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collective bargaining

Issue 10/2014 | October

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 minimum wages in Europe

October 23, 2014

A study published by the Friedrich Ebert foundation reveals that so far minimum wages in many European countries are set at rather low levels and are thus insufficient to prevent income poverty. Thorsten Schulten, the author, pleads for a European Wage Policy that leads to an agreement on a European Minimum Wage Norm. Such Norm could establish minimum wages as a certain percentage of national median or average wages. This European Minimum Wage Norm according to which all national minimum wages should at least be equivalent to 60% of national median wages would affect about 28 million workers or 16 per cent of the overall European workforce. It could contribute to a better coordination of wages in Europe.

English: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/11008.pdf>

Trans Pacific Trade and Investment Agreements criticized

October 15, 2014

Opposition is growing on both sides of the Atlantic against the proposed trade deals between the European Union and Canada (CETA) and the EU and the US (TTIP). The European trade unions expressed their rejection during several national actions (see also our July Newsletter). The ETUC has stated that specific issues for trade unions on both sides of the Atlantic are the right to join a union and to collective bargaining, the creation of quality jobs, and the protection of public services and procurement. According to a FEPS economic review the TTIP agreement could become a tool of pursuing 'market-conform' deregulation.

English: <http://www.etuc.org/press/trade-union-lone-critical-voice-eu-us-trade-event ...>

http://www.iuf.org/w/sites/default/files/TradeDealsThatThreatenDemocracy-e_0.pdf

<http://www.feps-europe.eu/assets ...>

EU Quarterly – Employment and Social Situation

[Paginanummer]

October 6, 2014

The European Commission's latest Employment and Social Situation Quarterly Review reports that future employment developments remain uncertain, unemployment still remains close to historical records, and the long-term unemployed represent a large and growing share of total unemployment, with almost 13 million people having been unemployed for at least one year. Section 6 summarises the data on productivity, wages and hours worked. Greece (-4.8%) and Cyprus (-5.1%) continued to see sharp decreases in compensation per employee, while Spain (+0.2%) recorded a modest increase. Estonia (+8.8%) recorded by far the strongest increase in compensation per employee, followed by Lithuania (+6.5%), Slovakia (+4.1%) and Malta (+3.9%).

English: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main ...>

Austria

Metal workers conclude pay deal

October 27, 2014

After a marathon meeting of negotiations lasting 11 hours, the collective bargaining partners in the largest subsector of the metal industry (the FMMI - the employers' federation for machinery and metal-ware and the trade unions PRO-GE and DPA-djp) agreed on a 2.1% pay increase (0.4% beyond the country's inflation rate) for the 120,000 employees in the subsector. The negotiations started (see our July 2013 Newsletter) in a tarnished climate, because of the break with the tradition to negotiate for an industry-wide agreement. However, it is quite probable that the other subsectors will conclude a similar deal. The entrance date of the one-year agreement is 1 November 2014. The minimum wage will increase from €1,688.71 to €1,724.17.

German: <http://www.proge.at/servlet/Content ...>

<http://www.gpa-djp.at/cms ...>

Minimum wage for doctors' employees

October 6, 2014

Over 6,000 doctors' employees in Lower Austria have a new collective agreement. The agreement instates a monthly minimum wage of 1300, which unions have welcomed as a step to raising wage levels in the female dominated sector. Employees whose wages exceed the new minimum wage will also see a pay hike of 3.4%, half of which is paid in retroactively from 1 January 2014 and the other half from 1 January 2015.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/10827>

German: <http://www.gpa-djp.at/cms ...>

Fatality for subcontracted migrant worker

October 1, 2014

A 59-year-old Hungarian painter decorator has tragically died after falling from a ladder whilst working in Austria. The man was working on a building in Aspang-Markt in Lower Austria when he fell and was seriously injured. His boss, who was paying him in cash, refused to call an ambulance and made a fellow worker drive the injured for more than an hour - a distance of 90 km - to a hospital across the border in Hungary. The authorities are investigating the decorating company.

English: <http://www.thelocal.at/20141010/illegal-worker-dies-after-ladder-fall-in-austria>

Belgium

Walk out of Football Association staff

October 31, 2014

In protest against dismissals workers at the headquarters of the Football Association walked out. The trade unions accused the Royal Belgian Football Association (KBVB) of having 'coldly dismissed in a degrading way' certain members of staff. Trade union anger is also the lack of industrial talks, which has not given the workers any chance of early retirement or redundancy package.

English: <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/xinhua-news-agency ...>

National demonstration and strikes announced

October 17, 2014

The three trade union confederations have announced a joint national demonstration on 6 November, followed by regional strikes and a general strike on 15 December, to protest against the planned policy of the incoming government. The new coalition has formulated proposals that will endanger important workers' rights and provisions like the annual indexation of wages, with a wage freeze as a consequence, and an increase of the retirement age to 67 year.

English: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-2795107/Belgian-unions-plan-general ...>

Large scale strike shuts down 100 Delhaize stores

October 17, 2014

A large scale strike forced 100 Delhaize supermarkets in Brussels and Wallonia to stay closed on 17 October. Warehouse workers walked off the job after proposals of far going pay cuts reached union officials. The pay cuts follow earlier proposals to cut 2,500 jobs, reported in the June 2014 newsletter.

