

# COLLECTIVE BARGAINING NEWSLETTER



**ETUI-REHS**  
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RESEARCH  
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This newsletter presents up-to-date information on collective bargaining developments across Europe. It aims to facilitate information exchange between trade unions and to support the work of the ETUC's collective bargaining committee.

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## AUSTRIA

### Successful negotiations in the construction and wood trades

*April 10, 2008*

The Austrian Metals, textiles and food union (Gewerkschaft Metall-Textil-Nahrung, GMTN) reports the successful negotiating of a collective agreement for the 22,000 office workers in the construction industry, that runs for one year from 1 May, 2008. Wages will be increased by 3.7% in 2008, and at the end by a further 3.55% from 1 May, 2009. At the same time, the colleagues of the Construction and wood workers' union (Gewerkschaft Bau-Holz, GBH) succeeded to negotiate a wage increase of the same magnitude for 20,000 workers in the wood and sawmill industry. From 1 May 2008, monthly paid wages will rise 3.7%, and all other wages 3.5%. In both industries, a number of improvements for apprentices have been realized. Both agreements lay down increases 0.4-0.6%pts higher than the average pay rise for 2008 agreed thus far in Austria.

(German:

[http://www.gmtn.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GMT/Page/GMT\\_Index&n=GMT\\_0.a&cid=1206108399566](http://www.gmtn.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GMT/Page/GMT_Index&n=GMT_0.a&cid=1206108399566);  
[http://www.bau-holz.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GBH/Page/GBH\\_Index&n=GBH\\_0](http://www.bau-holz.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GBH/Page/GBH_Index&n=GBH_0))

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## BELGIUM / LUXEMBOURG

### Prime ministers support wage indexation

*April 8, 2008*

In answering press questions, the new Belgian prime minister Yves Leterme, visiting Luxembourg, and his Luxembourg colleague Jean-Claude Juncker stated to continue supporting the system of wage indexation prevailing in both countries. They did so despite recent criticism of the president of the European Central Bank (ECB), Jean-Claude Trichet. Prime minister Juncker argued that "countries without an index do not show a better performance, neither in terms of inflation nor in terms of growth or job creation".

(Dutch: [http://www.wvs-sws.be/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=18809&Itemid=926](http://www.wvs-sws.be/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=18809&Itemid=926); *De Standaard*, 8 April 2008)

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## CROATIA

### Minimum wage law deadline

*March 19, 2008*

The Croatian government has stated that it will put forward its own legislation to introduce an official national minimum wage by May 1, 2008, if before that date no agreement on this subject can be reached with employers' associations and trade unions. All parties favour the idea of such a minimum wage in principle, but there have been prolonged arguments over the level at which the rate should be set. Employers advocate to start with 35% of the national average wage, which the unions regard as too low. At present, minimum pay in Croatia is effectively determined by the minimum income threshold set for social security purposes. In the beginning of 2008, that threshold was raised by 6.2% to HRK 2,441.25 (Euro 333) per month.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 3/2008)

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## CZECH REPUBLIC

### Union confederation wants renegotiation of agreements

*March 19, 2008*

The CMKOS (Czech Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions - Czech Republic) union confederation has called for the renegotiation of collective agreements concluded for 2008, after the annualised consumer price inflation reached 7.5% in

January. The demand coincides with CMKOS's first-ever general strike alert, direct against government's tax reforms. There is no precedent for reopening pay deals in force, and both government and business leaders say there is no need for that. Government states that price inflation would be down to 3.4% by yearend, but CMKOS challenges that forecast. Whatever the outcome of the controversy, CMKOS's 32 affiliates are likely to put pressure for compensation clauses in future collective agreements. At present, such clauses are rare in the Czech Republic, although the current agreement at car maker Skoda contains one.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 3/2008)

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## DENMARK

### Substantial wage increases in state sector

March 19, 2008

State sector trade union members are currently being balloted over a new three-year agreement worth 12.8%. The major part (8.17%) will be spent on general wage increases while 2.2% has been set aside as 'pool funding' for other improvements. In addition to this, the regulator mechanism (which ensures a parallel wage development between the public and private sector) and local wage developments will account for 2.23% of the increase. A new element is compensation to state employees for the growth in fringe/staff benefits in the private sector. This is set at 0.2% and means that the wage difference between the state and the private sector has been narrowed by 0.2% on a permanent basis. The general pay increase thus amounts to 8.37% over the next 3 years (the 8.17% in general wage increases plus the 0.2% compensation for fringe/staff benefits). The agreed wage increases guarantee a real wage development each year. Overall this is the largest wage hike in the state sector since 1987. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 2).

