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collective bargaining

Issue 7-8/2014 | July-August

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

Job quality and earnings

August 20, 2014

Based on its fifth European Working Conditions Survey Eurofound has analysed several aspects of working conditions. The resulting report aims to identify occupations and groups of individuals experiencing relatively lower levels of earnings, job and career prospects, poor working time and intrinsic job quality. Workers in mid-skilled manual and low-skilled occupations do quite poorly when it comes to earnings, prospects and intrinsic job quality, and they report relatively low levels of both physical and mental well-being. However, their working time quality is generally good. In contrast, workers in high-skilled occupations do relatively well on almost all job quality indicators, except working time.

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

Young people and temporary jobs

July 24, 2014

An analysis of Eurofound describes the labour market situation of young people in Europe, focusing in particular on their school-to-work transition, while also monitoring their more general transition to adulthood. The report investigates the ability of young people to remain in employment against the odds during the crisis and charts their transitions from temporary to permanent contracts. In many Member States, temporary jobs are associated with lower wages and more difficult access to training opportunities

and benefits (such as paid holidays, sick leave, unemployment insurance and other fringe benefits). The crisis increased the proportion of temporary employees making a transition to unemployment (from 11.6% to 18.5%). More than a quarter of temporary employees in Europe moved to permanent contracts in 2006-2007, and this transition rate slowed down slightly to around 23% during the crisis period.

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

European strategy at Amazon discussed

July 3, 2014

Union leaders from Britain, France and Germany held talks in Berlin with colleagues from Poland, the Czech Republic and the United States to discuss the rise of Amazon in Europe and how to engage with the online retailer on job security, warehouse working conditions and low pay. National organisers from the German trade union Ver.di, the French CGT and the British GMB view Amazon as a leading example of how a new generation of powerful e-commerce employers treat their low-skilled workforce. Amazon has been accused in the past of using aggressively anti-union tactics.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/03/amazoncom-unions...>

<http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/jul/01/amazon-rise-europe-discussed-union...>

Austria

Minimum wage index updated

August 5, 2014

Statistics Austria compiled an updated Index of Agreed Minimum Wages (basis: 2006 annual average = 100). The index is a key evaluation criterion for wage and salary negotiations. In June 2014 the index reached a value of 122.8 (provisional figure), there was no change compared to the previous month. The rate of increase compared with June 2013 was 2.3%. 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 the previous year (+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...

Labour market statistics published

July 4, 2014

A publication in German (with an English summary) provides topical figures about the labour market. In 2013 (yearly average) the number of employed persons (ILO-definition) was 4 175 200. The employment rate for the population aged 15-64 years was 72.3%. 215,200 persons were unemployed; the unemployment rate amounted to 4.9%. In 2013, 45.5% of female employed and 26.6% of all persons employed worked part-time. Nearly nine out of ten employed persons worked as employees (3 620 200), 476 900 as self-employed and 78 100 as family workers.

German: http://www.statistik.at/web_de/statistiken/arbeitsmarkt/erwerbsstatus...

Belgium

Picket lines at IKEA

August 21, 2014

Transport workers have organised actions at several IKEA stores in the Netherlands and Belgium, distributing leaflets and asking customers to support a campaign against IKEA, which they accuse of social dumping. The Belgian transport trade union BTB and FNV Bondgenoten in the Netherlands claim that IKEA is bringing in cheap labour from eastern European countries to transport their products. The unions say that these workers have few rights, are paid far less than the going rate in Western Europe and are often forced to sleep in their trucks. The aim is to end the cat and mouse game between the unions and the transport companies doing the job 'IKEA is responsible for its policy of organising social dumping'.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/10822>

Handbook for the annual wage indication

July 11, 2014

The calculation for the annual price indication, based on the price development of a series of services and goods (called the 'index-basket'), has been updated and modernised. The indexation that aims to guarantee the purchase power of workers has been applied retroactive from 1 January 2014 (see our February Newsletter). The next annual revision is planned for December 2014. The trade union confederation ABVV/FGTB has published a handbook 'Everything you need to know about the index'.

Dutch: http://issuu.com/abvv/docs/index_nl ...

French: http://issuu.com/fgtb/docs/index_fr ...

ManPower workers at Sony Online Store laid off

July 10, 2014

Seventy workers at Sony Online Store lost their jobs after the company broke off the agreement with the ManPower group. A number of temp workers received new contracts, but 42 workers were dismissed without a social plan and on minimum benefits. Despite requests from unions CSC, SETCA, LBC-NVK, CNE & CGSLB/ACLVB, neither ManPower nor Sony have shown any willingness for social dialogue.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/belgium-uni-taw-supports-unions ...>

Bulgaria

A quarter of the households below poverty threshold

July 28, 2014

According to a report on the cost of living from the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CITUB) 23.3% of the households live below the poverty threshold. The cost of living per member of a 4-member household (2 adults + 2 children) in end-June 2014 reached BGN 559.95, or a total of BGN 2240 for the household per month for food, healthcare, education, holidays, according to average Bulgarian standards. In the second quarter of 2014, the cost of living dropped by 0.6% from the previous quarter, and on an annual basis it fell by 0.7%.

English: <http://www.novinite.com/articles/162310/Trade+Union ...>

Protest over unpaid wages

July 21, 2014

Workers of the Avtomagistrali-Tcherno More construction company have started an ongoing protest. They first staged a peaceful protest due to unpaid salaries for April and May. A total of 600 employees gathered in front of the Regional administration in a silent protest. The company stated that the payment is delayed by the Road Infrastructure Agency. During the third protest of the employees within two weeks, they again urged to receive their payments for activities done on Hemus motorway. There were several police teams at the place who observed for strict compliance with the order during the blockade, but did not stop the protesters to express their position. Workers ask the head of the Road Infrastructure Agency to resign.

English: <http://www.novinite.com/articles/161890/>

<http://www.novinite.com/articles/162127/>

<http://www.focus-fen.net/news/2014/07/15 ...>

Croatia

Labour law changes explained

August 1, 2014

The Ministry of Labour and Pension System announced earlier in 2014 proposals to modify working time legislation that will make internal organisation of work easier for employers (see our February and March

Newsletters). The aim is to help them cut operating costs by being able to respond quickly to short-term fluctuations in orders. The ministry also wants changes to the current rules on severance payments so that all workers, including employees on the fixed-term contracts, have the right to severance pay. It hopes that the changes will stimulate job creation, and the proposals are now being discussed in Parliament. Employers approved the initiative, but trade unions want to keep mechanisms that guarantee automatic pay increases and set out comprehensive safeguards against dismissal.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2014/02/articles...>

Electricity services strike postponed

July 1, 2014

Due to the reopening of the talks the trade unions in the national electricity supply company HEP have postponed their strike announced earlier on. The protest was initiated as workers feared their rights were endangered with the new contracts they were offered.

English: <http://www.croatiantimes.com/news/Business/2014-07-01...>

Cyprus

Bus strike cancelled after deal

August 7, 2014

Employees of Larnaca bus company Zinonas cut short a 24-hour strike after the confirmation that they will receive in full their wages for July. They had requested the immediate pay by the company of last month's wages so that tourists and other public transport users were not inconvenienced by the work stoppage. According to the workers' union the delay in the payment of wages was due a disagreement between the employer and the Ministry of Communications.

English: <http://incyprus.philnews.com/en-gb/Top-Stories-News...>

Czech Republic

Wage raise at National Theatre

August 26, 2014

Staff of the National Theatre will receive a modest pay raise of 3.5% as of 1 January 2015. The employees have welcomed the pay hike, but also indicated that they will remain underpaid. The artists and staff at the National Theatre are paid only about half of those at the Czech Philharmonic on average.