English: <http://supermarketnews.com/retail-financial/strikes-belgium-shut-down-delhaize ...>

Conflict on retirement might lead to airport actions

October 13, 2014

The police trade unions are considering protest actions at Zaventem Airport in the run-up to the forthcoming half-term holiday in November. The officers are looking at plans to close the airport in connection with a conflict about the age of retirement. The coalition agreement does not mention any exception to the new 67 year retirement age for police officers. Therefore, many police officers will have to work 6 years longer than they envisaged. The trade unions think that also the staff bonuses are under threat.

English: http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/News/141013_belgium-brussels-airport ...

Bulgaria

Possible protests at customs agency

October 17, 2014

The trade union confederation 'Podkrepa' and the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CITUB) have threatened with protests if a merger between the customs agency and the national revenue agency (NRA) is not called off. The merger is a political initiative to boost cooperation between the agencies, but trade unions have said it is merely a move to cover-up 'wrongdoings by politicians' that will hurt workers.

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

Police and security services start protest

October 14, 2014

Police officers and employees in the security sector are to stage a protest over their cut social rights. The protest was announced by the trade union federation of police officers. The protest is organised in partnership with the trade union of prison workers, the Union of Officers and Sergeants from the Reserve and the National Association 'Security'.

English: <http://www.focus-fen.net/news/2014/10/14/351434/police-officers-in-bulgaria ...>

Croatia

Quality of life reported

October 6, 2014

A Eurofound report presents the trends and changes in quality of life among the population based on survey rounds conducted in 2007 and 2012. This period is especially interesting because it covers the beginning of the global economic crisis and therefore the report captures its impact on society. Section 2 is dedicated to work and employment (employment and unemployment rate, working hours, self-employment and job security).

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

Cyprus

Unemployment falls

October 14, 2014

Social insurance data show that unemployment benefit payments fell by 11.3% in 2014 compared to the year before. Unemployment also fell and was at 15.4% in August, compared to 15.7% in July.

English: <http://cyprus-mail.com/2014/10/14/unemployment-payments-down/>

Czech Republic

Pay cuts at Czech Airlines

October 24, 2014

After large scale job cuts at Czech Airlines were reported last month (see September 2014 newsletter), the airline now intends to lower pilots' wages from 1 January 2015. Experienced pilots allegedly will lose up to 30% of their salaries. Trade union representatives said that while the need for wage cuts is understandable, their size and the targeting of experienced pilots will have negative consequences. Union officials said tenured captains have many options for employment at better pay levels with other airlines and may be expected to leave the company following the wage cuts. Contrary to the other flight crew, who will go on strike on 30 October, the pilots have not threatened with strike action yet.

English: <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/business/czech-airlines-aims-to-dramatically-lower ...>

<http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/csa-s-cabin-crews-to-stage-strike-next-Thursday ...>

Lay-offs in mining

October 13, 2014

Coal mining company OKD will dismiss 300 people at the end of 2014, mainly from offices and surface facilities. OKD had more than 12,000 workers in 2013. It now employs around 11,000 people. Most of the 300 workers will retire or use pre-retirement provisions. They will receive severance pay of six monthly wages. The trade unions stated that it is obvious that a drop in volume of mined coal affects staff numbers.

English: <http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/czech-miner-okd-to-lay-off-300-staff ...>

Denmark

Living wage in fast-food is feasible

October 27, 2014

The New York Times has discovered that, in contradiction to US-practices, it is possible to pay decent hourly wages to workers in the fast-food services. \$20 an hour is the lowest hourly rate the fast-food industry can pay under the existing collective agreement between the 3F trade union and the Danish employers group Horesta, which includes Burger King, McDonald's, Starbucks and other restaurant and hotel companies. This illustrates that companies are capable to adapt in countries that demand a living wage.

English: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/28/business/international/living-wages-served...>

Unions take a stand for elderly care

October 14, 2014

A survey commissioned by the trade union FOA reveals that only four of the nation's 70 councils will increase the amount of funds they spend in 2015 on taking care of the elderly. At least 38 councils will spend less on the elderly. FOA wants to see politicians put more demands on the councils to care for the elderly.

English: <http://cphpost.dk/news/councils-to-spend-less-on-elderly-next-year...>

Pole position in pension ranking

October 13, 2014

For the third year in a row, Denmark topped an Australian study comparing the pension systems of 25 different countries. In the Melbourne Mercer Global Pension Index (MMGPI) that looked at the pension systems of 25 countries it was the only nation to receive an 'A' grade, signifying 'a first class and robust retirement income system that delivers good benefits, is sustainable and has a high level of integrity'. The retirement income system comprises a public basic pension scheme, a means-tested supplementary pension benefit, a fully funded contributions scheme and mandatory occupational schemes.

English: <http://www.globalpensionindex.com/wp-content/uploads...>

Estonia

Employers want reduction of social security costs

October 14, 2014

The Employers' Confederation has issued its third manifesto that calls for public consultations on the tax system, and the lowering of the state social security tax. The employers said that the country is no longer a country of cheap labour and that tax competition in the region is pretty sharp.

