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collective bargaining

Issue 2/2014 February

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
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European sources

Transport workers fight for quality railway services

February 25, 2014

European railway workers gathered in Strasbourg to call for quality railway services as the European Transport Workers' Federation organised a demonstration in front of the European Parliament. New proposals of the European Commission will lead to further liberalisation and fragmentation in the sector. The ETF stated that this has to be rejected because it will undermine the accessibility, affordability and quality of railway passenger services. And enhanced competition will inevitably lead to cost-cutting measures that put increased pressure on working conditions and employment.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/etf/etf-press-area.cfm/pressdetail/10152>

[http://www.tuc.org.uk/industrial-issues/transport-policy/unions-protest-against-threat ...](http://www.tuc.org.uk/industrial-issues/transport-policy/unions-protest-against-threat...)

***Employment and Social Developments in Europe 2013* review discussed**

February 18, 2014

Policy makers, social partners and academics discussed the findings of the 2013 *Employment and Social Developments in Europe* review. According to the review, a significant increase in poverty among the working age population is one of the most tangible social consequences of the economic crisis. A gradual reduction of unemployment levels may not be enough to reverse this situation if wage polarisation continues, notably due to a rise in part-time work. The chapter on the gender impact of the crisis shows that fundamental disadvantages for women remain, with diminished career opportunities, lower pay and lower prospective pensions.

English: [http://ec.europa.eu/social ...](http://ec.europa.eu/social...)

[http://webcast.ec.europa.eu/eutv/portal/empl ...](http://webcast.ec.europa.eu/eutv/portal/empl...)

Revised directive introduces binding social clause in public procurement

February 15, 2014

The European Parliament has adopted changes to the public procurement directive that will make it possible for member states to award contracts on the basis of more than just price. The amendments introduce a binding social clause that is meant to safeguard the application of collective agreements and decent working conditions. The revised directive obliges main contractors to provide information about the subcontractors, but still allows for both joint and several liability for subcontractors. The directive allows member states to reserve contracts for health, social and cultural services in such a way that private companies cannot apply for them. The changes have to be transposed into national legislation and practise in the upcoming period.

English: [http://www.etuc.org/press/etuc-welcomes-binding-social-clause ...](http://www.etuc.org/press/etuc-welcomes-binding-social-clause...)

Sector comparison of working conditions

February 10, 2014

Eurofound has produced a report that focuses on working conditions and job quality across sectors in Europe. The report pinpoints trends in areas such as working time and work-life balance, work organisation, skills and training, employee representation and the psychosocial and physical environment. It identifies sectors that score particularly well or particularly poorly in terms of job quality and sheds light on differences between sectors in terms of health and well-being. The figures show that earnings vary considerably across sectors in Europe. They are highest in financial services, banking, insurance and computer programming, and lowest in agriculture and activities of households, followed by industrial cleaning, textiles and clothing, food and beverage services, retail, accommodation and other services.

English: [http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2013 ...](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2013...)

Austria

Agreement for the insurance sector

February 14, 2014

Negotiations for the renewal of the collective agreement in the insurance sector (22,000 workers) were finalised during a second round of talks. The agreement includes an average pay increase of 2.1% (plus 10 euro) for the back office and a linear increase of 2.5% for the field staff. The increase (beyond inflation) is calculated from 1 March 2014.

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

2013 statistics - decline of vacancies

February 13, 2014

Statistics Austria published a brochure (in German) that gives an insight into the population's living conditions. Findings and statistics from economy and society are presented in text, table, and chart form. The data provide information on a wide variety of subjects: population, education, employment and the job market, the economy, science and technology, tourism, environment, and other topics. According to the country's Job Vacancy Survey, enterprises reported an annual average of 65,000 job vacancies in 2013, by 6.5% less than in the previous year (2012: 69 500). 40% of these vacancies were in unskilled jobs, mainly in the retail and services sectors. The presumed monthly pay was in 55% of all vacancies less than 1.700 euro and in 28% of the vacancies between 1.700 and 2.400 euro.

English: http://www.statistik.at/web_en/publications_services ...

German: http://www.statistik.at/web_de/presse/075243

Belgium

Update of the workers' statute

February 24, 2014

The differences between blue and white collar workers have been discussed for years. By the end of 2013 a tripartite agreement was formulated. In February 2014 the last details have been finalised. The differences in the redundancy procedure disappear, sickness pay is from now on from the first day and the supplementary pension schemes will be harmonised. Trade union confederation ACV-CSC summarised the consequences.

French: http://www.csc-en-ligne.be/droit_social/nouveau-statut/nouveau-statut.asp

German: <http://csc-ostbelgien.csc-en-ligne.be/Sozialrecht/Detail ...>

Dutch: http://www.acv-online.be/Sociale_wetgeving/nieuw_werknemersstatuut ...

New calculation system for indexation

February 11, 2014

A committee of trade union and employer representatives together with a few academics has elaborated a new calculation for the annual wage indexation. The updated calculation, based on the price development of a series of services and goods (called the 'index-basket'), includes a modernised mixture of goods. After some fine-tuning that led to a short postponement the indexation will be applied retroactive from 1 January 2014. The next annual revision is planned for December 2014.

