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Verzonden: maandag 2 juni 2014 16:14
Aan: Info ETUI
Onderwerp: Collective bargaining newsletter May 2014

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collective bargaining

Issue 5/2014 | May

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

Analysis of labour force survey figures

May 19, 2014

An analysis of Eurostat shows that the state of the EU labour market in 2013 was determined by the economic crisis, as in previous years. The key EU figures did not improve: the figures either continued to show a negative trend (unemployment) or remained relatively stable compared with the year before (employment). In addition, national labour market developments showed increasing divergence between Member States in 2013 compared with 2012.

English: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained...

Undeclared work and the need for regulation

May 14, 2014

Randstad commissioned a study into the undeclared economy to the University of Sheffield and Regioplan Policy Research. The report reveals the important role that well-regulated employment can play in tackling the undeclared economy. In advanced economies the size of the undeclared economy varies widely – from less than 10% in countries such as the US, the UK, Japan and the Netherlands, to more than 25% in parts of Southern and Eastern Europe. It is generally acknowledged that the undeclared economy lowers the quality of work and working conditions, undermines the business environment through unfair competition, and puts the financial sustainability of social protection systems at risk.

English: <http://www.ir.randstad.com/releasedetail...>
<http://www.randstad.com/press-room/research-reports>

Impact IMF-policy on inequality assessed

May 13, 2014

In the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) congress papers a critical assessment of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) policy is made. The papers state that the IMF has received attention for its research documents which show that income inequality harms economic growth and stability. However, the contributions of IMF researchers to the growing body of economic literature on the deleterious effects of inequality are undercut by the same institution's actions in a number of countries to deregulate labour markets. The impacts have been dramatic, with collective bargaining coverage falling by as much 85% over a few years. According to the ITUC the IMF should support a restoration of collective bargaining rights that respect international principles and that encourage the use of sector or regional bargaining with the objective of achieving working-time reduction and new hiring agreements between unions and employers.

English: <http://www.equaltimes.org/imf-and-inequality...>
<http://congress2014.ituc-csi.org/labour-market-deregulation?lang=en>
<http://www.imf.org/external/np/fad/inequality/>

Austria

Minimum wage index published

May 15, 2014

The Index of Agreed Minimum Wages (basis: 2006 annual average = 100) measures the minimum wage trend. This index is a key evaluation criterion for wage and salary negotiations and, with other indices

relating to wage and price trends, an important economic indicator. In April 2014 the index reached a (provisional) value of 122.4, there was a change of 0.2% compared to March 2014. The rate of increase compared with April 2013 was 2.6%. In 2013 the annual average of the Index of Agreed Minimum Wages amounted to 119.8. In general, minimum wages were 2.6% higher than in 2012 (+3.3% for blue collar workers, 3.0% for white collar workers and 0.7% for civil servants).

English: http://www.statistik.at/web_en/statistics/social_statistics/index_of_agreed...

German: http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/soziales/tariflohnindex...

Bargaining information online

May 15, 2014

The site www.kollektivvertrag.at is the result of a cooperation project of the trade union confederation OGB and its affiliates with the ministry of labour. It provides information (in German) on all collective agreements in force, summaries of a selection of agreements, news on ongoing negotiations and thematic background information. Short reports in English are considered. Latest news on the site is that the negotiations in the chemical sector and in the Vienna harbour were finalised in May 2014.

German: www.kollektivvertrag.at

Belgium

Advice social partners on health prevention transposed into law

May 23, 2014

A joint advice of the social partners on the reform of health and safety at the workplace has been transposed into legislation. The official journal published two royal decrees that bring within reach a multi-disciplinary policy of prevention at the workplace. Employers will pay a basic rate for their external prevention agency, irrespective of the actual use of medical checks by the workforce. The system is based on solidarity and provides the opportunity to use, next to labour doctors, other expertise like psychologic or ergonomic care.

Dutch: http://www.acv-online.be/Actualiteit/Nieuws/Detail/hervorming_arbeidsgeneeskunde...

French: <http://www.csc-en-ligne.be/Actualite/Communiques/detail/reforme-fondamentale...>

Airlines accuse Ryanair of unfair competition

May 13, 2014

Ryanair is called before the Commercial Court of Brussels by BATA (Belgian Air Transport Association) which includes major companies in Belgium (Brussels Airlines, Jetairfly, Thomas Cook Belgium). BATA accuses the low cost airline of unfair competition. It all started with the arrival of the low cost airline at the airport of Brussels -National in February 2014. BATA's position is that the cheap carrier, while working in Belgium and engaging people there, has to respect the applicable labour and working conditions. This includes the indexation of wages that keeps salary increases in line with price rises.

English: http://www.deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/News/140513_Ryanair

French: <http://www.lalibre.be/economie/actualite/la-compagnie-ryanair-bientot-interdite...>

Bulgaria

Wage decrease recorded

May 14, 2014

According to figures published by the National Statistical Institute (NSI) the number of employees under labour contract has increased at the end of March 2014 by 2.5% as compared to the end of December 2013 and reached 2.22 million. In comparison with the fourth quarter of 2013 the average monthly wages and salaries decreased in the first quarter of 2014 by 3.9% to 407 euro.

English: <http://www.nsi.bg/sites/default/files/files/pressreleases/EmplsSalary ...>

Substantial reduction of the railway workforce

May 12, 2014

Some 700 employees of the State Railways (BDZ) will be laid off in order to cut the costs of the financially troubled enterprise. Currently, there are over 1,200 people working for BDZ. According to the transport ministry the number should not be more than 400-500.