English: <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/wage-increase-at-national-theatre...>

Agreement on job security functions

August 20, 2014

Carmaker Škoda Auto wants to hire some 800 employees for its plant in Mladá Boleslav. A part of the employees will be gained from the ranks of the current agency workers. Škoda Auto has some 19,500 employees in Mladá Boleslav, and the average wage of blue-collar workers at the plant stands at around 1,222 euro a month. The company signed an agreement on employment with the unions last year. The agreement guarantees jobs to people who are interested in raising their skills and educating themselves.

English: <http://www.praguepost.com/czech-news/41051-skoda-auto-to-hire-800-people...>

Employment figures published

August 4, 2014

According to figures released by the Statistics Office the country has the fourth lowest unemployment rate in the EU, after the Netherlands, Germany and Austria. In 2013 the Czech Republic had an average 7% unemployment rate, compared with the EU average of 11%. On the other hand, the country has one of the

lowest number of employed working in part time jobs (5.8% as compared to 50% in the Netherlands), and ranks sixth as regards the number of employed men over 55 years of age (62.6%). As regards the number of employed women over 55 (41.4%) the Czech Republic is below the EU average now at 43.3%.

English: <http://www.czso.cz/csu/csu.nsf/enginformace...>
<http://www.czso.cz/csu/2014edicniplan...>

Pay rise for state employees

July 28, 2014

The prime minister announced that a deal had been reached and that the wages of all state employees will increase by at least 3.5% from January 2015. The government is scheduled to discuss wages with social partners on 4 September. The Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (ČMKOS) threatened earlier to call a strike if state employees would not get a pay rise.

English: <http://eu.cianews.cz/english-news/triarity-agrees-on-growth-in-wages...>

Denmark

Lay-offs in IT

August 7, 2014

IT company KMD announced the cutting of 120 positions. The job cuts – motivated by dropping prices and greater competition – will be scattered throughout the company. The move is the third round of firings in recent history for the company. There were two in 2013, the first costing around 100 jobs and the second trimming another 244.

English: <http://cphpost.dk/news/kmd-lays-off-120...>

Trade unions take a stand on Transatlantic Trade

July 14, 2014

In a statement published in the Financial Times the metal workers trade union and the confederation LO declared their commitment to an ambitious agreement on the TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership). According to the unions there is no time to waste if the aim is to ensure high environmental and consumer standards, legal protection and labour rights characterising the transatlantic markets.

English: <http://www.danskmetal.dk/Nyheder...>

Statistical yearbook 2014

July 1, 2014

An English version of the annual report of the official statistical office is available online. The section *Labour, Earnings and Income* summarises data on wages and labour costs, (un)employment, labour migration and other relevant items. Men's earnings are, on average, higher than women's and earnings of persons in managerial positions are higher than those of other employees. Average earnings of central government employees are higher than earnings of local government employees as well as persons employed in the private sector. But, the greatest spread of earnings is, by contrast, found in the private sector.

English: <http://www.dst.dk/pukora...>

Estonia

Trade unions hold wage conference

August 28, 2014

During a conference organised by the central confederation the participants discussed the fact that current wage growth is not meeting people's expectations which is why many are seeking work abroad as cost of living continues to increase and many people cannot make ends meet with their wages. The head of the trade

unions formulated one of the key questions: 'Do we want to continue seeing our wages grow 5, 7 or 10% a year and know that we will catch up with the EU only in 25 or 30 years, or do we have economic possibilities and are we ready to make an effort to catch up with the West faster?'

English: <http://balticbusinessnews.com/article/2014/8/28/are-wages-growing-too-slowly ...>

Transfer of production in manufacturing leads to job losses

August 7, 2014

The workers' representatives in a plant of PKC Estonia, a subsidiary of the Finnish owned company, which manufactures electronics for the automotive industry, were informed by the management that the factory in Haapsalu will close by the end of the year, which will result in 347 local jobs being terminated or transferred. The plant in Haapsalu manufactures wiring components. The PKC-plant in Keila, which employs 826, will remain open. About 100 of the employees will be offered positions at Keila, which is expanding its role within PKC to become the company's main centre for Europe- and Brazil-bound products. In 2012 PKC won top honours at the Entrepreneurship Awards, the country's most prestigious annual business award.

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

Wage increase in 20 years totals 280%

August 4, 2014

The Institute of Economic Research (EKI) has calculated that the real wages in the country have increased 279% since 1993. EKI estimates that the average gross wages will be 1,010 euro a month in 2014. In 2003, gross wages exceeded 400 euro and in 2008 they exceeded 800 euro. In 2007 the average wage fell to 784 euro. Between 1993 and 2008, wages were growing faster than inflation.

English: <http://balticbusinessnews.com/article/2014/8/4/estonia-s-real-wages ...>

Finland

Disputed shop assistants pay for language skills within reach

August 28, 2014

Based on the collective agreement for the commercial sector shop assistants are entitled to a 5% pay supplement when they use more than one language 'almost daily' in the course of their normal daily customer service. This wording has been subject to a dispute since it was agreed in 1975. After a ruling of the labour court the long struggle is beginning to bear fruit. Seppälä, one of the major clothing shops, is to start paying the supplement, as stipulated in the collective agreement.

English: <http://heikkijokinen.info/en/trade-union-news-from-finland/588-labour-court ...>

Divergence on the renewal of the bargaining system

August 10, 2014

A spokesperson of the employers' confederation EK expressed confidence that a working group charged with renewing the system of labour market negotiations will reach a common understanding before the end of the year. However, the chair of the transport trade union AKT, a member of the working group, stated that the task is unattainable because the objectives of the employers and labour are like 'night and day'. The whole exercise should lead to an assessment of the collective bargaining process and consider issues like improving the conciliation system and dispute resolution procedure, and implementing wage increases in industries not covered by agreements. Union demands like the criminalisation of underpayment and the prohibition of shopping around for collective agreements have not been picked up by the employers.

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

Railway electricians strike for better working conditions

July 19, 2014

Members of the Finnish Electrical Workers' Union working for railway company VR Track have gone back to work, but announced new strikes might be organised. The workers, who fall under the labour agreement for

railway workers demand to be treated equal to electric installation specialists under the Electrical Workers' Union collective agreement. The parties are not hopeful that a solution to the conflict will be found soon, with VR already announcing it is considering a two week lockout from 31 July.

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

France

Pilots ask for dialogue with a week-long strike

August 28, 2014

Trade unions representing the pilots have announced a week of strike between September 15 and 22, as part of a running dispute with the company over its strategy to compete against low-cost airlines. Pilots say they there is a complete lack of dialogue over the reorganisation of the airline as its parent company looks to strengthen its offering of short-haul flights. They stated that the threat to their jobs is too dangerous.

English: <http://online.wsj.com/articles/air-frances-pilot-union-calls-for-one-week-strike ...>

French: <http://www.liberation.fr/economie/2014/08/28/les-syndicats-d-air-france-contre ...>

Condor dispute to tribunal

August 13, 2014

Two Condor Ferries workers have taken the firm to a tribunal over employment rights. They are arguing all St Malo-based seafarers should have the same package of benefits as anyone who lives in France. It follows a 13 day strike earlier this year over the same issue (see our February Newsletter). The maritime trade union say if they win the case, they will push Condor to improve things for all St Malo-based seafarers.

English: http://www.channelonline.tv/channelonline_jerseynews ...

