general of the CBI, the country's biggest business lobby group, accuses employers of keeping too many people in minimum wage jobs and failing to pass on prosperity. Companies benefiting from the economic recovery should pay their long-suffering workers more in 2014 said the CBI-head in an unprecedented attack on firms he accuses of keeping 'far too many people stuck in minimum-wage jobs'. The



intervention in the debate on living standards came as the trade union GMB warned that the real value of national average earnings has fallen by 14% since the start of the recession in 2008. Citing data from the Office for National Statistics, the GMB said average pay in 2013 was £27,174, compared with £26,137 in 2008. That emerged as a 13.8% drop in real terms with inflation and the rising cost of living factored in.

English: <http://www.theguardian.com/money/2013/dec/30/pay-workers-more-cbi-firms>

### **Half-hearted policy on zero-hours contracts**

*December 19, 2013*

The government has started a consultation that will last 12 weeks on the use of zero-hours contracts. However, the responsible cabinet member ruled out a complete ban on zero-hours contracts from the start, saying the contracts had a place in the labour market even though there had been evidence of abuse of rights as they offered employers 'welcome flexibility'. Zero-hours contracts do not guarantee regular work for employees. Business leaders welcomed the move not to ban zero-hours contracts but the trade unions bosses accused the government of being 'desperately short on solutions' to restrict their use. The unions added that zero-hours contracts are only part of the problem with today's precarious employment and irregular work patterns.

English: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-25442506>

<http://www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/gmb-on-zero-hours-contracts>

### **Illegal gangmaster received jail sentence**

*December 10, 2013*

On 9 December, the court sentenced an unlicensed gangmaster to seven years in jail for offences under the Gangmasters Licensing Act. The Act, which regulates the application of national labour laws to contracts of temporary workers in the agricultural and food processing sectors, was adopted in 2004 to combat widespread exploitation of migrant workers. The illegal gangmaster was found guilty of acting as an unlicensed gangmaster, possessing a licence belonging to another person, conspiracy to money laundering and physical assault on his employees. This is the first time an illegal gangmaster is jailed rather than fined for offences under the act.

English: [http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/Research-Publications/Daily-News/UK ...](http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/Research-Publications/Daily-News/UK...)

**Focus** on the Gangmaster Licensing Act: [http://www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/migmain ...](http://www.ilo.org/dyn/migpractice/migmain...)

### **Heineken transfer to Poland**

*December 7, 2013*

Almost 100 staff at Heineken UK branches across Lothian are facing redundancy after the beer giant announced plans to shift the bulk of its operations to Poland. The job losses – mainly from the finance departments in Edinburgh and Livingston – are part of a major restructuring process 'to maintain competitiveness' that leads to a transfer to the firm's global shared facilities in Krakow. Heineken UK is said to help redundant staff members find employment elsewhere. Most of the affected workforce is likely to be based in the Livingston office with a smaller number from their Edinburgh HQ being made redundant.

English: [http://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/lothian-job-losses-as-heineken ...](http://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/lothian-job-losses-as-heineken...)

### **Poor enforcement of statutory minimum wage**

*December 3, 2013*

Only 2 employers in 4 years have been prosecuted for paying below the national minimum wage despite more than 300,000 people in the UK earning less, a report reveals. The revenue and customs institution HMRC has investigated 10,777 firms since 2009 for allegedly breaking the law on low pay, collecting £15.8m in arrears payments and imposing £2.1m in fines. However, only a couple of firms have been prosecuted, and despite ministers' repeated pledges, only one has ever been named and shamed. A report from the Centre for London and the Trust for London, Settle For Nothing Less, which uses unpublished data, says the figures point to a 'systemic failure' in the way the national minimum wage is policed.

English: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/dec/03/minimum-wage-poorly-policed>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-25189755>

**Focus** on the report *Settle For Nothing Less*: [http://centreforlondon.org/wp-content ...](http://centreforlondon.org/wp-content...)



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