

# COLLECTIVE BARGAINING NEWSLETTER



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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

### Civil service union calls for negotiations over pay structure

*April 23, 2008*

The GÖD public sector union wants to begin negotiations as soon as possible over reforming the pay structure and employment rights of federal civil servants. The union has made it clear that the two issues go hand-in-hand and it wants to see pay reform include higher pay for new starters. Any reform of employment rights should also retain protection for civil servants' jobs against political interference. The proposals were endorsed by two recent studies for both the unions and the government; on this basis the GÖD believes that negotiations can be completed quickly and that there is no need to wait until the autumn when the normal collective bargaining round begins.

(English: [http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=257;#a3760](http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=257;#a3760); German: <http://www.goed.at/14234.html>)

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## BELGIUM

### Unions call for better social dialogue at regional and local level

*April 23, 2008*

A local demonstration in Liège on 10 April and a march in Namur on 17 April reflect trade union discontent with local and regional social dialogue in Belgium. In Liège the local government unions were protesting over problems that were piling up because the municipality had failed to negotiate with them. Understaffing, pay and failure to regulate employment conditions were among the list of grievances. Meanwhile trade unions were also planning the Namur demonstration on 17 April in protest at the Walloon government's failure to meet a commitment to increase the number of civil service posts in local government organisations across the region.

(English: [http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=257;#a3760](http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=257;#a3760);

French: [http://csc-services-publics.csc-en-](http://csc-services-publics.csc-en-ligne.be/Nouvelles/Sectorielles/administrations_locales_et_regionales/actualites/manif_alr_17_avril_2008.asp)

[ligne.be/Nouvelles/Sectorielles/administrations\\_locales\\_et\\_regionales/actualites/manif\\_alr\\_17\\_avril\\_2008.asp](http://csc-services-publics.csc-en-ligne.be/Nouvelles/Sectorielles/administrations_locales_et_regionales/actualites/manif_alr_17_avril_2008.asp);

[http://csc-services-publics.csc-en-](http://csc-services-publics.csc-en-ligne.be/Nouvelles/Sectorielles/administrations_locales_et_regionales/actualites/manif_liege.asp)

[ligne.be/Nouvelles/Sectorielles/administrations\\_locales\\_et\\_regionales/actualites/manif\\_liege.asp](http://csc-services-publics.csc-en-ligne.be/Nouvelles/Sectorielles/administrations_locales_et_regionales/actualites/manif_liege.asp))

### Membership rejects draft accord, railways on strike

*May 19, 2008*

After consulting their rank and file, the trade unions organising NMBS-SNCB Belgian railways, ACOD/CGSP-Spoor/Rail, ACV-CSC-Transcom and VSOA/CGSP-Spoor, have objected the draft social accord for 2008-2012 negotiated with the NMBS-SNCB board and called for a 24-hours' strike to take place on 20 May. According to the spokesman of the Christian ACV-CSC union, his membership unanimously rejected the draft accord, while his colleague of the Socialist ACOD/CGSP spoke about a rejection rate of over 95%. They both explained that not only the employers' proposals concerning wage increases were judged unsatisfactorily, but that the same was true for the lack of perspectives on improving the work organisation.

(Dutch: [http://www.tijd.be/nieuws/binnenland/Spoorbonden\\_plannen\\_24-urenstaking.7120733-438.art](http://www.tijd.be/nieuws/binnenland/Spoorbonden_plannen_24-urenstaking.7120733-438.art); French:

[http://www.lloyd.be/nieuws/id21217-La\\_SNCB\\_fait\\_la\\_grve\\_du\\_\\_au\\_\\_mai.html](http://www.lloyd.be/nieuws/id21217-La_SNCB_fait_la_grve_du__au__mai.html))