Air France ground workers call for better working conditions

August 2, 2014

Air France had to cancel some of its short and medium-haul flights from airports after several unions called their ground workers to go on strike over work conditions and salaries. Workers are calling for better work conditions and salaries and increased flight security. They also oppose the use of subcontractors.

English: <http://www.english.rfi.fr/visiting-france/20140802-air-france-grounds ...>

<http://www.thelocal.fr/20140730/air-france-strike-airports-paris>

Lawyers on strike over new tax on law practices

July 6, 2014

Court hearings in six cities were reduced to a minimum as lawyers took to the streets on 7 July. The lawyers are protesting against a new tax on legal fees that is supposed to finance legal aid in the future. Legal aid is currently financed by the state, costing it around €250 million per year. The lawyers argue that the money to fund the legal aid could be found somewhere else, but negotiations with the justice ministry led to nothing. Over 2,000 lawyers will now march on the prime minister's residence, to make a final appeal.

English: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/france ...>

Avignon festival podium for strike action

July 4, 2014

Hundreds of striking artists, actors and technicians took to the streets of the southern French city in a silent march to publicise their battle over proposed changes to their unemployment benefits. The approximate 100,000 casual festival workers have a special legal status whereby they can draw unemployment benefits between jobs. Arts workers contend that they are being penalised by reform plans for higher payroll taxes and a longer wait for unemployment benefits which kick in between jobs (see also the March Newsletter).

English: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/theatre-dance/news/the-shows ...>

Germany

Strike at Germanwings

August 29, 2014

In an effort to maintain their early retirement scheme pilots at Lufthansa's budget carrier Germanwings staged a six-hour strike. The scheme allows pilots to retire at 55 and still receive up to 60% of their pay until state pension payments start. The Germanwings walkout is the fourth strike to affect Lufthansa's operations in 2014. Earlier this year, security staff and public-sector workers chose to strike at Frankfurt airport. The pilots are also in discussions with Lufthansa over pay increases, although they say the pension scheme rather than pay is the main reason for the strike.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/29/us-germany-strike-lufthansa ...>

Bundesbank favours higher wages

July 30, 2014

The Bundesbank that historically has been a strong advocate of wage restraint has welcomed above-inflation wage increases in some sectors, with euro zone inflation stuck below 1% and consumer prices rising just 1.0% in June in Europe's biggest economy. The trade unions have negotiated above-average pay hikes in the past year after a decade of wage restraint. In April, 2.1 million public sector workers agreed to a 3.0% pay increase for 2014 and 2.4% for 2015. Spokespersons of the bank welcomed that wages are rising more strongly again, as in a series of sectors and regions, there is near-full employment and reports of labour shortages are piling up.

English: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/07/30/uk-germany-wages-weidmann ...>

German: <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/bundesbankchef-weidmann-fordert-lohnplus ...>

Collective agreement for steel workers

July 8, 2014

The 75,000 steel workers in north western Germany have a new collective agreement. The collective agreement foresees a 2.3% wage increase from July and another 1.7% from May 2015. Trade union IG Metall had called strikes at several steel plants, but an agreement was reached after 12 hours of talks. The agreement includes part-time work schemes for older workers and permanent jobs for apprentices.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/08/us-germany-steel ...>

Autonomy of bargaining partners strengthened

July 3, 2014

The parliament has passed an act that strengthens the autonomy of the social partners in collective bargaining. The act (called *Tarifautonomiestärkungsgesetz*) introduces a statutory minimum hourly wage of €8.5 in 2015. Sectors with already negotiated minimum wages that are lower than €8.5 will have 2 years to adapt to the new minimum. After 2 years, a joint committee with representatives from the State, employers' organisations and trade unions will meet regularly (every 2 years) to reassess the minimum wage level. The act enables the social partners in a sector to impose more easily a collective agreement to all enterprises in a sector as the act makes an end to a (50% of workers in the sector) representation limit.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/03/germany-minimumwage-approval>

German: <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/mindestlohn-eine-historische-reform ...>

Focus on the new act (in German): <http://www.sozialpolitik-aktuell.de/kontrovers ...>

Greece

Poor job perspective for middle-aged workers

August 8, 2014

The Wall Street Journal has published a background article that describes the poor perspectives and the financial and psychological struggle that comes with being older and unemployed in a country where the

economy has shrunk by almost a quarter in six years. Experts say that the shock has been so severe that older workers are unlikely to ever hold full-time jobs again. While youth unemployment is still a record for the EU—almost 60% of people aged 15 to 24 were out of work in 2013—the unemployment rate among older males is about twice the euro-zone average. Recent pension reforms, meanwhile, mean older men who have lost their jobs could be looking at several years of no income.

English: <http://online.wsj.com/articles/older-greek-men-feel-pain-of-job-losses ...>

Pireaus dock workers strike threat leads to negotiations

July 22, 2014

Cosco Pacific workers at Pireaus dock have earned a seat at the negotiation table after threatening a three-day strike. The dock workers are angry that their labour contracts do not allow them to unionise. The furthermore protest against the secrecy surrounding wage agreements, with rumours that some workers are paid less than they should, and against company practices to call in workers via cell phone messages. The strike was cancelled when company management said it was ready to meet some of the demands and invited the workers to negotiations.

English: <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2014/07/19/strike-at-cosco-dock-in-greece/>
<http://www.seatrade-global.com/news/asia/pireaus-dock-workers-withdraw-strike-threat.html>

Power cuts throughout the country as electricity workers strike

July 3, 2014

Workers from the Public Power Corporation (PPC) have started organising rolling strikes, leading to power cuts throughout the country. The workers are protesting against the upcoming privatisation of the company, which is expected to lead to parts of the enterprise being sold off and reorganisation. Directly after the start of the strikes, the government moved to have it declared illegal in court. After a court ruling ordering all workers back to work, the unions ended the strike but announced they will continue their protests.

English: <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2014/07/06/ppc-unions-end-strike-at-midnight/>
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe ...>

Hungary

Media law obstructs union work

August 17, 2014

Although a Constitutional Court ruling in 2011 required the government to revise the most contentious provisions of the Media Law (such as the requirement for journalists to reveal their sources), other elements, such as the powers of the politically-appointed Media Council still exist. According to Open Society Foundations (OSF), the Council has a mandate to interfere with editorial decision-making. The OSF report claims that the power of the National Media and Infocommunications Authority, the broadcast media arm of the Media Council, is 'absolute' and 'unprecedented in other European democracies.' For a while civil society organisations were able to create some 'breathing space' for independent journalists, trapped between government pressure and profit-oriented investors. Modified labour legislation, adopted four years ago, has further weakened the bargaining power of journalists' union.

English: <http://www.equaltimes.org/independent-journalism-under ...>

Union busting at Hankook

August 5, 2014

Korean owned tire maker Hankook has been relentless in its union busting. The firing of a local union president became the last violation in a series of totally unusual and extraordinary examples of the bad industrial relations practice for years exercised by the Hankook management. Protesters have urged the company to put an end to violations of trade union rights, and most particularly to stop harassing and firing local union leaders.

English: <http://www.industrialunion.org/hankook-continues-to-violate-union-rights ...>

Iceland

Restaurant workers receive no compensation for irregular hours

August 3, 2014

The trade union Efling, active in hospitality services, has criticized the exploitation of restaurant workers. While most workers are given a base salary for day work – with a percentage of that added to it for working evenings, nights, weekends, and holidays – many restaurant workers receive one hourly wage for any shifts, regardless of the day or time. This pay is known as a *jafnaðarlaun*, a form of offsetting wages. A former employee of Lebowski Bar was fired from her position after asking to be paid according to the law. She was happy at her job until she got her first pay check on July 1.

