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Issue 1/2014 | January

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

Troika policy criticized - demonstration for a social Europe

January 27, 2014

The European trade union confederation ETUC presented the results of its investigations into the activities of the Troika in Cyprus, Greece, Ireland and Portugal. The report shows that countries where the Troika has implemented its policies have paid a high economic and social price. The ETUC demands substantial amendments to the existing programmes and mechanisms to ensure that the Troika's policy of austerity and deregulation cannot be repeated in the future. The ETUC also announced a European trade union demonstration in Brussels on 4 April 2014, as the European Parliament prepares to elect new members. It is part of its campaign *A New path for Europe*, outlining a bold new investment plan for the EU, based on a sustainable industrial policy and quality jobs. The ETUC is asking for the involvement of social partners in strengthening social dialogue, collective bargaining and worker participation, particularly in relation to economic governance process at national and EU level, education and training and labour market reform.

English: http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf/THE_FUNCTIONING_OF_THE_TROIKA ...

<http://www.etuc.org/a/11863>

Austerity undermines confidence

January 21, 2014

In a briefing published by the European trade union federation EPSU the arguments of those promoting austerity are analysed and found wanting - rather than any beneficial effect on confidence, the opposite is the case: austerity makes matters worse by undermining confidence. The briefing argues that the austerity advocates totally ignore the role of the public sector and cuts in social expenditure that fundamentally increase insecurity in society, resulting in excessive precautionary savings. Secondly, these advocates tend to forget that our economies are still suffering from a deep financial crisis.

English: http://www.epsu.org/IMG/pdf/2014_01_21_Briefing2_austerity.pdf

Two days of strike in the air

January 20, 2014

The European Transport Federation of trade unions (ETF) called for a European Action Day to demand a social dimension as part of a raft of industry reform proposals under the title Single European Sky. Controllers will hold parallel walkouts, rallies, meetings and strikes across Europe calling on the European Parliament to stop a 'never-ending process of liberalisation and cost cutting in the ATM industry'. The Air Traffic Controllers European Unions Coordination (ATCEUC) has planned a strike on 29 January. The actions coincide with a vote on 30 January by the Transport Committee of the European Parliament on the package called SES2+ based on market principles, top-down approach and cost reductions which the ETF claims will jeopardise safety and the number and quality of jobs.

English: <http://www.airtrafficmanagement.net/2014/01/air-traffic-unions-team ...>

European parliament assesses role of the Troika

January 13, 2014

In a public hearing the draft report of the European Parliament on the role and operations of the Troika was discussed. The report speaks about an unacceptable level of youth unemployment in the Member States under assistance programmes (Greece, Cyprus, Portugal and Ireland) and deplores that since 2008 the income distribution inequality has grown above average in the four countries and that cuts in social benefits and rising unemployment are raising poverty levels. The MEP's call for the involvement of social partners in the design and implementation of adjustment programmes, current and future.

English: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/econ ...

Privatisation of post brought deterioration of working conditions

January 1, 2014

A detailed study of the effects of market-opening of the postal services in Europe concludes that the balance sheet of post liberalisation is overwhelmingly negative. The privatisation has brought declining services and increasing prices. More important, postal sector workers have experienced liberalisation as massive deterioration of employment and working conditions based on five developments: a cut in employment numbers, an increase in atypical and precarious forms of employment, a reduction in wages, as well as an intensification of work and a fragmentation of industrial relations.

English: <http://www.globalresearch.ca/deregulating-and-privatizing-postal-services ...>

Austria

Telekom differentiates pay increase

January 22, 2014

Against the demand of the works council workers at Telekom Austria will receive a different pay increase depending on whether they are former civil servants or regular staff. Former civil servants will see a pay rise of 1.55% in 2014, whilst staff on other contracts will see a rise of 2.4%. However, employees with civil service contracts are also entitled to a 5% pay rise every two years and terms in their contracts means they are well protected from dismissal.

English: <http://austriantimes.at/news/Business/2014-01-22/50368 ...>

Pay deal brings civil servants 1.9% increase

January 20, 2014

Civil servants trade unions have succeeded in securing a pay rise. The new coalition government agreed on an increase to their wages of 1.9% in 2014 and a further pay rise of 0.1 percentage points above inflation in 2015. The move comes after protests held in December by civil servants, students and teachers over spending cuts proposed by the coalition.

English: <http://austriantimes.at/news/Business/2014-01-20/50352 ...>

Unemployment expected to increase in 2014

January 14, 2014

The Employment Agency AMS predicts the unemployment rate to increase to 7.6% in 2014 making it the highest unemployment rate in 60 years. On average 360,723 people were unemployed in 2013 but there were also record numbers of people in employment according to the figures. According to AMS more people from neighbouring countries came to Austria in 2013 in the search for work.

English: http://austriantimes.at/news/Business/2014-01-03/50290/Highest_Unemployment ...

German: http://www.ams.at/ueber_ams/14169_28714.html

Workplace stress on the rise

January 8, 2014

Pressure on employees in companies has increased significantly according to a study carried out by job search engine Monster. 87% of the 1010 people asked felt that stress in the workplace has increased over the last six months. It showed that women were more affected by the pressure than men. 48% of those asked said they regarded burnout as a serious illness and saw it caused by stress in the workplace.

English: http://austriantimes.at/news/Business/2014-01-10/50312/Pressure_in_workplace ...

German: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20140108_OTS0087/meinungsklima ...

<http://www.reichl-presseportal.at/monster.at/Monster-Jobwechsler-Studie-2014-1 ...>

Belgium

Gross wage and salary statistics

January 15, 2014

Although most data are presented in French and Dutch the statistical office has regular press statements in English. The Excel files attached to these statements contain an overview of indices by sector. In the third quarter of 2013, the index of gross wages and salaries in industry (excluding construction) stood at 92.4 (2010=100). This represents an increase of 0.2% compared with the third quarter of 2012.

