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collective bargaining

Issue 9/2014 | September

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

Report on wages and bargaining in times of crisis

September 29, 2014

The European trade union federation industriAll published a study that analyses the impact of the crisis on wage developments and collective bargaining in European manufacturing. The report includes a quantitative analysis of the development of employment, working hours and wages for the period 2000-2011. It evaluates existing data on collectively-agreed wages and contains a qualitative analysis of the main trends and key tendencies in the bargaining system.

English: <http://www.industriall-europe.eu/committees/cb/2014 ...>

German: <http://www.industriall-europe.eu/committees/cb/2014 ...>

French: <http://www.industriall-europe.eu/committees/cb/2014 ...>

European taxi drivers protest against taxi app companies

September 17, 2014

Registered taxi drivers in Europe, Canada, India and the USA have organised protests and met to discuss the growth of taxi app companies. The unions are concerned with social dumping and “the way these companies undermine public safety and the jobs of real, regulated taxi drivers by bypassing regulations and refusing liability in the case of accidents”.

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

TTIP-effect on income and employment questioned

September 1, 2014

Two researchers have formulated serious question marks with regard to the trade impact studies that are used to ‘motivate’ the negotiations between the EU and the United States in the frame of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). Notably the effects on wages and employment are criticized. For instance the estimated employment gains look big in absolute numbers but pale in relation to the overall labour pool. The authors note that those who commissioned the studies had already come down in favour

of the TTIP. However, the forecasts of economic impact studies should always deserve close scrutiny. Otherwise their results will be driven by their (biased) assumptions.

English: <http://column.global-labour-university.org/2014/09/selling-free-trade ...>

Austria

Campaign for reduction of income tax

September 26, 2014

The trade union confederation ÖGB wants a substantial reduction in taxes on all workers and employees. In addition, reform of the overall tax structure is required in order to bring greater fairness into the domestic tax system. In 2012, the average tax rate on work was 41.5% – the third highest level in the whole of the EU and well above the EU average of 36.1%. And while Austrian taxes on work are way above average, workers on low and medium incomes are particularly hard hit. According to the ÖGB the starting tax rate of 36.5% (on annual income of EUR 11,000 and upwards) is far too high, especially in comparison with corporation tax and capital gains tax with a flat rate of 25% – regardless of the tax base.

English: <https://usilive.org/austrian-unions-campaign-for-a-reduction-of-income-tax/>

Collective bargaining in metal starts in grim climate

September 25, 2014

In recent years we have reported about the changes in the collective bargaining tradition of the metal sector. Recently, collective bargaining started in the metal sector. The outcome always sets the standard for the wage trend in other industries. The six employers federations for the separate branches, in a sector with in total 180,000 employees, negotiate separate wage levels. The first talks led to no results and the negotiations have been postponed to 7 October.

German: <http://derstandard.at/2000005900524/Heisse-Eisen-fuer-die-Herbstlohnrunde>

Respect of labour laws for cross-border work

September 1, 2014

According to a report, more than 14,000 Slovenians regularly work in Austria, with around half commuting daily across the border, an increase with 2,500 during the past 12 months. The main motives for people crossing the border to seek work are a lack of jobs at home and higher earnings. The workers involved are said to be generally satisfied with the working conditions and attitude of their employers, who as a rule respect labour laws: 'In a case of disagreement, the Austrian Chamber of Labour is responsible for disputes, but inquiries over disputes with the employers are few'.

English: <http://www.thelocal.at/20140901/14000-slovenians-work-in-austria>

<http://www.sloveniatimes.com/over-14-000-slovenians-working-in-austria>

Belgium

Police officers protest against abolition of pension privileges

September 18, 2014

Some 14,000 Brussels police officers participated in a protest against the abolition of a special arrangement allowing them to retire in their fifties. Police unions have threatened a national strike if the plan to increase the pension age to 52 will be implemented. Spokespersons explained that police officers have always had an early retirement arrangement due to the hardship associated with the job. The pension reform is one measure in a much large reform of the police department that is ongoing.

English: <http://www.gulf-times.com/uk-europe ...>

Closure of plant leads to question marks

September 2, 2014

The decision of Doosan Infracore to close its excavator factory and parts distribution facility in Frameries, with the loss of up to 313 jobs, was met with surprise from the works council. The announcement came unexpected as the agenda of the extraordinary works council meeting included the item of economic perspectives, but not the closure of the plant. The trade unions want to talk as soon as possible with the management, also because the plant is still profitable in their vision.

English: <http://www.khl.com/magazines/construction-europe ...>

Bulgaria

Social partners stay away from tripartite talks

September 26, 2014

Trade unions and employers' organisations have refused to take part in a meeting of the National Council for Tripartite Cooperation on the budget update proposals. In an open letter to caretaker Deputy Prime Minister Yordan Hristoskov, chair of the Council, the representatives of trade unions and employers' organisations underscored that they have not received the documents related to the issues on the agenda, namely the updates of the 2014 state budget and of the 2014 budget of the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF).

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

Miners in underground strike to demand payment of salaries

September 18, 2014

Forty-two miners have refused to leave the Cherno More Mine in Burgas and are staging an underground strike. The miners are demanding the company pay their salaries, which they haven't received in two months. The miners trade union is ensuring that the workers who are on strike are supplied with enough food and have an ambulance standing by to avoid accidents. Before the start of the underground strike, miners held two one-hour warning protests. The mining company has confirmed that about BGN 600,000 in salaries for around 400 miners have not been paid.