English: <http://grapevine.is/news/2014/08/03/demanded-fair-wage-and-got-fired/>

Ireland

Bitter dispute on working conditions at Irish rail

August 31, 2014

An amended Labour Court Recommendation on a cost cutting plan for the railway company was rejected in a ballot. The plan included temporary pay cuts for 28 months ranging from 1.7% to 6.1%. The company had warned workers that if intensive negotiations failed to secure agreement on cost reductions, it would unilaterally implement the cuts set out in the recommendation. However, the recommendation was rejected by SIPTU and the National Bus and Rail Union. Other unions at the company, the TSSA, the TEEU and Unite, accepted the Labour Court recommendation, but the overall ballot result was 51% against, 49% in favour. The company thereafter imposed pay-cuts to the workforce. The trade unions reacted and stated that their members will stop work on four of five planned dates, with 'work to rule' on one date. Officials at the Labour Relations Commission asked the unions to call off the strike and to engage in formal talks.

English: <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/lrc-talks-aim-to-halt-second-wave...>

[http://www.rte.ie/news/2014/0711 ...](http://www.rte.ie/news/2014/0711...)

[http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/irish-rail-workers-confirm-strike ...](http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/news/irish-rail-workers-confirm-strike...)

Hope of public sector pay restoration rekindled

August 11, 2014

Trade unions have reacted favourably to indications by the minister for Public Expenditure and Reform that collective negotiations in the public sector may be restored in 2015. Since 2009, the public sector has been subject to pay freezes and across the board cuts as a part of the Croke Park Agreement, which has been repeatedly reported in this newsletter. In recent months, as the economy started to recover, trade unions have been demanding pay restoration. Minister Howlin has now flagged the government's interest in starting to address the loss of purchasing power by civil servants. The minister indicated that the pay growth would not compensate for all losses, but would be a start on the road to restoration.

English: <http://www.impact.ie/14/08/11/Pay-recovery-negotiations-flagged-for-2015.htm>

New act on bargaining agreed

August 2, 2014

The Cabinet has approved the drafting of new legislation to reinstate Registered Employment Agreements (REAs), which set pay rates for certain sectors, on a constitutionally secure basis (see our Newsletter in May 2014). Under the new legislation companies in financial difficulty will be apply to for a temporary derogation from the legally binding terms of the REA, for the first time. Previously, employers could face criminal sanctions if they breached the REA, no matter their economic circumstances.

English: [http://www.rte.ie/news/2014/0801 ...](http://www.rte.ie/news/2014/0801...)

High Court lifts injunction

July 1, 2014

The High Court has lifted the three interim injunction orders granted to Greyhound Household Ltd in June. The decision means that management cannot interfere with official union pickets or prevent workers from describing its actions as a lockout. Trade union Siptu stated that the pickets at two Greyhound plants in west Dublin will continue until the management sits down to discuss and find an agreed resolution. This dispute arose because management unilaterally imposed wage cuts of up 35% from mid-June 2014.

English: <http://www.siptu.ie/media/pressreleases2014/featurednews ...>

Italy

Employment outlook still not rosy

August 29, 2014

During the second quarter of 2014 the unemployment rate increased to 12.3%, with 3.1 million people being unemployed. The statistical office ISTAT has also published data in a pdf-file with regional figures. According to these figures the unemployment in the south is twice as high as compared to the north or the centre of the country. Youth unemployment still peaks at 41.5%.

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

Airport strike averted

August 9, 2014

Alitalia baggage crew protested over job cuts as part of the planned merger with Abu Dhabi carrier Etihad. Their four-day strike caused chaos at Rome's busiest airport. In the merger talks redundancies have been a major hurdle, with Etihad asking for 2,171 jobs to be cut. At talks between Alitalia and the trade unions in mid-July, there was a partial agreement on laying off 1,635 workers out of a workforce of some 12,800; less than the amount requested by Etihad and with some being moved to other companies in the aviation sector and others receiving redundancy packages. Etihad takes a 49% stake in Alitalia.

English: <http://www.livetradingnews.com/alitalia-set-to-seal-etihad-investment-jobs-secure ...>
<http://www.thelocal.it/20140807/rome-airport-chaos-ends-as-strike-called-off>

Eni workers strike over closure of refineries

July 29, 2014

Ninety percent of workers of the Eni oil and gas group have participated in a one-day strike to protest against plans to close or convert some of its unprofitable refineries. All three major unions joined the strike, targeting the country's government, which has a majority share in the Eni group. The unions said the closures are expected to lead to over 6,000 layoffs and jeopardise the country's industrial future.

English: <http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/07/29/eni-strike ...>

Steel workers Terni plant on strike

July 28, 2014

Steel workers at ThyssenKrupp Terni plant just outside of Rome have gone on strike over job cuts. ThyssenKrupp has announced it intends to lay off 550 workers, representing a fifth of the workforce at the plant. The plant has changed owners already twice in the last four years and the workers fear that ThyssenKrupp, too, is eyeing short term profit and planning to sell the plant off in the foreseeable future.

English: <http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/07/28/italy-steel-strike ...>

Construction industry concludes collective agreement

July 1, 2014

Long after it expired (the end of 2012) the collective bargaining partners in construction renewed the sectoral collective agreement that covers approximately 800,000 workers. In addition to a wage increase that starts at €40 for the basic level, it provides for a reform of the sector's paritarian organisations. The pay rise is implemented in two stages, first €15 in July 2014 and later €25 in July 2015. From January 2015 on,

employers have to pay a monthly €8 contribution per worker to a supplementary contingency fund. In December 2013 the joint trade unions had organised a strike to put more pressure on the employer's side.

Italian: <http://www.agenparl.com ...>

Latvia

Gender pay gap discussed

August 13, 2014

During the opening ceremony of the 'Līdzvērtīgas iespējas' (Equal opportunities) campaign it was stated that women's salaries are, on the average, about 17% lower than men's salaries. Women receive smaller salaries even if they work the same jobs as men. The proportion of women in the country is one of the largest in Europe, nevertheless, Latvia is ranked 15th on the European Union's gender equality index list.

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

Tallink ferries announce job cuts

August 6, 2014

The AS Tallink Grupp management reported that changes are necessary to improve the company's operational efficiency and profitability. The ferry M/S Isabelle Silja Europa will become the new ferry hub to Australia, starting with August. The management has announced that as a consequence of these changes it will have to cut jobs. Negotiations with trade unions are already underway.

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

Young workers sceptical on labour market perspective

July 6, 2014

A large minority of youngsters (39%) believes that the possibilities of getting an appealing job position are 'poor', according to a study conducted by the Youth Competence Center. The qualification good was substantially lower (16%). 72% of the surveyed youth, between 18 and 25 years of age, indicated that the lack of job opportunities is one of the main reasons that causes them to emigrate. More than two-thirds of the respondents believe that by increasing the average salary, youth diaspora living abroad, would return. Other solutions include improving of job opportunities and the standard of living.

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

Liechtenstein

Regular economic survey looks promising

August 8, 2014

The governmental Office of Statistics published the results of the regular economic survey for the 2nd quarter of 2014 with separate figures for several industries. The companies that participated react rather optimistic about the economic outlook. However, expectations with regard to the employment development stabilised.