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## BULGARIA

### Successful strike in power plant

*April 12, 2008*

Employees of the two Czech-based CEZ Bulgaria power plants scored a small but significant victory. On April 11, an agreement was signed to end the strike that had started two days earlier between with the company's management and the strike committee formed by the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB) and the Confederation of Labour 'Podkrepa'. Over three-quarters of all employees had joined the strike. According to the agreement, CEZ agreed

to increase workers' average wages, back-dated to January 1 2008, by 22.6%. Basic wages would be increased in 2008 by 24.97% and by a 6% wage bonus, reaching 698 leva (Euro 356) per month, and in 2009 with the 2008 inflation rate plus a minimum of 2%points, and a 12% wage bonus.CEZ employees earning less than the company average will receive higher salary increases. Initially, in early March, CEZ management offered a 20% pay rise. Management claimed that the originally envisaged cut of 400 staff would actually cover less than 200 CEZ employees. Individuals who are laid off will receive four to 14 months gross pay.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 4/2008;  
<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2008/04/articles/bg0804029i.htm>)

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## CROATIA

### Agreement achieved on Minimum Wage Act

May 9, 2008

After long and tough negotiations, on 7 May representatives of the government, the trade union confederations and the employers' association agreed on the Minimum Wage Act. As of 1 July 2008 the minimum wage will be 39% of the average wage in 2007. The average wage will no longer be calculated for the first eight months but for the whole previous year, which is more favourable for the workers involved. Thus, there will be an increase from the current 'lowest wage' for full-time work of gross monthly 2.441 kuna (Euro 335) to 2.747 kuna (Euro 377) based on the statutory minimum wage. In the years to come the share of the minimum wage in the average wage will increase each 1 July with the percentage of the real GDP increase in the previous year. The Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia (UATUC) regards the agreement as a huge step forward and as one of the first important outcomes of the pressure put by the UATUC and other union confederations through the Zagreb demonstrations of 12 April 2008 ((See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No 3).

(English: letter of Dijana Šobota, Head International Department of UATUC, to John Monks, ETUC General Secretary, 9 May 2008; [http://www.sssh.hr/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=99](http://www.sssh.hr/en/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=99))

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## DENMARK

### Health and social union members balloted on pay offer

May 9, 2008

Some 23,000 health and social workers - mainly those working in hospitals, eldercare and childcare employed by the municipalities - began strike action on 16 April in support of their claim for higher pay. The unions involved were the DNO nurses' association and the FOA federation that covers a wide range of municipal employees, although they have different claims. After three weeks of strike, the general municipal settlement provides for a 12.8% salary increase over three years, while workers represented by FOA will get 13.4%. Members of FOA are being balloted over this settlement; the result will be known on 29 May. A central element of the dispute was the undervaluing of occupations dominated by women compared to male wages. Members of DNO continue to strike, looking for an increase of 15%.

(English: [http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=257#a3763](http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=257#a3763); [http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=258#a3796](http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=258#a3796);  
Danish: <http://www.foa.dk/sw412434.asp>)

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## FINLAND

### Unions to agree rules after nurses' industrial action

May 9, 2008

During the wage dispute in the healthcare sector in October/November 2007, the government strongly criticised the Union of Health and Social Care Professionals (TEHY), in threatening with mass resignations. Against this backdrop, on November 17 the government adopted the new Patient Safety Act, enabling to order healthcare professionals to continue working even if the worker in question has resigned. Following a request of Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen, the three union confederations, SAK, STTK and Akava, agreed on a common wording for rules regulating industrial action, particularly in

the case of protected work. According to their proposal, "strike restrictions will be defined so that health and lives of citizens will not be endangered through industrial action". However, STTK-affiliated TEHY and the Finnish Union of Practical Nurses (SuPer) have expressed doubts as to whether the wording of these rules can in practice restrict their right to strike. Consequently, the working party of the union confederations is continuing discussions over the exact wording of the industrial relations rules (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No 1).

(English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2008/04/articles/fi0804029i.htm>)

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## FRANCE

### Unions join in demonstrations and strikes against public sector reform

May 16, 2008

Six public service federations jointly organised a day of demonstrations and strike actions on 15 May, in protest at the government proposals to reform the public services, the so-called RGPP - Révision Générale des Politiques Publiques (General revisions of policies on the public sector). The unions believe that these plans imply job cuts of 35-40,000 per year, widespread privatisation and deterioration of the quality of education. Earlier, the CFDT confederation reported that prospects for social dialogue appear bleak with public service minister Hervé Morin saying there is nothing to discuss in terms of how the RGPP is to be implemented. On 15 May, hundreds of thousands of French teachers and civil servants, including postal, hospital and customs workers, staged a one-day strike. There were major demonstrations in Paris, Marseille, Toulouse and Strasbourg. Union leaders claimed that at least 60% of all French teachers were on strike, and though the government said this figure was about 35%, foreign press mostly concluded to at least 50%. Unions are already planning a bigger strike on 22 May.