French: <http://www.abvv.be/web/guest/news-fr ...>

Dutch: <http://www.abvv.be/web/guest/news-nl ...>

Bulgaria

Labour code changes disputed

February 17, 2014

The government has submitted a draft bill which, if passed, would weaken workers' rights and social protection. The major changes were inspired by a set of proposals put forward by representatives of employers' organisations. The trade unions in particular denounce the plans to revise the regulations governing relationships between employers, workers and supervisory bodies, and attempts to deregulate the labour market further. Furthermore the unions fear the acceleration of the development of temporary work agencies and increase of precarious work.

English: [http://www.industrial-union.org/bulgarian-unions-react ...](http://www.industrial-union.org/bulgarian-unions-react...)

Drivers of small and medium truck carriers block border to Turkey

February 10, 2014

Drivers from small and medium truck carrier companies have blocked the Bulgarian-Turkish border at the Kapitan Andreevo checkpoint. The drivers are protesting against the closing of the border for trucks after a bilateral dispute between Turkey and Bulgaria about quota for transit traffic permits arose. While the Bulgarian Association of International Transport Carriers agreed not to organize a blockage after the prime ministers of both countries agreed to negotiations on 21 February, small and medium enterprises have said they cannot afford the losses of their trucks that have already been waiting at the check point for ten days.

English: [http://www.novinite.com/view ...](http://www.novinite.com/view...)
[http://www.novinite.com/articles/158032/Bulgaria ...](http://www.novinite.com/articles/158032/Bulgaria...)

Croatia

Warning strikes

February 25, 2014

Four unions of railway workers initiated a solidarity strike. The aim is to strengthen the protest against the negative impact of proposed changes to the Labour Act on workers' rights and dignity, which are to be discussed in parliament this month. The railway workers took a strong stand against three municipal courts in Zagreb - the civil, the criminal and the court for labour disputes - that had unilaterally and unlawfully decided that its employees would have to work more than the minimum amount of work required during solidarity strikes.

English: [http://dalje.com/en-croatia/trains-on-domestic-lines-to-stand-still ...](http://dalje.com/en-croatia/trains-on-domestic-lines-to-stand-still...)

Doctors take a stand in negotiations

February 15, 2014

The Association of Hospital Doctors (HUBOL), founded in late 2013, presented itself to the public. The association's main goal is to improve doctors' social standing and their status in negotiations with employers, as well as preserve the public health care system so that health will not become a privilege of the rich. Referring to a recently signed collective agreement for health workers, the association stated that it would not allow anyone to determine doctors' rights and obligations on their behalf.

English: [http://dalje.com/en-croatia/doctors-association-says-health-must-not-become ...](http://dalje.com/en-croatia/doctors-association-says-health-must-not-become...)

New collective agreement in forestry

February 11, 2014

The Forestry Trade Union and Hrvatske šume d.o.o. signed a collective agreement containing on 4 February. Despite dire conditions in the sector, the agreement includes higher wage increases for each of tenure and higher severance pay and better redundancy programme guidelines. The deal includes clauses on holiday bonuses, per diems, bonus for field work, transport and financial participation of the union in sports games.

English: [http://www.bwint.org/default.asp ...](http://www.bwint.org/default.asp...)

Cyprus

Union excluded from the negotiation table

February 20, 2014

The union of Cyprus Airways pilots PASYPI decided to take legal action against the airline's decision to reduce its contribution to the workers' provident fund, an agreement made with other unions but not with them. They condemned the 'unilateral and illegal' decision, which they said served to cover the losses to the provident fund of the rest of the staff, which collapsed due to mismanagement. The pilots demand full implementation of a restructuring plan, accusing the company of keeping excess staff on the payroll despite a reduction in the fleet and number of flights. The pilots have a separate provident fund.

English: <http://cyprus-mail.com/2014/02/20/cy-pilots-to-sue-airline-over-provident-fund/>

Strike at Electricity Authority, Telecoms and Port Authorities to follow

February 15, 2014

Trade unions are organising large scale protests against bill that will privatise semi-government organisations, including the Electricity Authority, the Telecoms Authority and the Ports Authority. Workers at the Electricity Authority have started strike actions, with the latter two to follow suit.

English: [http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-02-14/cyprus-workers-from-power-to ...](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-02-14/cyprus-workers-from-power-to-...)
<http://cyprus-mail.com/2014/02/12/eac-workers-strike-warn-of-more-to-come/>

Czech Republic

Policy statement discussed with the unions

February 11, 2014

A draft policy statement based on the coalition agreement will be discussed with the trade unions and employers' representatives, for the first time in history. The trade union confederation CMKOS stated that the government priorities corresponded to those of the trade unions that demanded measures in support of the economic growth, the creation of new jobs, development of school and health care sectors and the fight against poverty, usury and corruption. CMKOS is asking for a precise 'action plan' from the government. The Association of Independent Trade Unions (ASO) wants the government to solve the record high unemployment very quickly and to guarantee stable taxes for the following years.

English: [http://praguemonitor.com/2014/02/11/pm-hands-draft-policy-statement-govt ...](http://praguemonitor.com/2014/02/11/pm-hands-draft-policy-statement-govt-...)

Pay rise for civil servants

February 3, 2014

The Government announced on 2 February that all civil servants will receive a pay rise of 2% in 2014. Budget has also been reserved to raise salaries of police officers as well as to create new posts in the police force. Despite announcements, it remains unclear whether the funds to strengthen the police force will be available in this year's budget.