German: <http://www.llv.li/files/as/14Q2Konjunkturumfrage.pdf>

Lithuania

Slight improvement of labour market

August 15, 2014

The statistical office came with detailed figures, based on Labour Force Survey data. The unemployment rate decreased by 1.2 percentage points in the 2nd quarter of 2014 (against the 1st quarter of 2014); against the

2nd of 2013, it decreased by 0.5 percentage points. The end of June 2014 the unemployment rate in the country stood at 11.2%. However, the youth unemployment (persons aged 15-24) rate stood at 21.3% and was by 0.1 percentage points higher than in the 1st quarter of 2014, and by 0.3 percentage points higher than in the 2nd quarter of 2013.

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

Prime minister acknowledges role of trade unions in education reform

July 7, 2014

After two years of protests, Prime Minister Rømer acknowledged that a comprehensive reform of both the quality and working conditions in the education sector needs to be negotiated with trade unions. Teachers have repeatedly called attention to falling scores in international comparisons, their uncertain labour contracts and the overdependence on retired teachers that impede the hiring and training of new teachers. Trade unions are hoping to open a dialogue on a national plan as soon as possible.

English: <http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news ...>

Luxembourg

Next wage indexation expected early 2015

August 8, 2014

The national statistics office Statec is expecting the next indexation of wages to take place in the first quarter of 2015, with inflation to stay below 1% this year. For 2014, Statec estimates that inflation will be at 0.9%. Because of low inflation there will be no indexation of wages this year, by which wages are matched to inflation in order to maintain purchasing power. The next indexation payment is expected within the first quarter of 2015, following the 2% increase in VAT in January 2015.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/business/inflation-indexation-of-wages-in-early-2015 ...>

French: <http://www.statistiques.public.lu/fr/actualites/economie-finances/prix ...>

Luxair conciliation talks fail too

July 24, 2014

A first round of talks between LuxairGroup and trade unions OGBL, LCGB and ngl-snep at the national conciliation office has failed. After regular negotiations for a new collective agreement broke down in June, as reported in this newsletter, the dispute went into conciliation. The trade unions report that Luxair refuses to make any real wage offer, being only interested in an indefinite wage freeze despite a 1.9 million benefit in 2013. The wage freeze would mean a loss to the trade unions, because the current agreement includes automatic salary increases. Luxair management denied the accusations and said it continued to hope talks would resolve the issue, but refused to extend the current agreement to allow for more time for negotiations. After walking out of the conciliation talks, trade unions have organised three one-hour protests.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/business/collective-working-agreement-unions-launch ...>

<http://www.wort.lu/en/business/national-conciliation-office-talks-for-luxair-agreement-fail ...>

Malta

Collective agreement for academic staff

August 6, 2014

A collective agreement for academic staff at the University of Malta and the Junior College for the period between 2014 and 2018 was settled. It was signed by the University Rector, the trade union for academic staff union UMASA and the teacher's trade union. The agreement places salary increases for academic staff in parallel with those of other civil service workers. In the meantime, the situation in the island's trade union movement is quite turbulent with much infighting and rivalry. Efforts are made to bring unions together and

several new unions or union sections are set up in the wake of a Bill which would grant members of the police force, army, civil protection, detention services and prison warders the right to join a trade union.

English: http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/42023/collective_agreement ...
<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20140728/editorial/New-bid-to-bring-unions ...>

Netherlands

Social protection claims increase

August 29, 2014

The statistical office CBS has published data on the number of people claiming welfare benefits. People are entitled to welfare benefits once they have used up their entitlement to unemployment benefit and provided they have little in the way of assets. Despite a slight recovery the number of social security claimants has risen by 8 thousand to 434 thousand in the second quarter of 2014.

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

Collectively agreed wages and old age

July 30, 2014

The bureau for Economic Policy Analysis CPB investigated the anatomy of older workers' wages. Central research question was whether the wage cushion, defined as the difference between actual wages and (maximum) contractual wages as stipulated in collective labour agreements, contributes to the fact that wages continue increasing at older ages. In the public sector, CPB finds no evidence of a wage cushion. Wage scale ceilings set in collective agreements are guiding for older workers' wages, and workers earning a contractual wage equal to a wage scale ceiling are not compensated with higher additional wages. In the private sector, wage scale ceilings are less restrictive and workers earning a contractual wage exceeding the highest wage scale ceiling experience higher contractual wage growth.

English: <http://www.cpb.nl/en/publication/do-wages-continue-increasing-at-older-ages ...>

Retail chain HEMA questions paid breaks

July 30, 2014

Retailer Hema no longer wants to pay employees for taking short breaks. The management has sent the proposal to the works councils of bakeries, distribution centres and shop chains, to consider breaks as lunch hours, which Hema is already not paying for. Workers' hours will be expanded to make up for the lost hours. Trade union FNV has claimed that the measure is a collective labour agreement issue that needs consent from the works councils.

English: <http://www.nltimes.nl/2014/07/30/hema-end-workers-paid-breaks ...>

New collective agreement in waste sector

July 15, 2014

Negotiators of employers and trade unions have reached a collective agreement that will run from 1 September 2014 until 31 December 2015 if approved by the union members. The agreement includes a wage increase of 1.25% from 1 September 2014 and another 0.75% from 1 June 2015. Secondly, the performance related end-of-year bonus will be converted to a fixed bonus of 2.75%. The agreement also includes a more flexible leave system to accommodate employees from non-Christian religious backgrounds.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/10663>

Dutch: <http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/over-ons/nieuws/nieuwsoverzicht/2014/07 ...>

Collective agreement for municipal workers

July 15, 2014

The 165,000 municipal workers have a new collective agreement. The agreement was reached after 1.5 years of negotiation and its clauses will apply retroactively from 1 January 2013 until 1 January 2016. The agreement includes a one-time payment of €350, a 1% pay increase as of 1 October 2014 and a €50 per

month increase from April 2015 onwards. Due to the flat rate increase, the pay rise will represent about 4% for the lowest earning employees and 2.5% for the average employee. Workers who have worked for a municipality for at least 24 months or have had three temporary contracts will get permanent contracts. The agreement also includes a pledge to employ 1500 young workers (under 27) for at least one year.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/10655>

Dutch: <http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/over-ons/nieuws/nieuwsoverzicht/2014/07...>

Norway

Several pay deals for oil workers

August 17, 2014

In recent weeks two trade unions representing workers who operate in the oil industry have settled pay deals (see also our June Newsletter). Trade union SAFE came to an agreement with oil service companies, calling off a strike that would have affected a unit of Baker Hughes. Some 89 oil workers would have walked off the job if the talks had failed. In addition to the union members at Baker Hughes, the deal will cover those working at oil service firms Schlumberger, Oceaneering NCA and Vetco Gray, a part of General Electric Co, the Norwegian Oil and Gas Association said in a statement. The agreement is identical to an agreement on pay reached by the other trade union Industri Energi and the Norwegian Oil and Gas Association in July 2014. Collective agreements cover about 6,000 workers employed at oil service firms.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/17/norway-oil-strike...>

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-07-06/norwegian-oil-services-strike-averted...>

Employers expect workers to be on-call

August 12, 2014

A survey of business leaders has revealed that more than half of them expect employees to answer their email and phone calls after normal business hours. The survey worries the trade unions that call the outcome a frightening development that further blurs the lines between work time and free time. Fully 52% of bosses at private companies expect a response if they call or mail an employee after hours.