English: <http://statbel.fgov.be/en/binaries/Loonmassa ...>

Industrial relations system stays upright

January 14, 2014

Oxford University Press is to publish the studies 'Changing inequalities & societal impacts in rich countries' and 'Changing inequalities in rich countries, analytical and comparative perspectives'. These show that the profound economic crisis had a devastating impact on social systems in many countries, but not on Belgium. The country is strongly linked to the solid German economy, and the social security system and the labour market are well-organised. Reference is made to minimum wages, the health care system and unemployment policies.

English: <http://www.expatica.com/be/news/belgian-news/Crisis-only-had-a-moderate ...>

Dutch: <http://www.demorgen.be/dm/nl/3324/Financiele-crisis ...>

Bulgaria

Low salaries and brain-drain in health care

January 21, 2014

Because of low salaries the country loses about 500 physicians a year to emigration. The doctors' trade union stated this in an alert. According to a 2011 study, Bulgaria ranks lowest among EU countries in terms of remuneration for doctors, which for that year was 307 euro compared to 2,180 euro in the UK, 3,842 euro in Germany, and 4,569 euro in France.

English: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/01/bleeding-doctors ...>

8% pay increase for civil servants

January 15, 2014

Civil servants will receive an 8% pay increase from 1 January 2014. The increase will have its effect at the end of February. As of next month policemen, investigators and inspectors will receive payments with BGN 50 to BGN 70 more. Along with them, the salaries of the Ministry's administrative staff will also be increased.

English: <http://www.novinite.com/articles/157276/Bulgarian+Police+with+8+Salary+Rise>

Dispute over minimum wage

January 13, 2014

The EU petitions initiative for a EUR 400 minimum wage has led to firm debates. An employer spokesperson called it a political fiction and warned that the economy is not competitive and a minimum wage of BGN 800 will trigger a wave of unemployment. The trade union confederation Podkrepa stated that the introduction of the EU minimum wage will close the rich-poor gap.

English: <http://www.novinite.com/articles/157201/Unconditional+Basic+Wage ...>

Croatia

Labour law reform announced

January 24, 2014

The government presented draft amendments to the Labour Act to the parliament which provide a shorter and simpler procedure for lay-offs. The amendments shorten the notice periods so that the notice will not run during paid holidays or leaves of absence. Notice periods will not run during a worker's sick leave, but a notice expires six months from the date of the notice. As for the arrangement of work hours, a week can consist of 56-60 work hours, but the monthly work hours cannot be higher than the result of the number of weeks in that month multiplied by 40 hours.

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

Effort to make no cuts promised

January 22, 2014

The finance minister announced that the government would adopt a budget revision with measures to reduce the deficit in February, after the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) defined measures. He said the government would 'try to avoid cutting salaries in the public sector, especially reducing pensions, as pensions are already as low as they can get and it is impossible to reduce them'.

English: <http://dalje.com/en-croatia/finmin-says-will-try-not-to-cut ...>

Cyprus

Union excluded from the negotiation table

January 29, 2014

The Co-Operative Central Bank (CCB) decided to cut stubborn bank employees' union ETYK out of negotiations for pay cuts which have already been agreed with other unions. Following an earlier deal, workers at cooperative credit institutions took a 3% cut on salaries across the board. Their unions agreed to additional tiered salary cuts ranging from 8% (for salaries between €1,001 and €1,500) to 25% (salaries between €4,000 and €5,000). But neither agreement applies to employees of the CCB who are all ETYK-members, with which the CCB board has been holding separate talks. ETYK threatened strike measures if the CCB insisted on 'blackmailing' its members to accept pay cuts or face redundancy.

English: <http://cyprus-mail.com/2014/01/25/co-op-bosses-ditch-stubborn-union/>
<http://cyprus-mail.com/2014/01/29/bank-union-threatens-strike/>

Bulgarian workers underpaid

January 13, 2014

Every second Bulgarian worker in Cyprus is working extra hours; but only 16% get additional payment for the overtime work. According to the analysis in a survey carried out by the Institute for Social and Trade

Union's Studies in cooperation with the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB), the major problem workers have to cope with is the overtime work without additional payment.

English: <http://www.focus-fen.net/index ...>

Czech Republic

No reason for great optimism

January 22, 2014

Economists of the trade union confederation Unions CMKOS do not expect the economy to overcome stagnation earlier than in 2016. They put GDP growth for 2014 at up to 1%. CMKOS wants to focus on pushing through measures for boosting the economy and raising employment, instead of austerity measures. The country was paying an enormous price for the cuts and lowering of the budget deficit in the past years.

English: <http://praguemonitor.com/2014/01/22/unions-say-czech-economy ...>

Unemployment still high

January 10, 2014

Although the recovery in industrial output strengthened in November and third quarter GDP showed slight growth on the previous three months, unemployment didn't drop, with the national jobless total now just under 600,000. The harsh economic fact is that whatever the good news on GDP, inflation, and industrial output, it will take time to convert into new jobs and lower unemployment. Just as employers cut overtime and temporary jobs when times get hard, they usually boost overtime but make do with the existing workforce when there are signs of an upturn.

English: <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/business/czech-unemployment-rate-unlikely ...>

Denmark

Widening of the income gap

January 20, 2014

In a country survey, the OECD said that the country's weak productivity growth over the past 20 years has led to a widening of the income gap in relation to other OECD countries. The OECD looked positively upon ongoing reforms of compulsory education and of the vocational education and training system and expects these reforms will raise the skills of youth and improve transitions to the labour market. A recent reform of the flexjob and disability programmes 'should help to better activate skills if adequately implemented'.

English: <http://www.oecd.org/economy/surveys/economic-survey-denmark.htm>

Job losses at slaughterhouse

January 17, 2014

Slaughterhouse giant Danish Crown has closed two locations in the mid-Funen town of Faaborg. Just before the axe fell employees were called to an information meeting. The company said in a release that the changes were necessary if the company was to stay competitive. The last few months efforts were made to resolve how to responsibly resolve the current challenge of overcapacity while maintaining a sharp focus on costs.