English: <http://praguemonitor.com/2014/02/03/civil-servants-get-2-pay-rise>

Denmark

Massive job losses at Aarhus University

February 21, 2014

Aarhus University announced a plan to save 225 million kroner by 2016. The plan will make about 190 employees redundant, while an additional 162 will be offered a voluntary redundancy scheme. A further 42 will be offered a voluntary retirement scheme, known as a *seniorordning*. The trade unions are shocked by the size of the measures and blame the university leadership for not acting in time.

English: [http://cphpost.dk/news/aarhus-university-to-lay-off-hundreds-of-employees ...](http://cphpost.dk/news/aarhus-university-to-lay-off-hundreds-of-employees-...)

Recommendations for a new employment policy

February 6, 2014

The so-called Carsten Koch committee has produced its recommendations that could lead to major changes to measures aimed at unemployed people on benefit. After one year in the making, the much anticipated recommendations are ready and have been sent to the social partners for consultation. Leaks suggest an employment policy with a range of new elements to it. One of the committee's controversial proposals is that unemployed people with a good chance of finding new work quickly should be allowed to choose whether they want to deal with their job centre or the unemployment fund during the first six months of unemployment. Another recommendation will make an end to meaningless activation, i.e. to forcing unemployed people to take part in guidance and retraining. Instead they will be offered the chance to agree on measures directly with their job centre.

English: <http://www.nordiclabourjournal.org/nyheter/news-2014 ...>

Estonia

Unemployment in 2013

February 9, 2014

According to data of the Labour Force Survey, the estimated number of unemployed persons, which had been 53,000 in the 3rd quarter of 2013, increased by 6,000 persons in the 4th quarter. The unemployment rate went up to 8.7% in the 4th quarter of 2013. In 2013, the youth unemployment rate (i.e. the share of unemployed persons aged 15–24 among the labour force of the same age) was 18.7% (20.9% in the previous year) or 2.5 times higher compared to the rest of the working-age population.

English: <http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/analytics ...>

Trade Union Confederation calls to abandon low-wage industry

February 4, 2014

In a televised interview, the head of the Trade Union Confederation said Estonia needs strong wage growth and should abandon low wage sectors. The union head said wages are so low that it does not pay to work. The union observes that companies are run as in 1994 and remarks that the country should get used to not being a low wage country anymore.

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

Finland

Wage dumping condemned

February 20, 2014

A survey conducted by TNS Gallup and commissioned by the Service Union United PAM reveals that 82% of Finnish adults are of the opinion, one way or the other, that wage dumping should be criminalised, and that employers who knowingly pay wages which are below the collectively agreed minimum rate, should be convicted of a crime and punished. Respondents in managerial positions answered yes with an 82 percentage, whilst 65% of entrepreneurs and 91% of employees answered positively.

English: <http://www.jokinen.kaapeli.fi/index.php/en ...>

Responsibility throughout the chain

February 11, 2014

The trade union Service Union United has announced that workers from SOK, Tuko Logistics and Kesko will not move juices to supermarkets following a report from NGO Finnwatch that alleges suspicions of forced labour and human trafficking in certain factories in the country of origin. The campaign envisages enhanced social responsibility throughout the delivery chain. The aim of the three-day handling boycott is to make the

supplier VIP-Juicemaker and its Dutch parent company understand that responsible operations are, in the end, also in their best interest.

English: [http://www.freshfruitportal.com/2014/02/11/finnish-retail-worker-union-to-boycott ...](http://www.freshfruitportal.com/2014/02/11/finnish-retail-worker-union-to-boycott...)
[http://www.pam.fi/en/news/Pages/Finnishretailwarehouseworkers ...](http://www.pam.fi/en/news/Pages/Finnishretailwarehouseworkers...)

Union reveals 20% of municipalities had consultations on job cuts in 2013

February 6, 2014

A report by trade union JHL reveals that one in five municipalities consulted their works councils over intended job cuts in 2013. In consequence, 300 workers were laid off and 7200 faced temporary lay-off, of an average period of 13 days.

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

France

Law regulates closures

February 25, 2014

The parliament definitively passed a law slapping tough penalties on firms who shut down without looking for a buyer in three months' time. The law makes it compulsory for any company that employs more than 1,000 workers to look for a buyer for a site they want to close in three months' time. If they fail to do so they can be fined the equivalent of 20 times the minimum wage for each worker affected, or a sum of more than €28,000 per person laid off. Workers can also make an acquisition offer.

English: <http://www.thelocal.fr/20140225/france-industry-florange>

French: [http://www.liberation.fr/economie/2014/02/24/l-assemblee-doit-voter-la-loi ...](http://www.liberation.fr/economie/2014/02/24/l-assemblee-doit-voter-la-loi...)

Condor Ferries accused

February 20, 2014

Condor Ferries, which runs vessels between the UK, Channel Islands and France, is accused by the unions of 'social dumping': paying as little as £2.35 per hour to Ukrainian crews that it brought on board to replace British crews – well below the UK's minimum wage. Using the excuse that they are non-domiciled in the EU those seafarers are made to work longer hours of duty, while receiving shorter leave. The Rapide ferry from the same operator is registered in the Bahamas but has a French crew. The crew of this service (between St. Helier and St. Malo) started a wildcat strike demanding better benefits. After two weeks the management stated that all workers had decided to sign up to an offer of insurances and that sailings were expected to resume. However, the trade unions have warned that the dispute is not over. They will take legal advice on how to get better pay and conditions.