English: <http://www.newsineenglish.no/2014/08/12/bosses-expect-accessibility-after-hours/>

Negotiations on teachers' working time lead to strike

August 11, 2014

A strike that began with 36 Union of Education of Norway (UEN) teachers at one school in Bergen is about to explode in size as 5,500 additional teachers from 130 secondary schools will join the labour action. One of the controversial proposals orders teachers to spend 7.5 hours of working time at school each day, which the trade union argues does not reflect the realities and demands of the profession. In June, 73% of the teachers voted against a proposed collective agreement, which they say threatens their professional autonomy and hinders their ability to deliver a quality education.

English: <http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news...>

Poland

Airline LOT violates union rights

August 29, 2014

LOT Airlines has dismissed the vice-president of the cabin crew trade union ZZPP. The dismissal is not only a violation of trade union rights, but also an attempt to disrupt on-going collective agreement negotiations. The state owned airline has a bad record of similar anti-union practices. Over the last five years, the airline dismissed eight trade union leaders. The Civil Aviation Secretaries of the international and European trade unions ITF and ETF are demanding the reinstatement of the dismissed union leader in a joint letter to the President of LOT Polish Airlines. The situation is escalating into a dispute.

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

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

Minimum wage in construction

July 30, 2014

The Polish Confederation of Employers of the Building Industry (Polski Związek Pracodawców Budownictwa PZPB) and the Confederation of the Polish Crafts (Związek Rzemiosła Polskiego ZRP) and trade unions Solidarnosc and ZZ Budowlani have signed an agreement setting a minimum wage in the construction sector. The parties agreed that a worker should not cost less than 10.50 PLN (€2.53) gross or 7 PLN (€1.70) net per hour. The minimum wage was adopted in order to fight exploitation and dumping in the sector. The Cracow region employers' organisation, the Galician Builder's Chamber, refused to sign the agreement.

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

Quality of life and poverty surveyed

July 7, 2014

The report 'Quality of Life. Social Capital, Poverty and Social Exclusion in Poland' contains statistical information that allows a reliable diagnosis of many aspects of the quality of life. Chapter 2 presents the analysis of poverty, isolation and social exclusion. The authors considered three complementary dimensions of poverty (i.e. income poverty, living conditions poverty, and poverty in terms of the lack of budget balance). The threat of at least one poverty form or social isolation was found to concern nearly every-third of the population aged 16 years or more (over 32%).

English: <http://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/living-conditions...>

Portugal

Joint forces for migrants rights

August 29, 2014

The Portuguese and British trade unions signed a co-operation (28 August), aimed at ensuring Portuguese migrant workers in the UK can join unions and enforce their rights at work. The agreement will help to prevent the exploitation of migrants and the undercutting of existing workers' wages. The protocol also covers Portuguese speakers from non-European countries, such as Angola and Brazil, who are working in the UK. Unions will seek to recruit and represent these migrant workers, and a guide to workplace rights in Portuguese will be posted on the TUC website.

English: <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk...>

Massive strike of nurses in Algarve

August 28, 2014

The Portuguese Nurses Union has reacted disappointedly to the health ministry's announcement that 45 nurses will be hired for the Algarve. The union claims that 350 nurses are needed to get all services up to full capacity. Even by the standards of the Algarve Regional Health Board (ARS), who indicated that 169 professionals were needed, the current 45 new hires are far from sufficient. Since the austerity, hospitals take no responsibility for the heavily understaffed Basic Emergency Services (SUB). Unions say many nurses work 16 hour days for 15 or 16 days in a row to staff the units. The participation in a 24-hour strike to protest against long working hours, often without intervals, along with the continued shortage of doctors and nurses varied from a complete walkout at the Lagos Hospital to around 80 percent in Faro.

English: <http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/algarve-health-strike-saw-90-percent...>

<http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/union-deems-hiring-of-45-nurses-for-algarve...>

Court rejects pension levy and cuts in public sector pay

August 16, 2014

The Constitutional Court struck down a government measure that would impose a levy on better-off pensioners, and rejected part of another piece of legislation that would impose pay cuts on public sector employees on more than €1,500 a month in the years to come. In the rulings, the court declared

constitutional the cuts in public sector salaries this year and next, but said that continuing to apply these cuts in the following three years - even if they were progressively smaller - is unconstitutional. In the case of the separate bill to create a 'sustainability contribution' - a permanent levy of between 2% and 3.5% on pensions over €1,000 a month - the court ruled that most was unconstitutional.

English: <http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/court-rejects-pension-levy-cuts ...>

Collective agreement at Energias de Portugal

July 16, 2014

The 64 unions representing energy workers have reached a new collective agreement with energy company Energias de Portugal (EDP Group). The agreement covers some 6,700 employees working in 23 companies controlled by the EDP Group. The agreement includes a standard working week of 38 hours as well as the retention of compensatory rest for overtime, a 25% premium on night work and 24 days of annual leave.

English: <http://www.edp.pt/en/Investidores/informacaoprivilegiada ...>

Local government unions demand recognition 35 hour working week deal

July 10, 2014

Trade unions have held mass protests against further pay cuts and the privatisation of water. The unions also demanded an increase in the minimum wage and a clear commitment to the 35-hour working week. Earlier this year, public sector unions managed to stop a reform instating a 40-hour working week in local government. However, the deal protecting the 35-hour working week has still not been published by the government.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/10661>

Portuguese: <http://www.stal.pt/index.php/arquivo-2014 ...>

Romania

International migration documented

August 1, 2014

A report of the national statistical office documents the evolution of the workforce and notably the labour migration with facts and figures. On 1 January 2013, the country's resident population was approximately equal to that of 1969, amounting to approximately 20.01 million inhabitants. From 1989 to 2012, the total population declined by over 3.1 million inhabitants. More than 77% of the decrease in the usual resident (stable) population during this period was caused by emigration. As a result the country has to face an increased ageing of the population. Up to three quarter of the migrants leave for Italy and Spain.

English: <http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii ...>

Unpaid wage leads to sailors' strike

July 15, 2014

With negotiations are still ongoing a labour dispute that saw a cargo ship with 18 Romanian sailors and their Russian captain stuck in Canada for two weeks without food and water has been partially resolved. A trade union spokesperson said eight of the sailors and their captain, on the ship owned by German company Intersee, have been given three months' worth of wages that were owed them. Seafarers' International Union of Canada added they will be flying home, while the others will stay to handle cargo the crew wouldn't deliver during the strike. The sailors went without food and water for two weeks and got so desperate they yelled at passing fishermen for gear so they could catch something to eat, though supplies were later delivered by supporters.

English: <http://toronto.ctvnews.ca/dispute-partially-settled ...>

Tax cut on social security pay

July 3, 2014

The parliament's lower house approved a 5% point cut in social security taxes for employers that is intended to boost economic growth but will leave a gap in the budget, going against a recommendation from the International Monetary Fund. The cut in employers' tax to 15.8% from October 2014 will create a large revenue shortfall, which the government plans to cover with higher than expected returns from a tax on special buildings introduced this year.

English: <http://www.brecorder.com/taxation ...>

Serbia

Employers want reduction of public sector wage

August 6, 2014

The central employers' organisation has stated that the fund of gross salaries in the public sector must be reduced by 25%. The organisation said that it is better to do it now and avoid bankruptcy, than to afterwards cut salaries by 40%. The employers also requested a reduction of taxes and contributions paid for salaries from 65 to 40%. They claim that this would make workers more competitive than those in the Czech Republic, where the gross wage is the same as in Serbia, 'but workers take home more money and give less to the state and less to the pension fund.'

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

General strike over wages and working conditions

July 22, 2014

Trade unions organised a general strike to protest against the mounting pressure on wages and working conditions in the country. Pressed by foreign business interests, the government has approved changes that worsened minimum wage entitlements, employment provisions, pensions and disability insurance without any form of consultation. After various requests for social dialogue were ignored, unions resorted to organising a general strike.