English: <http://www.focus-fen.net/news/2014/09/18 ...>

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

Shadow economy discussed

September 4, 2014

During a conference attention was paid to the growing problem with the shadow economy. It was reported that the shadow economy represents nearly a third of the country's total GDP, which is well-above one and a half times the EU average. Based on a number of sources there was a general decline between 2002 and 2007 followed by a slight increase afterwards. The findings suggested that the increase occurred through a shift in the instances of undeclared work, for example from working without a contract to receiving part of the wages in envelopes, which spiked in 2013. Reference was made to a survey conducted by the ministry of labour with the main conclusion that employers know how to take advantage of the system, but the employees do not due to the lack of information or perceived self-interest from their side. Some of the recommendations of the conference included the implementation of a legal definition for undeclared work, which is currently missing and a coordinated approach at strategic and operational level, which would probably involve a national strategy of counteracting the issue.

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

Minimum wage debate opened up

September 1, 2014

In the middle of a political crisis in which the country is being governed by a caretaker government, its caretaker Minister of Labour and Social Policy has opened up the debate about the minimum wage. Minister Hristoskov said the minimum wage could be increased from BGN 340 to BGN 400 without the business sector experiencing negative impact. The caretaker government furthermore intends to raise social security contributions in order to close the budget gap of the country's welfare institutions. The Bulgarian Industrial Association (BIA) firmly opposes the plan, arguing the minimum wage is already relatively high, that labour productivity has not increased and that the hike in wages and contributions could result in the loss of jobs.

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

Croatia

Social partners discuss fair contracts

September 2, 2014

The social partners in construction have initiated the 'fair prices initiative' that aims to encourage debate and establish dialogue among participants of the process of public procurement and politically responsible bodies and individuals as well as to interrupt neglect, silence and tolerance by the public contracting authorities. Contracting authorities are buying whatever is cheapest, because the public procurement act prescribes that the best tender shall be a tender with the lowest price. The cheapest supplier with the cheapest labour destroys himself and other construction companies and jobs.

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

Cyprus

Public sector workers call off strike

September 19, 2014

A public sector strike announced for September 19 was called off after assurances were made by President Anastasiades. The trade union of public sector employees (PASYDY) had announced a strike after statements by the finance ministry on upcoming cuts in salaries and the taxation of a one off bonus allocated to public sector employees upon their retirement. The strike was called off after the President promised that the government has no intention of taxing the retirement bonuses.

English: <http://cyprus-mail.com/2014/09/18/civil-servants-to-call-off-strike/>
<http://financialmirror.com/news-details ...>

Social dumping in the tourist sector

September 7, 2014

Trade unions, active in the hotel branch, are complaining about exploitation practices in this branch. Whilst the hotels are exploiting migrant workers, the local workforce is really suffering due to attitude in the tourism sector to favour cheap foreign labour. The pay issue is directly linked to the lack of collective agreements. Some hotels prefer to employ people that are ready to work without a collective agreement because they are cheaper. The collective agreement was renewed in 2013 and the workers accepted the agreement, though they basically lost 15% of their benefits. The hoteliers said they would implement it but they haven't.

English: <http://cyprus-mail.com/2014/09/07/i-cant-work-for-e400-a-month/>

Czech Republic

Massive job cuts at Czech Airlines

September 24, 2014

The national carrier Czech Airlines has announced layoffs in an effort to keep the troubled company afloat. The airline will let go around one third of its staff including dozens of pilots and stewards and ground personnel. The trade union of pilots says that cutting jobs goes against the terms of the company's privatisation, and has asked the shareholders to reverse it. Czech Airlines stewards have meanwhile gone on strike alert, and said further steps will be announced.

English: <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/czech-airlines-announces-massive-layoffs>

Public sector workers get raise two months earlier than expected

September 22, 2014

Mid-September, the government has made it known that it will increase public employees' salaries by 3.5% starting from 1 November 2014 instead of 1 January 2015. The government has said that the necessary budgetary space to raise the wages already this year was found. The increase will benefit the 930,000 public sector employees such as teachers, health care workers and police officers.

English: <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/news/public-employees-set-for-pay-raise ...>

Employers against minimum wage increase

September 15, 2014

Government officials, trade union leaders and employers have failed to agree on a hike of minimal wage by CZK 700. Employers opposed the Social Democratic proposal, arguing that the government and trade unions previously agreed to a CZK 500 rise from the present 8,500 crowns to 9,000, starting from January 2015. Despite employer objections, the ministry of labour and social affairs announced on 15 September that it will be raising the minimum wage.

English: <http://www.shanghaidaily.com/article ...>

<http://www.radio.cz/en/section/news/employers-stand-against-minimal-wage-hike>

Denmark

Employers: migration a must

September 30, 2014

The employer association Dansk Industri (DI) has stressed the importance of having an international workforce. Unemployment is at its lowest since 2006 and DI predicts that it will fall even more in the coming years. According to DI, almost half of their member companies employ workers from abroad, and foreigners currently fill 123,000 full-time positions. The organisation suggested reducing the income threshold for getting a work permit from 375,000 to 325,000 kroner per year so that the professional competences that are lacking domestically can be secured.

English: <http://cphpost.dk/news/companies-can-t-cope-without-foreigners ...>

Income inequality on the rise

September 1, 2014

A recent analysis from the think-tank Cevea shows that income inequality is on the rise. The analysis shows that the wealthiest one percent of Danes – about 46,000 individuals – own nearly one third of the country's

total wealth. The gap is increasing; since 2002, the income of the wealthiest has increased by nearly 30% while the poorest have ten percent less wealth than they did 12 years ago.