English: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-guernsey-26277367>

<http://www.itfglobal.org/press-area/index.cfm/pressdetail/10129>

Effects of the crisis assessed

February 7, 2014

The Institute Great Place to Work produces an annual assessment of the companies that attractive to work in. This time it has also checked the situation in all French companies. Since the start of the crisis in 2008 the optimism of workers has decreased and job satisfaction has gone down. Three-quarter of the working population personally feels the effect of the crisis, whether in their wages that have stagnated (62%), in augmented stress at the workplace (41%) or in intensification of work pressure (37%). Motivation problems have increased and especially low skilled workers feel the negative consequences.

French: [http://www.institut-think.com/etudes/CP-Think ...](http://www.institut-think.com/etudes/CP-Think...)

Germany

East-European workers return home

February 24, 2014

Figures of the statistical office Destatis show that while immigration from the EU's newest members is growing fast, numbers of people moving back from Germany to Bulgaria and Romania are climbing even faster. In the last 2 years, around 200,000 Bulgarians and Romanians have left, putting into doubt fears of a mass immigration from eastern Europe to the country. If the number of people leaving for Bulgaria and Romania are taken into account, the net figure for immigration from Romania increased by only 9% between 2012 and 2013 (from 41,684 to 45,484). And the net total of Bulgarian immigrants actually dropped by 10.5% on the previous year, from 21,394 to 19,143.

English: [http://www.thelocal.de/20140224/thousands-bulgarians-and-romanians-leave ...](http://www.thelocal.de/20140224/thousands-bulgarians-and-romanians-leave...)

Security workers strike

February 21, 2014

Security workers at Frankfurt airport went on strike, prompting dozens of flight cancellations and causing delays to travellers. The trade union ver.di that initiated the strike is calling for an hourly pay rate of 16 euro for security employees in the state of Hessen and said employers had offered between 10 euro and 13 euro an hour. Workers in other states get up to around 15 euros an hour. The strike came after four rounds of talks between ver.di and employers' association BDSW ended without an agreement.

English: [http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/21/us-germany-airport-strike ...](http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/21/us-germany-airport-strike...)

Fall of wages registered

February 21, 2014

Wages fell by an average of 0.2% in 2013, the first decrease since the 2009 economic crisis, according to the federal statistics office. The calculation was made in terms of the real purchasing power of wages, taking into account inflation. Nominal wages in 2013 were up 1.3% from 2012, but consumer prices rose faster, at 1.5%.

English: [https://www.destatis.de/EN/PressServices/Press ...](https://www.destatis.de/EN/PressServices/Press...)

German: [https://www.destatis.de/DE/PresseService/Presse ...](https://www.destatis.de/DE/PresseService/Presse...)

Cleaners Frankfurt University Hospital protest against poor hygiene

February 3, 2014

Cleaners at the Frankfurt University Hospital have started an awareness raising campaign against deteriorating working conditions. Primarily, the cleaners object to the race to the bottom in the sector which has led to declining standards and infection control. The cleaners demand more attention to training, equipment and protection of the workforce.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/frankfurt-cleaners-protest>

Greece

Port workers protest against privatisation

February 26, 2014

Hundreds of striking port workers gathered in central Athens and marched to Parliament for a protest rally in a 24-hour strike to protest plans to sell a stake in the Piraeus Port Authority, the country's largest port. Privatising state-held assets is a key part of the country's international bailout agreement, under which the country has received billions of dollars in rescue loans from its partners in the Eurozone and the IMF since May 2010. In return pensions and salaries had to be cut and tax increased.

English: [http://www.timesunion.com/news/world/article/Greek-port-workers-strike ...](http://www.timesunion.com/news/world/article/Greek-port-workers-strike...)

Austerity impact on health

February 22, 2014

The country underwent the sixth consecutive year of economic contraction in 2013, with its economy shrinking by 20% between 2008 and 2012 and anaemic or no growth projected for 2014. Unemployment has

more than tripled, from 7.7% in 2008 to 24.3% in 2012, and long-term unemployment reached 14.4%. The economic crisis has deepened since it was bailed out by the international community in 2010. In a series of articles in the Lancet an assessment is made how austerity measures have affected the health of the population and their access to public health services. The authors explain how short-sighted measures intended to improve the country's economy have been counterproductive for the health of the people.

English: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article ...>
<http://www.enetenglish.gr/resources/article-files ...>

Farmers prepare roadblocks

February 16, 2014

Farmers in Northern Greece have started preparing roadblocks of crossroads and junctions and are waiting for the green light from their representatives to start actions. The farmers are angry over new tax regulations. Farmers' representatives are meeting with the Finance Minister but the talks have not been promising.

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

Hungary

Average wage decreased

February 21, 2014

Data published by the Central Statistics Office (KSH) revealed that the average gross wages fell 1.1% year-on-year in December 2013. The number of benefit supported workers, who earn less than the minimum wage, more than doubled from 203,000 in December 2013 from 87,300 in the same month a year earlier. Excluding these workers, the average gross wage rose 1.6% in December.

English: <http://www.bbj.hu/economy/gross-wages-down-in-december-up-for-2013 ...>

Striking EVM workers form picket to avoid relocation

February 11, 2014

Employees at United Chemical Works Company Ltd (EVM) in Budapest went on strike on 3 February over unpaid wages. The 100 workers fear that the company may try to relocate away from the site without paying the due salaries and have formed a permanent picket to prevent the removal of machinery from the plant. EVM management has not had any direct contact with the workers or the union representatives and has sent only lawyers to meetings instead. European trade union confederation IndustriALL has initiated an international support action.