English: <http://www.novinite.com/articles/160461/Bulgarian+Railways+to+Lay+Off ...>

Croatia

Government pushes for contracts in Qatar

May 6, 2014

A daily newspaper reports that workers are recruited for the building of football stadiums in Qatar. The same source says that the Croatian government has prepared a deal with Qatar authorities over work contracts for the building of stadiums. Just recently, Amnesty International has documented a range of abuses faced by migrant workers in Qatar in two detailed reports examining the situation for construction workers and domestic workers. The reports document the fatalities that take place on sites due to mistreatment of workers, unsafe working methods, extraordinary working times and poor safety regulations.

English: http://www.croatiantimes.com/news/Business/2014-05-02/35410/Croats_could ...

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/qatar-un-review-crucial-reforms ...>

Cyprus

New data on unemployment

May 8, 2014

While annual unemployment was falling across the Eurozone, Cyprus recorded by the end of March 2014 the highest increase compared with a year ago (from 14.8% to 17.4%). However, the number of registered unemployed for April 2014 decreased 1,988 to 48,384 persons compared to 50,372 in the previous month. Unemployment increased in the sectors of financial and insurance activities (an increase of 1,183 unemployed), public administration (+841), transportation and storage (+200), education (+186), accommodation and food service activities (+129). The unemployment decreased in the trade, construction and manufacturing sectors.

English: <http://incyprus.phileneWS.com/en-gb/Local/4332/41500/slight-decrease>

Czech Republic

Drop in real income

May 28, 2014

The real income of households dropped in 2013, according to the Statistical Office's Standards of Living in 2013 survey that reflects the situation in 2012 and spring 2013. In 2012, the average net financial income of a household reached 5,450 euro per capita, up 84 euro compared to 2011. According to the social survey department, the increase in income in 2012 was driven by tax changes, thanks to which net income grew faster than the gross income.

English: <http://www.czso.cz/csu/2014edicniplan.nsf/engp/160021-14>

<http://eu.cianews.cz/english-news/csu-czech-households-real-income-down-in-2013 ...>

Data on working poor – annual report 2013

May 17, 2014

Data from the statistical office ČSÚ reveal that 18% of working Czechs live in poverty since their low pay hardly suffices for their subsistence. Some professions are the most threatened with poverty, primarily unqualified workers, such as cashiers in supermarkets, cleaning ladies and security agency workers. In the annual economy report 2013 the office notes that the sinking of real wage in the non-business sector lasts already more than 4 years in a row, 2 years in the business sector. The real wage in total for the economy fell year-on-year by 1.3 % in 2013, in the 4th quarter the lowering was by 2.9%; historically the deepest slump since the commencement of observation.

English: <http://www.czso.cz/csu/2013edicniplan.nsf...>

<http://www.praguepost.com/economy/39027-mfd-one-in-five-working-czechs-lives-in-poverty>

Teachers' union criticises freeze of wages

May 13, 2014

Teachers' unions have criticised a government plan to freeze their salaries in 2015 while increasing the pay of other public sector workers. Union representatives called for an increase in the overall amount allocated for teachers' wages and said they wished to discuss the demands with the minister of finance and the prime minister.

English: <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/news/teachers-unions-criticise-government-plans...>

Hyundai plant on strike alert

May 2, 2014

Trade unions at the Nosovice plant of Hyundai declared a strike alert. The unions have been negotiating a collective agreement with the car manufacturing since March, but have found no agreement on the wage increase. Rejecting the 5.5% offer made by Hyundai management, trade unions demand a pay hike of 9.5%. Currently workers at the Nosovice plant earn on average €1097 (Kč 30,094) per month, whereas manual workers earn an average €1009 (Kč 27,700).

English: <http://praguemonitor.com/2014/05/02/trade-unions-hyundais...>

Denmark

Walk out at TDC

May 26, 2014

Technicians working nationwide for the telecommunications group TDC laid down their tools. TDC and the trade union Dansk Metal, which is negotiating on behalf of the workers, acknowledged that they were very far apart on wage demands. Employees are asking for an across the board increase to keep up with inflation, leaving room for managers to give raises to employees that they deem deserving. Dansk Metal said that TDC would not agree to a general raise and said that salary increases remain the domain of individual managers.

English: <http://cphpost.dk/news/tdc-technicians-walk-off-the-job...>

Tripartite initiative on training and retraining

May 7, 2014

The government and the social partners agreed to promote the vocational training and retraining of the workforce. A fund will be created that aims to upgrade the adult education and continuing training. The so-called double skills upgrade (continuing education for both skilled and unskilled workers) has to strengthen the productivity and, in turn, create workplaces. The partners share the idea that it is crucial for unskilled workers to receive the proper training to become skilled workers and that those who are already skilled have the opportunity to embark on further training.

English: <http://www.lo.dk/English%20version/News/veu.aspx>

Estonia

Wage increase of 7.3%

May 23, 2014

In the 1st quarter of 2014, the average monthly gross wages were 966 euro. Compared to the same period in 2013, the average monthly gross wages and salaries increased 7.3%. Real wages, which take into account the influence of the change in the consumer price index, increased 6.7% in the 1st quarter of 2014. Compared to the same quarter of the previous year, real wages increased for the eleventh quarter in succession. The average gross wages were 944 euro in January, 948 euro in February and 1,003 euro in March 2014.

English: <http://www.stat.ee/72391>

New leader wants trade unions to become a force of progress

May 6, 2014

The new head of the Trade Union Confederation, Peep Peterson, wants trade unions to become a force of progress through increased cooperation with social partners. Peterson's comments follow shortly after his predecessor criticised the weak state of unionism in Estonia, saying people must understand it's not enough to just pay membership fees and workers must want to fight to improve their working conditions. Peterson, on the contrary, stated the union needs less confrontation and more cooperation. Peterson said people will be more easily persuaded to become union members if they see the confederation can bring about progress.

