

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

New agreements for metalworking industry

November 12, 2008

During the night of 5-6 November the joint negotiation team of the Metalworking, Textiles and Food-processing Union (GMTN) and the Union of Salaried Employees, Printing, Journalism and Paper (GDA-DJP) achieved pay increases for the 170,000 workers in metalworking. Their agreement, leading in Austrian industrial relations, secures wage increases of 3.8-3.9% (3.9% for the lower occupational groups), plus extra one-off payments resulting in an overall increase of 4.6%. As a consequence, the new collectively agreed minimum wage stands at Euro 1,457 per month. The unions preferred collectively agreed pay increases, but in the end settled with one-off payments, depending on the profitability (EBIT) of companies. In case of profits, the extra payment will range from Euro 100 to Euro 250. The agreement covers 12 months, backdated from 1 November 2008.

Nearly one week later, on 12 November, GMTN signed a new agreement with the metalworking crafts enterprises, covering about 90,000 blue collar workers and over 23,000 apprentices in more than 15,500 firms. The agreement includes increases by 3.8% in the collectively agreed minimum wage, bringing this to Euro 1,453 monthly, and in the apprentices' remunerations, and an increase in effectively paid wages by 3.6%, with an additional on-off payment of Euro 80. The agreement will enter into force on 1 January 2009.

(English: GMTN messages via EUCOBAN network of European Metalworkers' Federation; German:

http://www.gmtn.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GMT/Page/GMT_Index&n=GMT_1.a&cid=1222795102403)

Agreement for federal accountancy service

November 4, 2008

The federal accountancy service (Bundeshaltungsagentur – BHAG) is one of a number of agencies that have hived off from the central administration and now operate with more independence although still owned by the state. The GÖD public service union has negotiated a separate collective agreement covering the BHAG that includes a new pay structure as well as a wide range of other provisions on leave, sick pay, sabbaticals, travel allowances and trainees' pay.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/273>; German: <http://www.goed.at/14740.html>)

BELGIUM

Local government unions demonstrate over jobs

November 24, 2008

On 19 November the three union federations in local government in the Wallonia region organised a demonstration in Namur, in protest at the regional government's failure to implement the 2005-2006 collective agreement. The unions are calling for the government to honour its promises on protecting workers' purchasing power, recruitment and pensions. They say to be ready for a long campaign of protest if the government does not respond.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/274>; French: http://csc-services-publics.csc-en-ligne.be/Images/Communiqu%C3%A9%20C3%A0%20la%20presse%20CGSP-CSC-SLFP%20-%20FINI%20DE%20RIRE%20-%2011-13_tcm90-185861.doc)

BULGARIA

Unions boycott social forum

November 19, 2008

The CITUB and Podkrepa union confederations have decided to pull out of the National Council for Tripartite Cooperation, as a protest against what they claim is the government's persistent failure to honour its commitments and in support for demands for "honest pay". The two confederations warned that ordinary workers must not be left bearing the brunt alone for the global financial crisis. They are demanding a tangible increase in the national minimum wage (CITUB earlier called for a 18.2% hike from 1 January 2009) and 20% pay rises in the public sector. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No.'s 7 and 8).

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 11/2008;

http://www.bnr.bg/RadioBulgaria/Emission_English/News/1211-B17.htm, via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Bulgaria)

CROATIA

Unions reject total pay freeze

November 20, 2008

On 20 November, the unions of the public and state services rejected the proposal of prime minister Ivo Sanader for a total freeze on pay increases in both the private and public sector, as part of the nation's response to the global financial crisis. This decision was made by the leaders of the 15 unions that were to negotiate with the cabinet. In 2006 they signed an agreement guaranteeing three years of wage growth. The unions had consulted their members, who clearly evaluated a pay freeze for the 220,000 public servants as unacceptable.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 11/2008;

<http://www.javno.com/home/en/croatia/clanak.php?id=205081>)