English: <http://www.industriall-union.org/support-hungarian-chemical-workers-striking ...>

LIGA produces bimonthly newsletter

February 3, 2014

Trade union confederation LIGA, the Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions, has published its bimonthly newsletter in English. The letter includes some labour market figures and an alarming item dedicated to the youth unemployment. This unemployment went up, according to the latest figures, to a striking 25 % in the 14-25 age bracket. The most urgent problem recently lies in vocational education, because the students entering the labour market in many cases are not up-to-date with the most important knowledge regarding labour relations and vital skills for certain jobs with skill shortages.

English: <http://www.liganet.hu/page/206 ...>

Iceland

Wage index 1.0%

February 21, 2014

The wage index in January 2014 is 468.5 points, 1.0% higher than in the previous month. In the last twelve months the monthly wage index has risen by 6.7%. Real wages were 1.7% higher than in the previous month. In the last twelve months the real wage index has increased by 3.4%. An agreement between the Confederation of Icelandic Employers and some member unions of the Icelandic Confederation of Labour, signed 21 December 2013, stipulates a general wage raise of 2.8% in January 2014.

English: [http://www.statice.is/Pages/444 ...](http://www.statice.is/Pages/444...)

Ireland

Coordinated campaign in pension dispute

February 21, 2014

The trade unions representing workers in Aer Lingus and Dublin and Shannon Airports agreed to engage in a process of consultation with members with a view to coordinating a campaign of industrial action, in pursuit of a just settlement to the long-running pension dispute. SIPTU members already voted in favour of all-out strike in the pension row over the Irish Airlines Superannuation Scheme (IASS) that has been dragging on for years. The pension scheme has a substantial deficit and years of negotiations have failed to deal with the insufficient funds, as reported previously in this newsletter. SIPTU reports the 98% and 96% of their members have now voted in favour of industrial and strike action. Spokespersons reiterated that the trade unions remain open to discussions with management on a possible resolution to the dispute. The management proposals include the use of new legislation which allows cuts in payments to current pensioners for the first time. They also mean current workers - as well as former workers who have not yet retired - would see a 20% cut in pensions benefit.

English: [http://www.siptu.ie/media/pressreleases2014/mainnews ...](http://www.siptu.ie/media/pressreleases2014/mainnews...)

[http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/aer-lingus-workers-vote-for-all-out-strike ...](http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/aer-lingus-workers-vote-for-all-out-strike...)

[http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/airport-unions-warn-of-action ...](http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/airport-unions-warn-of-action...)

Threat of national electricity strike lessened, not averted

February 13, 2014

Talks between employers and trade unions in the labour relations commission have led to proposals that might avert a national electricity strike. The Technical, Electrical and Engineering Union (TEEU) and employer organisations have been in conflict over wage developments in the electricity sector, with a threat of a national strike looming since weeks. The two parties have met under the mediation of the Labour Relations Commission and representatives have agreed to proposals that would lead to the withdrawal of both the employer demand for a 10% pay cut and the union demand for a 4.9% pay claim, pending new legislation on the matter. The TEEU has said that if members of the Electrical Contractors Association (ECA) and the Association of Electrical Contractors Ireland, (AECI) agree to the proposals, the strike notice will be withdrawn. However, TEEU also said strikes will still be held in the workplaces of non-compliant employers.

English: [http://www.teeu.ie/news/showtest ...](http://www.teeu.ie/news/showtest...)

Trade union confederation launches official complaint

February 6, 2014

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions ICTU has made a formal complaint to the European Court of Human Rights on the state's failure to uphold an effective right to collective bargaining, in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights. The complaint was lodged in the name of Congress and the Technical, Engineering & Electrical Union (TEEU) and was prepared by John Hendy QC. It is pinpointing the McGowan case which resulted in tens of thousands of workers being denied the effective right to collective bargaining, which is an essential element of Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

English: [http://www.ictu.ie/press/2014/02/06/congress-makes ...](http://www.ictu.ie/press/2014/02/06/congress-makes...)

http://www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/collective_bargaining_ireland_jan_30.pdf

Italy

Strikes at the Opera

February 30, 2014

The famous Rome Opera is in trouble since years. In 2013 the Opera lost 10 million euro. Operating costs were €61m, whereas the income was €51m, of which only 16% came from ticket sales and private sponsors. The trade unions are willing - despite the acute situation of the opera – to withdraw from industrial action and not to disrupt the theatre's programming for the first performance conducted by Riccardo Muti.

English: <http://www.gramilano.com/2014/01/budget-disaster-rome-opera-strikes ...>

Italian: http://roma.corriere.it/roma/notizie/arte_e_cultura/14_febbraio_25/teatro-dell-opera ...

Alitalia lay-offs avoided

February 14, 2014

Trade union FIT-CISL and Alitalia have announced to have reached an agreement that will avoid the lay-off of 1,900 workers. As reported in last month's newsletter, in January Alitalia announced a plan to cut the jobs of 280 pilots, 350 flight attendants, 480 ground staff, 600 office staff and 190 maintenance staff.