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

Finland

Teachers defend their rights

October 13, 2014

The teachers' union Opetusalan Ammattijärjestö (OAJ) started a campaign to save education. The OAJ is reminding people that investment in education and teachers is needed and that education has to be developed through long-term programmes. Part of the campaign is to contact local politicians and decision-makers.

France

Staff Paris's luxury hotels strike over low wages

October 22, 2014

Luxury hotels in Paris are being hit by a wave of strike over low wages. Chamber maids, valets, bartenders, cooks and other employees are protesting for better wages, arguing that hotels where rooms can cost more per night than their annual salaries, can afford to give them a better deal. Successes at two Parisian Hyatt hotels, where workers negotiated a better pay deal after days of full blown strike, have reinvigorated the protests at other luxury hotels.

English: <http://www.thelocal.fr/20141022/paris-luxury-hotel-staff-strike-for-better-wages>

Controversial debate on unemployment benefits

October 13, 2014

Members of the incoming government have stated that the country's costly unemployment benefit system needs further reforms. The unemployment rate is stuck above 10% despite billions of euro spent on subsidised jobs, and the country is under pressure of the EU partners to show it can implement reform. The statements suggest reducing the amount paid out as well as the length of time allowances are paid out for, with the aim of encouraging people back into work. Other suggestions include family allowances, child benefit and parental leave. But, the system is managed by trade unions and employers through agreements, so any reform will have to be negotiated by those two groups, which will no doubt be fraught.

English: <http://www.thelocal.fr/20141010/frances-welfare-state-set-to-get-stingier>
<http://www.france24.com/en/20141013-france-macron-unemployment-benefits-reform ...>

Germany

Amazon strikes continue

October 27, 2014

Trade union Ver.di has called a new series of strikes in Bad Hersfeld, Leipzig, Graben, Werne and Rheinberg. The strikes are organised in the context of an ongoing conflict with Amazon, reported in our Newsletter, over the application of collective agreement wages. Amazon refuses to pay wages applicable to the distribution sector, arguing it regards its staff as warehouse and logistics workers.

English: <http://ca.reuters.com/article/technologyNews ...>

Lufthansa pilots on strike again

October 22, 2014

The ninth pilot strike since April at Lufthansa has grounded 1,511 flights and affected over 166,000 passengers. The pilots went on strike on 20 October over a raise in the early retirement age. Initially, the strike was limited to short and medium haul flights, but on Tuesday was extended to include long-haul flights. Lufthansa wants to increase the early retirement age, at which pilots can retire with up to 60% of their pay, which is currently at 55 years of age. The recurrent pilot strikes and the large scale rail dispute organised by a small corporatist union have initiated a public debate over the desirability of transport strikes and the introduction of a single union bill that limits the bargaining power of smaller unions.

English: <http://www.dw.de/niche-unions-are-laming-germany ...>

Polarisation of rail dispute

October 6, 2014

The management of the national railway Deutsche Bahn wrote in an open letter that the train drivers union GDL was being 'completely counterfactual and absurd' in its public statements about the negotiations. The union claimed that by calling for wage negotiations to be suspended 'until the legal situation is clear' DB was using the talks as a pretext to ask the government to intervene (see also the September Newsletter). GDL stated that if they didn't receive a better offer from the rail operator over pay and working hours they would walk out again.

English: <http://www.thelocal.de/20141014/union-gdl-germany-ready-for-train-strike ...>

Greece

Unions protest against staff reviews in public sector

October 13, 2014

The public sector trade union ADEDY has called a walk out in Attica. ADEDY called for all public sector employees to attend a demonstration outside the State Council in Athens. The local government trade union POE-OTA announced it will participate in the strike actions. The State Council Assembly is set to convene and decide upon the appeals launched by ADEDY and the Thessaly-Central Greece employee union of decentralised administration against the public sector staff reviews. According to the appeal, the relevant legislation conflict with constitutional provisions of equality, impartiality, meritocracy and transparency.

English: <http://www.tovima.gr/en/article ...>

Pensioners protest

October 13, 2014

Pensioners have marched through Athens to protest against austerity measures in Greece which include plans to cut pensions and raise taxes. The conservative-led coalition government called a vote of confidence in parliament, where it gained a narrow majority.

English: <http://www.euronews.com/2014/10/03/pensioners-challenge-greece-coalition ...>

Hungary

Education trade union signals lack of social dialogue

October 28, 2014

At a meeting in Budapest the president of the education trade union has stated that one of the major challenges facing the union is the lack of social dialogue: 'We want regular negotiations and consultations with the authorities on matters that are important to teachers, and not only at times that there is a conflict'. However, the education reforms from 2013 were realised without much consultation, and there are several measures which need to be corrected, including those concerning teachers' career paths, teachers' assessment procedures, the wage structure and the increase of working hours.

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

Worries about low paid and housing

October 11, 2014

During a conference organised by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation together with Political Capital Policy Research and Consulting Institute, numerous sociologists, social workers and politicians tried to find the answers to the most urgent questions of homeless and low paid. Since the political turn there is virtually no social housing, so whoever gets in trouble paying the rent or the instalments of the loan does not really have alternatives. There are many people in Budapest today who are employed but they still have to make a choice: food or rent?