FINLAND

Collective bargaining levels debated

November 19, 2008

Within and outside the union movement the debate about the level of collective bargaining, and the prospects of a return to centralised policies is still going on. A study for the SAK trade union confederation shows that most local negotiators in the state and municipal sectors think that local bargaining on hours has been more positive than negative. On pay the results are less convincing. While 63% of local negotiators in the municipal sector are more positive than negative about local bargaining the figure in central government is only 46%. A substantial minority of around a fifth in both sectors believe local bargaining on pay has been negative for workers. In general 44% of municipal local negotiators and 54% of state sector bargainers think that the balance between employers and trade unions at local level is not equitable (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 5).

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 11/2008;

<http://www.sak.fi/english/whatsnew.jsp?location1=1&lang=en&ao=news&sl2=2&id=32941>;

<http://www.sak.fi/site/include/tulosta.jsp?id=32941>)

FRANCE

Performanced-based pay concerns civil service unions

November 4, 2008

The French government has announced plans for a significant extension of performance-related pay (PRP) across the civil service. By 2012 nearly 200,000 civil servants will have a PRP as part of their wages. The additional payment will be made up by a job-related premium (60%) set by each ministry while the remaining 40% will be entirely related to the individual's performance. The CFDT and FSU federations have warned of the risks of having pay determined in an arbitrary way. They

also argue that the key issue at the moment is to ensure that all public service workers have their pay protected against inflation without having to rely on unpredictable PRP payments. The new system will be financed by savings from the non-replacement of retiring workers.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/273>; French: <http://www.lesechos.fr/info/france/4792380-remuneration-au-merite-jusqu-a-14-400-euros-de-prime-individuelle.htm>; <http://www.fsu.fr/spip.php?article1338>)

Confederation plans to continue action

November 24, 2008

In the week of 17 November, the French government was confronted with a wave of strikes against its reform proposals. Airline pilots, train drivers, teachers, students and postal workers went on strike for one or more days. Notably the CGT union confederation is planning to continue actions, and plans a week of action in the public and private sectors from 24 November with 26 November a key date. The confederation's protest is over pay, employment and the latest government proposals to reform employment contracts and to raise the retirement age to 70. The CGT argues that an increase to salaries and boost to public services are important elements of a strategy to respond to the current crisis. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No.'s 1, 2, 4, 5 and 7).

(English: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/nov/18/nicolas-sarkozy-france-strike-union>; <http://www.epsu.org/cob/274>; French: <http://www.cgt.fr/spip.php?article35341>)

GERMANY

Pilot metal agreement settled

November 13, 2008

The IG Metall union and employers' association Gesamtmetall have reached a 18-month pilot agreement in the engineering sector for the bargaining region of Baden-Württemberg. It includes a pay increase of 4.2% to be entered into the pays scales: 2.1% from 1 February 2009, with an additional increase of 2.1% from 1 May 2009. There will be a one-off payment of Euro 510 to cover the period from 1 November 2008 until 31 January 2009, and an additional lump-sum payment of Euro 122 in September 2009. In negotiations with the works council, management can decide to push back the second 2.1% increase by up to seven months. The agreement ends on 30 April 2010.

It is expected that union branches in the rest of Germany will quickly ratify the deal as well; if so, it will finally cover 3.6 million workers. The IG Metall president, Berthold Huber, said that "the result will not put us in a state of euphoria", but that it combines income security for the workers with planning security for employers, a defensible outcome in the actual situation. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No.'s 7 and 8).

(English: IG Metall information via EUCOBAN network of European Metalworkers' Federation;

<http://www.imfmetal.org/main/index.cfm?n=47&l=2&c=18579>; German: http://www.igmetall.de/cps/rde/xchg/SID-0A456501-D3FB2454/internet/style.xsl/view_4508_4525.htm?seitenid=483)

Two minimum wage campaigns launched

November 19, 2008

Services union ver.di has joined with the German catholic charity federation (Deutsches Caritasverband) in calling for a minimum wage for the care sector. Ver.di executive member Ellen Paschke said that care workers should not be left without protection against market forces and Helmut Kohmann from the employer federation argued that the minimum for the sector should not be anything less than the current minimum salary set by the public sector agreement.