(English: [http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=258#a3795](http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=258#a3795);

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/05/15/europe/france.php>;

French: [http://www.ugff.cgt.fr/ftp/communiqués/fonction\\_publique/25\\_04\\_08.doc](http://www.ugff.cgt.fr/ftp/communiqués/fonction_publique/25_04_08.doc); <http://www.fo-fonctionnaires.fr/>)

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## GERMANY

### Federal and municipal workers back pay deal but Berlin transport strikes

April 23, 2008

A ballot of ver.di members in federal and local government produced a 76.5% majority in favour of the final pay offer from the employers. Around 189,000 members took part in the vote with 145,000 supporting the deal that will mean a 7.11% pay rise for the lowest paid workers. However, unions representing employees of the regional government in Berlin are backing a series of strikes by different groups of workers in support of a new pay agreement. Berlin is not part of the regional government employers' association and so the agreement covering regional government workers does not apply. The unions point out that most regional government workers around the country have received a 2.9% pay increase this year. Workers in citizens' offices, the IT centre and parks maintenance are among those taking action. In the meantime the strike on the Berlin transport system is over with unions agreeing a two-year deal, including a Euro 500 lump sum to cover January - July 2008. From 1 August workers will get monthly increases of either Euro 100 or Euro 60, depending on when they started with the company, the higher increase going to newer employees. There will then be a 1% increase for all workers from 1 August 2009. On average the agreement is worth 4.6%. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No's 1, 2 and 3).

(English: [http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=257;a3760](http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=257;a3760); [http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=258#a3785](http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=258#a3785);

German: <http://bb.verdi.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id=7d8daefe-1c1f-11dd-62ff-0019b9e321e1>)

### Ver.di claims 8% pay rise in banking

May 9, 2008

The ver.di union claims for the 420,000 employees in private, public and cooperative banks a pay rise of 8%, with a minimum of Euro 260, from 1 July 2008 (for the cooperative banks from 1 June on). Ver.di is also proposing stricter measures against rising work pressure, as well as extension of in-house training programs and of early retirement schemes. "The big banks paid out dividend increases to their shareholders, it's now time for workers to get adequate

compensation," said Uwe Foullong, chief negotiator for ver.di. On the employers' side, Heinz Laber, chief negotiator for the AGV lobby of private banks, stated: "The impact of the financial market crisis on German banks is clearly noticeable and causes considerable uncertainty. This situation leaves only very little room for wage talks".

(English: <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601100&sid=aTl5aYWzTqIE&refer=germany>;

German: <http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id=24624a58-1db0-11dd-4b13-0019b9e321cd>

## **Nokia Bochum compensations increased**

*April 23, 2008*

The Finnish cell-phone maker Nokia has agreed on a Euro 200 million compensation package for the 2,300 workers at its Bochum plant who are set to lose their jobs when the plant closes in June 2008 and production will be relocated to Romania. The company originally offered 70 million. Yet, Nokia has flatly rejected a claim by the state government of North Rhine-Westphalia for the return of Euro 60 million that the Bochum plant has allegedly received in state subsidies during the 1990s. Mostly due to the company's decision to close the Bochum facilities and the consequent public indignation, the German financial newspaper Euro am Sonntag reported, Nokia lost market share in Germany: in the first quarter of 2008 its share in Europe's biggest market dipped from 41 to 37%.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 4/2008; <http://www.yle.fi/news/id89190.html>)

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## **GREECE**

### **Substantial pay rise under national private sector deal**

*April 26, 2008*

After persistent negotiations, employers and trade unions in the Greek private sector have concluded a two-year national agreement including a cumulative rise of nearly 12.5% in minimum wage rates. An uplift of 3.45% is backdated to 1 January 2008, with a further 3% to be paid on 1 September 2008 and another 5.5% payable from 1 May 2009. The unions stated to be satisfied with the deal, and business leaders characterized it as "a modern pact for labour peace". Price inflation in Greece is forecast to average 3.7% for 2008, up from 2.9% in 2007. Public sector unions are demanding pay increases at least to cover that, and the private-sector award will put more pressure on the government to comply.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 4/2008)