English: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/serbia-general-strike-to-protect ...>

<http://www.industriall-union.org/industriall-global-unions-affiliates ...>

Economic outlook not promising

July 6, 2014

With one in five people unemployed and pensioners outnumbering those in work, the country is struggling with a record budget deficit and could sink into bankruptcy, analysts say. The country has more pensioners than those employed, and of those, more than 50% work in the public sector. More than 20% of the workforce is unemployed, and many of those with jobs barely survive on an average monthly salary equivalent to 350 euros.

English: <http://inserbia.info/today/2014/07/afp-serbia-could-sink-into-bankruptcy/>

Slovakia

Teachers' pay needs to be broadly discussed

August 18, 2014

Improvement of the pay for teachers will remain one of the most burning issues in education for the months to come. The teachers trade unions intend to hold talks on the matter not only with newly appointed education minister but also with the finance, interior and labour ministers. The unions want to discuss new measures and are of the opinion that talks with the education minister alone won't suffice. The labour minister has a say on the salary rates of non-teaching employees and the interior minister has under his remit district offices that run bilingual secondary schools and specialised schools.

English: http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/54985/10/teachers_want_to_discuss_salary ...

Gender pay gap on the agenda

August 13, 2014

The campaign titled 'When I Grow Up' organised the Labour Ministry in cooperation with the European Commission's Representation points out the difference in remuneration of men and women. Moreover, women and mothers of young children, as well as women approaching retirement age are among the most disadvantaged groups on the labour market.

English: http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/54940/10/campaign_points_out_differences ...

Tripartite talks on vocational education and training

July 7, 2014

Two years of discussions have led to proposals for a 'dual' approach of education at schools, which calls for secondary school students to gain practical work experience in specific fields with companies that have signed an agreement with their school. Representatives of employers, trade unions, ministries and regions discussed the rules in the government's council for vocational education. The related law should come into force as of 2015, and should create legal conditions for schools that will join the scheme in September 2015.

English: http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/54545/3/dual_education_scheme_outlined ...

Slovenia

Data on pay and employment

August 18, 2014

In the first sixth months of 2014, a person in paid employment earned on average 1,527.72 euro gross per month, which is 1.0% more in nominal terms and 0.4% more in real terms than in the same period in 2013. Average monthly net earnings in the first half of 2014 amounted to 999.06 euro; compared to the same period in 2013 earnings increased by 0.8% in nominal and 0.2% in real terms. The registered unemployment rate amounted to 12.8% - 0.2 of a percentage point lower than in the previous month - and it remained the same as in June 2013. The registered unemployment rate decreased the most among young people aged 15-29 years, by 0.7 percentage points. But youth unemployment is with 21.7% still very high.

English: http://www.stat.si/eng/novica_prikazi ...

http://www.stat.si/eng/novica_prikazi ...

Industrial disputes in energy and mining

July 7, 2014

The board of the trade union in the energy sector will meet to decide whether to call a general strike over growing unhappiness about conditions in the sector, especially at the state-owned power group HSE. The debate will take place as a strike by miners against proposed wage cuts at the Velenje Coal Mine enters a second week.

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

<http://www.rtvslo.si/news-in-english/velenje-coal-mine-two-steps-away-from-bankruptcy ...>

Spain

Self-employment decreased despite facilities

August 20, 2014

The government's decision to significantly reduce social security contributions for new self-employed workers has encouraged thousands of people to work for themselves. Over 267,000 people have particularly embraced a measure that allows them to pay €53 a month for half a year, compared with the regular rate of nearly €260. Discounts go down to 50% and 30% of the regular rate after that. The government also established that self-employed workers no longer have to pay the state the VAT they charge their clients until they have in fact been paid for their services. Despite these reforms, the overall number of self-employed workers has been declining since the crisis began, and is now 14% lower than it was before 2008.

English: <http://elpais.com/elpais/2014/08/20/inenglish ...>

Privatisation of airport operator AENA contested

August 20, 2014

Workers at Madrid's Adolfo Suárez Barajas airport have called a strike for the last weekend of August to protest the privatisation of the state-owned airport operator AENA. The workers called off their initial strike for August 15th and 17th but have now decided to hold it from Friday 29th to Sunday 31st. The trade union CGT-Aena, representing the disgruntled airport workers, has sent out a press release arguing that their call for negotiations with the Ministry of Public Works and Barajas authorities has fallen on deaf ears.

English: <http://www.thelocal.es/20140820/madrid-airport-staff-to-go-on-strike ...>

Railway strike motivated by lack of personnel

July 31, 2014

The train companies RENFE and ADIF have been forced to cancel more than 500 trains due to strikes by the CCOO, SF and CGT. The three trade unions motivated the strikes by a lack of personnel. Trade union CCOO stated that the strike could have been avoided if RENFE acceded to their demands and showed the will to negotiate with them. The demands of the CCOO include the contracting of at least 1,400 new workers and the building of new high speed lines as well as the internalisation of maintenance contracts. CCOO is also asking that RENFE puts ticket inspectors back onto regional trains as it considers that their removal was 'unfair' and places undue responsibility on the drivers.

English: <http://elpais.com/elpais/2014/07/31/inenglish ...>

<https://www.euroweeklynews.com/news/spanish-news ...>

Rally for right to strike

July 4, 2014

Thousands of workers have taken part in a rally in Madrid to protest at the arrest and possible imprisonment of several hundred workers for taking part in strike action. The government's actions break with decades of respect for the right to strike since the end of the Franco dictatorship.

English: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/huge-rally-in-madrid-for-right-to ...>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/02/spanish-unions-campaign-criminalisation ...>

Sweden

Labour market in the 2nd quarter of 2014

August 21, 2014

Statistics Sweden published figures for the 2nd quarter of 2014. The number of employed persons increased to 4 371 000, an increase of 1.2%. In the private sector the number of employed persons increased by 1.1%. Gross pay increased in total by 4.3% during the second quarter. Gross pay increased by 4.2% in the private sector and by 4.7% in the public sector. Although the economy is beginning to recover after several difficult years, the governor of the central bank warned that the risk for household indebtedness remains high.

English: http://www.scb.se/en/_/Finding-statistics/Statistics-by-subject-area ...

IKEA suspected of secret police funding

July 4, 2014

The Guardian reports that declassified files at the National College for Studying the Securitate Archives (CNSAS) in Romania show that furniture giant IKEA agreed to be overcharged for Romanian-made products and some of these funds were handed over to the Securitate, the infamous secret service. The documents are reported to indicate that Ikea was complicit in the payments, a claim denied by the firm. Ikea was one of a small number of western European firms who took advantage of the large timber resources and cheap labour that the country offered as restrictions on trade began to ease in the 1980s.

English: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/04/ikea-funds-romania-secret-police ...>

Switzerland

Labour market outlook published

August 8, 2014

The central administration SECO has reported (in several languages) on the employment situation. The number of registered unemployed people inched up in the month of July for the first time in six months, although the national jobless rate remained at 2.9%, unchanged from the previous month. Youth unemployment increased to 11.3%.

English: <http://www.thelocal.ch/20140808/swiss-unemployment-inches-higher-in-july>

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

Italian: <http://www.news.admin.ch ...>

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

Turkey

Settlement brings an end to 43-day strike

August 8, 2014

Workers at a Kimberly Clark plant reached a settlement after two particularly major demands of the strikers were accepted by the local management. With the new collective agreement, notice periods have been substantially increased which trade union Tümka-Is considers a remarkable step forward towards job security. The union members also gained high wage increases. Particular regulations have been made for lower-wage earners which has brought more equality in wage scales.

