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collective bargaining

Issue 11/2014 | November

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

Social partners and gender equality

November 27, 2014

The Eurofound report *Social partners and gender equality in Europe* assesses the role of the social partners in advancing gender equality in Europe. It explores the actions taken within the different national frameworks of industrial relations and against the ranking of the Member States on the Gender Equality Index. While the social partners can influence legislation through tripartite consultation, they primarily play a role in collective bargaining at national, sectoral and company level – and therefore can influence not only the working conditions of men and women, but also the ability to reconcile work and family life.

English: <http://eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default...>

Report: Excessive working hours major risk in health care sector

November 12, 2014

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) published a report on health issues in the health care sector in Europe. The report, *Current and emerging issues in the healthcare sector, including home and community care*, highlights the negative consequences of long working hours in the sector. Long hours have implications on the safety of both staff and patients, as well as on retention rates of staff. The authors add that in some countries public sector cuts have exacerbated the problem, as low paid nurses are taking on second jobs or extra shifts to make ends meet.

English: <https://osha.europa.eu/en/publications/reports/current-and-emerging-occupational...>

The social dimension of EU enlargement

November 6, 2014

Solidar, a European umbrella of social NGO's, published an in-depth report in cooperation with FEPS on the social dimension of the EU enlargement in the Western Balkans with expert articles presenting an overview of the current challenges. In recent years, unemployment and social inequalities have significantly increased in the region affecting in particular the situation of young people and showing that the socio-economic dimension cannot be separated from the political one. The report presents interesting data on collective bargaining and on the functioning of tripartite and bipartite dialogue in the Western Balkans region.

English: http://www.solidar.org/IMG/pdf/2014_11_03_the_social_dimension_of_eu_enlargement...

The global gender gap report 2014

November 1, 2014

The aim of the Global Gender Gap report is to document whether nations are distributing their opportunities and resources equitably between men and women. The 2014 report seeks to measure the relative gaps between women and men across four key areas: health, education, economy and politics. The 2014 report (with 142 country profiles) qualifies Denmark as the fifth best country for gender equality – up from eighth place – meaning the top five positions are now taken up by the Nordic nations. Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden make up the top four spots respectively.

English: <http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR14...>
<http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/>

Austria

Figures on pay and tax revenue for 2013

November 12, 2014

Data of Statistik Austria reveal that in the year 2013 a total of 6 667 884 taxpayers were registered, of whom 4 272 613 were employees and 2 395 271 were pensioners. Compared with 2012, the number of taxpayers increased by 1.0%. Gross earnings rose by 2.9% to a volume of €172 576.8 million and total wage tax revenue increased by 4.8% to a volume of €25 692.5 million. In the German version data about the GINI-coefficient are provided.

English: http://www.statistik.at/web_en/dynamic/press/079309

German: http://www.statistik.at/web_de/presse/079308

Services unions want six weeks holidays

November 5, 2014

Services union GPA-djp has called for an extension of the right to six weeks' holidays to more workers in the sector. The union said that in female dominated sectors in particular, workers need longer holidays to balance work and family life, recuperate and to remain motivated. The right to six weeks' holidays already exists, but it is limited to private sector workers with 25 years' service and public sector workers aged 43 and over.

English: <http://epsu.org/a/10913>

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

Metal sector subsectors results identical

November 5, 2014

After a total of 14 rounds of negotiations with the 6 employers' organisations in the different metal branches the trade unions PRO-GE and GPA-djp have concluded the same results for the (in total 180,000) workers in the metal sector (see also our October newsletter). The largest branch is the metal industry with 120,000 workers, followed by the automotive branch (30,000 workers) and the iron and mining (17,000 workers).

German: <http://www.oegb.at/cms ...>

Belgium

Massive demonstration against reforms

November 6, 2014

The joint demonstration organised by the three trade union confederations to act against new government proposals (freeze of the wage indexation and increase of the pension age – see our October Newsletter) has brought more than 100.000 workers to the streets of Brussels. The new liberal-conservative government had so far not talked seriously with the trade unions. This is in sharp contrast to the country's long post-war tradition of concertation and dialogue. After the demonstration the prime-minister announced that the ministry of labour has the task to open up the dialogue with the trade unions 'in all discretion'.

English: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/06/belgium-austerity-protests-violence>

Bulgaria

No minimum wage hike in 2015

November 24, 2014

Hopes of a raise in the minimum wage were disappointed this week when the head of the interim parliamentary committee on budget and finance Menda Stoyanova said that no proposals to raise the minimum wage were on the agenda and that the 2015 budget that is being adopted is based on the current level. The minimum wage is currently BGN340 (€173) per month and is the lowest in the EU. The

Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB) has demanded the minimum wage be raised to BGN400.

English: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=164980
http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=164916

Over half of employers plan on paying Christmas bonuses to employees

November 23, 2014

At 57%, more than half of the employers are planning to pay their staff Christmas bonuses this year according to a survey of the Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association (BICA). Almost three in ten employers have not decided whether they will pay such a bonus, whereas 15% said they cannot afford to do so. In most cases, bonuses are tied to the financial results of the company. 27% of companies will give Christmas bonus payments of up to BGN 100 to their employees, 35% will pay extra sums of BGN 100-300 and 38% will hand out holiday bonuses of over BGN 300.

English: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=164946

Croatia

Shipyard workers fear future after EU demands end to subsidies

November 19, 2014

Workers at the Ugljan island shipyard fear for the future of their jobs after the European Commission demanded the government cut subsidies to its four largest shipyards to meet fair competition standards. Rushed privatisations left the shipyards with lower production capacity, leading to the bankruptcy of the Kraljevica shipyard and the shedding of thousands of jobs.