English: <http://balticbusinessnews.com/article/2013/5/6/trade-union-leaders-estonians ...>

Finland

Outsourcing on the agenda

May 24, 2014

National airline Finnair is looking to cut costs to remain competitive. The management wants to start with subcontracting and the hire of cheap labour. Negotiations with workers' representatives started to target savings of 18 million euros. The ongoing talks could result in the elimination of some 540 cabin crew positions (or one-third of in-flight staff) as the company reaches for the savings target. Finnair currently employs about 1,500 cabin staff. The airline intends to hire cheaper labour from abroad.

English: http://yle.fi/uutiset/finnair_ceo_says_one-third_of_cabin_crew ...

Warehouse workers strike

May 3, 2014

Thousands of workers at Keslog, Inex Partners, Oriola, Tuko Logistics and Lidl warehouses went on strike after the deadline for a collective agreement expired on 30 April 2014. Focus of the dispute between the Finnish Commerce Federation and trade union PAM are working hours and low pay rates for sick leave. Unions also report attempts by some employers to break the strike by asking workers who did not join the strike to work overtime. Some workers in a recruitment company received threats of dismissal if they supported the strike.

English: <http://rogermckenzie.blogspot.nl/2014/05/thousands-of-warehouse-workers-strike ...>

France

Public sector strike for better pay

May 16, 2014

Tens of thousands of public sector workers joined the 15 May public sector strike to demand higher wages and an end to austerity. The strike was felt in schools, hospitals, airports, city transport, police stations and government buildings around the country. Air France reports that 115 flights were cancelled. Despite the turn out, government representatives reacted that there could be no wage increases before there is economic growth.

English: http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article/article_xinhua.aspx?id=218611

Law on take-over becomes effective

May 15, 2014

The government gave itself new veto powers over foreign industrial takeover bids, which will allow it to control the fortunes of, for instance, French giant Alstom, a current target. The new rules, which could be applied to block the attempts of US General Electric or Germany's Siemens to take over Alstom's energy arm, were published in the official journal and will come into effect this month. The initiative in fact defines the public authority as an important stakeholder that can play a fundamental role in protecting the strategic interests of the country.

English: <http://www.thelocal.fr/20140515/france-foreign-takeovers-investments-general-electric>

Pilots cancel strike after government promise to act against strike breaking

May 4, 2014

Pilots union SNPL called off a strike scheduled to run until 30 May after speaking to transport minister Cuvillier. The union protest was aimed to protest against a 2012 law imposing a 48 hour notice period on transport workers who want to strike. The union reports that the notice period has been used by airlines to assign foreign pilots to striking workers' shifts. In the meeting with the transport minister, SNPL got assurances that the government considers these practices as strike breaking activities interfering with fundamental trade union rights and will counteract it in the future.

English: <http://www.english.rfi.fr/economy/20140503-french-airline-pilots-call-strike>

Germany

Alarming figures on poverty among youngsters

May 30, 2014

The Youth Poverty Monitor 2014 reports that the country's youth is having an increasingly hard time. Every fifth teenager lives in poverty or is on the borderline. The annual study, which brings together available statistics and research on young people aged 15 to 24, found that education plays a key role. Those worse affected by youth poverty were teenagers with leaving certificates from Hauptschule schools, the lowest rung on the academically-tiered school system, or those who drop out early.

English: <http://www.thelocal.de/20140530/poverty-youth-germany-study>

German: http://www.jugendarmut.info/monitor_jugendarmut_2014

Solidarity action with Autogrill workers

May 20, 2014

Since 16 April 2014 workers at Autogrill service stations in Hörselgau and Eisenach (Thuringia) and in Donautal, Rhön and Greding (Bavaria) have been taking indefinite strike action. The aim is to conclude a standard general wage agreement with better working conditions. They work in three shifts and on weekends, but earn just over 7 euro an hour. The international trade union movement backed up the demands with an online campaign. Autogrill requested to stop the campaign, threatening legal measures. But the struggle for a collective agreement goes on. The Group, which has its head office in Milan, is the world's biggest provider of catering and retail services for travellers. It has approximately 75,000 employees at 1,200 locations in 43 countries.

English: <http://www.dw.de/the-battle-against-low-wages-strikes-at-german-rest-stops ...>

http://www.labourstartcampaigns.net/show_campaign ...

Pension reform and the aging of the workforce

May 19, 2014

Destatis, the official statistical bureau, published figures that show that the population is getting older fast, but the number of workers over 60 is rapidly outstripping that increase. Between 1991 and 2012 the number of workers over 60 still in work rose from 1.23 million to 3.18 million - a rise of almost 160%. The population

of over 60's, meanwhile, rose by 34%. Probably the biggest cause behind this trend are labour market and pension reforms over the last two decades, which have seen benefits cut and retirement ages rise.

English: <http://www.thelocal.de/20140519/elderly-germans-stay-on-in-jobs>

New collective agreement for construction

May 6, 2014

After four rounds of negotiations the partners in collective bargaining for the construction sector (approximately 780,000 workers) have agreed on a compromise two-year pay deal. Partners agreed to further reduce the pay gap between East and West Germany. From 1 June 2014 on the wages will increase with 3.1% in West Germany and 3.8% in East Germany, followed from 1 June 2015 with another 2.6% in West Germany and 3.3% in East Germany. Agreed is also a reform and improvement of the industry related supplementary pensions in the Eastern part. The deal has to be approved by the executives of both partners.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/06/germany-construction-wages ...>

German: http://www.igbau.de/Bau-Tarifrunde__2014.html

Greece

ITUC ranks Greece amongst worst countries to work in

May 21, 2014

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has ranked Greece amongst the worst countries to work in. At its world congress, the ITUC presented its new ITUC Global Rights Index that divides countries into six categories. While category one contains countries where workers' rights are guaranteed both by law and in practice, category five represents countries where both legislation and access to rights are lagging. The category five, in which Greece is found, was described by the ITUC as the worst countries in the world to work in. The index has a category 5+ for countries where no rights exist in practice because of a complete breakdown of the rule of law.

