

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING NEWSLETTER



ETUI-REHS
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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

Growing recourse to short-time arrangements

December 18, 2008

According to press information in December a growing number of companies is taking recourse to short-time arrangements, notably to the official "Kurzarbeitsbeihilfe" or "Kurzarbeit" (short-time support) provided by the Arbeitsmarktservice (AMS). This support can be offered for maximum three months to employers, in case of cuts in wages because of shortening working hours, provided that these cuts are due to substantial and persistent disturbances of economic activities. The level of support is derived from the unemployment benefit level. In order to qualify for short-time support, companies need to agree with the relevant workers' representatives on compensation above that level.

The largest and most frequent calls upon the Kurzarbeit arrangement stem from the steel industry, notably from the Voest-Alpine conglomerate, and from subcontractors of the car industry, but also chemical and wood manufacturers call upon the arrangement. In answer to critics the Metal and Textile Workers Union (GMTN) and the Union for employees in private industry, journalists, printing and paper industry (GPA-djp) have recently defended the Kurzarbeit model, as a workable and clear-cut defense line against the phasing out of employment.

(German: <http://www.ams.at/sfu/14087.html>; <http://portal.tt.com/tt/home/story.csp?cid=1012399&sid=57&fid=21>; http://www.gpa-djp.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GPA/Page/Index&n=GPA_0.a&cid=1228484918298)

3.55% pay increase for public sector workers

December 19, 2008

After four rounds of negotiations the public sector trade unions GÖD and GdG agreed to accept a 3.55% increase for 2009 for the 350,000 public sector workers. The union boards see this as a positive result in view of the difficult economic circumstances and were determined to secure increases to pay and rejected any lump sum payments as part of the deal. Salary increases are negotiated each year and apply from 1 January. The increase also applies to other elements of pay and allowances. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 8).

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/280>; German: <http://www.goed.at/14801.html>; http://www.gdg.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=C01/Page/Index&n=C01_0.a&cid=1227275602238)

Private health and social care workers get 3.6% increase

December 19, 2008

The GPA-DJP and vida trade unions have negotiated a 3.6% pay increase for the 75,000 workers covered by the BAGS collective agreement. The increase applies from 1 January 2009 and includes other salary-related payments. An important element of the deal is the agreement by the employers to take on training costs. The BAGS covers workers involved in the care of the disabled and the elderly as well as childcare workers and other occupations. The agreement was introduced in some regions in 2004 only on the basis of setting minimum rates of pay, but its pay structure will now be applied in full and this will mean increases of 4% and higher for some workers.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/280>; German: http://www.gpa-djp.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GPA/Page/Index&n=GPA_0.a&cid=1227275599571; http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=S03/Page/Index&n=S03_0.a&cid=1227275602291)

BELGIUM

National accord received with reservations

December 25, 2008

On 22 December, the three union confederations have agreed upon the new national agreement (so-called inter-professional accord or IPA) for 2009-2010. Board members of the three confederations call it an exceptional accord for exceptional times and emphasize that the result does not bring them in a jubilant mood. They regard as positive points the continuation of the country's automatic indexation system, higher freedom from taxes for employees' commuting costs (net Euro 250) and for meal costs, improvement of social benefits through repartition and higher benefits for temporary unemployment. There were considerable reservations among union militants in discussing the accord results, especially in the ABVV/FGTB confederation, where 68.7% voted in favour of the accord. Militants projected the outcomes against the lack of obligations for employers to preserve employment, seen against the backdrop of huge state support for finance and manufacturing firms.

(Dutch: <http://www.sociare.be/page?&orl=1&ssn=&lng=1&page=nieuws&nws=753>;
<http://www.pvda.be/nl/nieuws/artikel/article/ipa-2009-2010-echt-zon-uitzonderlijk-akkoord.html>)

BULGARIA

Government refuses minimum wage claim

December 15, 2008

In discussions with employers' associations and trade union confederations on the 2009 budget, the government has stuck to its plan for an 8.3% increase in the national minimum wage from 1 January 2009, taking it to BGN 240 (Euro 120) per month. Earlier, the CITUB and Podkrepa union confederations had called for a 18.2% hike. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No.'s 7, 8 and 9).