English: <http://www.thelocal.dk/20140901/denmarks-one-percent-problem>

Explained (in Danish) on Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch ...>

Estonia

Information for workers posted abroad

September 22, 2014

The labour inspectorate has published a brochure that explains to workers the difference between a business trip and the posting of workers. In the brochure potential abuses are defined as the withholding of payment, the deduction of administrative costs and the refusal of a decent contract. The Annexes provide a clear reference to the legislation applicable in case of cross-border employment. The publication fits in a campaign that is developed in cooperation with inspectorates of other countries (notably the Finnish inspectorate).

English: <http://issuu.com/tooinspeksioon/docs ...>

Average wage 4.8% up in one year

September 1, 2014

The Wages and Salaries Statistics Survey reported in the 2nd quarter an average monthly gross wage of 1,023 euro, an increase of 4.8% year on year. Average hourly gross wages were 6.21 euro and increased 8.8% compared to the same quarter of 2013. The average gross wages and salaries were 996 euro in April, 1,002 euro in May and 1,065 euro in June 2014.

English: <http://balticbusinessnews.com/article/2014/9/1/average-pay-in-estonia-up ...>

<http://www.stat.ee/72489>

Finland

Deal on pension reform

September 28, 2014

Negotiations between the social partners concerning the pension reform have ended with several agreed changes to the existing system. The agreement was signed by two of the three trade union confederations. The minimum retirement age will be raised gradually from 63 to 65 for persons born after 1955. Also, the system of accumulation of pensions will change. In the new agreement the pension accrual will be 1.5 % in a year of employees' entire earnings throughout a working career between the ages of 17 and 65.

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

First in – first out at Finnair

September 10, 2014

Airline company Finnair has announced its intention of replacing its own personnel with rental employees from the Far East. In the first phase of the changes cabin crews on flights to Hong Kong and Singapore will be outsourced to OSM Aviation. In addition to leading to heavy job cuts, Finnair management will attempt to make use of a clause in the collective agreement that allows them to lay off the better paid long serving employees while keeping the newer employees. Trade unions have reacted outraged and are deliberating further action.

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

Union confronts minister with low pay

September 1, 2014

Following an interview in which the social affairs and health minister questioned how many people actually earn less than 2,600 euros per month, the JHL trade union met with the minister to explain 'what life is like for those in low-paid jobs'. At a presentation the trade union claimed that figures from Statistics Finland show that over 800,000 people – or nearly 15% of the population – earn less than 2,600 euros a month. Meanwhile 90,000 earn below 2,100 euros. In some professions, such as child-minder and cleaner, over half of all workers earn a monthly salary below 2,100 euros.

English: http://yle.fi/uutiset/union_delivers_250_low-income_payslips ...

France

Longest Air France pilot strike ends

September 28, 2014

A full scale strike by Air France pilots entered its second week, potentially making it the longest pilot strike since 1998, before a deal was reached. The trade union Spaf, which won the second biggest number of votes in elections of representatives of personnel on works councils, announced early September it was backing the SNPL trade union strike call for 15-18 September (see our Newsletter of July/August), bring mobilisation up to 75% according to the unions or 60% according to Air France management. As Air France reorganises in order to face up to competition from low-cost airlines, the trade unions wanted a single contract for pilots working on planes run by Air France, its regional carrier Hop! and its low-cost branch Transavia. Management wanted to expand the Transavia routes, whose pilots and crews are paid less than their Air France counterparts. The unions rejected offers from Air France to limit the expansion to 30 planes by 2019 instead of 37 and to temporarily suspend Transavia routes to and from Paris, Lyon, Nantes and Toulouse. Transavia pilots earn about 40% less than Air France pilots, who make an average of €75,000 per annum.

English: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/business/air-france-pilots-union-ends-strike ...>

<http://www.english.rfi.fr/visiting-france/20140905-second-pilots-union-joins ...>

Wage increase won

September 26, 2014

Outsourced hotel housekeepers at the Park Hyatt Paris-Vendôme have won an important wage increase bringing pay into line with other luxury hotels following a four-day strike for better wages and working conditions begun on September 19. The agreement covers 80 hotel housekeepers, porters and maintenance staff and brings monthly wage increases from 380 to 420 euro.

English: <http://www.iuf.org ...>

Employer proposals strongly rejected

September 15, 2014

In a document that was leaked to the newspaper Les Echos the MEDEF employers association came up with controversial proposals how to increase jobs. The trade unions opposed the suggestion from the country's main employers' association to cut the number of holidays, increase the hours that workers put in each week and pay below the minimum wage. The MEDEF document said that getting rid of two out of 11 annual holidays would allow 100,000 jobs to be created, and recommended allowing retailers to open on Sundays and later in the evening. It also urged more flexibility on the limits on the work week, now 35 hours, and suggested people now getting only a minimum income state benefit might supplement their income by working for less than the minimum wage, currently 9.53 euro per hour.