English: <http://cphpost.dk/news/danish-crown-lays-off-472-employees ...>

Estonia

Dispute at ferries continues

January 23, 2014

The State conciliator involved in a labour dispute at the Tallink ferry company said after a meeting with the parties that both sides were digging in for 'war.' The dispute deteriorated after a one-hour work stoppage. The trade unions were not giving up their demand for a 15% raise, while the management of Tallink was not offering more than the 5.5%. In the latest statements the management increased this offer to 6%.

English: <http://news.err.ee/v/economy ...>
<http://bnn-news.com/tallink-offers-employees-6-pay-rise ...>

New law on undeclared labour

January 9, 2014

The government approved a bill that creates a registry starting July 2014. The register should intensify the fight against unreported labour. Currently, a new employee can be registered a week after the start of employment, but in the future, it has to be done before the employee starts working.

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

Pilot strike at Estonian Air leads to talks

January 3, 2014

An announced strike has brought the management and the trade unions at Estonian Air to the negotiation table for a new collective agreement. According to the pilots union the airline's management had not contacted them since the strike was announced on 21 December and it looked as if they were not seeking ways of averting the strike. Though the relationship between the Airline Pilots Association and Estonian Air leadership is qualified as very messy the negotiations were constructive and a new agreement seems feasible.

English: <http://news.err.ee/v/economy ...>

Finland

New legislation applies

January 8, 2014

As of 1 January 2014 some changes in regard to unemployment benefits, parental leave and developing employees' professional skills are coming in effect that origin from the 2013 agreement between trade unions, employers and the government. It will be easier to get earnings-related unemployment benefit (calculated in terms of a daily allowance) than before. The waiting period to receive unemployment benefit is cut from seven to five days and unemployed can earn up to 300 euro a month without it affecting their dole. Parents of children under three years of age can now get a flexible care allowance if they combine part time work and childcare.

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

Job losses continue

January 8, 2014

The number of redundancies remained on a high level already for the second year in a row during 2013. A total of 14,500 employees lost their job, according to statistics from the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions SAK. In 2012 the number of redundancies was 15,800. Only in the year 2009 the number of redundancies was greater than in the last two years. SAK sent out a questionnaire to all their shop stewards and occupational safety and health representative at working places across the country. Almost half (48%) of them reported that there had been negotiations on either temporary lay-offs or redundancies at their places of employment during the year 2013.

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

France

Goodyear conflict comes to an end

January 22, 2014

The industrial dispute at Goodyear has polarised over recent months. The management filed a lawsuit against the trade union CGT over the forced detaining of two executives and the ongoing occupation of the Amiens-Nord plant. Workers at the plant have been demanding new negotiations over severance packages since Goodyear notified the union of its intention to close the site. According to the CGT the company demonstrated a dismissive attitude towards negotiations on a voluntary redundancy scheme with payoffs for departing workers. However, the latest news is that a deal has been reached that provides significant improvements in benefits for the 1,173 employees. The CGT agreed to end the occupation of the plant and halt legal action meant to delay its closing.

English: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/23/business/international/goodyear-reaches-deal ...>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/07/goodyear-executives-released ...>

<http://www.rubbernews.com/article/20140113/ISSUE/301139996/goodyear-sues ...>

Reflagging dispute ended

January 10, 2014

Ferry operators SNCM and Compagnie Méridionale de Navigation resumed sailings between the mainland and Corsica after seafarers voted to end a nine-day strike. At a meeting with strike leaders the government promised to safeguard the future of SNCM. According to the trade unions of the sector, the main demands by the workers are now guaranteed by the Executive. One of those demands is the obligation of all ships that operate in the country to carry the French flag as their first insignia, with the purpose of achieving a significant number of jobs on board for local workers and to end the services with ships under foreign flags, on which all the personnel is from other countries, although they work within the French maritime space. Trade union leaders feared SNCM was heading into bankruptcy following indications that one of its main shareholders, utilities group Veolia, was no longer ready to support its fleet renewal plans.

English: <http://www.fairplay.co.uk/login ...>

Sunday opening debated

January 2, 2014

A debate that is going on for a while has entered a new phase. In a temporary relaxation of the usual law on Sunday opening some do-it-yourself centres are added to a list of categories exempt from the usual ban on Sunday trading, but it is only operational until July 2015. Trade unions and employers' organisations will hold discussions in early 2014 over the terms of the Sunday work. The involved ministers say it should involve at least double pay as well as time off in lieu.

English: <http://www.connexionfrance.com/DIY-shops-Sunday-opening ...>

Germany

Vodafone announces job cuts

January 29, 2014

Vodafone is seeking to cut around 600 jobs, representing 5.7% of its Germany workforce. Last month the company announced it would seek to cut 100 million euros in annual costs, saying it would try to avoid forced redundancies. The cutbacks come on top of a two-year restructuring programme launched in April 2013, affecting 500 jobs.

English: <http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/01/28/vodafone-germany-jobs ...>

Lufthansa turns to court in order to avoid strikes

January 24, 2014

In an attempt to stop a strike by air traffic controllers, which is set to lead to delays and the cancellation of flights, Lufthansa has requested a court injunction. Air traffic controllers are protesting against plans from the European Commission to cut costs which they say will reduce safety in the skies (see European Sources).

English: <http://www.thelocal.de/20140124/lufthansa-seeks-court-order ...>

Reform program Hartz IV a failure

January 22, 2014

The trade union confederation DGB has analysed the functioning of the so-called Hartz-Reform. The reform was introduced nine years ago and promised a permanent and integral assistance to long-term unemployed in their search for a job. The results are disconcerting; the analysis reveals that the main objectives of the reform failed completely. Local communities do neither have the capacity nor the will to deliver the assistance needed. Around half of the target group needs more than only occupational assistance as their problems are manifold: high debts, psychosocial problems, addiction.