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 12/2008)

CROATIA

Total pay freeze abandoned

December 16, 2008

Prime minister Ivo Sanader has abandoned the idea of a total freeze on pay increases in both the private and public sectors as part of the nation's response to the global economic crisis, an idea that he floated mid-November. Instead, the government has been seeking to defer a previously agreed 6% rise in public-sector pay due on 1 January 2009. Government negotiators offered public sector unions a succession of formulae under which the award would be met only in part. However, the unions continued to insist it to be delivered in full. Finally, the government gave in; instead it slashed expenditures for a costly public health reform and also reduced some infrastructural investments. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 9).

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 12/2008;
<http://balkaninsight.com/en/main/news/15578>)

CZECH REPUBLIC

State employees could get higher than planned pay rise

December 19, 2008

The 2009 pay rise for civil servants will be 6.6% rather than 5%, according to a Czech news report on a parliamentary vote on December 10. The minister for labour proposed the higher increase in response to current economic conditions and a large majority of MPs supported the proposal, although the finance minister was among the small minority voting against. However, the overall budget still has to be approved by President Vaclav Klaus.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/280>; http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/tema/index_view.php?id=349098&id_seznam=2185)

ESTONIA

Unions demand national minimum wage hike

December 30, 2008

Harri Taliga, chairman of the Estonian Central Union of Trade Unions, told a newspaper to have reason to believe that the government and central employers' organization have agreed in advance not to increase the minimum wage. Taliga claims that the Employers' Confederation had agreed to increase the minimum wage by the previous year's inflation rate which means that the 2009 minimum wage should be 10% higher than in 2008: "Now they have retracted from their promise." The Employers' Confederation chairman Tarmo Kriis denied such agreement with the government. He said that the opinion of employers is to wait until statistical data about the economic growth of the first quarter 2009 is available. Trade unions are demanding that the new minimum wage should be EEK 4,750 a month (Euro 304), an uplift of EEK 400 (Euro 25.58) or 9.2%. The Central Union of Trade Unions has decided to ask its membership at an extraordinary meeting in January, which action to take as to raise the minimum wage.

(English: <http://www.balticbusinessnews.com/Default2.aspx?ArticleID=7c63c235-0be8-4ffb-a2eb-3331b1529f47>)

FINLAND

Finnair staff to be sent with unpaid leave

December 2, 2008

Finnair has announced plans to temporarily lay off up to 1,700 cabin stewards and air hostesses next year to cut costs. The staggered layoffs, mostly in April and May 2009, will last about two weeks, airline spokeswoman Kati Lehesmaa said. The measures are aimed at saving some Euro 25 million, she said. "We don't know exactly how many staff it will affect but many are prepared to take a holiday in the spring and some will retire," Lehesmaa said. The Finnish national carrier is also engaged in wage negotiations with the company's 750 pilots and will decide on possible temporary layoffs for pilots after the talks are over. Last September, Finnair employees rejected proposals by the management for voluntary wage cuts to avoid cutting 400 jobs in the airline, which has been struggling with high fuel costs and heavy competition. It then said it was seeking ways to make savings of some Euro 50 million.

(English: <http://asia.news.yahoo.com/081202/ap/d94qk7n80.html>)

Industrial trade unions to coordinate goals

December 8, 2008

In the next round of collective bargaining the 13 members of the Finnish Council of Industrial Trade Unions intend to strengthen their mutual cooperation. The council, representing 750,000 workers organised in unions from the three confederations, SAK, STTK and Akava, decided to approve common goals and coordinate their actions more closely. This decision reflects to the new situation created by the Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK), that no longer supports the model of comprehensive income policy successfully applied in Finland since the late 1960s. According to EK, this model does not leave enough space for company and local level collective bargaining. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 5).