English: <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2014/05/21/greece-ranks-low-on-workers-rights/>

Court orders imprisoned shipbuilding workers released

May 7, 2014

Of the twelve activists that were arrested during a shipbuilding workers' strike, eleven have been released by court order, while the 12th received a suspended six month sentence. On 4 October 2012, workers at the Hellenic Shipyard in Skaramanga went on strike to demand the payment of wages that had not been paid for over a year. When clashes with the police occurred during the strike, twelve activists of the Panhellenic Metal Workers' Federation (POEM) were arrested. On 5 May, after a court battle that involved international trade union support, the court ordered the activists released.

English: <http://www.industrialunion.org/victory-for-greek-shipbuilding-workers>

Hungary

First quarter figures

May 22, 2014

In the national economy (in companies employing at least 5 persons, budgetary and designated non-profit institutions) average earnings increased by 1.8% in the first quarter of 2014, compared to 2013. Gross earnings grew by 6.4% in the national economy (5.5% in the business sector, 9.0% at budgetary institutions and 8.3% in non-profit organisations) compared to the same period of 2013.

English: <http://www.ksh.hu/docs/eng/xftp/gyor/let/elet21403.pdf>

Gender pay gap

May 11, 2014

The website Fizetesek.hu has investigated how the gender pay gap has changed during recent years. The results show that women receive 21% less money than men for the same amount of work, and in higher positions the difference is even greater. In 2008 the gap was 17.5% but after a small improvement in 2009 it began growing and in 2012 reached 20%. Since then it has grown even more. It means that women would need to work about two months for free to receive equal wages.

English: <http://budapesttimes.hu/2014/05/11/womens-pay-packets-a-whole-lot-slimmer/>

Iceland

Nurses join series of public sector strikes

May 19, 2014

The Nurses' Association and the Union of Public Servants (SFR) have joined the public sector protests, organising two one-day pay strikes. Several groups of public sector workers, including pilots, have already organised strikes. Other strikes, including a teachers strike are looming. All strikes have a common demand: that after years of austerity and taking into account considerable economic recovery in the past years, public sector wages are increased.

English: <http://www.trust.org/item/20140519 ...>

Pay dispute of pilots continues – ban on strike

May 15, 2014

Negotiations between pilots and Icelandair on a collective bargaining agreement were broken off. The International Transport Workers' Federation stated: 'The company has had tremendous success over the last four years, resulting in substantial executive bonuses and an excellent return on investment for shareholders'. Therefore, the Union of Icelandic Pilots FIA says it is time the workers saw some financial benefit – but Icelandair management is declining to share. Following the collapse of negotiations between the airline and the Union of Icelandic Pilots the parliament passed a legislative bill on banning a strike. According to the bill, the Union of Icelandic Pilots and Icelandair have until June 1 to reach an agreement or the matter will be placed before an industrial disputes tribunal.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/10445>

Ireland

Cabin crew strike

May 29, 2014

Aer Lingus cabin crew organised a 24-hour strike over rosters. Pickets were placed on Dublin, Cork and Shannon Airports and the cabin crew marched through Dublin Airport to Aer Lingus headquarters to hand in a letter to management outlining their position. Meanwhile, efforts are continuing to arrange a date for a meeting between management and trade union Impact in a bid to resolve the row. The cabin crew says their current roster is erratic and imposes excessive fatigue on them. They want the same roster that applies to pilots, which involves working 5 days on, then 3 days off.

English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/business/2014/0529/620474-aer-lingus-strike/>

New act on bargaining proposed

May 14, 2014

The government has drafted proposals that aim to deliver on the commitment in the coalition programme to legislate on employees' right to engage in collective bargaining. Workers will get new protection from employers in disputes over pay cuts, pensions and other conditions. The legislation is designed to see companies that refuse to recognise trade unions being hauled in front of the Labour Court for the first time.

English: <http://www.independent.ie/business/irish/workers-given-new-protections ...>

Demand of 6% pay increase at postal services

May 7, 2014

Workers at An Post and Eircom are to seek pay rises of 6%, one of the largest percentage increases to be sought in the current series of claims being lodged by trade unions following several years of pay freezes and cuts for many workers. Details of the 6% pay claim emerged at the delegate conference of the Communications Workers' Union (CWU) which represents 8,500 members in An Post and 3,500 in Eircom. A spokesman said that staff in Eircom had had an effective 10% pay cut through the introduction of 9-day fortnight while employees in An Post had had a pay freeze.

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/staff-in-an-post-eircom-to-seek...>

Italy

Airport workers on strike

May 30, 2014

Flights at Rome Fiumicino and Milan's Malpensa and Linate airports were facing disruption resulting from a strike coordinated by the trade unions, including baggage handlers and staff working with airlines Alitalia and Easyjet. At Fiumicino airport, baggage workers were due to hold a sit-in, to protest against 850 jobs being put at risk at handling company Groundcare. Trains, metros, buses and trams were also hit by a workers' strike, affecting all major cities.

English: <http://www.thelocal.it/20140530/airports-at-risk-as-strike-hits-italy-airports>

Mobilisation of unpaid workers

May 19, 2014

Trade union leaders in Sicily threatened to call a general strike if as many as 30,000 workers on the regional government payroll do not receive months of unpaid back wages. They called the situation in Sicily dramatic and are very worried about the grave social, economic and administrative crisis in which Sicily has plunged. The 30,000 workers depend on the regional budget and have been for months without salaries.