German: <http://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/soziales/hartz-iv-kommunen-vernachlaessigen ...>

Minimum wage in meat sector agreed

January 20, 2014

Trade union NGG and employers' group ANG have agreed on a minimum wage for the approximately 80,000 employees of the meat sector. The pay deal implies a minimum wage of €7.75 per hour from 1 July 2014 that will rise to €8 per hour from 1 December 2014. This is below an overall statutory minimum wage planned from 2015 at €8.50 per hour. However, in October 2015, workers in the meat sector will see their minimum hourly pay above average to €8.60 and from December 2016 to €8.75.

English: <http://www.iuf.org/w/?q=node/3093>

<http://www.euractiv.com/cap/france-welcomes-minimum-wage ...>

German: <http://www.mindestlohn.de/news/meldung/2014/januar-2014/arbeitgeber-und ...>

Greece

Public workers solidarity strike

January 23, 2014

Public workers with the Attica region staged a four-hour strike (from 10 am until 2 pm) called by trade union Adedy, one of the country's main unions representing the public sector, against the government's decision to ban a demonstration called on 8 January in Athens. The trade union also invited workers to take part in the protest of employees of the national healthcare service (Eopyy), who decided to prolong a strike until February 7 against government health policies.

English: <http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/economics ...>

New evaluation scheme for civil servants

January 15, 2014

A new evaluation method for the public sector employees will put an end to 'excellent' grades, as it introduces new quota on ratings. The bill concerning the evaluation of civil servants is one of country's obligations under the memorandum rules and will be tougher on employees, potentially opening the way for layoffs. Any civil servant with a low score on the test will be in danger of labour mobility or even exit from the public sector in general. Evaluators will not only judge the performance and achievements of each employee, they will also take into account the possibility they have of excelling in their work environment.

English: <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2014/01/15/new-evaluation-method ...>

Hungary

Unions join the air strike

January 29, 2014

Air traffic controllers' unions will join a European Transport Workers' Federation day of action called for 30 January. The air traffic controllers' federation HungaroControl will hold a two-hour strike action from 9am

to 11am to involve reduced air control services for flights. Other unions will parallel walkouts, rallies, meetings and strikes.

English: <http://www.bbj.hu/politics/hungarys-air-traffic-controllers-in-sit-down-strike ...>

OECD recommends freezing of minimum wage

January 27, 2014

The OECD's latest Economic Survey assesses the country's exit from recession as well as steps that can be taken to boost its growth potential. Growth potential is held back by weak investment and low employment among low-skilled workers. Employment is hampered by skills mismatches and low mobility. Low-skilled labour supply greatly exceeds demand, especially in disadvantaged regions. The public works program has increased employment, but has a poor record in reintegrating the non-employed to regular work. One of the recommendations is: 'avoid increasing the minimum wage by more than warranted by inflation and productivity developments, and consider even freezing it for some time'.

English: http://www.oecd.org/eco/surveys/Overview_Hungary_2013.pdf

Iceland

Unemployment 4.4% in December 2013

January 22, 2014

According to the Labour Force Survey the number of persons in the labour force in December 2013 was 185,100, of those 8,200 persons were unemployed. The activity rate was 80.9%, the employment rate was 77.3% and the unemployment rate was 4.4%. Comparison between December 2012 and 2013 shows that activity rate has increased by 0.8 percentage points and employment rate has increased by 1.6 points. At the same time the unemployment rate has decreased by 1.1 percentage point. Real wages decreased in December 2014 by 0.6% from the previous month.

English: <http://www.statice.is ...>

<http://www.statice.is ...>

Ireland

Reform of wage-setting mechanism welcomed

January 29, 2014

The operation of the joint labour committees that functioned as the wage-setting mechanism was suspended in July 2011 following a successful constitutional challenge brought by a group of employers in the catering sector. The Government subsequently introduced legislation in 2012 under which a review of individual joint labour committees was to be established. The employers do not want to retain what it described as the outdated joint labour committee wage setting system. But, the trade unions have welcomed the reinstatement of a tradition that provides a framework within which employee representatives can come together to negotiate terms and conditions for workers in their respective sectors. The JLC-work will set basic levels of pay, above the minimum wage, for tens of thousands of low paid workers.

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/number-of-sectors-covered ...>

<http://www.mandate.ie/news/Mandate/999/mandate-and-siptu-welcome-reinstatement ...>

Tyndall workers ask better pay

January 22, 2014

The Labour Relations Commission with officials from the Department of Education and from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform failed to resolve a four-year dispute at the Tyndall National Institute. The institute is the country's largest research centre with around 460 researchers and support staff. Workers are University College Cork staff, but currently there is a gap of 10% to 20% between their pay and that of their colleagues in UCC. The trade unions warned of further industrial action.

English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2014/0122/499421-tyndall-institute-cork/>

Troika openly violated social dialogue principles

January 17, 2014

The trade union confederation, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions ICTU, told an EU Parliamentary inquiry into the operations of the mission in Eurozone programme countries that the Troika mission repeatedly violated core European Union principles of solidarity and social dialogue. According to the ICTU the Troika was ideologically blind; while there were regular meetings with the ICTU - the largest civil society body on the island – there was no dialogue.

English: <http://www.ictu.ie/press/2014/01/17/troika-openly-violated-core-eu-principles ...>

Workers at crane manufacturer Liebherr reject recommendations

January 13, 2014

Labour Court recommendations aimed at resolving a four-year dispute over pay were rejected by a ballot (a 163 to 107 majority) of SIPTU members. The trade union represents about 300 of the crane manufacturing plant's 670 workforce. The recommendations with a 2.5% pay increase, backdated to May 2012, were accepted by the management in December 2013. The management argued that the pay claim was not justified, but undertook to honour it, provided other cost-saving proposals were addressed in negotiations.

English: <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/bruton-urges-all-parties-in-liebherr ...>

Pressure on pension schemes

January 6, 2014

Pensions have become the latest industrial relations battlefield. At the end of 2013, strikes over company retirement plans threatened the ESB, Aer Lingus and Marks and Spencer. At around the same time, members of a scheme operated by multinational Element Six, in Shannon, were suing its trustees in the High Court for breach of duty. The schemes at the centre of these disputes are defined-benefit ones, where the pension is tied to the employee's final salary and the employer is liable for any shortfall in the fund. About 800 companies operate such retirement plans, and the Pensions Board – the regulator –recently stated that half of them are in deficit. The trade unions take the stand that employers should make adequate provision for workers once they retire as they regard pensions as part of their workers' pay and conditions.