(English: <http://www.union.ee/index.php?id=20&uudis=3072>)

FRANCE

Short-time arrangement widened

December 23, 2008

In November and December a substantial number of firms, including car manufacturers Renault and PSA, steel producer ArcelorMittal and tire manufacturer Michelin have called upon the French short-time compensation program. If accepted, in cases of economic difficulties under exceptional conditions and with sales falling at least by 50%, participants in funds for

“chômage technique” or “chômage partiel” can fall back on state-governed funds for payment of 50% of wages during maximum 600 hours. In mid-December President Nicolas Sarkozy proposed to widen these arrangements, and subsequently the Ministry of Labour has prolonged the 600-hours term generally to 800 hours and for a number of industries even to 1,000 hours, including car manufacturing.

Moreover, local experiments with so-called “transition contracts” under which redundant workers receive full pay for a year and intensive assistance to find new jobs, are to be extended as part of the government’s Euro 26 billion plan to combat unemployment and stimulate the French economy.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 12/2008; French:

<http://info.assedic.fr/employeurs/index.php?idmenu=86&idarticle=18&chemin=83%7C86%7C&idPage=631ec05905c790bb350542e808b87180>; http://www.lemonde.fr/cgi-bin/ACHATS/acheter.cgi?offre=ARCHIVES&type_item=ART_ARCH_30J&objet_id=1060260)

Public service unions announce day of action

December 19, 2008

The long-term campaign for a proper system of social dialogue in the public sector will continue to be one of the main collective bargaining issues in 2009, as eight trade union federations will come together to support a day of action across the public and private sectors on 29 January. The unions have a range of demands including compensation for past losses in purchasing power, properly funded public services, an end to job cuts in the public sector and measures to tackle precarious employment conditions.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/280>; French: <http://www.ugff.cgt.fr/spip.php?article259>)

GERMANY

Short time arrangements in the car industry

December 21, 2008

The large car manufacturers were the first to take recourse to various short time arrangements. Though already by mid-November the Daimler concern central announced a general step towards short time linked up with the collective agreement (“Arbeitszeitverkürzung”), later arrangements proved to be more refined and mainly based on short-time arrangements (“Kurzarbeit”) to be agreed with the official labour agency authorities (Bundesagentur für Arbeit). In the latter cases, lowered wages can partly be compensated by social funds (“Kurzarbeitergeld” or Kug), under conditions of a temporary but most likely passing loss of work for at least 30% of the workforce. Such an arrangement needs the consent of the works council, to be laid down in a company collective agreement.

In Daimler’s November announcement, the HR officer in charge already announced prolonged Christmas holidays up to four weeks for all 150,000 employees in Germany, in a number of plants to be continued by ongoing measures. In Daimler’s major Sindelfingen plant, a “Kurzarbeit” arrangement will be in force from 12 January till 31 March 2009 for two-thirds of the 28,000-strong workforce, and during the same period in its Untertürkheim plant for about 10,000 of 18,000 workers. Yet no special arrangements have been announced for Daimler’s truck division, employing 80,000, contrary to MAN, a major competitor in the truck market. MAN announced 40 to 50 closure days in the first six months of 2009. In the course of December companies from other branches, like the large printing machine firm Heidelberger Druck and major steel producer ThyssenKrupp, also called for application of the Kug regulation.