English: [http://www.equaltimes.org/croatia-s-shipyard-workers-face ...](http://www.equaltimes.org/croatia-s-shipyard-workers-face-...)

Cyprus

Health minister tries to avoid work stoppage in last minute talks

November 14, 2014

Doctors have announced a two hour work stoppage as issues on wages and job security remain unresolved. Health Minister Philippos Patsalis called for a last-minute meeting to avoid the work stoppage, arguing that all issues are either resolved or being addressed. However, doctors claim they have been misled before, when the same minister promised that everything would be resolved by September.

English: <http://cyprus-mail.com/2014/11/14/crunch-meeting-on-doctors-strike/>

Czech Republic

General strike that made the regime tumble

November 27, 2014

The Bohemian and Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (CMKOS) devoted an assembly to the 25th anniversary of the general strike that made the regime tumble. But, people are still afraid to join the trade unions even after 25 years of their life in freedom. Whilst the trade union thanked the actual government for a readiness for dialogue and growth in the minimum wage it criticised the government over disputes of ministers, the civil service law and increase in salaries of top state officials. The prime minister announced that the minimum wage will be raised by 700 crowns to 9,200 crowns (€334) as of January 2015.

English: [http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/general-strike-toppled-communist-regime ...](http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/general-strike-toppled-communist-regime-...)

Employment figures published

November 10, 2014

The Employment Office stated that against October 2013, unemployment decreased in October 2014 by 0.5 percentage point and the number of vacancies grew by 19,080. The situation on the labour market is influenced, among other things, by economic revival and seasonal work, for example in gastronomy, hotels, construction, tourism and also in agriculture.

English: <http://www.mpsv.cz/en/17266>

<http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/unemployment-in-cr-down-0-2-pts ...>

Denmark

Retailers leave the country

November 28, 2014

Wholesale giant METRO Cash & Carry is closing down its last two remaining stores at locations in Aarhus and Glostrup and dismissing 300 employees. According to the company, a deal with Euro Cater, which could have saved the employees' jobs, fell through. Metro that opened its first store in Glostrup in 1971 announced in September 2014 it would close its five Danish stores because they were no longer profitable. Almost simultaneously, the Danish arm of the company chain Build-A-Bear, which gives customers the chance to put together their own teddy bear, has gone bankrupt. The company's Danish website has gone offline and all of its shops, with the exception of the one next to Tivoli, have closed down. At its height in 2010, the chain had ten shops, making it the fourth biggest Build-A-Bear country at that time in terms of the number of retail locations. At the time of the bankruptcy, a total of five shops was still open.

English: <http://cphpost.dk/news/metro-wholesalers-laying-off-300-employees.11838.html>

<http://cphpost.dk/news/bear-market-american-retailer-wiped-out-in-denmark.11825.html>

Women's Last Work Day calls attention to 17% gender pay gap

October 12, 2014

Trade unions are calling attention to the large gender pay gap through the Women's Last Work Day campaign. While the country has been praised for its gender equality, the pay gap remains at 17% and even 24% among white collar workers. The gender pay gap is the difference between the average salary of men and that of women. Arguing that women work a large part of the year for free because they only receive a proportion of the average male wage, the campaign marks the day that women should stop working.

English: <http://www.thestarphoenix.com/business/Danish+women+protest+cent ...>

Heated debate over foreign workers pay

November 7, 2014

In a debate among politicians over benefits and wages offered to foreign workers a Liberal Alliance (LA) employment spokesman compared the policies of government coalition partner Socialistisk Folkeparti (SF) to Nazism. The SF and trade union 3F want to guarantee that foreign workers are treated the same as national workers.

English: <http://cphpost.dk/news/liberal-alliance-employment-spokesperson-compares ...>

Estonia

Wage increase documented

November 26, 2014

Gross wages grew 5.0% in the third quarter, compared to the same period in 2013. The country's average monthly gross wages and salaries stood at 977 euro, according to the Statistic Estonia's Wages and Salaries Statistics Survey. The average hourly salary rate was 5.89 euros, a 5.6% increase. Compared to the same quarter of the previous year, real wages increased for the 13th straight quarter.

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

Finland

Better staff policy and negotiations diminish disputes

November 24, 2014

Improving the negotiation culture at working places would cut clearly the number of industrial disputes, a survey carried out for the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions SAK reveals. The survey was conducted in November 2014 for the trade union shop stewards and industrial safety delegates and based on 960 replies. 71% of the respondents answered that better staff policy and negotiation culture would very much reduce the number of industrial disputes.

English: <http://heikkijokinen.info/en/trade-union-news-from-finland/648-survey-employers ...>

Court has to rule on the use of agency workers

November 21, 2014

The Advocate General of the ECJ presented an opinion on a case focusing on restrictions of the use of agency workers. The case could affect how such restrictions are imposed through collective labour agreements throughout Europe. The opinion is non-binding, but is likely to serve as important guidance for the ECJ, which is anticipated to arrive at the same conclusion. The Advocate General found that the directive does not prohibit the Finnish restriction on the use of agency workers. A final verdict is expected in early 2015.