English: <http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/french-unions-furious-at-proposal-to-cut-holidays ...>

French: <http://www.lesechos.fr/economie-france/social ...>

Germany

Lufthansa talks fail

September 28, 2014

Lufthansa that is seeking to expand low-cost services has to face opposition from the trade unions. The airline has been locked in a dispute with the Vereinigung Cockpit union over an early retirement scheme. The main item in this dispute is the planned change of the existing retirement scheme. Actually Lufthansa, Germanwings and Lufthansa Cargo pilots (in total 5.400) leave the company with an early retirement provision at the (average) age of 59 years. The company wants to lift this up to 61 years. Pilots at Lufthansa's budget carrier Germanwings went on strike earlier on over the plans. The company is considering renting out the A340s earmarked for long-haul low-cost services to Switzerland-based PrivateAir and leasing them back with Swiss pilots who are not subject to its collective agreements. This is an unprecedented move after failing to reach an agreement with trade union Vereinigung Cockpit (VC) that would also have required the planes' pilots to work longer hours before receiving overtime benefits. The pilots are threatening a fifth strike in a row so far this year. Earlier this month a pilots' strike led to the cancellation of 200 flights and hit the travel plans of about 25,000 passengers.

English: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/09/28/lufthansa-strategy ...>

Focus on the strike (in German): http://www.spiegel.de/thema/lufthansa_streik/

Rail negotiations in new turbulence

September 25, 2014

New rail strikes might come after the train drivers' union GDL said that 'last chance' talks with the state-owned rail operator Deutsche Bahn over pay had collapsed. GDL is seeking a 5% pay rise for about 20,000 train drivers and a shortening of their work week to 37 hours from 39 hours. The union is also seeking a mandate to negotiate pay and conditions for train guards and other personnel. Deutsche Bahn, which is conducting separate talks with the larger main railway union EVG representing most railway-related workers and professionals, opposes competing negotiations.

English: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/09/25/uk-germany-strike-railway ...>

<http://www.euronews.com/2014/09/06/german-train-drivers-strike ...>

Amazon workers continue the fight, strike again

September 24, 2014

Services union Ver.di has hit Amazon's distribution centres with another series of walkouts. Work stoppages were organised in facilities in Leipzig, Bad Hersfeld, Rheinberg and Graben. On the third day of strike workers at 6 out of 9 logistics centres participated. Ver.di's actions have been going on for one and a half year and were repeatedly reported in this newsletter. Amazon management has been applying the wrong collective bargaining agreement, refusing to bring its employees under the applicable agreement, which would mean raising the wages.

English: <http://www.zdnet.com/in-germany-amazon-workers-strike-again ...>

Collective agreement for Autogrill workers

September 11, 2014

The workers' strike at Autogrill service stations in Thuringia and Bavaria, reported in the May 2014 newsletter, has led to an agreement. In April, the workers went on indefinite strike 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. On 9 September, Autogrill announced that it will join the national employer organisation for the sector, which means their employees will fall under the relevant collective agreement.

English: <http://www.iuf.org...>

Greece

Cleaners against austerity

September 24, 2014

A group of 30 cleaners attended the first European Parliament plenary session in Strasbourg on 16 September, exactly one year after they were unexpectedly fired by the Ministry of Finance. The 30 cleaners are among 595 workers – mostly women aged between 45 and 60 – who used to work for the Ministry of Finance and were laid off and replaced by a private cleaning contractor. Their wages ranged from €205 to €757 a month (net) and their layoffs were part of the public spending cuts imposed by the Troika of Greece's international lenders (the European Union, the International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank).

English: <http://www.equaltimes.org/armed-only-with-rubber-gloves...>

Another 24-hour public sector strike

September 23, 2014

Public sector workers have taken to the streets in a 24-hour strike against the upcoming round of public sector cuts. The cuts, imposed by the EU and IMF lenders, are expected to lead to more layoffs and pay cuts. Unions report a readiness to continue to fight, while media note that it is increasing difficult to mobilise the population that is growing hopeless after years of protests, during which very few successes were achieved.

English: <http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/foreign/23-Sep-2014/public-sector-workers-strike...>

Police, fire fighters and coast guards protest

September 6, 2014

About 2,000 police, firefighters and coast guards have held a peaceful anti-austerity protest in the northern city of Thessaloniki, on the eve of a visit by prime minister Samaras. The trade unions that organised the protest are angry at pay cuts and government plans to merge their pension funds under a major pension reform. They have held similar protests every year on the eve of the Thessaloniki Trade Fair opening, where the prime minister traditionally delivers a keynote speech on the economy. Other groups are planning protests in Thessaloniki, amid tight police security.

English: <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2014/09/06/greek-police-firefighters-coast-guards...>

Hungary

Employment increasing

September 26, 2014

According to official data the number of employed people in the period June-August 2014, increased to 4.158 million, 177 thousand more than a year ago. The employment rate of people aged 15-64 increased to 62.4%, the highest rate since 2009. The percentage increased in all age groups. However, though the participation of women went up with 3.3% (to 56.2%) it did not keep pace with men (up 3.6% to a total of 68.8%).

English: <https://www.ksh.hu/docs/eng ...>

Report on economic outlook

September 1, 2014

Economic institute GKI published a report on the economic outlook. In the first half of 2014 employment mounted by 5.5% including those employed in public welfare schemes and by about 2.5% without them. The unemployment rate for May-July 2014 was 7.9%, 2.2 percentage points lower than a year earlier. However, improvements slowed down in this sphere, and they were less than usual in summer. Gross earnings grew by 3% in the first half of 2014 (by 5.7% with the exclusion of those involved in public work schemes). As net earnings increased by the same rate and the price level remained practically unchanged, real wages also were up by the same rate. From May on, however, the rate of increase in earnings dropped from 6-7% in the past few months to 4%.