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/employment/pensions-a-new-battle ...>

Italy

Pay cuts at Electrolux disputed

January 30, 2014

Electrolux plans to slash wages and cut hours at its plants has led to a furious reaction from the side of the trade unions. The Swedish based company has come up with a proposal to cut wages with 8% for its 5,700 strong workforce in order to put off the possibility of moving its operations to Eastern Europe, where labour is cheaper. Trade unions have responded with strikes and rallies, saying the plan would mean a drop of at least 40% in wages, as shifts are also being shortened and seniority and wage adjustments have been frozen. The management has held a series of meetings with unions and government officials to discuss the plans for reorganising production, with another meeting scheduled for 17 February. The industry minister stated that the plans were 'not convincing' and concern remained over the future of the plant in Porcia, north of Venice, the largest of four sites in northern Italy.

English: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/01/30/uk-italy-electrolux ...>

<http://en.europeonline-magazine.eu/electrolux-under-fire-in-italy ...>

Alitalia in bad weather

January 23, 2014

The heavily indebted air carrier Alitalia is planning to scrap 1,900 jobs as part of a restructuring plan. The management promised the trade unions that there would be no involuntary redundancies, with those laid off

likely to opt for early redundancy with special benefits. The layoffs affect 280 pilots, 350 flight attendants, 480 ground staff, 600 office staff and 190 maintenance staff. Meanwhile rumours that the Abu Dhabi-based carrier Etihad is preparing a big investment in Alitalia are still circulating.

English: <http://www.thelocal.it/20140123/alitalia-to-shed-1900-jobs>

200,000 jobs at risk

January 15, 2014

Central statistics bureau Istat reported estimates of the main labour market indicators resulting from the 'Labour force survey'. A total of 208,283 people claimed benefits for temporarily laid off workers in 2013, meaning they are in real danger of being made permanently unemployed in the near future. Unemployment reached a record 12.7% of the workforce in November 2013 with nearly 42% of under-25s out of work. There were 522,000 fewer people employed in the third quarter of 2013, with 333,000 in the economically less developed south.

English: <http://www.istat.it/en/archive/109139>

<http://www.adnkronos.com/IGN/Aki/English/Business/Italy-Over-200000-jobs-at-risk...>

FIAT likely to stay

January 5, 2014

Carmaker Fiat's recent deal to gain full control of No. 3 U.S. automaker Chrysler has raised worries the merger could further diminish Fiat's presence in Italy and lead to job cuts. The ministry of economic development dismissed concerns expressed by unions, saying the merger, which will combine the technology, dealer networks and cash of the two companies, could only be positive for the country. The ministry will meet with representatives from the automotive sector supply chain on 10 January to discuss moves that could help revive the car market, which has shrunk to levels last seen in the 1970s.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/05 fiat-italy...>

Latvia

Research on mobility published

January 2, 2014

The National Bank has published a working paper on labour mobility. The paper gives an overview of labour market internal and occupational mobility comparing periods before, during and after the crisis. It uses both the labour flow analysis and the survival analysis to evaluate labour mobility and to determine factors influencing it. The analysis is based on labour force survey (LFS) longitudinal data for 2005–2011.

English: <http://www.bank.lv/images/stories/pielikumi/publikacijas/petijumi...>

Liechtenstein

Hair dressers' exposure to allergenic substances

January 14, 2014

Inspections of the office for food and veterinarian items found that the use and exposure of hair colorants in hairdressing salons in general terms stayed within acceptable levels. However, in 6 out of 30 inspected cases the application had to be corrected after the first inspection. The substances used in hair dyes can cause allergic reactions to hairdressers. Package inserts, therefore, have to indicate the risks.

German: www.llv.li/llv-alkvw-aktuelles...

Lithuania

Poor health and safety record

January 30, 2014

According to data provided by the State Labour Inspectorate (VDI), 58 people died and 137 suffered severe injuries on the job in 2013. Most of the fatalities and severe injuries occurred during construction or repair work, servicing or repairing electrical equipment or electricity networks, repairing machinery or carrying out storage, loading and unloading work. Most accidents could have been avoided if work was adequately organised and carried out, if equipment met health and safety requirements, if internal health and safety control was properly organised and if the workers carried out all compulsory safety requirements.

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

Luxembourg

Negotiations at ArcelorMittal enter new stage

January 15, 2014

In an effort to avoid strike action ArcelorMittal negotiators are working with the trade unions on a last-minute deal. The collective working agreement for the steel giant expired on 15 December 2013. The trade unions have become cautious after a year of negotiations. The unions had hoped a new agreement would be effective from 15 January 2014 but the management appealed for further discussions with employee representatives.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/view/arcelormittal...>

Difficult negotiations in banking

January 7, 2014

Representatives of the employers' organisation ABBL (Luxembourg Bankers' Association) and the trade unions OGBL, LCCB and Aleba started negotiations at the end of December for a new collective working agreement, with 20,000 employees waiting for the new contract. The unions came back with largely negative feedback from the talks.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/view/20-000-banking-sector-employees-wait...>

Malta

Unions welcome parental leave

January 6, 2014

The government's proposal to enable parents to use their sick leave whenever they needed it to take care of their sick children was welcomed by the trade unions. There was a clear consensus among the members of the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development on the need to encourage more women and carers of children to participate in the labour market. It is therefore high time that such parents are not just encouraged but assisted to participate in the labour market.