Ver.di and NGG, the food workers' union, have announced a new campaign aimed at securing the introduction of a national statutory minimum wage, to be set initially at Euro 7.50 per hour. The drive is due to reach its peak on the eve of the federal general elections scheduled for September 2009. The two unions refer to a representative survey concluding that 72% of the voters believe a statutory minimum wage should become a major election issue.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/273>; Watson Wyatt Data Services, New Industrial Relations Europe, 11/2008;

German: <http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id=568dbb62-a68c-11dd-4ce2-0019b9e321e1>;

<http://mindestlohn.verdi.de/data/pressemitteilung.pdf>)

Widespread protest of hospital workers

November 24, 2008

Services union ver.di is warning of a deteriorating employment situation in the hospital sector, which will continue to worsen despite proposals for additional funding. Ver.di argues that the new framework law on hospital finance will not provide enough money for decent pay increases and that more workers will leave the sector. With employment shortages existing employees are under increasing pressure and the heavy workloads and poor pay hamper recruiting new staff. On 18 November, thousands of hospitals workers joined lunchtime demonstrations in protest at the financial crisis facing the sector and the inadequacy of the government's funding package. Ver.di general secretary Frank Bsirske demanded in particular that salary increases should be fully funded (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 7).

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/273>; <http://www.epsu.org/cob/274>; German:

<http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id=a6e2ce34-a5c1-11dd-5970-0019b9e321e1>;

http://www.verdi.de/nachrichten/newsArchive?channel=nachrichtenbox&id=krankenhaus-beschaefigte_protestieren_gegen_finanznot)

15-month agreement for rubber workers

November 17, 2008

A large majority of union members accepted the collective agreement agreed on 30 October by the IG BCE union and the rubber employers' association, covering 30,000 workers. The 15-month agreement, backdated from 1 September to 30 November 2009, calls for a wage increase of 2.5% by 1 November. On 1 July, another increase of 1.3% will be put into effect. The yearly training allowance is increased by Euro 25 per worker, effective on 1 January 2009. The rubber employers have committed Euro 4 million to the Association of Employment Promotion (VzB), which assures a flexible transition to retirement.

(English: <http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/?date=2008-11-17#2848>)

HUNGARY

Clashes loom over 2009 wage increases

November 19, 2008

The public sector seems to be heading for a major clash over pay increases for 2009. The unions are demanding a general norm of 15.9% for awards, with a similar increase in national minimum wage rates, currently HUF 69,900 (Euro 272) per month. The government, however, says it intends to freeze all wages under its direct control, and heads of state companies are being urged to take a similar line. The public service unions have renewed the statutes of their combined strike committee, declaring that the proposed austerity measures are unacceptable (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No.'s 7 and 8).

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 11/2008 ;

<http://www.budapesttimes.hu/content/view/9829/27/>)

IRELAND

Union threatens national strike over pay deal

November 24, 2008

The leader of the largest craft union has threatened a national strike against employers who refuse to implement national agreements. The general secretary of the Technical, Engineering and Electrical Union (TEEU), Owen Wills, warned that tough measures should be taken against employers who renege on legally-binding Registered Employment Agreements (REAs). This warning comes after the construction employers' association CIF claimed that its members could not afford the new national pay deal. Mr Wills suggested at his union's biennial conference that a national strike in solidarity with other unions may be necessary. REAs govern wages and terms and conditions of employment in the private sector, while the national pay deal generally applies to the remaining unionised workers in both the public and private sector.