English: <http://www.gki.hu/sites/default ...>

Iceland

Bus drivers followed by cameras

September 28, 2014

Bus company Strætó told its bus drivers that complaining about an on-board video camera policy will lead to termination. Employees reported that their work environment is bad, and that their union deals with many complaints. Drivers are placed under a great deal of pressure, and their supervisors are reportedly out of touch with their own workers.

English: <http://grapevine.is/news/2014/09/28/bus-drivers-told-they-will-be-fired ...>

Worries about working conditions in tourism

September 1, 2014

The trade unions have stated that they are extremely worried about the treatment of workers in the tourism industry. Unions around the country have had to deal with reports of employees filing grievances, mostly about being paid unfairly. Numerous employers are reluctant to pay the right wages. The largest complaints to come forward are that employers pay daytime wages regardless of what shift is worked.

English: <http://grapevine.is/news/2014/09/01/union-official-worried ...>

Ireland

Living wage has to go up

September 27, 2014

Over the past five years wages have shrunk, with average annual earnings down by about €1,000 since 2009. More people are finding it harder, not easier, to make ends meet. One in five workers is earning less than the 'living wage', a sum above the minimum wage but below what campaigners consider to be enough to make ends meet. One in six people in poverty has a job, a figure that has grown during the recession. A group of campaigners, trade unions and think tanks has put forward a proposal for a living wage of €11.45 per hour. It is estimated that this is the minimum needed to maintain an acceptable standard of living.

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/the-living-wage-should ...>

Deal at Greyhound after 14-week strike

September 23, 2014

After 14 weeks of strike action, an agreement has been reached at Greyhound Recycling, bringing a bitter labour conflict to an end. The conflict started when Greyhound proposed major wage cuts, allegedly to keep the company from going bankrupt and closing down. When the actions intensified, Greyhound locked the workers out, claiming they endangered the jobs of all 400 employees and threatening with legal action against the protesters. Reduced cuts of 30% to 35% were rejected in the beginning of September, as the picketing continued. The agreement that ends the conflict includes a wage reduction between 15% and 20% for workers who decide to stay with Greyhound and a redundancy package of two weeks' pay plus statutory entitlements of two weeks per year of service for the workers who have decided to leave.

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

<http://www.thejournal.ie/greyhound-court ...>

Prison workers announce collective action

September 4, 2014

The Prison Officers Association (POA) served notice of industrial action on the Irish Prison Service. Prison officers at two of the country's largest prisons are to begin work stoppages later this month in a dispute over staffing levels. The POA has accused the prison service of breaching local agreements on staffing levels.

English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2014/0904/641489-prison-officers/>

Italy

Labour reform leads to heated discussions

September 30, 2014

The International Monetary Fund has (again) directly intervened in a debate that is going on in Italy on the need to reform the labour market. The IMF backed up the reforms planned by the Renzi-government. Trade union FIOM stated that it is ready to stage a demonstration on October 18 as well as an eight-hour strike in future over proposed government changes to labour protections in Article 18 of the 1970 Worker's Statute. Under the change the government is proposing, newly hired workers would be given compensation, instead of being rehired, if a court rules they were unjustly dismissed - unless discrimination was the reason for the sacking. The trade union confederation CGIL said that the unions are ready to go on strike repeating threats made earlier this month when draft legislation began its passage through Parliament.

English: <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20140930/world/Italy-unions ...>

<http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/english/109105/FIOM-union-calls-demo-for-October-18 ...>

<http://www.thelocal.it/20140919/italy-must-overhaul-its-job-market-imf>

Fiat suspends production

September 19, 2014

Fiat had decided to temporary suspend the production at the Pomigliano plant near Naples. Some 1,950 of the plant's 4,500 workers have already been on so-called solidarity contracts since March, under which they agree to work less and are also paid less in exchange for workers retaining their jobs. After meeting with the company to approve the temporary layoff of workers for the time of the closure a trade union spokesperson declared that the measure was 'necessary because of the slowdown in the market in view of the end of the year'. Fiat often uses the state-backed temporary layoff schemes to avoid over-production by keeping workers at home when market demand is lower.

English: <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/thomson-reuters/140919/fiat-suspend ...>

Latvia

Data on hourly labour costs published

September 15, 2014

Data of the Central Statistical Bureau show that, compared to the 2nd quarter of 2013, hourly labour costs in the 2nd quarter of 2014 grew by 8.6%, reaching 6.58 euro. Seasonally adjusted data (differences in number of calendar days and seasonal influence have been averted) show that labour costs have increased by 6.0%.

English: <http://www.csb.gov.lv/en/notikumi/hourly-labour-costs-have-grown-51-cents ...>

Lithuania

The burden of undeclared labour

September 18, 2014

A large conference dedicated to the fight against undeclared labour took place in Vilnius. Several speakers (from the ILO and several European institutes) formulated proposals to deal with formalising the informal economy, which in Europe often takes the form of undeclared work; it refers mainly to lawful work that is not declared to the public authorities in order to reduce labour costs and evade taxation.