(English: [http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=254#a3695](http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=254#a3695))

### International pressure on ISS through Goldman Sachs

April 9, 2008

On 9 April, workers in 12 countries went to more than 20 offices of Goldman Sachs to point out that Goldman has the opportunity to advance the cause of working women through its private equity ownership of the Danish multinational facilities management giant, ISS. ISS employs more than 300,000 women in over 50 countries— mostly in the part-time and low wage cleaning industry. Goldman recently ran ads profiling its new "10,000 women" program through which it provides for education and other advancement for women in developing countries. UNI's leaflet points out that a global agreement with UNI means progress for more than 300,000 women. ISS has a global agreement with UNI which expires in May, 2008. Discussions for a new agreement have been under way since last spring, but ISS has not yet made a concrete proposal. UNI Property Services unions around the globe aim to achieve an agreement with ISS in which both parties take responsibility for their common interest in raising standards across the markets in which ISS operates.

(English: [http://www.union-](http://www.union-network.org/UNIFlashes.nsf/By+Date/76E5AF870D6225EFC1257426002C9C3B?OpenDocument)

[network.org/UNIFlashes.nsf/By+Date/76E5AF870D6225EFC1257426002C9C3B?OpenDocument](http://www.union-network.org/UNIFlashes.nsf/By+Date/76E5AF870D6225EFC1257426002C9C3B?OpenDocument))

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## FINLAND

### Transport and dock workers' strike yields results

April 3, 2008

Finnish transport and dock workers ended their five-day strike for increased wages on 3 April, when the main union involved in the dispute signed an agreement with management that had been proposed by the national incomes conciliator Juhani Salonius. The agreement implies an extension of the new contract from just 10 months to three years. Under the new agreement, transport workers will receive a 3.5% pay rise in April 2008 and another 1.4% in October 2008, which is about . The total pay increase will be 12-14%, which is 0.7%pts higher than the average pay rise for 2008 agreed thus far in Finland. The strike involved around 10,000 workers at 70 bus and road haulage companies and 12 freight terminals. Over 5,000 dockworkers and members of the seamen's union took strike action in support of the transport workers.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 3/2008;

<http://www.wsws.org/articles/2000/apr2000/lab-a06.shtml>)

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## FRANCE

### **Air France flight assistants reject salary plan**

*March 21, 2008*

In March, Air France hostesses and stewards objected to a new salary plan. According to union sources, the salary plan for flight assistants that was drafted by the company after dealings with three unions - CGT, CFDT and Unac - was rejected by hostesses and stewards who carried out an internal referendum: 65% of those that voted said 'no' to the plan. Already in January, Air France had failed to reach an agreement with the body representing 60% of its workers (SNPNC, Unsa, FO, SUD, and CFTC).

(English: <http://www.agi.it/business/news/200803212049-eco-ren0080-art.html>; French: *La Tribune*, 20 March 2008).

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## GERMANY

### **Union recommends employers' pay offer in federal and local government**

*April 9, 2008*

The ver.di union is recommending to its members that they accept a new offer from the federal and local government employers. Ver.di's collective bargaining committee voted 64-25 in favour of the employers' latest offer, which is a significant improvement both on earlier offers and on the proposals from the arbitration committee. If backed by the ver.di membership, the deal will mean an increase in 2008 of at least Euro 50 a month plus 3.1%. These figures translate into a 7.11% increase for those on the lowest pay scale. The increase in 2009 will be 2.8% plus a Euro 225 lump sum. There will be a 30-minute increase in weekly working time in some areas in the West of the country while weekly working hours will remain at 40 in the East. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No's 1 and 2).