English: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN ...>

<http://www.recruiter.co.uk/news/2014/11/legal-opinion-expected-on-landmark-legal-case ...>

Social partners agree on pension reform

November 15, 2014

Parliament will vote on a pension reform agreement that has the support of all employers' federations as well as of trade union confederations SAK and STTK, but not of the Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff. Under the proposed system, the pension age will be raised in increments from 63 to 65 years of age for people born after 1955. The upper age limit for old-age pension will be five years higher than the earliest eligibility age. Under the deal, workers' pension accrual will amount to 1.5% of wages between 17 and 65 and earnings-related pension contribution will no longer be deducted from the pensionable wage. The agreement also includes rewards for continuing to work after reaching the earliest eligibility age, a new plan for partial early old-age retirement and early retirement for people working in physically or mentally demanding jobs if they have worked for at least 38 years and are at least 63 years of age.

English: http://www.pardia.fi/in_english ...

<http://www.epsu.org/a/10916>

Journalists want to negotiate cost-cutting measures

November 5, 2014

The public broadcasting company Yle has announced an imminent plan to reduce at least 185 permanent jobs as part of its cost-cutting measures. Following the announcement, the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) has sent a letter to the CEO and the management team of Yle, calling on them to engage in dialogue with the journalists' trade union, Suomen Journalistiliitto.

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

France

PSA wants to cut more jobs

November 19, 2014

PSA Peugeot Citroen is preparing to cut another 3,450 jobs in 2015 as the troubled carmaker pursues a recovery plan. The cuts, to be achieved through a combination of early retirements, voluntary buyouts and internal transfers, will be presented to the trade unions during a works council meeting that will address staffing plans under a labour deal struck with unions last year. Some 1,500 of the affected workers are said to receive early retirement, with a further 550 offered buyouts and 1,400 transferred to new positions.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/19/us-peugeot-cuts...>

EDF workers strike

November 4, 2014

A 24-hour strike by state-owned utility EDF's workers has cut 6,000 megawatts (MW) in the country's electricity production capacity. The strike is part of a nationwide day of protest over wages and working conditions and comes two weeks after a surprise strike by EDF workers cut French nuclear power production by around 7,000 MW.

English: <http://af.reuters.com/article/energyOilNews...>

Germany

Court says states cannot decide on Sunday opening

November 27, 2014

The Federal Administrative Court ruled that the state of Hesse overstepped its bounds when legislating more allowances for firms to operate, and thus force employees to work, on Sundays and bank holidays. According to the ruling, there was no need for video rental shops or call centres to be open on Sundays and it was not up to a state government to decide that. The decision will have implications across the country, as other states have similar laws. The case stems from a 2011 decision by the state of Hesse to allow broader exceptions to labour laws regulating who has to work on Sundays. The trade unions that brought the case to the court called the verdict a very positive success. They stated that the local government overstepped its bounds when forcing more people to work on Sundays.

English: <http://www.thelocal.de/20141127/court-to-rule-on-labouring-sundays>

Employment figures still improving

November 27, 2014

Despite a slowing down of the economy the number of jobless people has dropped significantly. There were 2.717 million unemployed people in November 2014, 16,000 less than the previous month and 89,000 fewer than at the same time in 2013. The unemployment rate - which measures the jobless total against the working population as a whole - was steady at 6.6% in seasonally adjusted terms.

English: <http://www.dw.de/german-unemployment-hits-three-year-low...>

Rail strike ends after two days

November 7, 2014

Right after a state court rejected Deutsche Bahn railways' attempt to win an injunction to stop an ongoing strike, the trade union GDL announced to cut short the planned four-day strike and return to work - in time for celebrations marking the 25th anniversary of the Berlin Wall's fall. Deutsche Bahn had asked for an injunction to halt the strike after the GDL rejected an offer of mediation. However, in two subsequent cases within 15 hours, the court upheld the union's right to strike.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/07/germany-railways-strike...>

Greece

General strike against austerity

November 27, 2014

The major trade unions organised a 24-hour general strike to protest against planned layoffs and pension reforms demanded by the country's international lenders. As a result nationwide chaos ensued as tens of thousands of workers rallied in major cities across the country. Air, rail and ferry services across the country grounded to a halt and state-run schools closed for the day. The nationwide strikes also forced hospitals and ambulance services to rely on emergency staff.

English: <http://www.dw.de/tens-of-thousands-march-against-austerity-measures-in-greece...>

Port workers strike

November 6, 2014

Ships and ferries did not operate among the country's many islands due to a 24-hour strike called by the National federation of port employees (Omyle) to protest against the government's planned privatisation of ports. In a statement issued by the trade union, the workers blamed the strike on 'the government's policies and decision to sell out ports'.

English: <http://www.travelagentcentral.com/greece/greek-strikes-block-ship-ferry-services...>

Hungary

Parliament rejects tax on fringe benefits after protest

November 19, 2014

Over a thousand workers gathered in front of Parliament to protest against a new law that would increase taxes on fringe benefits from 35.7% up to 51.17%, while at the same time lowering the maximum possible annual amount of this allowance paid by the employers. As the fringe benefits constitute a substantial part of many families' incomes, the higher tax would lead to a loss of purchasing power across the board. During the protest, the leader of the ruling Fidesz party promised to vote against the law, which was defeated in Parliament two days later.

English: <http://www.industrialunion.org/hungarian-workers-protest-against-austerity>

Sunday opening in retail reconsidered

November 7, 2014

A decision on a proposal to restrict shop openings on Sundays made by Christian Democrats (KDNP), the minor partner in the governing alliance, will be made only after consultations with the trade unions and companies operating the shops. The government has discussed the proposal but has not made a decision. The leader of the Commercial Employee's Trade Union welcomed the bill. In view of the labour shortage hitting the sector, the restrictions would not bring about layoffs of retail workers, he said.