English: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/sns-rt-us-alitalia-jobs ...>

Government and unions agree on sale minority share Poste Italiane

February 6, 2014

Postal trade unions have supported the government plan to sell a 40% share of the Poste Italiane in order to raise funds to bring down the national debt. T SLP-CISL commented that the government will retain a majority share and that no changes are made to the industrial model, the sale thus not resulting in job losses. Unions have asked for at least 5% of the property to be conferred to them and have also requested the right to elect their own representative on the Board of Directors.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/italian-government-sell-40-poste-italiane ...>

Latvia

Pensioners' federation against electricity market privatisation

February 17, 2014

The Pensioners' Federation believes that several decisions made by the government this year, including the one on opening the electricity market, will considerably lower pensioners' standard of living and drive many of them into poverty. The federation expects that at least ten percent of residents will be forced to apply for state aid if the electricity market is opened. It announced a rally against electricity market liberalisation by April 1 and urged non-governmental organization to support its efforts.

English: <http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/energy ...>

Update of the country profile

February 6, 2014

The global financial crisis has hit the country hard, and the former Baltic tiger has endured one of the worst recessions in the EU. By January 2010, unemployment had increased to 20%, and despite deep public spending cuts that made the country popular by international lenders, unemployment remains persistently high till now. In recent years many youngsters have left the country to seek opportunities abroad. Between 2000 and 2011, the population fell by about 13%.

English: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe ...>

Liechtenstein

Country reports published

February 1, 2014

The Office of Statistics has produced an overview of employment data and figures. A majority of the labour force is commuting (52% in 2012) from Austria, Switzerland and Germany. The gross monthly wage (in 2010) was on average 6,257 Swiss francs (5,128 euro). Good to know that big brother is also watching; the CIA's World Factbook includes country reports from around the globe and uses the same data. The Factbook notes that the country participates in a customs union with Switzerland and uses the Swiss franc as its national currency. The low business taxes are memorised, with a maximum tax rate of 20%. Combined with easy incorporation rules this has induced many holding companies to establish nominal offices in Liechtenstein providing 30% of state revenues.

English: http://www.llv.li/pdf-llv-as-fl_in_zahlen_englisch_employment_and_income_2014
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ls.html>

Lithuania

Agreement on teachers' pay *February 14, 2014*

Representatives of education trade unions and the government have signed an agreement over consulting and coordination of positions on topical issues related to education. As a result of the agreement salaries are expected to be lifted. Negotiations took a year and a half. The responsible minister expects that the agreement will also allow preserving 150 small schools.

English: [http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/education ...](http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/education...)

Unemployment declines in 2013 *February 14, 2014*

In 2013, the unemployment rate declined and the activity rate increased. The unemployment rate declined from 13.4% in 2012 to 11.8% in 2013. In the 4th quarter of 2013, the youth (persons aged 15–24) employment rate stood at 24.9%; over a quarter, it decreased by 1 percentage point. It is expected that the unemployment rate will decline to 10% in 2014.

English: [http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/analytics ...](http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/analytics...)

Luxembourg

Labour market indicators published *February 24, 2014*

According to figures published by the official labour market agency ADEM, 19,565 people were registered as unemployed in January 2014, up from 19,200 people in December 2013. Although, the unemployment rate remained unchanged at the end of January at 7.1%, the actual number of people out of work rose. Compared with a year ago when the unemployment rate was 6.5%, the proportion of resident jobseekers has risen substantially with an additional 2,157 people joining the group of jobseekers.

English: [http://www.wort.lu/en/view/unemployment-rate-stabilises-but-jobseeker-numbers ...](http://www.wort.lu/en/view/unemployment-rate-stabilises-but-jobseeker-numbers...)
French: http://www.adem.public.lu/actualites/2014/02/news_01_14/Bulletin-janv-2014.pdf
[http://www.adem.public.lu/actualites/2014/02/news_01_14/Communique-de-presse ...](http://www.adem.public.lu/actualites/2014/02/news_01_14/Communique-de-presse...)

Possibly more redundancies at RBC *February 7, 2014*

After 210 workers were laid off at Royal Bank of Canada Investment Services in Belval in 2013, new job cuts are expected. Reports indicate that about 40 jobs might disappear and RBC confirms that negotiations with employee representatives have started. RBC employs 1,400 people at its Belval site and has stressed that its operations in Luxembourg will not be discontinued.

English: [http://www.wort.lu/en/view/rbc-to-cut-further-jobs-in-luxembourg ...](http://www.wort.lu/en/view/rbc-to-cut-further-jobs-in-luxembourg...)

Malta

HSBC workers hold two hour strike

February 12, 2014

Workers at HSBC massively answered to a call made by trade union MUBE to go on strike between 8:30 and 10:30 on 12 February. The strike is a reaction to a lack of progress in the negotiations on a new collective agreement, which have been ongoing since October 2013. While HSBC has refused virtually all MUBE proposals, it has not tabled any counter offers.

English: <http://www.di-ve.com/news/hsbc-employees-follow-mube-directive>

Netherlands

Security workers on strike

February 21, 2013

G4S private security guards are taking strike action in detention centres at Schiphol airport, Rotterdam and Alphen. They are protesting over the failure of G4S to make efforts to redeploy guards or offer arrangements to assist in finding alternative posts in the company. 400 Workers are to lose jobs due to government cuts. Some prisons are closing and private security companies are losing the contracts. Workers are demanding a social plan with a good outplacement to help them find new jobs, and financial compensation to offset the job losses. Despite consultation with the trade unions, there has been no agreement on a social plan.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/g4s-workers-strike-holland>

Strike at FloraHolland yields results

February 14, 2013

Workers at auction giant FloraHolland went on strike after months of failed negotiations over a new collective agreement and a massive restructuring plan. After giving up hope on an agreement over which unions and FloraHolland had been negotiating since last year, unions organised a warning strike on 6 February and went on indefinite strike on 9 February. The strike and an e-mail support action that caused FloraHolland management to be flooded by over 6,000 emails, the company agreed to negotiate on the trade union demands. An agreement is expected next week.