(English: [http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=256#a3737](http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=256#a3737);

German: [http://tarif-oed.verdi.de/tarifrunden/oed-tarifrunde\\_2008/materialien\\_flugblaetter\\_2007\\_2008](http://tarif-oed.verdi.de/tarifrunden/oed-tarifrunde_2008/materialien_flugblaetter_2007_2008))

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## IRELAND

### **ICTU concerned as inflation rises**

*April 10, 2008*

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) has expressed serious concern at new figures which show that the annual rate of inflation increased to 5% in March. ICTU has said the rising cost of living will have serious implications for pay talks. The warning comes as the latest consumer price index from the Central Statistics Office reveal the annual rate of inflation has increased to 5% during March from 4.8% during February. Two months ago Ireland's inflation rate was down to 4.3% and most forecasters predicted it would ease considerably further throughout the year. Since then that food and energy prices have risen globally and a significant knock on effect on consumer prices has been unavoidable. The new figures show that overall the cost of housing electricity and other fuels has risen by 12.3% in a year, while the overall cost of food and non-alcoholic beverages is up by 9.3%.

(English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2008/0410/inflation.html>, via <http://www.labourstart.org>)

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## LITHUANIA

### **Support for teachers' strike**

*March 29, 2008*

Lithuanian teachers - members of the Lithuanian Education Employees Trade Union- launched a indefinite strike on 3 March, demanding that the government raise their wages immediately by 50%. Staff from nearly 200 out of 1400 schools were participating in the strike when it started, leaving thousands of pupils out of school. By late March, union leaders in

Estonia and Latvia threw their support behind the striking teachers. Officials of the Estonian Teachers Union said they believed that conditions for Lithuanian teachers were appalling due to low pay, receiving 640 Euros a month, and a work load they described as excessive. The leader of the Lithuanian union, Aleksas Bruzas, stated that the union would not back down until the government took their problems seriously.

(English: [http://www.sussexineurope.org/news\\_2.htm#Lithuania](http://www.sussexineurope.org/news_2.htm#Lithuania); <http://www.teachersolidarity.com/blog/?p=61#more-61>)

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## NETHERLANDS

### **Negotiators reach University Medical Centres agreement**

*March 26, 2008*

Negotiators have reached agreement for the 60,000 employees covered by the University Medical Centres collective agreement. These employees will see their pay increase in three stages between now and 2010: the 2008 increase of 2.1% will be followed by two increases of 1.95% in March 2009 and March 2010. There will also be increases in the end-of-year payments worth 1% in 2008, 1.5% in 2009 and 1.55% in 2010. The agreement runs from 1 January 2008 to 1 March 2011. The major ABVAKABO FNV union advises their membership to accept the agreement, but the independent NU '91 union regards the result as unacceptable considering the position of the nursing staff.

(English: [http://www.epso.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=254#a3690](http://www.epso.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=254#a3690);

Dutch: [http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/eindelijk\\_onderhandelaarsakkoord\\_cao\\_umc](http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/eindelijk_onderhandelaarsakkoord_cao_umc); <http://www.nu91.nl>)

### **Unions recommend new collective agreement in social work sector**

*March 26, 2008*

After five months of intensive negotiations, a new agreement in the social work sector is being recommended by trade union negotiators to their members. The agreement runs from 1 November 2007 to 1 March 2010 and will include two main pay increases, 3% from 1 March 2008 and 2.5% from 1 March 2009. A change in the pay structure will also mean that many workers covered by the agreement will get a 0.5% increase from 1 January 2009. There will be a Euro 125 lump sum payment in February 2010. The agreement includes changes in working hours arrangements for older workers. Those aged 58 can reduce their hours by 10% with a 5% cut in pay, while those aged 59 can reduce their hours by 20% with a 7.5% reduction in salary. Those aged 61.5 can also reduce their hours by 20% but with no reduction in pay.