English: <http://hungarytoday.hu/cikk/82194-2-christian-democrats-to-restrict-sunday-shopping...>

Iceland

Wage index goes up

November 7, 2014

The unemployment rate in September was 4.1%, a year-on-year drop of 1.1%, while the wage index showed a month-on-month rise of 0.7%, according to Statistics Iceland. The survey reveals that the number of people classed as part of the labour force market, including 7,500 unemployed people, in September stood at 183,200. The activity rate during the month was 79.2%, while the employment rate stood at 78.9% and the unemployment rate at 4.1%. Among 16 to 24-year-olds, the unemployment rate was 9.4%, compared to 3.2% among the 25+ age group.

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

<http://www.icenews.is/2014/11/07/iceland-unemployment-down-and-wage-index-up/>

Dismissal of cleaners

November 4, 2014

The trade union Efling announced that 18 workers were fired by the Government Offices in an effort to save revenue. Most of these workers are over the age of 50, and all of them are women earning amongst the lowest legal wages in the country. The government believe they can save a lot of money by contracting out the work that Efling members do, as cleaning companies are constantly competing to underbid each other, which ultimately leads to lower wages and an increased workload for the workers.

English: <http://grapevine.is/news/2014/11/04/government-fires-cleaning-staff-to-save-money/>

Ireland

Engineering union formulates 5% pay rise demand

November 22, 2014

One of the country's largest trade unions, the Technical Engineering and Electrical Union (TEEU), is to seek pay rises of 5% for its 40,000 members across the public and private sectors. TEEU represents electricians and number of other craft worker grades. It also wants to recoup all the concessions made to employers on issues such as pensions and working conditions during the past seven years. Since the economic crash, many unions had to engage in concession bargaining with employers, which frequently resulted in members agreeing to the deterioration in their traditional terms and conditions in return for greater job security.

English: <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/engineering-union-to-seek-5-pay-rise...>

Restoration of wage-setting mechanisms pleaded

November 11, 2014

The trade union confederation ICTU has called for the restoration of wage-setting mechanisms in key sectors of the economy such as construction, in order to halt the race to the bottom in wages and standards and to restore some protection for workers' livelihoods. Addressing the Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation the ICTU stated that it is necessary to bring back some balance for workers in these sectors, as the absence of wage-setting mechanisms has seen wages and standards undermined.

English: http://www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/reponse_to_joint_committee...

Abuses of recruiter Atlanco Rimec investigated

November 6, 2014

The national TV channel has investigated the practices of international recruiter Atlanco Rimec, notorious for its treatment of workers. By using a labyrinth of cross-border posting relationships (for instance Polish workers recruited on the basis of a social security certificate from Cyprus) the payment of social security costs is circumvented. Interviews with individual workers illustrate how the social dumping practices are completed with poor living and housing conditions and the non-respect of pay and other working conditions.

English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/player/2014/1106/20677365-the-treatment-of-foreign...>

Labour court recommendation leads to pay deal

November 4, 2014

Members at insurance company Irish Life have voted overwhelmingly to accept a Labour Court recommendation which could result in a pay increase of up to 7%. Trade union Unite called the result a 'great deal'. The deal followed extensive talks at the Labour Relations Commission and Labour Court to avert industrial unrest. Pay increases by a minimum of 2%, lower-paid clerical staff will receive pay rises of up to 7 per cent under the recommendation. Workers will be compensated for the abolition of a long-standing profit-sharing scheme through a once-off lump sum payment of €1,500.

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/business/lower-paid-irish-life-staff-to-get-pay-rises...>

Italy

Public sector unions bring pay freeze to court

November 28, 2014

The CGIL, CISL and UIL trade unions representing civil servants have filed an appeal with the courts over the government's freeze on contracts, including pay increases, for public-sector workers. The unions said proceedings are beginning at the Court of Rome level but they expect the case will reach the Constitutional Court for a ruling on the unions' challenge to the legitimacy of the government freeze. More than one year ago, unions warned of social conflict over the freeze on contracts that dates back to 2010. Earlier this month tens of thousands of public service workers marched through Rome to demand that the government give them better pay and a new contract and take measures to boost employment. The demonstrators demanded higher salaries and a new national contract for the sector, which has not been renewed for four years.

English: <http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/english/118432/Unions-take-freeze-on-civil...>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-2826516/Italian-civil-service-workers-march...>

Court judges claim against Eternit expired

November 27, 2014

In one of the longest fights against the asbestos exposure of workers the public prosecutor of the Supreme Court of Cassation has overturned a Turin court decision condemning the Swiss billionaire Stephan Schmidheiny, one of the owners of Eternit Group, claiming the sentence is not applicable because of the long period of time that has passed since the crime took place. The dismissal of the accusations against the group owners is a slap to almost 3,000 victims who according to the Turin Prosecutor's office were either working at the four Italian Eternit plants in Cavagnolo, Casale Monferrato, Rubiera near Reggio Emilia and Bagnoli, near Naples, or lived near them. The decision also cancels the compensatory payments to the victims and their families. The trade unions claim that the harmful effects from asbestos exposure in many cases continue for more than 40 years and therefore have nothing to do with the timing of judicial proceedings.

English: <http://www.industrialunion.org/eternit-owners-crime-judged-expired...>

<http://www.france24.com/en/20141120-outrage-italy-quashes-asbestos-conviction-trial...>

Steel workers block highway

November 16, 2014

Steel workers at AST steelworks, a subsidiary of the Germany based ThyssenKrupp, have blocked the highway between Milan and Naples, demanding clear answers to the question what will happen to their jobs. The workers already took to the streets this summer, as reported in the July newsletter, when 100 million cuts and up to 550 layoffs were announced. In the meantime, the workers are still uncertain whether they will lose their jobs and which plants will be shut down.