English: <http://budapesttimes.hu/2014/10/11/winter-means-death-on-streets-again/>

Iceland

Labour market analysed

October 22, 2014

Research institute FAFO has published an analysis of the Icelandic labour market in the frame of the NordMod 2030 project. The main characteristics of the labour market are a high level of union density, high labour force participation rate, long work hours, as well as late retirement. The trade union movement has a high level of organisation and also a high level of centralisation in confederations, with great capacity for cooperation and coordination. The existence of large umbrella organisations for both workers and employers in the private sector has made nationwide collective bargaining possible, with an active participation of the central government. In most cases collective bargaining takes place between the Confederation of Labour (ASÍ) and the SA-Business Iceland (SA). Bargaining rights however reside in individual unions.

English: <http://www.fafo.no/pub/rapp ...>

More people receive social benefits

October 9, 2014

The official office Statistics Iceland (SI) reported that a total of 8,042 households, consisting of 13,130 individuals or 4% of the country's population, received municipal income support in 2013. This income support on the municipal level is defined as the welfare system's 'last resort'; it is provided to those households with low or no income, that verifiably do not meet the requirements for state-level welfare measures, such as unemployment benefits.

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

Ireland

Act that blocks negotiations in public sector might disappear

October 30, 2014

A law that allows the government to make cuts to public servants' pay and hours without their agreement is about to be repealed. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions has been lobbying intensively for the removal of this provision and wants to see it repealed before the end of the Government's term of office because as a leader of trade union SIPTU said 'one doesn't know what the next administration will be like'.

English: <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/politics/howlin-to-axe-law ...>

Hospital workers vote for strike

October 10, 2014

Around 2,000 hospital support workers belonging to the trade union SIPTU have voted by 95% to go on strike if the Health Service Executive reduces their premium payments by replacing weekend staff with interns. The dispute centres on a new HSE internship scheme for support staff including porters, catering and household personnel, and some laboratory and sterilisation employees, earning between 85% and 95% of the standard entry rates. SIPTU said staff believe the lower paid interns would be assigned to do weekend work, resulting in a significant drop in the weekend earnings of established employees.

English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2014/1010/651403-hospital-support-staff-strike/>

Picket continues after court case

October 10, 2014

Striking bricklayers at a site in Kishoge, west Dublin are to continue their picket, after the High Court ruled that they were entitled to maintain the protest. However, they have agreed to limit the number of picketers, and to ensure that all future picketing will be lawful. The strike centres on allegations of low pay and irregular subcontracting which have been denied by the company JJ Rhatigan. The company had taken legal proceedings in a bid to halt the pickets, which brought the site of a Department of Education-funded school building to a standstill.

English: [http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/courts/high-court-judge-refuses...](http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/courts/high-court-judge-refuses-...)

Italy

CGIL plans general strike as one million turn out for anti-labour reform protest

October 26, 2014

The country's biggest trade union confederation will call a general strike to protest against the government's Jobs Act labour reform after a big demonstration on October 25. CGIL is staunchly opposed to the changes to Article 18 of the 1970 Workers' Statute, which protects from unfair dismissal. Speaking to up to one million people who turned up to the protest march, CGIL head Susanna Camusso announced the union would fight to change the government policies.

English: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-29771540>

[http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/english/112182/CGIL-announces--general-strike...](http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/english/112182/CGIL-announces--general-strike-...)

Strike at ThyssenKrupp plant

October 17, 2014

The metalworkers' trade unions held a 24-hours strike at ThyssenKrupp's Acciai Speciali Terni (Terni) in their fight against a drastic cost cutting plan. Thousands of people rallied in Terni against ThyssenKrupp's decision to impose layoffs to 537 workers. The trade unions of Cgil, Cisl and Uil have proclaimed the general strike and stopped all production activities of the city, while hundreds of people gathered in front of the gates of the factory.

English: [http://lovesschool.com/terni-steelworks-workers-strike...](http://lovesschool.com/terni-steelworks-workers-strike-...)

<http://www.industrial-europe.eu/news...>

Outrage at Rome Opera Theatre decision to dismiss all its musicians and choir members

October 16, 2014

A decision by the Board of Directors of the Rome Opera Theatre to dismiss all orchestra musicians and choir members has been met with international outrage. The International Federation of Musicians (FIM), the International Federation of Actors (FIA), UNI – Media, Entertainment & Arts (UNI MEI) have called the decision "an act of cultural vandalism" and reiterated that no world class ensemble has been known to be

able to exist on flexible contracts, nor has any theatre been able to establish a reputation without an in-house orchestra. The organisations are calling on the Board of Directors to reverse its decision.

English: <http://www.iae-globalunion.org ...>

Students against labour reforms

October 10, 2014

Thousands of students are taking to the streets to protest against the government's labour and education reforms. Protests are taking place across 60 cities and towns across the country as students demand 'better schools, jobs and a different country', which they believe premier Renzi's so-called Jobs Act, which passed a vote of confidence, will fail to deliver. The Union for university students said in a statement that Renzi's controversial labour reforms, which will make it easier for companies to hire and fire, will not guarantee security or jobs for young people: 'In reality, the Jobs Act will only increase the precariousness without guaranteeing protection to those entering the labour market...the reforms were carried out without listening to young people'.