English: <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20140106/local/trade-unions-group...>

Netherlands

Rabobank announces giant job cuts

January 25, 2013

Rabobank Group announced a cut of 2,000 jobs as part of the so-called *Vision 2016 plan* that aims to reduce expenses by 220 million euros by 2016. The bank will reduce between 1,000 and 2,000 positions at Rabobank Nederland and at the Dutch arm of the company's international operations. The job reductions come on top of the 8,000 jobs earlier unveiled at its consumer bank, which currently employs 28,000.

English: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-01-25/rabobank-groep-may-cut ...>

Only partial refunding of wage deductions

January 21, 2013

Portuguese workers at a large tunnel site near Maastricht, who had nearly €1,000 a month deducted from their wages for housing and travel, will get back around €400 for each month they have worked on the project. The building consortium will not refund all the living costs deducted from the wages of foreign workers involved with the project. The foreign workers' working hours are now being closely monitored and they have all now been brought under Dutch employment law. An independent report into union claims had concluded that the official pay and working conditions were not respected.

English: http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2014/01/a2_builder_will_not_pay_back ...

Philip Morris workers on strike

January 17, 2013

Workers at the Bergen op Zoom plant of US cigarette manufacturer Philip Morris are on strike. The workers want to force the company's board to agree on requirements for a new collective agreement. The management finds the demands of the trade unions unacceptable. After work interruptions in the first week and working half shifts the week after, the action committee decided to further increase the pressure on the management.

English: <http://www.epa.eu/view ...>

Retirement age moves up

January 16, 2013

The average retirement age for employees rose further in 2013 to 63.9 years, i.e. 0.3 years higher than in 2012. In the period 2000-2006 the average retirement age for employees was 61 years. Since 2007, the average retirement age has risen annually due to the introduction in 2006 of legislation changes aimed at encouraging people to work longer. As a result, the proportion of people going into retirement prior to their 60th birthday declined from 28% in 2006 to 6% in 2013. The proportion of employees who retire between 60 and 65 has also dropped dramatically in recent years: from 70% in 2008 to 46% in 2013.

English: <http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/themas/arbeit-sociale-zekerheid ...>

Bankruptcy because of energy costs

January 2, 2013

Aluminium producer Aldel has filed for bankruptcy. A substantial part of the 300 employees will lose their jobs. Background is the decision of energy provider EON to stop delivery of electricity, after Aldel appeared not to be able to pay the bills. EON terminated the contract per 1 January 2014. Aldel has been trying to lower the energy costs, which are some 25% higher than in neighbouring Germany. Some cost reduction measures had been taken by the Ministry of Economic Affairs earlier in 2013, but appeared not to suffice. Shareholder Klesch, a UK investment company, was not prepared to invest extra money. A regional protest group has started a campaign to demand attention from political the Hague for problems in the province.

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

<http://www.nltimes.nl/2014/01/03/part-aldel-remains-open/>

<http://www.nltimes.nl/tag/aldel/>

Norway

Unions leave platform safety group

January 27, 2014

Based on harsh criticism of cutbacks in safety training the trade unions that represent offshore oil rig workers have pulled out of the Norwegian Oil and Gas Association's Network for Safety and Emergency Response Training (NSOB) that was established in the wake of the 1980 Alexander Kielland platform disaster in which 123 people died. The unions made the move reluctantly but were forced to make a

statement after the industry group unilaterally instituted a number of changes that impair safety and emergency training on the continental shelf despite vociferous objections of workers.

English: <http://dalje.com/en-world/norwegian-oil-worker-unions-pull-out...>

Mercury victim wins important case

January 10, 2014

It has finally been established that mercury is harmful to health and that it made dental nurses ill. This ruling by the Supreme Court might lead to a breakthrough for female-dominated workplaces. The Union of Municipal and General Employees (known as Fagforbundet) took on the case on behalf of a group of dental nurses. It won the case and was awarded costs.

English: <http://www.world-psi.org/en/mercury-victims-win-supreme-court-case...>

Poland

Economic indicators problematic

January 27, 2014

According to statistics provided by the Ministry of Labour, over 2.15 million people were registered as unemployed in December 2013, marking a 0.5% rise since November. A government spokesperson said that any level of unemployment that is in double figures is 'a big problem', but there is reason for optimism as it is the first time since 2007 that unemployment at the end of the year is the same as in the previous year. However, other sources forecast hard times for the economy.

English: <http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/158203,Unemployment-spiral-slows...>
<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/poland/unemployment-rate>

Discussion on Sunday trading reopened

January 2, 2014

The government oppose an initiative by a group of MPs, including 11 from the ruling party, to ban Sunday trading. The opposition wants to extend the existing ban on national holidays to Sundays.

English: <http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/157571,Government-to-oppose-push...>

Portugal

Public transport strike

January 16, 2014

The public transport trade unions organised a strike to protest against austerity policies passed by the conservative government of Pedro Passos Coelho which are part of the 2014 budget, layoffs and pay cuts in a new law on public companies which became effective in December. Union sources said almost all workers participated in the strike. The walkout is part of a round of initiatives first launched in October 2013; it is the third protest by public transport workers since the beginning of this year (the others took place on January 2 and 9). Another partial strike has been scheduled for January 23.

English: <http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections...>

Grievances of dockers

January 7, 2014

According to the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) and the International Dockworkers' Council (IDC), all negotiations between workers and employers have ceased, with attempts being made to establish a new labour pool of non-union workers to replace existing professionals. The trade unions have stated in advance of a Europe-wide strike that working conditions in the ports have deteriorated since the

adoption of a new Port Law on 1 February 2013, with dockers allegedly having come under sustained attack from both the Portuguese government and their employers.

English: <http://www.portstrategy.com/news101/world/europe/portugal ...>

Romania

No optimism on employment growth

January 24, 2014

The population is optimistic regarding economic development in the following 12 months and both the willingness to buy and income expectations are rising, according to a survey from market researcher GfK. However, most of the respondents expect unemployment levels to rise in 2014 compared with 2013: the percentage of people optimistic about employment has been reduced, from 7% (2012) to 5% (2013).