English: <http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/english/116273/Striking-AST-steelworkers-block...>

Latvia

Teachers deliberate strike action

November 13, 2014

Teachers unions are deliberating strike action after talks over investment in education reached a deadlock. The government has said it will allot an extra three million euro for education, which falls far short of the 36 million euro investments unions say are needed to pay decent salaries

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

Lithuania

Average wages in sectors published

November 28, 2014

The statistical office has updated the overview of average wages. The figures are based on the average monthly earnings in a series of sectors and illustrate the wage gap between men and women in the public and private sector.

English: <http://osp.stat.gov.lt/en/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize-2014> ...

Luxembourg

Hotel Le Royal employees to be laid off over renovation works

November 14, 2014

Staff at the Hotel Le Royal may be laid off before the end of the year due to renovations that will be taking place between December 2014 and September 2015. Management of the five star hotel said the works are necessary and denied rumours that a quarter of its staff may be made redundant, stating a maximum of five per cent of employees will be laid off.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/business/hotel-le-royal-renovations> ...

Next wage indexation in 2015?

November 5, 2014

The national statistics office STATEC published forecasts. The inflation rate for 2014 is estimated at 0.7%. This is much less than in the previous year (1.7%). Despite the impending increase in VAT, which comes into force on 1 January 2015, the price increases in 2015 should be at 1.4%. This leaves the next wage index tranche still hanging in the balance. Recent calculations by STATEC reveal that the earliest possible wage index adjustment date will be the second quarter of 2015.

English: <http://www.statistiques.public.lu/en/news/economy-finance/prices> ...

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

Malta

Paramedics take action as ministry refuses to set date for implementation meetings

November 24, 2014

Trade union UHM, who was recently given sole recognition to represent paramedic aides, announced it will be taking industrial action. UHM and the Ministry for Energy and Health had previously reached an agreement over the carrying over of leave days that could not be taken up due to staff shortages, salaries and incentives to increase skills. Since the agreement was reached, however, the ministry has failed to set a date for talks discussing their implementation.

English: <https://www.uhm.org.mt/paramedic-aides-cold-shoulder-ministry-energy-health/>

Netherlands

ING to cut nearly 3,000 jobs

November 25, 2014

ING bank has announced it will be cutting its workforce by 3,000 over the next three years. Dutch media report the layoffs will concern 1700 full time jobs and 1075 part time jobs. Thousands of people have already left the bank in the wake of the financial crisis; they will now be followed by another 3,000 in a process of reorganising the bank's online services. Trade unions have reacted shocked to the size of the dismissals.

English: <http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2014/11/ing-to-cut-3000-jobs> ...

Dutch: <http://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2014/11/25/ing-schrapte-1700-voltijdbanen-en-1075> ...

Lack of enforcement in road projects

November 13, 2014

Based on a report by the research foundation SOMO, the building workers' union FNV has accused the transport ministry's roads department (Rijkswaterstaat) of a passive attitude towards the exploitation of workers despite all the evidence of abuse. The trade union stated that the department has a variety of options to check and monitor building companies working on its behalf but fails to do so. As a major road project client, Rijkswaterstaat has in the past been repeatedly confronted with violations of the law and exploitation of construction workers on its sites, such as on the recent work on the A2 and A4 motorways.

English: <http://somo.nl/news-en/social-risks-at-government-construction-projects>

Home care workers protest against cuts

November 13, 2014

Home care workers organised a protest, handing over a petition with over 159,000 signatures against cuts that will lead to the closure of care centres and redundancies. The Parliament is currently debating a law on long-term care, which aims to bring down costs. Nearly 3,000 home care workers gathered for the protest, demanding jobs, decent working conditions and high quality care services.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/10929>

Members vote determines future of collective agreement in social services

November 6, 2014

After 18 months of negotiations, employers in the welfare and social services sector have made a final offer, on which trade unions members will be balloted. The agreement includes a 1% wage hike as of 1 December 2014 and another 1% per 1 October 2015. In addition, there would be a one-time bonus of €300 in January 2015 and an annual flat increase of €250. Trade union CNV has advised its members to accept the offer, whereas trade union FNV has called on its members to vote against it. FNV's main objections concern the proposed pre-pension arrangement, which would make it more difficult to retire before the legal retirement age, and a set of measures for enterprises employing fewer than 25 workers.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/10920>

Dutch: <https://www.mijnvakbond.nl/Onderhandelaarsresultaat-CAO-Welzijn ...>

<http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/over-ons/nieuws/nieuwsoverzicht/2014/11/eindbod-negatief ...>

Flexible contracts

November 3, 2014

A recent study published by the trade union research institute 'de Burcht' compares the use of flexible contracts in four companies operating in the media and transportation sectors. In those sectors many employees are working on a flex contract or as freelancers. According to the authors, the growth of flexible contracts is not a natural phenomenon caused by globalisation or fickle consumer behaviour, but appears to be a conscious choice. The government has prepared a law (the Law work and security, entering 1 January 2015) that aims to bridge the gap between fixed and flexible contracts.

English: <http://www.nltimes.nl/2014/11/03/flex-workers-losing-permanent-jobs/>

Dutch: <http://www.deburcht.nl/userfiles/file/Flexibele%20arbeid.pdf>

Norway

Job cuts in mining discussed

November 19, 2014

Store Norske, the most northern mining company in the world, has suggested eliminating almost 100 positions in a new operating plan that the board will discuss in a meeting with the union representatives. The management seeks to lay the foundation for the company's talk with their bank and owners in order to find the financing solutions they depend on. Store Norske has a total of 320 employees at Svalbard.