English: <http://www.thelocal.it/20141010/italian-students-protest-labour-reforms>

Latvia

High proportion of female top executives

October 28, 2014

According to a study conducted by EY on talented people in the corporate world (Time for Diversity) Latvia has the highest proportion of females on company boards among European countries that have no special quotas for female representation. With 29% of female top executives, Latvia is ahead of Lithuania and Estonia, where this proportion is 16% and 7%, respectively. The highest proportion of female representatives in company boards in countries that have gender quotas was registered in Iceland (48%), Norway (42%), France (30%), and Finland (30%).

English: <http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY-time-for-diversity ...>

Liechtenstein

Employment in 2013

October 10, 2014

The governmental Office of Statistics published its annual employment report. Migrants and commuters from surrounding countries build the majority of the workforce (almost 53%, with Swiss nationals up to half of the commuters, Austrian nationals more than 40%). By the end of 2013 the growth in employment was 1.4%. A detailed report with statistics (in German) is available.

German: <http://www.llv.li/#/11367/beschäftigungsstatistik->

Lithuania

Teachers take protest action

October 15, 2014

Teachers will organise a protest rally outside the Ministry of Education and Science. The teachers have been trying to negotiate a collective agreement with the ministry, which trade unions claim is stalling the process. Despite an agreement to solve the dispute via conciliation, the ministry has refused to sign an agreement on the intermediation conditions that is necessary to start the mediation process. Trade unions tabled demands

on the right to a collective agreement for education, the reinstatement of education vouchers, raising salaries of pre-school teachers to match the level of secondary school teachers, and the improvement of the base monthly salary. The ministry neither reacted to the union demands, nor to the intermediation conditions.

English: <http://en.delfi.lt/lithuania/society/lithuanian-teachers-to-hold-protest-action ...>

Luxembourg

Labour market does not recover

October 23, 2014

The number of workers placed under reduced working hours increased for the third month in a row. At a meeting of the official committee that deals with the applications (the 'comité de conjoncture') 23 businesses were granted their request to cut working hours in a bid to save costs. The state will compensate employees for the lost wages. In total, the companies employ 4,260 people, with 1,850 affected by the partial unemployment measure in November. While in August the number of workers on reduced hours was just 844 – a usual seasonal development – this rose to 1,023 in September and 1,123 for October.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/business/chomage-partiel-labour-market-difficulties ...>

Luxair strike averted – new round of talks

October 9, 2014

Talks between LuxairGroup and the trade unions in the dispute over a new collective working agreement (CWA) are set to resume, following a meeting at the national conciliation office. At the conciliation office meeting LuxairGroup agreed to extend two collective working agreements currently in place and issued a job guarantee. The agreement reached at the conciliation office comes into force on November 6.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/business/strike-averted-for-now-luxair-talks-to-resume ...>

Malta

Mixed feelings with adjustment of living costs

October 8, 2014

Most trade unions and employers' organisations seem to be satisfied with the cost of living adjustment expected to be announced in the upcoming budget, which is set to be €1.16 per week. However, one union labelled the increase a 'measly' amount and branded it a 'gross injustice'. The increase is the lowest since 2011. The Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) is automatically set by a mechanism that has been agreed to by the social partners, the trade unions and the employers' bodies, and the government.

English: <http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2014-10-08 ...>

Netherlands

Regional government employees vote on collective agreement

October 14, 2014

Two years after the previous collective agreement expired, unions are consulting their members on a new deal. Negotiators from FNV and CNV trade unions have reached an agreement with regional government representatives, which includes a €450 lump sum payment, a 2% pay increase from 1 January 2015 and

another 1% from 1 July 2015. The agreement includes further clauses on limiting the number of flex workers, pensions, assistance to find new jobs, training and career advice.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/10825>

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

Wage statistics published

October 6, 2014

The national statistics office CBS reported that average wages increased around 1.1% in the third quarter of 2014 which is almost similar to the inflation increase in August 2014 (of 1%). The cost of labour rose 1.7% because of changes in unemployment, sickness and health insurance payments. Year on year, wages have risen most sharply in the healthcare and welfare sectors and were down an average of 1.8% in the financial services sector. The office also published an overview of income-related allowances for housing, health and children in 2013. The government paid over 10.4 billion euro in 2013.

English: http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2014/10/wages_rose_in_line_with_inflat ...

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

Pay cuts and demotion popular measures

October 1, 2014

An annual report of a survey among employers shows that workers are still confronted with pay cuts (1 in 10 employers), though the economy is recovering. Almost a quarter of the responding employers reduced the provisions and working conditions, and almost 50% have started with the item of demotion or the positioning of the regular workforce in lower paid jobs. Workers are confronted with a lowering of the applicable wage scale, with non-application of entitled pay increases or the cut back of the 13th month payment.

English: http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2014/10/one_in_four_dutch_employers ...