(German:

<http://blog.daimler.de/2008/12/12/ueber-verlaengerte-weihnachtspausen-und-kurzarbeit/#more-667>;

<http://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/0,1518,595509,00.html>; <http://www.epochtimes.de/articles/2008/11/25/374595.html>;

<http://fau-duesseldorf.org/nachrichten/dokumentation-thyssen-krupp-setzt-nun-ganz-massiv-auf-kurzarbeit>)

Verdi begins mobilisation for regional government pay claim

December 19, 2008

Services union ver.di’s collective bargaining committee for regional government has agreed to submit a claim for an 8% pay increase next year. The current regional government agreement had no pay increase in 2007 – just lump sum payments – and the increase for 2008 was 2.9%. Verdi wants an 8% rise and a minimum increase of Euro 200. It argues that a gap has opened up between people doing similar jobs in local and regional government with regional government workers losing

out.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/280>;

German: http://publik.verdi.de/2008/ausgabe_12/gewerkschaft/.titel/seite_1/A0?rnd=9826139.18347)

GREECE

National strike widespread

December 19, 2008

On 10 December a general strike brought the country to a halt today as more than 10,000 people marched on parliament as protests continue over the fatal police shooting of a schoolboy. The demonstration in Athens was part of a previously scheduled nationwide strike but has developed into a protest against the conservative government's handling of the crisis that has seen four days of rioting. Flights were grounded, banks and schools closed and hospital services restricted. "Participation in the strike is total. The country has come to a standstill," said Stathis Anestis, spokesman for the GSEE private sector union confederation. The ADEDY public sector confederation joined GSEE in protest on a range of government policies, including cuts to pensions and undermining legal rights to collective agreements.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/280>; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/dec/10/greece1>;
<http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSTRE4B91YU20081210>)

HUNGARY

Repeated national railway strike

December 29, 2008

Hungarian railway workers began an indefinite strike on Sunday 14 December. Like at earlier occasions in January and July 2008, the Free Union of Railway Workers (VDSZSZ) as the main union is demanding a one-off payment of HUF 250,000 (Euro 930) to every worker as a share in the proceeds from the recent privatization of MAV Cargo, the spun-off freight division of the Hungarian Railway Company. Other demands include retrospective supplementary payments and the scrapping of a new timetable that includes branch line closures. On 29 December, the MAV management and most unions agreed on a collective contract, in effect from 1 January 2009 to 31 January 2010 and including a 4.1% pay rise. The VDSZSZ union refused to sign the agreement and is still pressing for a 7% wage increase. (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 1 No. 6).

(English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2008/02/articles/hu0802069i.htm>; <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,3874848,00.html>;

http://www.caboodle.hu/nc/news/news_archive/single_page/article/11/hungarian_ra-24/?cHash=90e7caf3bf via
http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Hungary)

Airport unions protest at German embassy

December 23, 2008

On 9 December two unions launched a strike at Budapest's Ferihegy International Airport to demand a new collective agreement and a halt to lay-offs. Initially the strike caused severe delays and flight cancellations. In the course of the strike the Joint Aviation Trade Union reported that the airport operator, Germany-based Hochtief AG, attempted to employ unqualified and untrained workers as strike-breakers, which could undermine safety. On 22 December, the striking unions organised a demonstration outside the German embassy in Budapest to push for a deal with Hochtief.

(English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/rbssIndustryMaterialsUtilitiesNews/idUSLM56382720081222>;
<http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/2916>)

IRELAND

Government to seek talks on pay

December 29, 2008

The government is expected to issue invitations to the social partners to take part in talks on plans for economic recovery in early January. There has been widespread speculation that it will seek to extend the current 11-month pay pause in the public service or even introduce pay cuts in some cases as part of the forthcoming talks. Under the current national pay deal, over 300,000 public sector staff are due to receive a 3.5% wage increase next September. In a letter to senior activists in the Impact trade union, general secretary Peter McLoone said that "an incomes policy" would undoubtedly form part of the talks and that this would "present enormous challenges". However, nobody had as yet mentioned, never mind discussed, the issues of pay or pensions, he added. At the forthcoming talks the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) is expected to press for government measures to assist home-owners who default on mortgage payments on their homes. ICTU is also likely to press government to take action to prevent pension schemes from collapsing as a result of the recent economic turmoil.