English: <http://www.norwaypost.no/index.php/business/15-oil-a-gasshipping ...>

Union staff go on strike

November 13, 2014

Staff at the retail and office sector of the LO trade union confederation have announced they will be taking strike action. Roughly 150 employees will go on strike, claiming that their colleagues in other LO unions earn higher wages for the same work. The strike will be the first in the history of the LO union confederation.

English: <http://www.newsineenglish.no/2014/11/13/unions-own-staff-to-go-on-strike/>

Poland

Deal on voluntary redundancies

November 25, 2014

PKP Cargo, the biggest railway freight company has concluded an agreement with its employee organisations to carry out a voluntary redundancy programme. PKP Cargo was in a collective dispute with its employees for a considerable time. After the dispute was resolved the company raised salaries and introduced extra bonuses. Before its Warsaw Stock Exchange debut last year it signed a 10-year agreement with employee representatives.

English: <http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/188343,PKP-Cargo-prepares-voluntary...>

Miners occupy company headquarters

November 18, 2014

Two hundred miners have occupied the offices of the EU's largest thermal coal producer, Kompania Weglowa S.A. (KW), in Katowice. The occupation followed news that KW will liquidate the firm, threatening the jobs of 46,000 workers. KW has been facing financial problems for years and is already subject to a social plan in which its workforce reduces by 26,000. However, even with the reorganisation the company has been unable to gather the funds needed to keep it in business. The miners demand to speak to representatives from the labour ministry, which has refused to bailout the company, as well as payment of owed wages. The occupation ended after six days, when the ministry agreed to talks and subsequently gave union representatives guarantees in respect of the company and other mining companies in difficulties.

English: <http://www.industriall-europe.eu/news...>

<http://www.industriall-union.org/200-polish-miners-occupy-company-headquarters>

Portugal

Nurses and railway personnel on strike

November 24, 2014

Nurses organised two country-wide strikes on 14 and 21 November, whereas a strike by ticket inspectors and ticket clerks halted trained across Portugal on 24 November. The workers are protesting the ongoing cuts in the public sector, endangering both working conditions and the quality of services. The nurses' strike went ahead despite a call by the health ministry to cancel it in light of a major legionella outbreak.

English: <http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/train-strike-to-halt-monday-services...>

<http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/health-ministry-asks-nations-nurses-to-call-off-strike...>

Cabin crew strike

November 1, 2014

Portugal Airline cabin crews launched a 24-hour strike. The crews for the TAP Portugal carrier grounded flights causing mass cancellations for nearly half of its 320 scheduled flights and rerouting more than 25,000 passengers. The cabin crews are demanding better working conditions. Currently, the government is preparing to sell the state-owned airline. The cabin crew trade union SNPVAC claims that contracts are being violated and contributing to a continuous and systematic degradation of work conditions at the airline.

English: <http://www.telesurty.net/english/news/Portugal-Airline-Cabin-Crews ...>

Romania

Ford lays off 680 workers

November 19, 2014

Up to 680 of the total 3,200 workers at the Ford Craiova plant will be laid off due to low demand. The car maker has launched a voluntary leave programme that employees can sign up to. A spokesperson confirms that layoffs will follow if not enough people volunteer.

English: <http://www.romania-insider.com/ford-starts-voluntary-leave-program ...>

Collective agreements in social services

November 14, 2014

Workers in social services have new collective agreements. The agreements with negotiated by unions Sanitas, Columna and Publisind, who agreed on a monthly minimum wage in the sector of RON975 (€220) and constitutes a wage hike of RON100. The agreements also cover employment conditions, including wages, working time and holidays, job protection, continuous professional training as employers' responsibility, consultation with the union in case of changes in the organisation and much more.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/10935>

Public sector pay after court decision

November 10, 2014

The public sector workers went to court in 2010 against the state's decision to cut their salaries. The government announced that it could pay this year the due salaries state employees have won in court and which should have been paid gradually, over several years. The amount stands at some EUR 1.2 billion.

English: <http://www.romania-insider.com/romanian-state-could-pay-due-salaries ...>

Focus on the court decision:

http://www.labourlawnetwork.eu/national_labour_law_latest_country_reports ...

Serbia

Teachers against pay cuts

November 17, 2014

After the government refused to exempt teachers from public-sector salary reductions, the trade unions in education have cut classes from 45 to 30 minutes in a strike. The new budget, adopted on October 22, includes wage cuts of 10% across the board in the public sector. A spokesperson of the unions said teachers were well aware of the difficult economic situation, but wanted the burden of the crisis more equally distributed. While the average salary in the public sector is 70,000 dinars (585 euro) a month, in education the average salary is 42,000 dinars (342 euro).

English: <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/175663-serbia-teachers-strike-over-pay-cuts ...>

Massive care workers' protest against austerity

November 5, 2014

Tens of thousands of doctors, nurses, pharmacists and medical staff launched a one-day strike against the government's austerity measures. Medical trade unions representing some 80% of more than 160,000 employees called the work stoppage in protest at a planned 10% cut in all wages paid from the state budget. The strike followed work stoppages in several other sectors over pay and salary cuts.

English: <http://en.europeonline-magazine.eu/thousands-of-serbian-health-care-workers ...>

Slovakia

Extension of agreements leads to higher wages

November 24, 2014

A robust growth of the minimum wage, an extension of higher collective agreements and changes in temporary employment are the developments with the biggest impact on the labour market in 2014. A revision of the law on collective bargaining, valid as of the beginning of 2014, has reintroduced the extension of higher-level collective agreements to all businesses in a given sector that have not signed individually. The Confederation of Trade Unions (KOZ) praises the revision, pointing out that workers sheltered by collective agreements have 17-19 percent higher wages compared to those who work for employers where such agreements are not signed.