Dutch: <https://touchpoint.adp.nl/publicaties/hr-trends/salaris-inleveren-demotie ...>

Norway

More job losses at Statoil

October 3, 2014

State oil company Statoil, faced with falling oil prices and rising costs, reportedly plans to cut 500 jobs on its offshore platforms on top of the roughly 1,400 jobs eliminated so far as it tries to slim down its organisation. More land-based employees may lose their jobs as well, as the country's oil and offshore industry stops gushing. Management unveiled the new cuts at a meeting with the company's works council. Around 500 workers on Statoil's offshore installations will likely need to find something else to do, while an unclear number of other Statoil employees may also need to leave the company. The trade unions concluded that no one has a secure job anymore.

English: <http://www.newsenglish.no/2014/10/03/statoil-plans-to-slash-more-jobs/>

Poland

Unions threaten with railway strike

October 28, 2014

The trade unions in the biggest passenger railway company have taken a strong stand in a restructuring project. So far only seven provinces have signed a rescue plan prepared for the company Przewozy

Regionalne. Some of the others are against it and have suggested they would rather develop their own passenger railway firms. In response to the situation, 14 trade union organisations active in the company have put forward an ultimatum. If the plan is not signed, they will demonstrate and possibly go on strike. The demonstration is planned for 6 November at noon in front of the Ministry of Infrastructure, which supervises railways.

English: <http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/185592,Regional-railway-unions ...>

Package deal in the making for miners losing jobs

October 2, 2014

The government is preparing legislation allowing for 280 million zloty (some 67 million euro) from the state budget to be spent on shutting down the Kazimierz-Juliusz coal mine, putting over 1000 miners out of work. The KHW-company, one of the country's biggest coal producers, had earlier decided that the colliery was not profitable and should be closed by the end of September 2014. The decision sparked a protest from workers, who also demanded the payment of overdue salaries. On September 27, the company's management reached an agreement with the miners, who then ended their protest. The firm agreed to find employment for the workers in other coal mines. The money set aside from the state budget is meant to cover costs of closing down the mine, including redundancy payments.

English: <http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/183074,State-budget-to-pay-for-coal-mine ...>

Portugal

Public sector unions stage protest

October 9, 2014

The Frente Comum, the main platform for trade unions representing public sector employees, has announced plans for a national demonstration in Lisbon on 31 October, to protest against pay cuts and the erosion of employment rights in the public sector. The decision was taken at a meeting of the platform's leadership, which is demanding the restoration of the 35-hour week (from 40 hours currently), an end to austerity-driven pay cuts, and a salary increase of 3.7%, equivalent to a minimum raise of €50 a month, as well as an end to the erosion of employment rights.

English: <http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/public-sector-unions-call-protest ...>

Lisbon metro strikes again

October 7, 2014

Workers of the Lisbon Metro underground system are to hold the latest in a series of 24-hour strike. The strike is being held to protest against plans to auction off the concession to private investors and consequent erosion of their rights. The trade union said it had handed in notice of the strike in what will be the third strike since the start of September, following a long period with no such action.

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

Romania

Pay hike for postal workers in the making

October 29, 2014

The communication minister announced a salary increase for everyone who works with the state-owned Romanian Post, after the company managed to steer back into profitability. Romanian Post has 27,000 employees. The company's former management was dismissed because it approved salary hikes without respecting the law, authorities said at the time.

English: <http://www.romania-insider.com/romanias-communications-minister-announces ...>

Public workers protest

October 7, 2014

Thousands of workers, including clerks, teachers, rail workers and nurses, gathered in downtown Bucharest despite torrential rain, chanting and blowing whistles and vuvuzela horns. They rallied in front of the offices of the country's leftist government to demand better living standards, decent work and wages, just weeks before the presidential election. The trade unions in the care sector warned that too many people have left the country due to low salaries and underfunding.

English: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/10/07/uk-romania-labour-protests ...>

Serbia

Teachers on strike over lagging wage developments

October 19, 2014

All four education unions have announced they will join a teachers strike on 22 October. The teachers will organise a one-hour strike, followed by a one-day strike and possibly indefinite strike. The unions say teachers feel tricked into accepting wage moderation by false promises made to them while their situation continues to deteriorate. Whereas teachers earned 30% above the national average wage in 2008, they currently earn below average wages. Promised improvements of salary grades have failed to materialise, leading to the announcement of industrial action.

English: <http://inserbia.info/today/2014/10/serbia-teachers-to-strike-on-wednesday/>

Police trade unions end strike

October 6, 2014

The police trade unions have returned to the negotiations table after a ten days' strike. Representatives of the Independent Trade Union of Police conferred with the interior minister concerning the unions' demands. The minister stated that he hopes all potential future problems, including talks on a new collective contract, will be resolved exclusively through social dialogue. A spokesperson expressed, on behalf of all police trade unions involved in the strike, satisfaction over the continuation of the social dialogue.

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

Slovakia

Union offers free legal advice in fight against precarious work

October 16, 2014

Trade union OZ KOVO has started to offer free legal advice to non-members in the fight against precarious work. OZ KOVO organised an event in the city of Zilina, offering free legal advice on labour law application to raise awareness of labour law violations and precarious work. The event was accompanied by a rally against precarious work.