English: <http://www.industriall-union.org/kimberly-clark-workers-in-turkey-end ...>

Hard fought victory for Georg Fischer workers

July 24, 2014

A new collective agreement at Georg Fischer Hakan Plastik was negotiated under harsh conditions and finally came about after a long fight and an international solidarity campaign in alliance with IndustriALL. Trade union Lastik-Is began fighting for such an agreement immediately after it had been certified as the official trade union by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. Hakan Plastik management came to the negotiation table after several attempts to dispute the certification and continued its union busting practices throughout the process (reported in the April 2014 newsletter). Amongst others, the company fired several union activists, attempted to bribe employees not to join the union and tried to exclude mechanics, electricians, quality controllers, forklift operators and experienced workers from the collective agreement. After a long battle and union action against the Swiss based multinational in both Turkey and Switzerland, an agreement was reached.

English: <http://www.industriall-union.org/international-union-campaign-delivers ...>

Collective agreement at Amcor Tobacco Packaging plant Izmir

July 17, 2014

Weeks after being recognised as the plant's official union, Basin-Is reached a collective agreement that will cover all 200 workers at the Amcor Tobacco Packaging Izmir plant. The union fought for recognition for over three years, overcoming both legal and business obstacles. After receiving recognition, the union and management quickly agreed on a collective agreement that includes an additional social premium, increase of wages and financial benefits, paid annual leave, health and safety and participation in decision making.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/collective-agreement-signed-amcor-tobacco ...>

Collective agreement for journalists at BirGün newspaper

July 14, 2014

The Journalists Union of Turkey (TGS) and BirGün newspaper have reached their second collective agreement. The agreement includes a 12% wage increase, a child allowance of 500 TRY (€ 175), marriage or partnership allowance of 500 TRY bonus and protection against harassment at workplace. The agreement also includes a holiday for female journalists on the International Women's Day, 18 weeks paid maternity leave, 1-day paid leave per month on request for female workers during their menstruation, holiday for all journalists willing to participate to the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia on 17 May. A workers' committee will be set up to ensure the editorial independence of the paper.

English: <http://www.ifj.org/nc/news...>

Justice for unrecorded worker

July 1, 2014

A court in Istanbul has ruled that a company that employed an unregistered worker from Turkmenistan, but disowned him after he died in a work-related incident, must pay a record amount of compensation to his family. The court found the main contractor liable. Earlier in 2014, the 13th Labour Court had ruled that the incident was a work-related accident, paving the way for the Social Security Institution (SGK) to pay the widow a monthly benefit until she remarries or dies. In a related penal law suit, two officials of the subcontractor firm who were responsible at the construction site have been given suspended sentences of more than one year in prison.

English: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-court-rules-for-record-compensation...>

United Kingdom

Low pay among youngsters more than tripled

August 30, 2014

Analysis by the independent think-tank the Resolution Foundation shows that the proportion of workers aged 21 to 30 who are now classed as low paid has more than tripled over the past four decades. The data help to explain why many young people are locked out of the housing market. The report comes amid growing concern that the economic recovery is not translating into wage growth and higher living standards for large sections of the country. The trade union confederation TUC recalls that too many low-pay, low-skill and low-productivity jobs in low-investment workplaces are hampering the chances of a recovery.

English: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/aug/30/low-pay-workers...>

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/aug/30/low-pay...>

Blacklisting compensation scheme insufficient

August 20, 2014

Trade union GMB has described an offer of compensation for blacklisted construction workers as grossly inadequate (reported since August 2012: see our archive www.cbnarchive.eu). Eight firms who set up the compensation scheme have urged workers in Scotland employed in construction up to 2009 to contact them. The scheme offers payments between £4,000 and £100,000. The firms have appealed for anyone whose name appeared on a file which was held by a company called the Consulting Association to contact them. The file was seized as part of an investigation into blacklisting by the Information Commissioner's Office. The names in the file were mainly those of construction workers. They have been denied work for years as a result of being blacklisted for union activities or raising health and safety concerns.

English: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics...>

<http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/home-news/union-attacks-low-payouts...>

Meat inspectors strike

August 20, 2014

Meat inspectors at the Food Standards Agency (FSA) are to stage two four-hour strikes in a row over pay. The move follows a ballot earlier this month, voted by 63% in favour of strike action, over an imposed pay offer of 0.75%. Trade union Unison, which represents around 500 employees involved in the dispute,

warned that industrial action could hit meat supplies to supermarkets and butchers. The union is seeking an above-inflation pay increase it says would begin to make up some of the 15% that has been lost from the pay of FSA staff since the coalition government came to power.

English: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/20/fsa-meat-inspectors> ...
<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/aug/12/meat-hygiene-inspectors-vets> ...

Recovery doesn't end disparities

August 13, 2014

Trade union confederation TUC reacted on recent publications from the Bank of England and the National Statistics Office. The second quarter of the year the statistics show less unemployment and more people in work. According to the Regional Labour Market figures unemployment is spread very uneven (ranging from 9.4% in the North East to 4.4% in the South East). According to the TUC the jobs being created are low paid, insecure and could lead to a recovery being built on sand. Any fall in unemployment is to be welcomed, but working people are not feeling the benefits of recovery.

English: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-market-statistics/august-2014> ...
<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons> ...

Firefighters strike against pension reform

August 8, 2014

A long-running dispute about firefighters' pensions will see a further series of strikes. The Fire Brigades Union FBU has been in negotiations with the government for three years in an attempt to avoid the implementation of proposals that they say would see firefighters paying more, working longer and receiving less. An academic report on firefighter fitness by the University of Bath undermined the proposals of working until 60 by arguing that higher fitness levels are required for firefighting than those suggested by the government. According to the results physical activity and well-being tended to decline with age.

English: <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/aug/08/firefighters-england-wales> ...
<http://www.fbu.org.uk/news/2014/07/firefighters-set-strike-eight-consecutive-days> ...
<http://therfu.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/enhancing> ...

Union takes NHS hospital to court over strike breaking charges

July 18, 2014

Trade Union Unite is taking legal action against Northampton General Hospital (NGH) for replacing striking workers by agency workers. The hospital's haematologists have been on strike for three weeks over an imposed £6,000 (\$10,272) cut in out-of-hours pay and a proposal to double their night-time shift patterns. To cover their workload, the hospital has started to encourage agency workers to set themselves up as limited companies in order to exploit a loophole in the regulations against strike breaking.

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

Public sector workers strike

July 10, 2014

Public sector workers organised a nationwide 24 hour strike to protest against falling purchasing power due to pay freezes. The public sector workers received their last pay rise in 2010 and have seen their real wage deteriorate. Trade unions report more and more workers are having trouble making ends meet on the 'poverty pay' they receive.

English: <http://www.world-psi.org/en/10-july-uk-public-sector-workers-strike-better> ...

People on low income cannot afford decent life

July 1, 2014

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's minimum income standard (MIS), now in its sixth year, has become an essential, annual benchmark of what is thought to be the reasonable financial underpinnings of a modest life; not starvation rations, just sufficient to achieve a decent standard of living in the 21st century. The MIS

reveals a dismal truth that runs deeper than poverty numbers alone: that increasing numbers of British people on low incomes will never be able to afford an acceptable standard of living.

English: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jul/01/minimum-income-standard ...>
<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/minimum-income-standard-2014>

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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