English: <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/ilo-chief-urges-eu-members-ramp-steps-tackle-shadow ...>

Luxembourg

Job security proposal announced

September 25, 2014

The air freight firm Cargolux announced it will make a job security proposal at the next Collective Working Agreement meeting with unions LCGB and OGBL. The firm has come under fire over a newly created Italian subsidiary, Cargolux Italia, over which fears were raised of outsourcing. The subsidiary employs 25 people and Italy is known to have lower personnel costs. The move from Cargolux comes after the LCGB announced it would call a press conference to urge the airline to sign a Job Security Act, ensuring the security of pilot jobs in Luxembourg and Italy.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/business/cargolux-italia-fears ...>

Inspectorate cracks down on illegal work on construction sites

September 19, 2014

The labour inspectorate, in cooperation with the police, has cracked down on illegal work and hazardous working conditions, leading to the closure of several construction sites. The inspectorate is actively fighting the exploitation of mainly Eastern European workers on the sites, the hazardous working conditions as well as tax evasion.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/luxembourg/labour-inspection-illegal-workers ...>

Increase of partial unemployment

September 1, 2014

According to a report from the 'Comité de conjoncture', which analyses employment indicators, 16 firms applied for state funding to reduce working hours and save costs. Applications for the 'partial unemployment scheme' need to be renewed every month. Under the scheme, companies in difficult financial circumstances can place workers under reduced hours with the state compensating lost wages for employees.

French: <https://www.gouvernement.lu/3968460/27-comite-conjoncture>

Malta

Bus drivers criticize work environment

September 30, 2014

The General Workers' Union reported that incidents of physical and verbal abuse against drivers are on the rise. The debate was stoked by a report about a Nigerian bus driver who was attacked by a motorist and had to be treated at a health centre after being punched three times in the face. His colleagues said that such cases are becoming increasingly common. Drivers vented their frustration that they were being left alone to face awkward situations.

English: <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20140930/local/bus-firm-denies...>

Netherlands

Transport workers ask for dialogue on expansion of port

September 24, 2013

After the decision of a court that gave the green light for a second port the transport trade unions have made clear that there is a clear need for discussion around a phased implementation of Maasvlakte 2 with the trade unions. This must include a dialogue involving all stakeholders, including the representative trade union, FNV Havens, and it must cover areas such as job creation, job stability and sustainability. Without that process, the future of one of the world's busiest and most successful ports – and one with a record of good labour relations – will be put at risk.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/press-area...>

Strike at AkzoNobel postponed for security reasons

September 8, 2013

For security reasons workers at the AkzoNobel plant MEB have postponed a planned strike. The reason for the delay is that workers want to guarantee a safe phasing out of chlorine production, including for customers. The demand of the workers in this industrial action is a 10% pay rise, motivated by the stagnation of wage improvements in recent years. Another aim is to tackle the inequality of wages between workers and executives. The management tried to block the strike by an appeal to the court. However, the court rejected in the summary proceedings this demand.

English: <http://www.highbeam.com...>

Dutch: <http://www.beurs.nl/nieuws/Binnenland...>

Norway

Massive protest against labour reform

September 24, 2014

The trade union confederation union LO (Landsorganisasjonen i Norge) has mobilised its members in a campaign against the government's proposed changes to work conditions legislation. The government wants to make it easier for employers to take on staff in the short-term and not offer permanent positions. Several thousand union members walked out in short strikes and gathered in Oslo and Trondheim.

English: <http://www.thelocal.no/20140924/mass-strikes-in-norway ...>

Downsizing in oil industry

September 4, 2014

Oil workers at the Polar Pioneer rig are confronted with a downsizing process because the market is not developing in the way thought previously. In addition to redundancies, some workers will be offered other jobs, but in a more junior position. The company Aibel published the plan of further redundancies. Earlier this year Aibel had already announced a reduction of staff by 230. Aibel's round of cuts is due to a decrease in maintenance and modification assignments. At the same time oil service company Bilfinger is going to cut positions due to oil companies' strategy to cut costs and the downturn that they notice.

English: <http://www.aftenbladet.no/energi/aenergy/85-Transocean-staff-to-go ...>

<http://www.aftenbladet.no/energi ...>

Poland

Wage development – first half of 2014 report

September 30, 2014

The publication 'Employment, wages and salaries in national economy 1st half of 2014' that can be downloaded from the governmental portal presents the current changes on the labour market regarding the number of the employed in large and medium units and the work time of employees, as well as the number of the unemployed registered in labour offices. Also presented are data on the level of average nominal earnings in the national economy and real wages indicators, as well as information concerning the number of permits for work, granted to foreigners. Average monthly gross wages increased by 3.9% compared to the same period of last year.

English: <http://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/labour-salaries/employment-wages-and-salaries ...>

Portugal

Minimum wage goes up

September 25, 2014

As a result of a tripartite agreement the minimum wage will go up by 20 euro to a monthly 505 euro. The increase in the minimum wage from 485 euros to 505 euros will take effect in October 2014 and is estimated to affect around 11% of all workers. The CGT-P trade union confederation has rejected the proposal.

Portuguese: <http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/govt-bosses-unions-raise-minimum ...>

Lisbon metro workers on strike

September 11, 2014

Workers of the Lisbon metro have gone on strike over recently approved salary cuts for civil servants. The workers went on strike on September 10, staying away from work between 5am and 11 am. Another 24-hour strike has been announced for 25 September. The workers are protesting against the loss of income as well as the government's plans to grant the sub-concession for the system's operation.

English: <http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/lisbon-metro-workers-to-strike-again ...>

<http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/lisbon-metro-workers-strike/32694>

Romania

Spontaneous strike at Tarom

September 16, 2014

Pilots and flight attendants of airline company Tarom went on a spontaneous strike on 16 September. Three days after the start of the strike, the transport ministry, Tarom management and trade unions were meeting to discuss the situation. Tarom and its management have been under close scrutiny for years after making big losses and a multitude of changes in its management structure and administrative board.