(English: [http://www.epso.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=254#a3690](http://www.epso.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=254#a3690); Dutch:

[http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/onderhandelaarsakkoord\\_voor\\_sociale\\_werkvoorziening](http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/onderhandelaarsakkoord_voor_sociale_werkvoorziening))

### **Metal and technique agreement improves position of craftsmen**

*March 24, 2008*

After four weeks of strikes and negotiations, unions and employers in the Dutch 'metal and technique' industry, employing 410,000 workers and encompassing installation technology, assembly shops, garages and the like, reached a basic collective agreement. The agreement covers 22 months. It includes a pay increase of 3.5% and a Euro 200 lump sum from 1 April 2008, a Euro 200 lump sum in December 2008, 3% from 1 February 2009, and a lump sum of Euro 400 in November 2009. Moreover, the final level of the craftsmen grades B – F will rise 3%. A number of new arrangements have been included concerning training and re-integration of disabled workers. The FNV Bondgenoten union negotiators recommend this result to the membership. Jan Berghuis, responsible officer of this union, notably acclaims the improvements in the position of craftsmen. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 2).

(Dutch: <http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/nieuws/actueel/773365>)

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## NORWAY

### **Unions win early retirement and substantial pay deal**

*April 9, 2008*

Negotiations last week between Norwegian unions, the NHO employers' organisation and the government ended with a

positive result for the trade unions as the government agreed to extra funding to continue to provide early retirement pensions. The official retirement age in Norway is 67, but workers can retire from 62 on a slightly reduced pension. The agreement ensures that workers still have this option as well as being able to continue working. The negotiations also resulted in a 5.6% pay increase covering mainly private sector workers, with higher increases for the lower paid. The collective agreements covered by the negotiations include the private sector nurses and health care agreement.

(English: [http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=256#a3737](http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=256#a3737);  
[http://www.lo.no/portal/page/portal/LONO/PAG\\_NOR\\_DYN/PAG\\_ENG\\_ARTIKKEL?p\\_d\\_i=-121&p\\_d\\_c=&p\\_d\\_v=126742&p\\_d\\_i=-321&p\\_d\\_c=&p\\_d\\_v=126742](http://www.lo.no/portal/page/portal/LONO/PAG_NOR_DYN/PAG_ENG_ARTIKKEL?p_d_i=-121&p_d_c=&p_d_v=126742&p_d_i=-321&p_d_c=&p_d_v=126742))

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## POLAND

### Dockers in Gdynia win agreement

*April 3, 2008*

Negotiations following 13 days of strike action by dockers in the Polish port of Gdynia over pay and other issues have led to an agreement between the management board of the Baltic Container Terminal in Gdynia and the strike committee. Five hundred dockers began an indefinite strike in the port on 20 March after they rejected a pay offer from management. Workers' demands also included an end to the violation of safety at work regulations; the restoration of double staffing on travelling cranes and in cool containers for safety reasons and allowing technical support employees to carry out overtime rather than outsource the work. Kazimierz Waldowski, Chairman of the ITF-affiliated dockers' union Solidarność, stated that the agreement was a success for all parties. He also thanked the ITF, the ETF and the Water Transport Unions' Federation of Latvia for their support during the strike.

(English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/1888>;  
<http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/1871>)

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## ROMANIA

### Dacia car workers' strike results in 23% pay rise

*April 11, 2008*

On 11 April, workers at Renault's Dacia plant in southern Romania returned to work and ended a 19-day strike, after management decided to raise employees' wages by on average 23% in 2008. The Dacia management had initially offered 19%. Dacia is the maker of the Logan model series of cheaper cars developed for emerging markets but which also became a success in western countries. The Logan has played a big part in Renault's bid to boost overall sales in the world and is now made in many countries. The Romanian car workers will receive a pay rise of around 435 lei (Euro 120) a month, on top of their average monthly wage of 1,900 lei (Euro 524). A source close to Renault estimated the total costs of the strike, including lost production, at Euro 50 million. The struggle of the Dacia workers was supported by the European Metalworkers' Federation (EMF). The EMF earlier welcomed the Romanian court's ruling that the Dacia strike action was completely legal.