(English: <http://www.independent.ie/national-news/union-threatens-national-strike-over-pay-deal-1550833.html> via

ITALY

Bargaining revision talks stall

November 19, 2008

Talks between the three major union confederations and employer association Confindustria about changes in the collective bargaining system have come to a standstill. Following the presentation of amended employer proposals, the CGIL confederations declared the negotiations "have lost all meaning" and are therefore at an end so far CGIL is concerned. The other confederations, CSIL and UIL, remain hopeful that concrete results still can be achieved. The main points of disagreement are the length of industry agreements and the replacement of government's price inflation forecasts by those from another source.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 11/2008)

Civil servants unions adopt different strategies

November 4, 2008

While the FP CGIL public service federation will continue with planned regional strike action on 3, 7 and 15 November, the FPS CISL and UIL federations have decided to sign an initial agreement with the government over pay and future discussions over reforming public sector pay and contractual arrangements.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/273>; Italian: <http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/8466>; <http://www.fps.cisl.it/informa/new/new.htm>)

NETHERLANDS

Controversial new post agreement negotiated

November 20, 2008

Four unions (BVPP, CNV Publieke Zaak, CNV Bedrijvenbond and FNV Bondgenoten) have negotiated an industry agreement for the new postal services entering the market besides the large TNT Post company, notably Sandd and Selektmail. Yet, the major ABVAKABO FNV union has not been involved and has also refused to sign. This union argues that it is unclear when and under which conditions 80% of the so-called commission agreements of the Sandd and Selektmail postal workers, based on piece rates, will be changed into regular labour contracts as the agreement suggests. ABVAKABO FNV says in terms of labour conditions a level playing field is missing if the government decides to open the postal market fully.

(Dutch: *NRC-Handelsblad*, 12 and 17 November 2008;

http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/bond_tekent_cao_nieuwe_postbedrijven_niet/)

Major agreement in IT not renewed

November 7, 2008

IT firm Atos Origin (8,800 employees in the Netherlands) has definitely decided not to conclude a new collective agreement with the four unions involved, but instead to have regular talks about labour conditions with the Central Works Council (COR). This end of a leading agreement puts more pressure on the existing company-based agreements in the IT sector. Only one out of the six remaining company agreements has recently been re-negotiated (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 8).

(Dutch: *AutomatiseringGids*, 7 November 2008)

PORTUGAL

Public services federation organizes demonstration

November 24, 2008

On 21 November the FNSFP public services federation organised a demonstration of public administration workers in protest at the government's proposed 2.9% pay increase for 2009. The federation has called for a 5% increase and said that 2.9% is inadequate as it does nothing to begin to recover the lost purchasing power suffered by public sector salaries in recent years (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 6).

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/274>; Portuguese: <http://fnsfp-pt.inout-decor.com/>)

ROMANIA

Pay confusion on poll eve

November 19, 2008

After the parliament, on its own initiative, voted a 50% wage increase for teachers, which the unions insist should be applied from 1 October 2008, the government sought to postpone it until 1 April 2009, thus provoking industrial unrest. President Traian Basescu now finally has announced legislation to implement this award. Most recently the government, facing parliamentary elections on 30 November 2008, says it has reached an outline agreement with employers and trade unions on future pay policy in the public sector.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 11/2008)

SLOVAKIA

Minimum wage hike confirmed

November 19, 2008

The government has confirmed to raise the national minimum wage by 9.8% to SKK 8,902 (Euro 266) per month from 1 January 2009, using the legislative amendment it passed earlier in 2008. That establishes the formula for calculating increases when those cannot be agreed between employers and unions. The minimum hourly rate will also go up by 9.8% to SKK 51.15 (Euro 1.53) (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No.'s 6 and 7).