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

Minimum wage increased

January 4, 2014

The level of the statutory minimum wage is established each year by a Government Decision, after trade unions and employers' organisations are consulted. Decision no. 871/2013 (published in the Official Journal no. 703/15.11.2013) provides an increase to 850 lei per month (i.e. approximately 190 Euros) for a full-time of 168 hours per month starting from January 1st 2014. Employers cannot negotiate and provide in the labour agreement a basic wage inferior to the national hourly gross wage. A second increase to 900 lei per month (approximately 200 Euros) is planned for 1 July 2014.

English: <http://www.nrcc.ro/index.php ...>

Serbia

Solidarity campaign on labour law reform

January 27, 2014

The two main trade union confederations along with several independent unions supported a one-hour strike in protest against government proposals for major changes to labour legislation. The amendments will have serious impact on workers' rights, including changes to severance pay, compensation for sick leave and paid leave. The trade unions are also very concerned about changes to the law that hinder the position of trade union representatives and the right to collective bargaining and believe that it is wrong that salaries and working hours will no longer have to be stipulated in employment contracts.

English: <http://www.world-psi.org/en/we-say-no-amendments-serbian-labour-law>

<http://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews ...>

<http://www.b92.net/eng/news/society ...>

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

Slovakia

Traditional training schemes strengthened

January 13, 2014

In an effort to boost the influx of young workers the government has initiated a project that opens up the possibility for vocational schools to receive more money per student from the state for particular specialisations. The list of preferred specialisations includes trades like mining mechanics, bakers, shoemakers, printing press operators, polygraphists, fishermen, sheep breeders and butchers.

English: http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/52552/10/selected_vocational_schools_to_get...

Slovenia

Takeover not embraced

January 16, 2014

The trade confederation has cautioned against selling the country's leading grocer Mercator at any price in a letter to Mercator's chief supervisor in the wake of reports that Agrokor further reduced the bidding price. The union threatened with industrial action unless commitments over jobs are kept.

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

Spain

Unemployment hits 26%

January 24, 2014

New unemployment figures from the National Statistic Institute (INE) show the country's unemployment climbed back up to 26.03% at the end of 2013, up from 25.98% three months earlier. The reported fragile growth has had no positive effect on employment after six straight years of job destruction. Some 198.900 jobs disappeared in 2013, and 3.5 million have vanished since the country's crisis began in 2008. New jobs are of poor quality and hours of overtime have increased.

English: <http://www.thelocal.es/20140124/seven-shocking-facts...>

<http://www.ine.es/welcoing.htm>

Spanish: <http://www.ine.es/en/daco...>

Coca cola plans closures

January 23, 2014

In a move affecting 1,250 jobs Coca-Cola plans to close 4 of its 11 bottling plants. The management said it would try to place 500 of the affected workers in other positions, and offer the rest early retirement or attractive termination packages. The trade union UGT is seeking to negotiate with Coca-Cola to head off the closures. The unions will launch strikes and demonstrations to press their position.

English: <http://www.thebull.com.au/articles/a/43562-coca-cola-plans-to-close-4-plants...>

Premature declarations of victory

January 16, 2014

For the past six years, the European Commission has predicted that Spain would return to solid growth in two years' time. They are now forecasting the same recovery in 2014-2015 that they predicted in 2010 for 2011-2012. However, further cuts would be a disaster for economic recovery, a disaster for public services, and for social cohesion. Even the IMF recognised that they have been more harmful than expected.

English: <http://www.social-europe.eu/2014/01/austerity-must-be-avoided/>

Wage gap widens

January 14, 2014

An annual report carried out by Barcelona business school Eada and the consultant ICSA indicates that the salary gap is getting bigger. While directors saw their remuneration rise by 6.9% in 2013, middle managers suffered a fall of 3.8% and workers a drop of 0.4%. The figures, based on 80,000 interviews, show that the average salary of directors has been on the rise in spite of the crisis, with the exception of 2009. The average annual gross salary of this group rose from 68,705 to 80,330 euro in 2013.

English: <http://elpais.com/elpais/2014/01/14/inenglish...>

Sweden

Serious job cuts in rail services

January 21, 2014

The national rail operator SJ announced that it was laying off 400 staff members in part of a savings package. The majority of the jobs will be cut back in the administration department where 237 people will be culled, mostly in the Stockholm head office but also in Gothenburg, Malmö and Krylbo in eastern Sweden. The management said to be willing to look in the negotiations with the unions at different packages and offers for those who are leaving.

English: <http://www.thelocal.se/20140121/sj-cuts-400-jobs-as-passengers-turn-to-web>

Olympic bid with fair working conditions

January 10, 2014

An agreement between the Swedish Olympic Committee and national trade union centre LO, seeks to stop the violations of workers' rights and worker-exploitation which continue to plague Olympics, football World Cup and other such events. The agreement is intended to apply to companies that produce facilities, equipment, clothes and supply services for the Winter Olympic Games in Stockholm in 2022 to ensure respect for the International Labour Organisation's core labour standards which guarantee union organising and collective bargaining rights, non-discrimination and freedom from forced labour and child labour.

English: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/swedish-2022-olympics-bid...>

Switzerland

Restructuring at pharmacy giant Novartis

January 21, 2014

The pharmaceutical giant Novartis is cutting up to 500 jobs at its Basel headquarters and pharmaceuticals division as part of a restructuring plan, a move that could include layoffs. The company said the job reductions were necessary to guarantee the 'necessary resources' for the launch of products this year.

English: <http://www.thelocal.ch/20140121/novartis-lops-500-pharma-jobs-in-basel>

Why the Swiss are involved

January 17, 2014

In an interesting Blog the dependency of Switzerland is described. Before the financial crisis the country had run large and rising current account surpluses and kept a stable exchange rate against the Euro without the need for any intervention, proving that these surpluses constituted market equilibrium. However, with the outbreak of the financial crisis speculators started to consider the Swiss Franc a safe haven, driving the currency to a level at which the export sector could not compete any longer. The SNB intervened heavily and then fixed the exchange rate against the Euro. The cost of defending the Franc limit is becoming apparent and the economy is far from immune to the risk posed by another exchange rate shock.