English: <http://www.romania-insider.com/four-tarom-flights-canceled-on-Tuesday ...>

Wages in 2014

September 4, 2014

PWC published a wage report. Despite the increase in the minimum wage, which was twice increased in the last 12 months, salaries in the private sector registered only a modest growth in 2014. Salaries in the private sector were up 4.1% on average this year, below the growth of 4.6% last year. Over half of the companies plan to increase salaries by around 4% in 2015.

English: <http://business-review.eu/featured/pwc-private-sector-wages-increased ...>

Serbia

Fiat factory schedules temporary shut downs

September 9, 2014

Workers at the Fiat factory in Kragujevac have had three non-working days early September and are expected to have more non-working days as the company plans to temporarily close its factory to adjust to lower demand. During the down times, the workers receive only 65% of their regular wages. Fiat has said that it is forced to resort to short-term suspensions of production in order to ensure that the factory remains open and that no jobs are lost.

English: <http://inserbia.info/today/2014/09/serbia-fiat-temporary-closes-factory/>

Slovakia

Holidays discussed

September 22, 2014

Employers have criticized the number of holidays in the country. There are 246 working days in Slovakia in 2014, the lowest number among all Visegrád Group (V4) countries, an alliance of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia. Poland has 251 business days and Hungary and the Czech Republic both have 252, according the Klub 500, a civic organisation uniting owners of firms with more than 500 employees. In recent years the debate has been to decrease the number of days off. However, a broad opposition led to no agreement among the parties.

English: http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/55303/3/no_cut ...

Employment and average wage figures

September 11, 2014

The portal of the statistical bureau comes with detailed figures on the development of employment and wages in selected sectors and industries over the last 12 months. Employment grew in information and communication by 12.2 %, wholesale by 7.8 %, selected market services by 7.7 %, food and beverage service activities by 7.5 %, industry by 1.7 %, and in accommodation by 1.6 %. The numbers of employed persons fell in sale and repair of motor vehicles, construction, transportation and storage and in retail trade. The wage development is also unequal; the average nominal monthly wage increased in wholesale by 5.6 % (to 825 euro), transportation and storage by 5.1 % (786 euro), sale and repair of motor vehicles by 4.6 % (838 euro), retail trade by 3.7 % (586 euro), industry by 3.2 % (929 euro) and in accommodation by 1.5 % (597 euro). It decreased in information and communication by 5 % (1 658 euro), construction by 2.5 % (617 euro), selected market services by 2.2 % (808 euro), food and beverage service activities by 2.1 % (365 euro).

English: <http://slovak.statistics.sk ...>

Slovenia

Union takes a stand for migrant workers

September 7, 2014

The trade union confederation ZSSS underlined at a press conference that the country needs to improve its administration system as regards migrant workers. Exploitation of migrant workers is still an ongoing problem. In many cases employers send migrant workers to do a job abroad and when the work is completed and the person comes to collect the wage, they either do not get paid at all, or receive much less money than previously agreed. The worker's social contributions are also not covered. NGOs who fight for migrant rights pose the question: 'How is it possible that companies in Slovenia who have problems with liquidity or have frozen accounts are still able to hire?'

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

<http://www.rtvslo.si/news-in-english/exploitation-of-migrant-workers-in-slovenia ...>

Spain

Emigration effects economic perspectives

September 25, 2014

The Central Bank writes in its monthly bulletin that the current rate of emigration of foreign residents from Spain and of Spaniards themselves could have a significant effect on the potential growth of the economy. 'With the arrival of the crisis, the number of migrants working in the Spanish economy has changed radically', said the report's authors. They noted that around a million migrated to Spain in 2007, that number was just 342,000 in 2013. At the same time, some 500,000 people left Spain last year. The initial wave of departures included many younger, highly-qualified individuals but since 2010 a higher number of older and less-qualified individuals had made the decision to leave. According to the bank it is necessary to make the country a more attractive place to work.

Spanish: <http://www.thelocal.es/20140925/emigration-may-hurt-growth-warns-central-bank>

Granada hotel, bar and restaurant staff on strike

September 14, 2014

Hotel and catering workers in Granada have been on strike for two weeks to protest against reduced wages and lack of job security. Despite employers' threats that contracts of striking workers will not be

renewed, the workers continue to strike, picket and protest. Trade unions CCOO and UGT have blamed the employers for lack of willingness to negotiate, amongst others because they have refused to meet with union representatives before the end of September, almost a month after the start of the strike.

Spanish: <http://news.gnom.es/news/granada-hotel-bar-and-restaurant-staff-continue-strike ...>

Sweden

Job losses at Saab

September 24, 2014

Hundreds of the remaining workers at Saab's factory in Trollhättan are set to lose their jobs, according to the Chinese company Nevs which owns the Swedish car business. The factory has been out of action since May 2014, with Nevs unable to pay its suppliers. Trade union IF Metall reacted and stated that 'faithful and competent auto workers are being laid off again, and the faith in the future that many felt in Trollhaettan runs the risk of turning to resignation'.

English: <http://www.thelocal.se/20140924/two-hundred-jobs-go-at-swedish-saab-plant>

Agreement on sustainable global supply chains in the garment industry

September 15, 2014

The International Labour Organization (ILO) and Swedish based H&M have forged a unique partnership to promote sustainable global supply chains in the garment industry. The agreement will include joint work on industrial relations and wages, training and skills development in factories H&M source from, as well as strengthening employers' and workers' organizations in the global garment industry.