English: http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/55902/3/more_pro_employee_measures...

Parliament discusses equal pay for temp workers

November 24, 2014

Parliament is discussing a draft law that imposes equal pay for temporary workers as well as a cap on temporary assignments. The law, if adopted, would give temporary agency workers the same wages as permanent workers if they do the same work. In cases where temp workers earn less, the law makes the temp agencies liable for paying the missing amount. The law includes a 24-month and five contract cap, preventing companies from employing someone for several years without offering a permanent position.

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

Report on poverty

November 1, 2014

A survey, which was conducted in September, canvassed the views of 1,043 respondents. It was carried out within a project entitled 'What to Do About Poverty'. 34% of the respondents said that a four-member family needs at least €900 per month in order to be able to live a modest but decent life. Another 34% said that it needs at least €1,200. Furthermore, 94% think that poverty is a problem or very serious problem.

English: http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/55671/2/slovaks_aware_of_poverty...

Slovenia

Unions say no to privatisation

November 10, 2014

The joint trade unions have called for a rally in front of the government building to demand a halt in the ongoing privatisation drive in the country, which they believe is 'aimless'. Representatives of all seven trade union confederations argued that the country lacks a strategy to answer questions about how it wants to manage state assets and what the sale of state companies could mean for the employees and the country's development. They call for conditions to be put in place to make privatisation process transparent: including improvements to the takeover act, boosting the role of state institutions in the procedures and protecting shop stewards and worker representatives on management and supervisory boards.

English: <http://www.sloveniatimes.com/unions-to-hold-anti-privatisation-rally>

Negotiations on public wages stagnate

November 6, 2014

Government proposals of a voluntary shorter working week, reduction of the bonus for years of service and lower lunch allowance, as well as lower compensation for commuting costs were rejected by the trade unions. They see the move of the government as a fresh set of measures to cut the public sector wage bill. The unions concede to the extension of existing savings measures and they are willing to debate the shorter working week and commuting costs, but they deemed other measures unacceptable.

English: <http://www.sloveniatimes.com/deal-between-unions-and-govt-impossible>

Spain

Prosecution of union leaders

November 28, 2014

More than 40 legal proceedings are underway against trade unionists who took part in general or sector-wide strikes protesting against the austerity measures imposed by the Spanish government. The two main trade union confederations, CC.OO. and the Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT), have denounced the criminal prosecution of trade unionists before the Public Prosecution Service and the courts. Some 300 trade unionists are currently facing administrative and penal proceedings.

English: <http://www.equaltimes.org/spain-where-trade-union-leaders ...>

The curse of youth unemployment

November 7, 2014

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report in September puts the developed world average for youths who are neither in employment nor in education at 15%. Spain fares poorly in the report: 31% of people without a high school diploma are out of work, compared with an average of 15%, while 20% of those who did graduate from high school are also unemployed, compared with an OECD average of 16%. At the same time 23% of university graduates are jobless, compared with a developed world average of 13%. The question is how to motivate youngsters to seek work or study in such a situation.

English: <http://elpais.com/elpais/2014/11/07/inenglish ...>

Agreement on respect for labour standards in construction

November 3, 2014

The international building workers federation BWI and the national affiliates have signed an International Framework Agreement with the construction companies Sacyr, Acciona and Dragados. The agreement constitutes a formal recognition of social partnership at the global level. It provides a framework for protecting trade union rights and encouraging social dialogue and collective bargaining, with a view to maintaining good working conditions and industrial relations.

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

Sweden

Half of under 25s in temporary jobs

November 20, 2014

Recent figures presented by trade union confederation LO show that half of the working young Swedes under 25 are on fixed term contracts, compared to 20% of the workforce as a whole. The unions report that many young people have to be constantly reachable on their mobile phones in order to be able to work intermittent days in temporary jobs.

English: <http://www.thelocal.se/20141120/half-of-young-swedes-in-temporary-jobs>

SAS replaces staff in dispute over facilities

November 19, 2014

SAS will dismiss 100 Swedish cabin staff workers. Beginning in February 2015, the workers will be replaced by Norwegian personnel. The dismissals are the result of a dispute between the airline and the Swedish cabin trade union. Norwegian cabin crews do not have the same requirements for rest facilities in their collective agreements, so they can take over from the Swedish cabin crews.

English: <http://cphpost.dk/news/sas-cuts-100-swedish-jobs ...>

Working in Norway not always a success

November 8, 2014

Research from the Oslo University reveals that being a guest worker in Norway may not be as idealistic as it seems because many companies are breaking employment rules to save money. The western neighbour has developed into an extremely popular option for jobless Swedes because of its booming economy. It is pointed out that among the ways Swedes were being mistreated included jobs without written contracts, unpaid trial shifts, and different working conditions and lower salaries than their Norwegian counterparts.

English: <http://www.licenews.is/2014/11/08/swedes-told-of-risks-of-working-in-norway/>

Switzerland

Controversial referendum on limiting migration

November 30, 2014

Voters in Switzerland have decisively rejected a proposal to introduce severe immigration quotas. The trade unions campaigned against the initiative that was advocated by the so-called Ecopop group. It sought to limit immigration to 0.2% of net population growth – effectively about 16,000 people annually. Over the past few years, net immigration was about 80,000 people on average. The country's 26 cantons rejected the proposal, with about 74% of people voting no in the referendum. In the weeks before the referendum observers found it difficult to judge how the 30 November vote would swing.