English: <http://www.social-europe.eu/2014/01/swiss-policy/>

Jobless rate rises

January 10, 2014

Despite economic growth, the unemployment rate continued to rise in December 2013, jumping to 3.5% from 3.2% in November, with foreign workers hardest hit. At the end of December 149,437 people were registered for unemployment benefits, 10,364 more than the previous month. The number of job seekers increased to 205,802, up 9,280 from November.

English: <http://www.thelocal.ch/20140110/expats-again-hardest-hit-as-jobless-rate-grows>

German: <http://www.news.admin.ch/message ...>

French: <http://www.news.admin.ch/message ...>

Turkey

Charges against union leaders

January 23, 2014

In a series of hearings the public prosecutor brought complaints to 502 trade union leaders, members and others supporting a strike and action in 2012, including from the confederations KESK and DISK and the professional organisations of doctors and of engineers and architects. The public prosecutor charged the union leaders with organising the strike and demonstration, and with the damages done to public property. The case has led to an impressive solidarity campaign by several national and international trade unions colleagues who were present at the hearing. They expressed their concerns: 'We are shocked that trade unionists are prosecuted in this manner in Turkey. If participating in strikes and demonstrations, and organising them is a criminal activity and seen as radical, then we are all radicals'.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/10112>

<http://www.world-psi.org/en/turkey-stop-judicial-harassment-trade-unionists>

United Kingdom

Pay dispute at universities

January 23, 2014

The members of the University and College Union are involved in a dispute over pay with universities. They rejected a 1% pay increase in 2014 that would have seen their pay drop by 13% in real terms in the past five years and announced plans for a series of two-hour strikes beginning on 23 January aimed at disrupting teaching at universities. The university workers condemned the claim by the employers, the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA), that the action was putting students' education at risk.

English: http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/news_details/2831

<http://www.theinformationdaily.com/2014/01/23/university-heads-and-staff-relations-hit ...>

Law does not protect agency workers

January 22, 2014

A High Court judge ruled that a safety rep from trade union UCATT blacklisted for his safety activities was treated unjustly, but the worker has no legal redress because he was an agency employee. Dave Smith, a founder member of the Blacklist Support Group, was repeatedly dismissed and refused work after his name appeared on a blacklist (see several items in our database www.cbnarchive.eu). A large file held by the blacklisting company, The Consulting Association-TCA, itemises concerns raised by the safety rep about asbestos, poor toilet facilities and contaminated waste on building sites controlled by Carillion companies. The judge identified human rights violations and expressed concern that Smith had 'suffered an injustice from blacklisting', but said that UK employment law does not protect agency workers.

English: <http://www.hazards.org/blacklistblog/2014/01/22/blacklisting-case-highlights ...>

Lack of skilled labour but regional development stagnates

January 22, 2014

A TUC report shows how people's chances of having a job have fallen in four English regions – the West Midlands, the North West, the North East and the South West. The North East and London have performed best over the last twenty years, with employment rates increasing by over five percentage points since the 1990s, in spite of the recession. However, even between the London boroughs there are big local differences. On the other hand, a report from the temporary agency sector suggests that a growing proportion of businesses have no capacity to take on more work without creating new jobs. Technical and engineering, computing and IT, and education and training are the areas in which employers expect to have the most difficultly sourcing appropriately skilled candidates for permanent roles.

English: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Economic ...>
<https://www.rec.uk.com/news-and-policy/press-releases/employers-lack-workforce-capacity ...>

Total breakdown of industrial relations on SERCO DLR

January 16, 2014

Members of the transport trade union RMT on the SERCO Docklands Light Railway have voted by massive majorities of more than nine to one for both strike action and action short of a strike in a dispute over a wide range of issues which amount to a total breakdown in industrial relations between the union and the employer. The issues at the heart of the dispute include stalling on talks over the 2014 pay award, abuse of the disciplinary and attendance procedures, the use of agency and contract staff to undermine jobs and conditions, and failures on training, development and grade progression that are limiting staff opportunities.

English: <http://www.rmt.org.uk/news/docklands-light-railway-vote-by-massive-majority ...>

Less rights for agency workers with indefinite assignments

January 10, 2014

The Employment Appeal Tribunal has judged that the Agency Workers Regulations 2010 (AWR) do not apply to agency workers placed with a hirer indefinitely. Workers employed by Ideal Cleaning Services Ltd but placed to work as agency workers at the premises and under the supervision of Celanese Acetate Ltd had been placed with Celanese for between 6 and 25 years when their contracts were terminated in 2012. The workers brought claims that they were agency workers under the AWR and entitled to protection as such. The tribunal dismissed their claims on the basis that the work they had carried out for Celanese had not been temporary in nature and did not therefore fall within the AWR-scope. The question is whether this decision will lead to temporary work agencies (and user undertakings) using indefinite assignments as a means of preventing agency workers from falling within the scope of the Agency Workers Regulations.

English: <http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/Research-Publications ...>
<http://www.lexology.com/library/detail ...>

Care workers in Glasgow set for strike

January 10, 2014

Care workers in Glasgow City Council's residential homes are going on strike for two days to resist new job roles, longer shift patterns and pay cuts of up to 7%. The lowest-paid workers are being asked to take on new tasks like dispensing medicines - and at the same time they are being forced to work longer shifts and to accept massive wage losses of up to £1,495 per year for 182 staff who are already feeling the impact of rising living costs.

English: <http://www.unison.org.uk/news/glasgow-homecare-staff-set-for-strike>

Tube workers voted yes to strike

January 10, 2014

The RMT union has announced that on 4 and 5 February, and 11 and 12 February two 48-hour strikes on the Tube will take place. London Underground workers voted to go on strike in protest at plans to close ticket offices and axe 750 jobs. Some 77% of Rail Maritime and Transport (RMT) union members voting in the ballot backed strike action. The union also announced action short of strike, including telling its members not to sell tickets at certain times.

English: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tube-strikes-loom ...>

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