(English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2008/1229/1229728603393.html> via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Ireland)

NETHERLANDS

Short-time support judged too limited

December 31, 2008

On 9 December, on behalf of the three trade union confederations and the employers' associations the Labour Foundation (STAR) sent a letter to the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, Piet Hein Donner, asking to soften the "rigid" rules of the current official short-time ("werktijdverkorting" or WTV) arrangement: prolongation to 1 April 2009 instead of 1 January and lifting the maximum number of 20,000 employees. The Dutch arrangement is rather similar to the German one: lowered wages can partly be compensated by government funds, under conditions of a temporary but most likely passing loss of work with sales falling minimum 30% in the two months before requesting support. Per worker this arrangement can last maximum 24 weeks. In view of the economic crisis, minister Donner had reserved Euro 200 million for this purpose, covering 760,000 hours.

Many companies reporting serious problems, like steel producer Corus, truck manufacturer DAF and chipmaker NXP, also argued that the closing date came too early and complained about bureaucratic procedures; already before getting official support, these three firms announced short-time for most of their workforce but also collective dismissals -- though under union pressure DAF retreated from the announced dismissals. By 26 December, the ministry had approved 137 of 280 requests for short-time support, covering 233,000 hours. By that time, the closing date was prolonged to 15 January.

(Dutch: *NRC-Handelsblad*, 5, 10, 30 and 31 December 2008; *De Volkskrant*, 20 December 2008; information Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment).

Confederations demand maximum 3.5% wage increase

December 16, 2008

After in October FNV, the main trade union confederation, had announced a maximum wage demand of 3.5%, in mid-December CNV, the second largest confederation, made about the same announcement. Though recently inflation in 2009 is expected to go down to about 1.5%, both confederations judge a 3.5% hike defensible for a number of sectors. Negotiators of the two confederations point to the possibility of concluding short-term collective agreements, like the recent half-year agreement at steel producer Corus.

At the year-end, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment reported for 2008 an average increase of the collectively agreed wages of 3.2%, varying from 2.5% in agriculture and fishing to 3.7% in commercial services.

(Dutch: *De Volkskrant*, 16 December 2008; information Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment)

PORTUGAL

Continuous struggle with postal company

December 4, 2008

The SNTCT and SINTTAV unions are continuing their struggle for their demands to be met in negotiations for their collective agreement with the Portuguese Postal company, CTT Correios. This struggle has been going on for many months now and SNTCT is actually involved in another 4 day strike to try and get CTT Correios back to the bargaining table. CTT Correios have also been making demands on the union that have made it extremely difficult for the latter to continue its day to day activities, such as insisting that union officials who are employed by CTT Correios are at their workplaces all the time instead of having time off for union activities that they have previously been entitled to under the "allegedly" now expired collective agreement.

(English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/UNIPostal.nsf/0/A503220FA7FD1BC6C1257515004D58F9?OpenDocument>)

SLOVAKIA

Wage demand lowered for engineering agreement

December 15, 2008

It has been reported that OZ KOVO, the Metal Trade Union Association, has lowered its wage demand for the leading engineering industry collective agreement. The union actually says it will seek wage increases at least in line with price inflation, which was running at 5.3% in the third quarter of 2008. Yet, OZ KOVO will not quantify its demand precisely before the conclusion of current discussions with employers on the economic and financial conditions affecting wage negotiations.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 12/2008)

SLOVENIA

Unions ask for improving social dialogue

December 15, 2008

In early December the leaders of the Pergam, Neodvisnost and KS 90 unions made a plea for improvements in the social dialogue from Prime Minister Borut Pahor's newly installed centre-left coalition government. They also wanted a moratorium on lay-offs until the direction in which the administration's policies are heading becomes clear. The union leaders urged for caution over a proposal to reduce employer social contributions temporarily as a way of combating the current economic crisis, and said that the state should make up any reduction in wages as more and more companies resort to short-time.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 12/2008;

<http://www.ukom.gov.si/eng/slovenia/publications/slovenia-news/7684/7723/index.text.html>)

SPAIN

Unions mobilise over pension cuts

December 19, 2008

Public sector unions mobilised for a series of demonstrations around the country in protest at the government's unilateral decision to cut ill-health early retirement pension rights for many public sector workers. On December 10 the trade unions demonstrated outside the finance ministry in Madrid and expressed their anger that the pension changes had been imposed, an action that clearly contravened the basic agreement that requires such changes to be negotiated. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 9).