(English: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/feedarticle?id=7454748>, via <http://www.labourstart.org>;  
[http://www.emf-fem.org/press/press\\_releases/the\\_struggle\\_of\\_dacia\\_workers\\_is\\_the\\_struggle\\_of\\_all\\_european\\_workers](http://www.emf-fem.org/press/press_releases/the_struggle_of_dacia_workers_is_the_struggle_of_all_european_workers))

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## SLOVAKIA

### Engineering workers win 6.5% pay increase

*March 26, 2008*

In mid-March, after tough negotiations and under the threat of a general strike, negotiations in Slovakia's engineering industry finally produced a deal implying a 6.5% wage rise for basic rates, to take effect from 1 April 2008. OZ KOVO, the metalworkers' union, originally demanded a 7% increase while the employer delegation of the Slovak Engineering Industry Association (ZSP) had responded with a 3% offer. The industry includes major car makers Volkswagen, PSA Peugeot-Citroen and Kia. It has to be added that in Slovak engineering basic tariff rates account for only 60% of total wages, which averages about SKK 21,000 (Euro 630) a month including bonuses and other incentive payments: the pay hike does not



cover these. Yet, after the agreement AVC Čadca, an important supplier of car producers, left the employers' association, criticising the agreement for giving too many privileges to the trade unions.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 3/2008;

<http://www.spectator.sk/articles/viewcat/3/3;>

[http://www.spectator.sk/articles/view/31254/3/avc\\_cadca\\_leaves\\_the\\_engineering\\_industry\\_association.html](http://www.spectator.sk/articles/view/31254/3/avc_cadca_leaves_the_engineering_industry_association.html))

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## SPAIN

### Unions win pay increase to end Ministry of Justice strike

March 26, 2008

After two months of strike action, trade unions in the Ministry of Justice have agreed a deal that provides for a Euro 190 pay increase for around 10,000 workers. The increase will be paid in two instalments: Euro 160 in 2008 and a further Euro 30 in 2009, together with a one-off payment of Euro 480. The dispute was over major discrepancies in pay between workers at the Ministry and those doing similar jobs but who had been transferred to the regions and were earning around Euro 200 a month more. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 2).

(English: [http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=256#a3737](http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=256#a3737);

Spanish: <http://www.fspugt.es/index.php/mod.noticias/mem.detalle/idnoticia.3854/cat.1029>;

<http://www.fsap.ccoo.es/webfsap/menu.do?Actualidad:Sindical:Actualidad:20786>)

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## UNITED KINGDOM

### Coastguards organise second one-day strike

April 11, 2008

With no progress on pay negotiations, employees of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) took a second day of strike action on 11 April. The PCS trade union has been in a long-running dispute over pay, arguing that coastguard watch assistants have a starting salary (UKP 12,097 – Euro 15,100) that is little more than the minimum wage. Mark Serwotka, PCS general secretary, commented: "The strength of feeling amongst dedicated coastguard staff is self evident following the strong support for their first strike. The government needs to reassess in policy of capping pay to avoid unnecessary industrial action and start valuing its own workforce with fair and just pay." The MCA is just one of nine UK government agencies and departments that have faced strike action over pay in recent months.

(English: [http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=256#a3737](http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=256#a3737);

<http://www.pcs.org.uk/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=918722>)

### Unions express disappointment at pay offer of local governments

April 9, 2008

After two months of industrial action, local government employers have made a 'final offer' of a 2.45% pay increase with an extra UKP 100 (Euro 125) on lower pay rates. While this is an improvement on the previous offer of 2.2%, it falls well short of the trade unions' claim for 6% or 50p per hour. Unions will consult over the offer, with UNISON recommending rejection. The other unions involved, GMB and Unite, have also expressed their disappointment at the employers' offer. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No's 1 and 2).

(English: [http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=256#a3737](http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=256#a3737);

[http://www.unison.org.uk/news/news\\_view.asp?did=4163](http://www.unison.org.uk/news/news_view.asp?did=4163);

<http://www.gmb.org.uk/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=96860>)

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[aias.net](http://aias.net).

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