English: <http://www.iuf.org/w/?q=node/3151>; <http://www.iuf.org/w/?q=node/3113>

Norway

Increase in fatal accidents

February 11, 2014

There has been an increase in fatal accidents, a trend which has repeated itself for the past three years. According to the Labour Inspection Authority statistics 48 people died performing paid work in 2013 compared to 37 the year before. According to the director of the Inspection Authority it is no longer possible to talk about a fall or stabilisation of the number of workplace related accidents in working life. The presented preliminary data remain to be controlled, but they indicate a trend.

English: [http://www.nordiclbourjournal.org/nyheter/news-2014/article ...](http://www.nordiclbourjournal.org/nyheter/news-2014/article...)

Outsourcing is wrong track

February 6, 2014

A trade union representative stated that the move of the Statoil management to outsource jobs to low cost countries is just an attempt to cover up mistakes that cost the company dearly. He thinks the right medicine for the oil company is to carry out more work assignments themselves.

English: [http://www.aftenbladet.no/energi/aenergy/Bad-management-costs-Statoil-dearly ...](http://www.aftenbladet.no/energi/aenergy/Bad-management-costs-Statoil-dearly...)

Poland

Unemployment up to 14% *February 24, 2014*

According to the latest monthly statistics released by the Central Statistical Office (GUS) unemployment rose by 0.6% in January 2014. These figures represent the worst results since April 2013, although in February 2013, during the typical winter rise in unemployment, the level was as high as 14.2%.

English: <http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/163158,Unemployment-up-to-14-percent>

Solidarność calls for boycott of Lidl *February 5, 2014*

Trade union Solidarność has initiated long term protest actions against Lidl Poland for indecent working conditions and union bashing. Ever since Lidl workers decided to unionise the shop floor in January 2013, relations with management have been poisonous. By December 2013, Lidl fired the union leader and deputy leader. In reaction, Solidarność decided in favour of a range of actions against Lidl. The first stage is a call on union members to boycott Lidl in February and a series of complaints to the ILO and OECD.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/solidarnosc-takes-action-against-lidl-poland>

Portugal

EU calls for another 5% wage decrease *February 21, 2014*

The European Commission has argued in its report on the 10th regular review of Portugal's economic and financial assistance programme that the country needs a further 5% average reduction in wages to ensure a balance between the unemployment rate and wage rates. According to the EC's calculations, 'a reduction of one percentage point in the unemployment rate demands a reduction in real wages of about 2.4%' - which means a 5% decrease of real wages.

English: [http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/eu-calls-for-portugal-wages-to-fall-by ...](http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/eu-calls-for-portugal-wages-to-fall-by...)

Romania

Reform of healthcare system *February 19, 2014*

The year 2014 will be the year of the reform of the healthcare system. The planned measures include the design of a package of basic services available for insured citizens and a minimal package for the un-insured. According to data from the National Health Insurance Agency the latter represent, out of a total 20 million citizens, 2 million citizens thus lack a public healthcare insurance.

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

Serbia

Yumco workers lift roadblock after government concessions

February 14, 2014

Workers of the Yumco textile factory in Vranje have lifted their roadblocks in Southern Serbia after concessions regarding health insurance and delayed pay by the government. The workers have been on an all-out strike for a month and threw up roadblocks on 12 February. Due to operational problems the Yumco factory is facing restructuring and employees have not been paid for eight months. The workers have agreed to drop the blockades but are yet to decide on ending the strike after receiving proposals from the government.

English: [http://www.b92.net/eng/news/business ...](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/business...)

<http://inserbia.info/news/2014/02/traffic-from-belgrade-on-corridor-10-blocked-at-vranje/>

Slovakia

Hauliers on strike alert over toll roads and high fines

February 10, 2014

The Slovak Road Hauliers Association (UNAS) is on strike alert in reaction to expected new legislation on road transport. The hauliers object to the high number of toll roads, charges for driving through villages and high fines. Small and medium sized hauliers say the new regulations will endanger their businesses.

English: http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/52908/10/hauliers_on_strike_alert.html

Slovenia

Average monthly wages decline for second year in a row

February 17, 2014

The Statistics Office reports that real average monthly wages have declined for the second year. The office reports average wages in 2013 were down by 1.2% in real terms and up by 0.6% nominally. The largest declines were recorded in education, administrative and support services. Wages increased most strongly in manufacturing and energy supply. The average monthly wage in 2013 was €997.01.

English: <http://www.sloveniatimes.com/new-average-wages-continue-to-fall>

Spain

Dispute over lay-offs at Coca Cola

February 21, 2014

Coca-Cola workers have been on strike all month over plans to close four bottling factories. They rejected a proposed layoffs deal by the US drinks giant, demanding it halt factory closures which they say threaten nearly 1,200 jobs. Talks between the trade unions and the management are difficult and the trade unions are sceptical to come to any agreement while the management is still planning closures and layoffs. The strike won plenty of popular support with some consumers banning the popular beverage.

English: <http://www.thelocal.es/20140220/coca-cola-worker-slam-lay-off-deal>

Productivity agreement for Iberia pilots

February 13, 2014

Airline Iberia and pilots' union Sepia have reached an agreement on productivity and wages, which ends a conflict that has troubled the relationship since 2012. Under the agreement, the fleet of the low cost carrier Iberia Express is limited to 14 planes, Iberia pilots will fly the maximum allowed 900 hours per year and

wages will be frozen through to 2015. From 2015, wage increases will be linked to the company's profitability.