English: <http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/92714/Sicily-unions-urge--general-mobilisation...>

Court condemns Fiat for anti-union behaviour against Fiom-CGIL

May 16, 2014

The Turin Court of Appeal has condemned Fiat Industrial for anti-union behaviour. The case concerns a three year ongoing industrial conflict, reported in the October-December 2011 and August-September 2013 CBN newsletters, in which Fiat scrapped all labour contracts in its factories to reinstate the workers on longer shifts. Following strike action, Fiat then reached an agreement with several unions but not with Fiom-CGIL, which has been the most prominent opponent of the plans and represented the largest share of workers. Subsequently, Fiom-CGIL was excluded from the Special Negotiation Body (SNB) that was supposed to negotiate the Group's European Works Council (EWC). The judge ruled it is illegal to attempt to limit the right of association by only granting union representation to unions that sign collective agreements.

English: <http://www.industrial-europe.eu/news/list2.asp?stid=203>

Deal at Electrolux

May 16, 2014

The government signed a deal with the trade unions and representatives of the home appliance maker Electrolux to stave off the threat of closure for one of the company's factories and to save 1,200 jobs. Electrolux will invest around €150 million by 2017 and will suspend planned redundancies in exchange for tax breaks for the four plants affected in central and northern Italy. The trade unions stated that this deal 'shows public money should be spent on firms that do not sack people and do not outsource'. The agreement has to be voted on by factory workers and provides for meetings every six months between trade unionists, company executives and government officials to monitor its implementation.

English: <http://www.thelocal.se/20140516/electrolux>

Latvia

Labour market figures published

May 15, 2014

Results of the Labour Force Survey conducted by the Central Statistical Bureau show that in the first quarter of 2014 there were 118.7 thousand unemployed persons aged 15-74, of which 15.5 thousand or 13% were young people aged 15-24. Unemployment rate (share of unemployed persons in the total active population) in the first quarter accounted for 11.9%, and over the year it has dropped by 1.1 percentage points (in the 1st quarter of 2013 - 13.0%). In the first quarter slightly more than two fifths (or 43.6%) of the unemployed in age group 15-74 years were long-term unemployed who are seeking job for 12 and more months. This share has dropped by 10.2 percentage points, as compared to the first quarter of 2013, and by 2.9 percentage points compared to the previous quarter.

English: <http://www.csb.gov.lv/en/notikumi/over-year-share-long-term-unemployed ...>

Teachers demonstrate for decent wages

May 14, 2014

Education and science workers mobilised on 12 May in order to demand decent wages and reform of the education financing model. Latvian teachers' salaries fall far behind the EU average, have not kept up with inflation and do not reflect an average of 18 hours that teachers work more than they are paid for contractually. At the moment that the Education and Science ministry is redesigning the remuneration system, teachers are demanding fair wages.

English: http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/news_details/3021

Liechtenstein

Economic outlook improves

May 22, 2014

The governmental Office of Statistics published new analysis for the year 2013. The employment figures show that in manufacturing (mainly food and automobile services) and in general and financial services the perspective improved. But, in construction, construction materials and metal unemployment increased.

German: http://www.llv.li/files/as/Konjunkturbericht%2014F_Int.pdf

Lithuania

Minimum wage table updated

May 5, 2014

The minimum wage data bank NMW provides overviews of the minimum salary that most workers are entitled to be paid. The data shown are based on a monthly rate, even if in some other countries the basic rate is an hourly or weekly rate.

English: <http://countryeconomy.com/national-minimum-wage/lithuania>

Luxembourg

Still use of reduced working hours

May 28, 2014

Although the economic indicators are relatively positive the employment outlook is still not promising. Government authorities granted 20 applications by companies to place workers under reduced working hours. A total of 29 applications were filed in May, compared to 33 in April, and 20 were given the go-ahead. Out of a total number of 3,299 employees at the 20 companies, some 1,800 will work under reduced working

hours starting June, with the state compensating workers for lost wages. The measure aims at helping businesses who are experiencing financial difficulties, either because of a difficult economic climate or structural issues.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/business/luxembourg-labour-market-1-800-employees ...>

Collective agreement in banking signed

May 15, 2014

Partners in collective bargaining concluded a collective agreement for the banking sector, after almost five months of negotiations. Employer organisation ABBL and the trade unions agreed, in principle, on the terms of a collective bargaining agreement for the years 2014 to 2016, i.e. the period running from 1st January 2014 to 31st December 2016. The official signature of the new agreement took place on 15 May 2014.

English: <http://www.abbl.lu/collective-bargaining-agreement-2014-2016>

May day victory Lidl workers

May 1, 2014

After trade unions called on Lidl to respect the 1 May bank holiday, the supermarket chain agreed to keep its shops closed. Days earlier, Lidl had announced its shops in Wasserbillig and Pommerloch would remain open and their staff expected to work. After trade unions sent out a press release calling on Lidl to respect the May day celebration, management agreed to keep the shops closed.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/view/lidl-shops-forced-to-close-on-may-1 ...>

Malta

Legislative changes initiate renewal of police officers unions

May 28, 2014

Anticipating the adoption of legislative changes that will grant police officers and members of other disciplinary forces the right to join a union, the Malta Police Association announced it intends to become an independent union as soon as possible. The association, established in 1955, has been defending the interests of law enforcement personnel for decades but has so far lacked the negotiation rights pertaining to trade unions. The legislative changes would make it possible for the association to become a union. MPA announced that this is its intention, after the formation of another union affiliated to the general workers' union UHM was made. Analysts think that the planned legislation will give a boost to the membership of the trade union movement not only numerically but also in psychological terms as the inclusion of all categories of workers could enhance the principles of solidarity upon which the movement is based.