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## **IRELAND**

### **Big differences emerging in new national agreement talks**

*April 25, 2008*

At the start of the negotiations concerning a new national agreement, employers ruled out the possibility of pay increases above the rate of inflation. However, unions said they were seeking increases that matched the current rate of inflation as well as compensation for rises which were eroded by inflation that occurred during the existing deal, and moreover for a share of productivity growth in the economy. The general secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), David Begg, stated he was "looking for something above what the employers say they cannot give". He said the unions would be seeking increases that covered inflation - which he estimated would not abate very much - and that made up for a 1.7% shortfall in wages under the current deal. Jimmy Kelly of the Unite union said it would be seeking increases of above inflation as well as improvements in pensions, union representation rights and equal treatment for agency workers.

(English: <http://www.ireland.com/newspaper/frontpage/2008/0425/1209072888288.html>,  
via <http://www.laborstart.org/europe>)

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## ITALY

### **Unions urgently ask new private health agreement**

*May 9, 2008*

The public sector unions of three main confederations, CGIL FP, CISL FP and UIL FPL, united in a national demonstration on 9 May demanding renewal of the collective agreement covering 150,000 workers in the private health sector. A new agreement should have come into effect already in January 2006. The unions now want an urgent response from the employers that a new agreement will be signed before the summer break.

(English: [http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=258#a3791](http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=258#a3791),

Italian: <http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/6284>)

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## NETHERLANDS

### **New collective agreement for childcare workers**

*April 23, 2008*

The ABVAKABO FNV civil servants union reports that a new collective labour agreement covering nurseries should make working in this sector more attractive. Along with higher pay, more training possibilities and improved career prospects comes there is also an increase in annual leave entitlement. The collective agreement runs from 1 May 2008 to 1 May 2009, with pay increases of 2% on 1 May 2008 and again on 1 January 2009. A lump sum payment worth 0.5% of pay will be paid in October 2008. Leave entitlement rises to 210 hours a year, up by 35 hours with part timers having a pro-rata entitlement. The agreement covers around 65% of nurseries and some 55,000 workers.

(English: [http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=257;a3760](http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=257;a3760);

Dutch: <http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/kinderopvang/>)

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### **Regional bus transport on strike**

*May 19, 2008*

A long conflict concerning the renewal of the collective agreement in regional bus transport has escalated in a 48-hours' strike, on May 14 and 15, and the announcement by the unions of a further three-days strike, on May 20-22. Except for the four main cities, Dutch regional transport has been privatised and the companies involved (Veolia, Connexxion and Arriva) fiercely oppose the union demand of a structural pay rise over 2008 of 3.5% and a 0.5% lift of the end year bonus. In the first round, 95% of the 13,000 workers went on strike. After this round, the employers offered a 20% wage increase, yet under the condition that the workers should work longer shifts and should give up 17 paid days-off, paid pauses and their 0.65% end year bonus. On May 19, the employers in large newspaper ads urged the bus drivers "to work like it is usual in the Netherlands", thus adding fuel to the flames.

(Dutch:

[http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/branches\\_bedrijven/branches/vervoer/openbaar\\_vervoer/reizigersinformatie\\_acties\\_stree](http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/branches_bedrijven/branches/vervoer/openbaar_vervoer/reizigersinformatie_acties_stree))

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## ROMANIA

### **Commerce union and Metro Cash & Carry sign collective agreement**

*April 29, 2008*

UNI Commerce reports that the Free Trade Union Federation of Commerce (FSLC) and its recently established company-based union Solidaritatea have successfully concluded their collective agreement negotiations with Metro Cash & Carry, subsidiary of the German Metro Group. The new agreement will improve working conditions and wages, and establish a social dialogue. It includes a 9,5% increase in wages, a loyalty bonus after five years of employment, and a 10% bonus for work on Saturdays and Sundays, increased from 7%. It also provides for three paid days of leave each month for union representatives, and includes a focus on improving working conditions. Based on a project cooperation, UNI Commerce and its Danish affiliates HK and HK Handel support the development of modern unionism in the Romanian wholesale and



retail industry.