English: <http://www.ilo.org/pardev/public-private-partnerships ...>

Switzerland

Public services union blocks pay cut by Winterthur city council

September 16, 2014

A large scale lobby action and protest by public services union Vpod has succeeded in blocking a looming 2% pay cut for city workers in Winterthur. The union's campaign led to the proposal being rejected by the city council. Some 300 city employees joined a protest, where the workers handed the president of the council a red card for abusing workers.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/10750>

German: <http://www.vpod.ch/aktuell/nachrichten/ansicht/article/erfolg-in-winterthur ...>

Turkey

More dismissals of union members

September 24, 2014

Deva Holding a Turkey-based pharmaceutical company belonging to EastPharma Ltd., established in 2006 and incorporated in Bermuda, has sacked 24 workers, simply for signing up with a union. Four years ago, the company management used different tactics to demolish a 40-year-long union existence, contractual labour relations and mature social dialogue with trade union Petrol-Is. Management announced that there would no longer be a collective agreement using the pretext of high production costs and government policies in the pharmaceutical industry. It exerted pressure on workers to sign individual labour contracts

in place of the collective agreement and then dismissed 70 employees because they had refused to sign individual contracts. The local labour courts ruled that Deva terminated employment contracts of the dismissed workers on unjustified grounds and all of them must be reinstated. However not one sacked worker has been able to return. Over the years, working conditions have deteriorated with low wages, insufficient social benefits and continuous threat of dismissal, mobbing, unsafe and unhealthy working conditions. In June 2014, an overwhelming majority of Deva workers started to re-join Petrol-Is.

English: <http://www.industrialunion.org/turkey-deva-continues-to-sicken-union-members ...>

Collective agreement for glass workers

September 11, 2014

Over 5800 glass workers in ten factories of the Sisecam group have a new collective agreement. The agreement was reached after a long struggle. The strike that the unions organised after negotiations broke down was banned eight days after its start, as reported in the June 2014 newsletter. The negotiations were also forced into arbitration with a threat of a final decision being taken by the high Arbitration Board looming over the talks. Before the expiration of the arbitration talks, however, an agreement was reached. The collective agreement includes a 14% pay hike, as well as higher bonuses and social payments.

English: <http://www.industrialunion.org/turkish-glass-workers-reach-collective-agreement ...>

Construction workers present safety demands after fatal lift accident kills ten

September 10, 2014

Construction workers at a new tower complex in the Mecidiyeköy area of Istanbul held a successful protest action against unsafe working conditions after ten colleagues died when an elevator plunged from the 32nd floor on September 6. The workers put up road blocks and presented 14 demands regarding the improvement of their working conditions. Amidst public outrage, the construction company has made known that it will honour the demands. The workers now have the right to stop their labour whenever they think a malfunction poses a threat to their lives. The construction company will also monitor subcontractors for upholding safety standards, for the on-time payment of wages and social security contributions, as well as request that the costs of safety materials are not deducted from the workers' wages. The deal also improves the living conditions of the construction workers, guaranteeing them 24 hours of hot water, two computers, wardrobes and refrigerators for collective use.

English: <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/construction-workers-at-istanbul-residence ...>

United Kingdom

Unite wants higher minimum wage

September 25, 2014

Trade union Unite has stated that the minim

um wage should be increased immediately to £7.81 an hour, arguing it would boost the economy as well as lift millions of low paid workers out of poverty. Unite said a £1.50 increase from the current hourly rate of £6.31 was affordable because it would generate an estimated £2.1bn in revenues for the public purse and create at least 30,000 jobs. About 4.6m low-paid workers would benefit, making them better off by an average of £1,400 a year, according to an independent report commissioned by the union.

English: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/sep/25/minimum-wage ...>

A living wage for low pay care workers

September 22, 2014

The trade union Unison is seeking to enlist one of the world's biggest pension funds to put pressure on Care UK into paying a living wage to disability support workers in Doncaster. Unison held talks with Calpers – the California Public Employees Retirement System – and local authority pension funds in the hope that they will push Care UK's private equity owners to do a deal with the employees who are seeking a living wage of £7.65 an hour. Pension funds are significant investors in funds set up by Care UK's owner, Bridgepoint Capital, including those with Care UK in their portfolios.

English: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/pension-funds-urged-to-act ...>

NHS workers to strike

September 18, 2014

Two thirds of the unionised NHS workers in England voted to strike, announcing the NHS's first pay strike in 32 years. Up to 88% of the balloted members indicated they would join the strike. The workers are angry about recent news that a planned 1% pay rise in 2015 and another 1% in 2016, will not apply to many NHS workers, because it is reserved for workers who will not get a raise from length of service or experience. The unions have reacted outraged that the already disappointing raise will not even apply to all workers.

English: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/sep/18/nhs-workers-strike ...>

Underemployment reaches record level

September 2, 2014

An analysis of the Labour Force Survey by the trade union confederation TUC shows that the number of people who count as underemployed – people working part-time because they can't get a full-time job, or wanting more hours in their current job – has increased for both employees and the self-employed. The analysis shows that while unemployment has fallen by over 400,000 since early 2012, underemployment has risen by 93,000 over the last two years. And at 3.4 million the current level of underemployment is over a million higher (46%) than it was before the recession.

English: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/economic-issues/labour-market/record-number-people ...>

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

sbouillon@etui.org
www.etui.org
Tel.: +32 2 224 04 53
Fax: +32 2 224 05 02

European
Trade Union Institute
Bd du Roi Albert II, 5
1210 Brussels
Belgium

etui.

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