English: <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20140516/local/update-2-police ...>
<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20140526/opinion/Union-members-in-uniform ...>

Netherlands

Philip Morris workers strike

May 28, 2013

The social plan negotiations for the loss of 1230 jobs at the Philip Morris cigarette factory in Bergen op Zoom came to a halt. The social plan drafted by the management was rejected by the workforce that called for a strike on Wednesday 28 May. The trade unions were asking the company to 'pay back the millions' on tax facilities with a decent social plan and alternative investment in the region. They asked the continued payment as long as workers have not found another job, a 5-years period of job seeking guidance and the indexation of pensions during the next 10 years. In an ultimatum the unions announced that if no agreement is reached new strikes are planned for the beginning of June 2014.

English: <http://www.nltimes.nl/2014/05/28/philip-morris-worker-strike/>

3-year agreement for cleaning sector

May 27, 2013

The trade unions (FNV Bondgenoten and CNV Vakmensen) reached an agreement with the Employers' organisation Cleaning and Office services (OSB) for a collective agreement in the cleaning sector after a long period of negotiations and strike actions that, according to an opinion poll, had a 70% public support. Cleaners at train stations and in trains, employed by outsourced cleaning companies, went on strike in the end of April after negotiations with OSB failed. They asked a €0.50 pay hike and an end to the practice of waiting periods, which leaves cleaners without sick pay for the first two days when they are ill. Railway company NS offered to act as an independent mediator to resolve the conflict. The 3-year agreement stipulates an annual pay increase of 2%, with an additional year-end bonus of 0.2% (thus 6.6% for the total contract period). The first two days of sick leave for account of the workers will be abolished step-by-step (one on 1 January 2015, one on 1 January 2016).

English: <http://student.uva.nl/en/announcements/content/2014/05/agreement-in-principle ...>

<http://www.thehagueonline.com/headlines/2014-05-22/ns-cleaners-strike-rubbish-in-trains ...>

<http://www.nltimes.nl/2014/05/28/janitors-strike-reach-deal-union/>

Amsterdam municipal workers strike, more to follow

May 19, 2013

Municipal workers in Amsterdam staged a two-hour strike on 19 May to demand a new collective agreement with decent pay, clear employment agreements, steady jobs and more respect for their work. Protests in other cities are expected in June. All municipal workers fall under the collective agreement of the municipalities, which expired over a year ago. Trade unions have tabled wage demands of 2.5% in 2013 and 3% in 2014, in a long negotiation process.

English: <http://www.nltimes.nl/2014/05/19/amsterdam-workers-strike/>

Schiphol security staff demand decent work

May 16, 2013

Security workers at Amsterdam Schiphol airport have initiated industrial action against indecent working conditions. Hundreds joined a manifestation whereas others wore protest badges on the job. The workers are protesting against insecure contracts, being made to work long hours without sufficient breaks and irregular pay and hours. In a reaction, Schiphol management said it was ready to include decent working conditions in any new contracts with the security firms, but did not make any concrete commitments. Trade unions said they were happy with this promise, but would continue to monitor the situation carefully.

English: <http://unionrenewal.blogspot.nl/2014/05/security-officers-at-schiphol-airport.html>

Norway

Wage deal for oil rig workers

May 28, 2014

Two trade unions representing workers who operate oil drilling rigs reached a deal with the Norwegian Shipowners' Association, averting a strike after similar negotiations with other oil sector workers broke down in recent weeks. The unions were pleased with the overall financial settlement. Three rounds of talks with other types of oil workers - platform workers, oil services employees and those operating onshore supply bases - have broken down. These are heading for state mediation in the coming weeks.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/28/norway-oil-wagetalks ...>

Collective agreement for state and local level public sector workers

May 26, 2014

Hours before state and local government workers were due to initiate strike actions, negotiators reached two new collective agreements, with a third being expected soon. As negotiations progressed slowly, local, Oslo municipal and state level public sector workers announced industrial action. After over-night negotiations, however, the local level workers reached an agreement for a 3.3% wage increase and no changes in the

organisations' pay systems. Within hours, the state level agreement was reached as well and Oslo municipal workers are expected to settle soon.

English: <http://www.newsenglish.no/2014/05/26/local-strikes-averted-state-talks-go-on/>

Air strike called off after deal was reached

May 14, 2014

Danish and Norwegian workers of low-cost air carrier have been in conflict with management since the company announced it intends to transfer its cabin crew to new holding company subsidiaries in a move that workers fear will affect their wages, working conditions and pensions. Norwegian workers called a strike after the mandatory arbitration failed, but only pulled one flight attendant off the job while they waited for their Danish colleagues to call for strike too. In the strike, almost all Norwegian Air flights departing from Norway and Denmark were expected to be grounded and 1,300 Norwegian flight attendants to walk off the job; only flights to Bangkok and the US would run as scheduled, since these are already staffed by non-unionised Asian crews. On the eve of the strike, however, management and unions reached an agreement in which rights and contracts of the crew remain the same as the past four years.

English: <http://www.newsenglish.no/2014/05/19/norwegian-air-strike-called-off/>

<http://cphpost.dk/news/norwegian-strike-would-paralyse-airline.9556.html>

<http://www.newsenglish.no/2014/05/07/strike-settles-over-norwegian-air/>

Strikes loom in hotels, harbour and farms

May 8, 2014

Strikes over pay and working conditions are looming in the hotel and restaurant branch, the harbours and farming. Harbour workers are taking action against attempts by harbour managers and shipping companies to use seafarers instead of dockers to load and unload vessels. Hotel workers will take action on 17 May, a national holiday. The action is expected to close down or affect 69 hotels and involve 2,621 workers. The hotel strike follows a ballot in which union members rejected an agreement on pay that was reached between the Fellesforbundet union and employers' organisation NHO Reiseliv.

English: <http://www.newsenglish.no/2014/05/08/harbor-strikes-loom-all-over-norway/>

<http://www.newsenglish.no/2014/05/07/hotel-strike-to-hit-norway-next-week/>

Poland

Unemployment decreases

May 28, 2014

The level of unemployment fell from 13.5% to 13% in April. Analysts predict that with winter over, the level will continue to decrease, as an increasing number of seasonal jobs become available. The growth pace in the purchasing power of wages and salaries was weaker than in March 2014.