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

<http://www.dw.de/switzerland-tackles-immigration-yet-again ...>

<http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/-ecopop-campaign-takes-to-the-streets ...>

Public transport staff strike in Geneva

November 19, 2014

Geneva drivers of streetcars and busses have organised a one day strike, halting virtually all public transport in the capital. The drivers are protesting against budget cuts and expected job reductions. Members of the union voted 93 percent in favour of the work stoppage to protest an "austerity" budget for transit and the planned reduction of 100 jobs.

English: <http://www.thelocal.ch/20141119/strike-grinds-geneva-public-transit-to-halt>

Turkey

Kazova workers start cooperative

November 14, 2014

Kazova Workers, a group of textile workers who launched an occupation protest after being fired with no repartitions or deserved wages in early 2013 and obtained their own factory machines after months of struggle, have formed a cooperative. The court had ruled that their former employers had to hand them their machines in return to unpaid salaries. The cooperative will continue to produce sweaters and also open a workshop and factory. The goal is to start producing as soon as possible.

English: <http://bianet.org/english/labor/159950-kazova-workers-now-struggle-to-launch ...>

Deva Holdings denies bargaining rights

November 6, 2014

The third largest pharmaceutical company in the country, Deva Holding, has a notorious record. Already in 2010 Deva used a range of union busting tactics to dismantle a 40-year industrial relations system at plants in Çerkezköy, Kartepé and the Topkapı area of Istanbul. Deva Holdings sacked 74 employees at that stage when they refused to replace their collective agreement with individual contracts. In recent years similar

actions of union busting have taken place culminating this summer in the sacking of workers for exercising their right to join the trade union Petrol-Is. On 14 October, 2014 the government instructed Deva Holdings in an official directive to begin collective bargaining with Petrol-Is as its recognised bargaining partner. But, instead of respecting the authority and findings of the Ministry of Labour, Deva management declared to its workers that the company will never recognise or bargain with any union.

English: <http://www.industriall-union.org/deva-holdings-must-stop-attacking-its-workers ...>

Court approves association right

November 2, 2014

The Constitutional Court has abolished some provisions of a law that prevented workers from organising in trade unions, but experts remain cautious, as significant challenges to workers' rights to organise remain. The court cancelled several provisions of Law No. 6356 on trade unions and collective bargaining agreements. However, a major hurdle still blocks unionisation by workers: the nationwide threshold of 3 percent required for the unions to bargain collectively for members' wages and working conditions.

English: http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_barrier-to-unionization-removed ...

United Kingdom

The changing picture of poverty

November 24, 2014

Insecure, low-paid jobs are leaving record numbers of working families in poverty, with two-thirds of people who found work in 2013 taking jobs for less than the living wage, according to the latest annual report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, written by the New Policy Institute. The report focuses on money, housing, work, benefits and services, among other indicators. The key points are highlighted in an infographic and summary. Though the number of unemployed for over a year decreased for the first time in a decade and unemployment fell by 300,000 in 2013, wages have fallen, for men and women, working full and part time, for low and high earners.

English: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/monitoring-poverty-and-social-exclusion-2014>

NHS workers strike again

November 24, 2014

For the second time in a month tens of thousands members of 11 trade unions walked out for four hours in England and Northern Ireland in protest at the coalition government's controversial decision not to accept a recommended 1% wage rise for all NHS employees (NHS workers in Scotland and Wales will be getting a 1% pay rise and the Living Wage). There were picket lines on every acute hospital, ambulance station and across many community health services. Workers provided life and limb cover and cared for anyone in need of emergency treatment.

English: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/nov/24/nhs-workers-to-stage ...>

Defence staff on strike

November 17, 2014

Workers at the Defence Support Group, which is in charge of maintenance and repairs of Defence equipment, organised a four day strike over a wage offer of 1%. The main sites affected by the industrial action were Bovington, Dorset; Catterick, North Yorkshire; Colchester, Essex; Donnington, Shropshire; Stirling and Warminster, Wiltshire. The workers are angry about a wage offer that falls below the inflation rate as well as anxious about their jobs after announcements that the group will be privatised next year.

English: <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-30074422>

Significant increase in the national minimum wage needed

November 6, 2014

The trade union confederation TUC handed over its submission to the Low Pay Commission (LPC) on the national minimum wage. According to the TUC the economy not only can support a significant increase beyond £7, but there is a growing consensus that it will benefit long term growth and stability. While the minimum wage rose above inflation in October 2014 for the first time in four years, at £6.50 it is still well below the peak of its real value. The government must increase the minimum wage by more than the rate of inflation to avoid putting even further financial strain on low-wage families.

English: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/economic-issues/labour-market-and-economic-reports ...>

Landmark decision on overtime

November 4, 2014

The Scottish Employment Appeal Tribunal formulated a landmark ruling on holiday pay. Trade unions welcomed the decision on test cases, which could lead to claims by hundreds of thousands of workers who do voluntary overtime. The tribunal's ruling looked at whether variable elements of pay, such as overtime and allowances, should be included in holiday pay calculations. The tribunal stated that article 7 of the Working Time Directive is to be interpreted such that payments for overtime are part of normal remuneration and to be included as such in the calculation of pay for holiday leave taken under Regulation 13 of the Working Time Regulations 1998.

English: <http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/home-news/employment-appeal-tribunal ...>

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For more information, please contact the editor Jan Cremers, Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies (AIAS) cbn-alias@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).

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