English: <http://www.industriall-union.org/slovakia>

Panasonic dismisses and transfers production

October 2, 2014

A Panasonic plant based in the eastern town of Krompachy (Košice Region, a region with an unemployment rate between 15-20%) plans to shut down its production of Blu-ray players and recorders, DVD recorders and printed circuit boards (PCB) for TV sets, and move to Plzeň, in the Czech Republic. The end of the production of all video products is scheduled for December 31, with the remaining production ending as of May 2015. As a result, at least 400 people will lose their jobs. The closing of the plant should actually concern 656 permanent employees, with 215 of them to be offered jobs in Plzeň. Trade unions and workers' representatives heard from the company that it is ready to assist workers in their seeking new jobs while lending a hand in the organising of job fairs that will be attended by leading temp agencies.

English: http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/55428/10/panasonic_will_close_plant...

Slovenia

Precarious work on the rise

October 7, 2014

The number of precarious workers is double the figure of unemployed persons – around 250.000. In addition, a third of all sole proprietors (self-employed) are below the poverty threshold, according to the Movement for Decent Work. The trade unions added that 80% of all young people with jobs are employed with a fixed-term contract and that precarious work is always involuntary. One of the difficulties is that there are no records on people who work through temporary contracts. It is also difficult to determine the existence of different forms of precarious work. Workers often find themselves in a dependent employment relationship, or are sole proprietors with only one customer.

English: <http://www.rtvslo.si/news-in-english/slovenia-has-around-250-thousand...>

Spain

One in four people live in poverty

October 29, 2014

The leading Catholic charity Caritas published a massive 700-page report on poverty and social exclusion prepared by some 90 experts and academics. The number of people living in poverty has risen by 4.4 million since the country was battered by an economic crisis to reach 11.7 million, or one in four. The proportion of people living in social exclusion stood at 25.1% in mid-2013, up from 16.3% in 2007, a year before a decade-long housing bubble collapsed sending the economy into a tailspin. Of the 11.7 million people who live in social exclusion, 77.1% do not have a job and 61.7% struggle to keep a roof over their heads.

English: <http://www.thelocal.es/20141029/one-in-four-spaniards-live-in-poverty-report>

Spanish: <http://www.foessa2014.es/informe/>

Health workers ask minister to resign

October 7, 2014

In the slipstream of the detection of an Ebola infection and with reference to the deteriorating working conditions health care workers in Madrid have organised a protest. They are angry because many hospitals have experienced cuts in budgets, staff, units and equipment. Workers are confident they are doing their jobs properly albeit with limited resources, however they are calling on the resignation of those responsible for the cuts, including the health minister.

English: <http://elpais.com/elpais/2014/10/07/inenglish...>

Sweden

Trade union leader not in favour of higher income taxes

October 7, 2014

According to a trade union official of the confederation Saco the proposal of the incoming government to raise taxes for people earning more than 50,000 kronor (5,500 euro) a month could damage the country's global reputation. He stated 'if the coalition is serious about working across political bloc boundaries then it should put this proposal to one side and appoint a new parliamentary committee to reach a broad agreement on taxes'. With reference to higher education and the country's image as a competitive knowledge-based nation Saco sees a rise of already high tax rates on workers' income hardly conducive to create good incentives for knowledge building.

English: <http://www.thelocal.se/20141007/should-taxes-be-raised-in-sweden>

Switzerland

Job losses as Electrolux closes Swiss factory

October 22, 2014

Up to 120 workers are expected to be laid off at Swedish owned electronic manufacturer Electrolux. Electrolux is closing down its Schwanden factory by the end of 2015. Company management made a statement blaming the closure on new Swiss regulations making it impossible to attain the "Made in Switzerland" label for its products. The announced closure follows several job cuts in the watch making industry, sprouting fears of an economic downturn.

English: <http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/electrolux-plant-closure-highlights-job-fears...>

Trade unions push for labour rights and standards

October 13, 2014

After four years of negotiations, Switzerland has become the second European country to sign a free trade agreement (FTA) with China. The trade unions, together with several NGO's, committed the negotiating party to the inclusion of a 'durability chapter' in this FTA, which emphasises human rights and labour rights as well as environmental standards. Regarding ILO core standards, both countries commit to respecting those that have been ratified. This is highly problematic as China has ratified only 4 (excluding the standards protecting freedom of association and prohibiting forced labour). Nevertheless, the agreement contains a reference to both parties' obligations arising from membership of the ILO and from the major ILO declarations on labour rights and social justice, observing all 8 core standards.

English: <http://column.global-labour-university.org/2014/10/switzerland-china-free-trade...>

Slight increase of unemployment

October 8, 2014

The unemployment rate remained at 3% in September, unchanged from the previous month and from the same period in 2013, according to government figures. A total of 129,965 people were registered at regional job centres, an increase of 1,531, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs said in its latest monthly report. The number of job seekers at the end of September increased 1.8% to 183,113 from the end of August 2014.