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/280>; Spanish:

<http://www.fsap.ccoo.es/webfsap/menu.do?Actualidad:Sindical:Actualidad:40903>)

UNITED KINGDOM

Lobby at City Hall for bus drivers' pay

December 14, 2008

Unite members will be lobbying the London Mayor, Boris Johnson to coincide with Mayor's Question Time (Wednesday 17 December) in an ongoing campaign to win equal pay and safe working hours for all London bus workers. This follows a series of strikes earlier in the year. Unite, the UK's biggest transport union, has also learnt that TfL Surface Transport spent UKP 16 million less than budget in the year to date largely because of lower bus network contract prices. According to the union, this money would go a long way towards settling this ongoing dispute and averting further strike action. Peter Kavanagh, Unite officer, said: "Our members do identical jobs but their pay varies significantly from company to company. We are demanding equality in pay for all London bus workers and we will be taking our message to Mayor Boris so our members' demands are heard". Unite is seeking UKP 30,000 (Euro 33,560) yearly for a 38 hours week, 10 hour maximum spread over and a 4.5 hour maximum spell.

(English: <http://www.amicustheunion.org/Default.aspx?page=9749>)

Unions reject Corus 10% pay cut plan

December 11, 2008

UK unions have rejected a plan for a 10% across-the-board pay cut at Corus as the steel giant tries to adapt to the global crisis. In London officials from the three unions that represent Corus workers – Community, Unite and the GMB – met to discuss the company's prospects. Corus itself said it had been discussing various options with the unions: "In the short term, payroll reductions and specific government support for temporary unemployment could be of great assistance to address the current market conditions." The union representatives strongly denied proposing a 10% cut in wages in return for saving 1,000 jobs and preventing Corus's Llanwern plant in Wales from closing. A joint union statement said: "The company's proposals for a 10% pay cut were part of a range of options which have been so far rejected by the unions. Before we reach any agreement on the future of the 25,000 UK employees, the unions are demanding that Corus makes clear its intentions for 2009". Corus, the Anglo-Dutch subsidiary of the Indian Tata conglomerate, has already announced to reduce its European output by 30% by March 2009.

(English: <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/2008/12/12/unions-reject-corus-10-pay-cut-plan-91466-22459970/>; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2008/dec/12/manufacturing-tradeunions> via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=UK)

Civil service union calls off national strike action

December 19, 2008

The PCS civil service union has called off its national strike campaign in response to concessions by the government on a number of pay issues. In particular, the government has agreed that pay increases can be partly financed by efficiency savings although how this is implemented in practice will depend on the separate negotiations across the UK civil service's decentralised bargaining structure. The government has said that there is no longer a 2% pay cap on staff pay increases. There is also a commitment to address the significant differences in pay across government departments. The union emphasizes that the concessions do not mark the end of its campaign for fair pay. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No.'s 6, 7 and 9).

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/280>; http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/index.cfm/id/B51C3238-C9C0-4881-8122A073DADA5CFC)

NHS pay negotiations not to be re-opened

December 19, 2008

Trade union demands to re-open negotiations over National Health Service (NHS) pay have been rejected by the Pay Review Body, the independent organisation responsible for recommending NHS pay increases to the government. Unions had called for the three-year deal to be re-negotiated in the light of the 2.75% increase for 2008 that had been rapidly overtaken by inflation that reached 5% by the summer. The Unite trade union is still in dispute with the four health departments of the UK over the three-year agreement. It organised a day of industrial action on 3 December and is meeting on 12 January to discuss what further action might follow in 2009. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 5).

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/280>; http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=1308; <http://www.amicustheunion.org/Default.aspx?page=9785>)

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