English: [http://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/aggregated-studies/informations-on-socio-economic ...](http://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/aggregated-studies/informations-on-socio-economic-...)

Report on working conditions

May 22, 2014

The statistical office GUS published the results of a survey on working conditions. The report aims to assess and monitor the changes in the range of hazards related to workplace, connected to working environment, strenuousness of work and hazards related to mechanical factors and the number of persons receiving compensation due to work in harmful conditions and accidents at work.

English: [http://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/labour-salaries/working-conditions-accidents-at-work ...](http://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/labour-salaries/working-conditions-accidents-at-work-...)

Portugal

CGTP takes week-long action

May 29, 2014

The trade union confederation CGTP staged a week of protests and strike action as a form of national action to fight for the improvement of the national minimum wage. The demand was to hike the minimum monthly wage by €30, from the current €485 to €515, as well as a general rise in salaries, for a reduction in working hours and against obstacles imposed on collective action.

Portuguese: <http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/portugals-largest-trade-union-takes...>

Police officers plan appeal to tourists

May 1, 2014

Police officers have announced they are preparing a leafleting action targeting tourists arriving to the country's ports and airports. The officers are protesting the far going cuts, which have left them with lower salaries, fewer colleagues and higher work pressure. Through the action, tourists will be made aware of the situation. Authorities as well as hospitality and catering association AHRESP have called on the police unions to refrain from printing the leaflets, which allegedly will tell tourists in five languages that the government is putting the internal security of the country at risk.

Portuguese: <http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/disgruntled-police-take-grievances...>

Romania

Postal workers on strike

May 6, 2014

Postal workers throughout the country have gone on strike against low pay, bad working conditions and mismanagement. The workers demand a 20% pay rise, paid overtime, new uniforms, new staff to fill the vacant jobs and for current management resign. Further strike action is planned in Bucharest on 11 May and country-wide on 13 May.

English: <http://www.romania-insider.com/romanian-postal-workers-announce-four-day...>

Serbia

Fight against grey economy

May 14, 2014

The minister of finance announced strict measures against the grey market, adding that in the way the budget revenues could increase by 500-700 million euros annually. The fight against the grey economy requires strengthening of the Tax Administration institutions in the first line, and data analysis has already identified the ones that pay and the ones that evade taxes.

English: <http://www.balkans.com/open-news.php?uniquenumber=193139>

Slovakia

Strike averted at Volkswagen

May 28, 2014

Trade unions at the Slovak division of German carmaker Volkswagen called off a warning strike in Volkswagen's plant in Bratislava. A new collective agreement raises the basic salary 2.4% retroactively as of April 2014. Another pay rise of 2.3% is scheduled to take effect at the start of 2015. Employees will also get a bonus of 280 euros. The plant's management promised to maintain employment levels until the end of 2017. Workers were preparing industrial action after collective agreement negotiations failed. Breaking point was the request by management for employees to accept a 4% reduction in working hours and pay. Unionists reported that the initial Volkswagen-request had even been to reduce the wages but not the working time.

English: <http://www.praguepost.com/eu-news/39305-strike-alert-called-off-at-slovak...>

Trade unions want improvement of minimum wage

May 28, 2014

The trade union confederation KOZ is asking for an increase of the minimum wage to €400 per month. Their claim is that a person who works eight hours a day should not earn an amount that is below the poverty level. As a consequence a person working for the minimum wage during standard working hours should receive a net monthly salary of €346.40, after deductions into insurance funds (i.e. the social and health insurers).

English: http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/54127/10/trade_unions_want_to_up...

Slovenia

2013 employment figures – wages stabilise

May 26, 2014

The statistical office published the final employment figures for 2013 and the March 2014 data on average monthly earnings. After a serious fall of wages that started in 2011, wages stabilised (with seasonal differences) around 1,500 euros. At the end of 2013 there were about 791,000 persons in employment; 31% of them had tertiary education, 57% upper secondary education and 12% basic education or less. Among women who were in employment 40% had tertiary education and among men 23% had tertiary education. The structural difference between the sexes was smaller in case of basic education or less. Among women in employment 11% and among men 13% had basic education or less.

English: <http://www.stat.si/eng/indikatorji.asp?ID=29>

http://www.stat.si/eng/novica_prikazi.aspx?id=6244

Spain

Hotel workers announce strike

May 28, 2014

Hotel workers throughout the Balearic Islands are planning sit-in protests and possible strikes unless agreements can be reached over their working conditions and pay. The trade unions CC.OO and UGT are attempting to negotiate collective working agreements which cover rights and duties of employees across the sector, including time off, hours and wage scales. However, employers are proving to be the most inflexible during meetings and no progress has been reached.

Spanish: <http://news.gnom.es/news/balearic-hotels-strike-threat>

Wage growth or moderation divides employers and unions in salary pact

May 15, 2014

Employers' organisations CEOE and CEPYME on the one hand, and trade unions CCOO and UGT on the other, have started negotiations over the framework agreement on pay. The framework agreement concluded at the national level between social partners sets the stage for collective agreement negotiations and in effect establishes the bounds of wage demands and offers. UGT and CCOO have started the bargaining round stating they accepted pay freezes in the last two agreements (2010 and 2012) and therefore expect this year's agreement to outpace inflation. Employers, however, have argued that the recovery is fragile and it is too early to start increasing wages.