English: <http://www.thelocal.ch/20141008/swiss-jobless-rate-remains-unchanged-in...>

Turkey

Workers trapped after another mine accident

October 29, 2014

Surging water trapped at least 18 workers in the privately owned Has Sekerler mine, officials and reports said — an event likely to raise even more concerns about the nation's poor workplace safety standards. The trade unions repeatedly have criticised the country's poor safety standards and superficial government inspections in many of the country's mines. The International Labour Organisation organised a National Tripartite Meeting on Improving Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) in Mining in Turkey. Government, workers' and employers' representatives and other relevant stakeholders concluded with agreement on the main elements of a roadmap on how to improve occupational safety and health in the industry.

English: <http://www.timesunion.com/business/energy/article/Report-23-trapped-in-Turkish...>

<http://www.industriall-union.org/turkey-no-more-mine-deaths-turkish-government-must...>

Cultural workers protest with hunger strike

October 28, 2014

Cultural workers are set to go on hunger strike in protest of their unemployment and its endangerment of the country's vulnerable cultural resources. In reaction to the government's broken promise to hire 50 workers among the thousands of unemployed cultural heritage professionals the Association of Culture and Art Workers (Kültür Sanat Emekçileri Derneği, or KSED) is taking desperate measures.

English: <http://hyperallergic.com/158974/cultural-workers-in-turkey-prepare-for-hunger...>

Poor health and safety record reported in Soma mine

October 2, 2014

A long-anticipated 126-page expert report, commissioned by the public prosecutor, clearly states the Soma mining catastrophe (see our May Newsletter) was preventable. While eight high-level managers of the mine's operating company have already been arrested in connection with the tragedy, the report points the finger of blame at almost everyone involved in the mine, including ministry bureaucrats, with the exception of the miners themselves. 'The only innocent group is the workers,' says the report.

English: <http://www.industriall-union.org/soma-mine-was-a-death-trap-report-shows>

United Kingdom

More long-term low paid than ever

October 30, 2014

New research by the Resolution Foundation think-tank reveals that more than five million workers are in low-paid work, with the proportion of people on low salaries rising from 21 to 22% in 2013. Millions are in jobs so poorly paid that they have little if anything left to spend after their basic needs have been met. The report, Low Pay Britain 2014, reveals that 5.2 million workers earn less than £7.70 an hour, an increase of 250,000 on the previous year. The minimum wage is £6.50 an hour. The recession has merely exacerbated a trend that has been in place for the past three decades: a polarisation of the labour market.

English: <http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/low-pay-britain-2014/>

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

<http://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/oct/18/economy-bleak-british-workers...>

Strike and work to rule in Welsh care sector

October 27, 2014

NHS staff in Wales, including nurses, occupational therapists, porters, paramedics, medical secretaries, cooks and healthcare assistants will strike for half a day in November and then work to rule for the following four days. Trade union Unison confirmed 27,000 members will stage the half-day stoppage on Monday 10 November. For the rest of the week, staff will take action short of a strike by ensuring they take breaks and work their contracted hours. The union said the action is in response to a recommended pay increase of 1% for staff being ignored. Instead a non-consolidated payment of £160 was offered.

English: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-29785370>

Working conditions of migrants lead to 'shocking' sentence

October 9, 2014

The Gangmasters Licensing Authority, the institute that licenses the supply of temporary labour will appeal the sentence given to an illegal gangmaster (labour provider) who kept fellow Romanian workers in inhumane conditions in County Armagh. Migrant workers were employed as apple pickers, working in orchards in County Armagh under extreme working and living conditions. They were paid £100 per week, which is well below the minimum wage. The sentence was a mere £500 fine, a punishment that was described by the GLA as "shocking". The institute stated that it simply fails to see how this punishment fits the crime and how it can act as a deterrent for someone who preyed on vulnerable men. The maximum sentence under the Gangmasters Licensing Act for working as an illegal gangmaster is 10 years in jail.

English: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-29547874>

Campaign for better working conditions in non-fiction TV

October 8, 2014

The Canadian Media Guild and BECTU are joining forces to highlight the problems with working conditions in the non-fiction TV sector. The unions are delivering principles aimed at improving the situation to production and broadcast executives attending an industry conference (Realscreen), taking place in London. Workers in both countries have reported similar concerns about excessive and unreasonable working hours, unpaid time, inadequate rest time and poor health & safety management in non-fiction/factual production. The principles the unions are presenting, supported by the Writers Guild of America East, are modelled on the Code of Practice that BECTU developed in 2013 to improve working conditions for factual workers.

English: <http://www.broadcastermagazine.com/news/unions-join-forces-for-better-working ...>

Midwives strike for the first time in 133 years

October 1, 2014

Members of the Royal College of Midwives (RCM) voted in favour of walkouts by 82% (a margin of more than four to one) and will join other health workers on strike for four hours on October 13. The action is in protest at the decision by the Government not to pay all NHS staff a 1% pay rise, which was recommended by the independent Pay Review Body. It is the first time members of the college will go on strike in its 133-year history. Members of Unison and Unite, which between them represent about 400,000 NHS personnel including nurses, voted for the same four-hour strike, followed by a work to rule for the rest of that week.

English: <http://www.middevongazette.co.uk/Midwives-strike-time-133-year-history ...>

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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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