(English: [http://www.union-network.org/unisite/Sectors/Commerce/Multinationals/Metro\\_Romania\\_collective\\_agreement.htm](http://www.union-network.org/unisite/Sectors/Commerce/Multinationals/Metro_Romania_collective_agreement.htm))

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## SPAIN

### **Sidenor/Gerdau workers on strike against longer hours**

*May 13, 2008*

On May 8, workers at Sidenor/Gerdau plants throughout Spain conducted a 24-hour strike in protest of the company's move to increase working hours by 40 hours annually per worker, beginning in 2009. More strikes are expected if negotiations fail to bring a resolution. In 2003, unions bargained for a gradual reduction of hours down to a maximum of 35 hours per week by the year 2008. When Gerdau took control of Sidenor in 2005, the company vowed to respect all rights and benefits negotiated by the unions. The actual bargaining round is the first with Gerdau since the company took over Sidenor. After two months of unsuccessful negotiations the three unions involved (ELA-Metala, MCA-UGT and FM/CC.OO) have decided to take collective action.

(English: <http://www.imfmetal.org/main/index.cfm?n=47&l=2&c=17638>)

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## SWEDEN

### **Nurses strike for higher pay**

*April 23, 2008*

Following a failed attempt at mediation, members of the Swedish Association of Health Professionals (SAHP, Vårdförbundet) began strike action on 21 April. The union says that current pay levels fail to reflect the years of training and levels of responsibility that nurses have. It is calling for an increase of SKr 1,700 (Euro 181) a month in 2008 and in 2009. This would be worth around 7% each year for nurses on average pay. More workers will get involved in the action if the employers, the municipalities, don't come back to the negotiating table with a better offer.

(English: [http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=257;#a3760](http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=257;#a3760);  
<http://www.vardforbundet.se/templates/VFArticlePage4.aspx?id=395>)

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## UNITED KINGDOM

### **Strikers urge government to review pay policies**

*April 25, 2008*

The UK government was urged to review its pay policy April 25 as up to 400,000 teachers, lecturers, and civil and public servants went on strike. Members of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) walked out of government offices in a dispute which also closed benefit offices and driving-test centres, and left the coastguard with only emergency cover. Mark Serwotka, the general-secretary of the PCS, said: "This action illustrates the depth of anger over the government's insistence to cut the living standards of hard-working civil and public servants, some of whom earn just above the minimum wage. The government must review its discredited policy of using public-sector workers as an anti-inflationary tool." Union leaders warned that unrest in the civil service would intensify unless the government changed its policy of pegging pay rises to 2% a year in each of the next three years.

(English: <http://news.scotsman.com/education?articleid=4019889>, via <http://www.laborstart.org/europe/>)

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### **Unions reject local government pay offer in Scotland**

*April 23, 2008*

The UNISON, GMB and Unite trade unions, jointly representing Scotland's 220,000 local government workers, have rejected the employers' offer of a three-year pay deal with increases of 2.5% in each year. Unions were looking for a 5%

increase or UKP 1,000-a-year, whichever was greater. There will be a consultation of branches to decide over how to proceed and whether there should be a ballot for industrial action. Meanwhile, UNISON will be balloting its health sector members to see if they support the employers' pay offer. This is worth 8.1% over three years and includes a number of measures to improve pay at the bottom end of the pay scale, setting a minimum wage of UKP 6.77 (Euro 8.44) an hour, just above UNISON's UKP 6.75 target. UNISON's Dougie Black, who is also trade union side secretary, said there was "a great deal of anger" at the employers' insistence on a three-year deal and their continuing refusal to agree a reopener clause linked to inflation. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No's 1, 2 and 3).

(English: [http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id\\_mot=257;#a3760](http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=257;#a3760);  
[http://www.unison.org.uk/news/news\\_view.asp?did=4168](http://www.unison.org.uk/news/news_view.asp?did=4168))

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