Spanish: <http://economia.elpais.com/economia/2014/05/15/actualidad...>

Sweden

Municipalities hire increasing numbers of low paid temp workers

May 15, 2014

A report by local government union Kommunal reveals that temporary workers employed at municipalities earn less than their permanently employed counter parts, as well as that their number is growing. Kommunal reports that temporary workers receive lower pay, are more likely to work part-time, work more shift duties and receive less training. One in five temp workers at the municipalities does not earn a living wage.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/10445>

Switzerland

Opening hours in retail disputed

May 30, 2014

A draft federal law to set uniform national opening hours for shops is running into opposition from cantons, municipalities and trade unions representing store workers. The law would allow shops across the country to stay open on weekdays from 6am to 8pm and from 6am to 7pm on Saturdays. All the country's cantons, except for Ticino, oppose the law because they say the legislation is a serious threat to their autonomy. The trade unions oppose the federal law because it would change the working conditions for shop employees who are already facing stress and put under pressure. The extension of hours would mean working more in the evening without extra compensation.

English: <http://www.thelocal.ch/20140530/proposed-shopping-hours-law-faces-resistance>

No majority for minimum wage in referendum

May 18, 2014

The proposal to introduce a minimum wage was rejected by 76% of voters in a referendum. Under the plan, employers would have had to pay workers a minimum 22 Swiss francs (about 18 euros) an hour. The trade unions that initiated the referendum have always said that the proposed introduction of a minimum wage at that level was necessary for people to live a decent life. They argued that surviving on less than 4,000 francs a month is not possible because rents, health insurance and food are all prohibitively expensive.

English: <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-27459178>

<http://www.thelocal.ch/20140515/pay-under-less-than-4000-a-month-challeng>

Job cuts announced at insurer

May 15, 2014

Although net profit rose in the first quarter of 2014 from the same period a year earlier, thanks to returns on its investments, Zurich Insurance is continuing with a plan to cut hundreds of jobs in Switzerland and elsewhere. A three-year programme aims to save Zurich Insurance 180 million euros by the end of 2015, with measures including cutting 800 jobs and removing management layers between the group and its business units.

English: <http://www.thelocal.ch/20140515/insurer-zurich-sticks-to-swiss-job-cuts-plan>

Turkey

Disaster with miners due to poor safety record

May 14, 2014

Hundreds of coal miners were trapped underground after an explosion and fire in Soma (western Turkey) that left almost 300 of their colleagues dead. A blast in the power unit of the mine triggered an electricity cut, making the lifts unusable and leaving hundreds of miners stranded underground. Miners' representatives said that accidents such as the latest one would increase due to privatisations, the increasing employment of subcontractors and a lack of strong unions, all of which they said had led to massive pressure

on workers to produce as much as possible for as little cost as possible. Trade unions all over the country organised protest actions against the Soma tragedy. Protestors were brutally attacked by riot police.

English: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/13/turkey-mine-blast-people-killed ...>

<http://www.equaltimes.org/profits-over-people-murder-in-the ...>

<http://www.industrialunion.org/rising-death-toll-turns-mine-accident-in-turkey ...>

Violent May Day clashes at Taksim square

May 1, 2014

Police and trade union members clashed at Taksim square as activists braved the demonstration ban on the square that has been the centre for protest and 1st of May parades for decades. As the activists marched on Taksim square to celebrate May Day, riot policy employed tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons to disperse the crowd. Fifty protesters were injured and 138 detained.

English: <http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/may-day-clashes-in-istanbul-50-injured ...>

United Kingdom

Vote on post office pay deal

May 30, 2014

Post office workers have until Wednesday 11th June to vote on a pay deal reached after months of industrial action and negotiations between trade union CWU and Post Office Ltd. If accepted, the deal will see the pay of staff employed in Crown Post Offices increase by up to 7.5% with lump sum payments totalling £3,300 for full-time employees and pro-rata pay-outs for part-timers, paid in instalments over the course of 2015.

English: <http://www.cwu.org/news/archive/post-office-workers-to-vote-on-pay-deal.html>

Trade union membership recorded

May 28, 2014

Around 6.5 million employees in the UK were trade union members in 2013. The level of overall union members was broadly unchanged from 2012, with a reduction of only 6,000 over the year (a 0.1% decline), but well below the peak of over 13 million in 1979. The overall number of employees increased between 2012 and 2013. As a result, the membership rate fell slightly to 25.6% in 2013, from 26% in 2012. Private sector membership rose by 61,000 to 2.6m, including increases in transport, finance and arts and entertainment.

English: <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads ...>

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/industrial-issues/union-issues/stronger-unions-blog/rising-union ...>

Curbs on strikes considered

May 12, 2014

David Cameron's statement that next year's Tory election manifesto would impose a threshold in the number of union members who have to vote in favour of industrial action for it to be legal has led to angry reactions. The TUC stated that workers in Britain already face the toughest barriers to taking action to defend their living standards of almost any advanced democracy. This has helped to turn the country into one of the most unequal where billionaires co-exist with food banks.

English: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/david-cameron-promises-curbs ...>

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/industrial-issues/tuc-strike-ballots>

London Tube workers reach agreement

May 9, 2014

Hours before another strike of London Underground personnel, representatives from the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) trade union and management reached a working agreement. The last-ditch talks were called to prevent another crippling strike, such as reported in last month's newsletter. Calling off the strike, RMT said the talks had yielded a 'viable framework for a review of cuts and proposed ticket office closures'.

English: <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/tube-strike-rmt-union-calls-off-threeday ...>
<http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/10441/region ...>

Growth of 'in-work poverty'

May 8, 2014

Figures, compiled by the House of Commons Library, highlight the growth of 'in-work poverty' in recent years while wages fell in real terms and rents continued to rise. The number of housing benefit claimants in work rose from 650,561 in May 2010 to 1.03 million by the end of 2013. In England, the number of in-work claimants has increased from 586,181 to 936,964 since 2010. In Scotland, the number jumped from 40,447 to 61,856 over the same period and in Wales from 23,923 to 38,003.

English: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/exclusive-socalled-inwork-poverty ...>

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