English: [http://elpais.com/elpais/2014/02/13/inenglish ...](http://elpais.com/elpais/2014/02/13/inenglish...)

Sweden

Trade union comes up with alternative budget plan

February 14, 2014

LO, the blue-collar trade union confederation said the country should re-introduce the inheritance tax and try to rein in tax cuts for the wealthy. According to LO the tax reforms over the past two decades had left the tax landscape looking like a 'Swiss cheese full of holes'. Overall, LO argued, too much reform had focused on easing the tax burden of those with higher incomes. The LO-plan for higher taxes should lead to new investments in infrastructure (road and rail), education, health and social care, and higher child allowances.

English: <http://www.thelocal.se/20140214/union-economist-paint-bold-tax-reform-palette>

Swedish: http://www.lo.se/start/valj_jobb_fore_sankt_skatt

Switzerland

Trade unions call result referendum a huge setback

February 20, 2014

A narrow majority of Swiss voters voted in favour of an initiative by the Swiss People's Party (SVP) calling for the re-introduction of quotas for immigrants from the EU. The trade union leadership has written an open letter that calls the result a slap in the face for the more than one million EU citizens currently living in Switzerland, and ushers in massive discrimination against all who enter the country in future. The trade union movement will continue to fight for the rights of workers – with or without a Swiss passport – and campaign against all forms of discrimination.

English: <http://www.social-europe.eu/2014/02/peoples-initiative/>

Charges against sacked Gourmet workers thrown out by prosecutor

February 10, 2014

Six workers who were fired following union actions at Gate Gourmet on Geneva Airport were cleared by the court against charges brought forward against them by Gourmet management. The workers led a strike action on 14 September 2013 and were subsequently fired. After filing complaints of anti-union practices by Gourmet, its management brought criminal charges of trespass, rioting, verbal abuse, personal injury against the activists to justify their dismissals. On 4 February the prosecutor decided not to proceed with the case for lack of evidence against the workers. While Gourmet has announced it will appeal the decision, the Public Service Workers Union has called on the cantonal government to demand the reinstatement of the workers.

English: <http://www.iuf.org/w/?q=node/3131>; <http://www.iuf.org/w/?q=node/2974>

Turkey

Fired canteen workers of Cerrahpaşa hospital reinstated

February 4, 2014

The eleven canteen workers of Istanbul's Cerrahpaşa Hospital who were fired for complaining about low pay were reinstated. The workers, employed by a subcontractor overseeing canteen services, were member of the Dev Sağlık-İş Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions (DİSK). After the dismissal of the eleven workers, colleagues organised a 22 day sit-in in the hospital garden, which led to the reinstatement of the workers.

United Kingdom

Enforcement of legal minimum wages

February 28, 2014

The Living Wage Commission that watches over the payment of the statutory minimum wages released the report *Working for poverty*. The report provides a detailed analysis of the rise of low pay and working poverty, shows that spiralling living costs and stagnating wages at the bottom create a 'double squeeze' on the lowest paid. The 5 million people in low paid employment have the smallest budget elasticity, and are therefore hit hardest by rising living costs. The trade union confederation TUC stated that a government's announcement that came later this month and named and shamed five employers for not paying the minimum wage was a welcome start towards a more transparent enforcement of the legal minimum wage.

English: <http://livingwagecommission.org.uk/new-report-from-the-living-wage-commission ...>
<http://www.tuc.org.uk/economic-issues/britain-needs-pay-rise/tuc-welcomes-government ...>

Deal on working conditions at college

February 20, 2014

Further strike action has been suspended at Edinburgh College, one of Scotland's largest colleges, after a deal was reached on working conditions and pay. Members of the Educational Institute of Scotland's Further Education Lecturers' Association (EIS-FELA) went on strike in protest at their continuing low pay and the damaging changes to conditions of service that college management were proposing. Trade union EIS will put the proposal to its members in a ballot. The main controversy was about management's 3% pay offer that would still leave the lectures amongst the lowest paid lecturers in Scotland.

English: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife ...>
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife ...>

Tube workers to be consulted over cuts programme

February 14, 2014

After going on strike from 4 to 6 February, London tube workers represented by the National Union for Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) and Transport Salaried Staffs Association (TSSA) are to be consulted on a planned cut programme. As reported in last month's newsletter, the London Underground recently presented a unilateral programme involving the cut of 950 ticket office jobs. The workers went on strike demanding to be consulted on the reformed and have now won two months to reach an agreement.

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

Cleaners Royal Opera House to be paid living wage

February 6, 2014

The cleaners and porters at London's Royal Opera House will receive a pay hike bringing them up to the living wage. The cleaners have been protesting against their low hourly wage of £7, which is not enough to get by in London. After threats of organising a

staff protest during the Bafta awards ceremony, the Opera House and subcontractor Mitie caved in and agreed to raise the wages to £8.80 per hour.

English: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/exclusive-royal-opera-house ...>

Layoffs at Bank of England

February 3, 2014

The Bank of England has announced a reorganisation that will lead to cuts of up to 100 jobs. The layoffs are expected to take place in the security, IT and human resources divisions. Union officials have reacted shocked and called on the Bank of England to set the good example in the sector.

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

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

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