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 11/2008)

SLOVENIA

Confederation sets net minimum wage target

November 19, 2008

The major union confederation ZSSS has made a plea for a substantial hike in the national minimum wage. The federation expresses its target in net rather than gross terms, setting it at Euro 500 per month. The present gross minimum rate, which has stood at Euro 589.11 per month, yields take-home pay of around Euro 426; thus the unions' envisaged increase amounts to 17.4%. By formulating its target as a net sum, the ZSSS is implying that the full cost of the uplift should not necessarily fall on employers and that the government could chip in with concessions on personal income tax.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 11/2008;

<http://www.sta.si/en/vest.php?s=a&id=1333233>)

SPAIN

Protest over pension changes

November 4, 2008

The FSP-UGT and FSAP-CCOO public service trade union federations are demanding that the government withdraws proposals to cut ill-health early retirement pensions from next year. An estimated 800,000 public sector workers are covered by the current arrangements and in 2007 alone 3,000 employees took early retirement because of disability. If the new provisions had been in place then these workers would have lost 25% of their pension if they had not made 20 years of contributions. The unions are particularly angry that the proposed change has been added to draft legislation without consultation or negotiation.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/273>; Spanish:

<http://www.fsap.ccoo.es/webfsap/menu.do?Actualidad:Sindical:Actualidad:39034>;

<http://www.fspugt.es/index.php/mod.noticias/mem.detalle/idnoticia.5987/idimagen./relcategoria.7>)

UNITED KINGDOM

Health service union votes to strike over pay

November 24, 2008

Members of the Unite union in the National Health Service (NHS) have voted to reject the three-year pay deal and take industrial action. There was a 53% vote in favour of strike action, with 45% against. Other unions are also unhappy about the deal. Earlier UNISON, the biggest union in the health service, called on the NHS employers to re-open negotiations in view of the recent surge in inflation (See this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 5).

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/274>; <http://www.amicustheunion.org/default.aspx?page=9598>;

http://www.unison.org.uk/asp/presspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=1280)

National civil service strike suspended

November 7, 2008

On 7 November, the national executive committee of the PCS public services union decided to suspend the industrial action across the civil service planned for 10 November and the overtime ban proposed to commence on 11 November. The employer has agreed to a 28 day extension to the limitation of the current mandate for initiating industrial action to midnight 11 December 2008. PCS will take forward discussions to address the concerns that form the basis of the current dispute over government's 2% pay limit (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 8).

(English: http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/index.cfm/id/317AF477-88ED-4224-955F4C23CE3891F6)

Mixed outcome in Scottish council strike ballots

November 24, 2008

UNISON Scotland, the biggest union in local government with around 100,000 members, voted narrowly to accept a two-year pay deal that increases pay by 3% in 2008 and 2.5% in 2009. The union said that it was very disappointed by the pay deal and the narrowness of the vote reflected widespread discontent with the outcome. The pay offer was rejected by two other unions in the sector – the GMB with around 25,000 members and Unite with around 20,000 (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No.'s 4 and 7).

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/274>; <http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/localgovt/pay2008/index.html>;

<http://www.gmb.org.uk/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=97820>; <http://www.amicustheunion.org/default.aspx?page=9622>)

No further industrial action at Sellafield Nuclear

November 17, 2008

After months of dispute at the Sellafield nuclear energy site, members of the Unite and GMB unions voted to accept a pay offer of the British Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA). In mid-September members of the Prospect union accepted a 2.5% pay increase plus a 2.5% bonus. During October, Unite and GMB members were engaged in limited industrial action, strictly performing work in their own job classifications. Now these members voted by a three-to-one margin to accept similar terms. They received four months back pay, and two separate bonus schemes of UKP 600 each. An added incentive in the negotiated proposal was a UKP 1,500 "goodbye bonus" as the NDA prepares to sell its nuclear assets to Nuclear Management Partners, a consortium of French, American and British energy interests.

(English: <http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/?date=2008-11-17#2847>)

For more information, please contact the editor Maarten van Klaveren, Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies – AIAS (M.vanKlaveren@uva.nl), or the communications officer of the ETUI-REHS Tristan Macdonald (tmacdonald@etui-rehs.org). For previous issues of the *Collective bargaining newsletter* please visit www.etui-rehs.org/publications.

You may find further information on the ETUI-REHS at www.etui-rehs.org, and on the AIAS at www.uva-aiaa.net.

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