

collective bargaining

Issue 11/2009 | December

This newsletter presents up-to-date information on collective bargaining developments across Europe since February 2008. It aims to facilitate information exchange between trade unions and to support the work of the ETUC's collective bargaining committee.



AMSTERDAM INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED LABOUR STUDIES
UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM



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Austria

Unions co-ordinate action over health sector pay

January 1, 2010

On 21 December, negotiations over a new collective agreement for 80,000 health and social services workers in the private sector were broken off. Members of the GPA-DJP and vida trade unions are seriously disappointed with the employers' latest offer of a 1.17% pay increase. The increase on some pay rates and allowances would only be

0.9% and the employers also want to abolish the 50% additional payment for working the 39th and 40th hours each week. Works council members are being co-ordinated in demonstrations taking place in four cities on 14 January before negotiations reconvene on 21 January.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/332>;

German: <http://www.gpa-djp.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GPA/Page> .;
<http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=S03/Page/> .

Public sector workers to get 0.9% plus ? 4

December 17, 2009

After several challenging rounds of negotiations the GÖD and GDG public service unions have accepted a pay increase of 0.9% plus ? 4 a month for 2010. The government had initially said that it had only budgeted for a 0.5% increase in the pay bill and that it only wanted to pay a lump sum payment. The flat-rate increase of Euro 4 means that the overall increase for the lowest paid will be 1.23% and 0.94% for the highest paid. Other payments and allowances will increase by 0.9%. The increase will cover around 400,000 workers across the public sector.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/331> ;

German: <http://www.gdg.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=C01> .;
<http://www.goed.at/files/877/GOED-Info-Gehaltsabkommen-2010.pdf>

Belgium

Temporary unemployment scheme covered over 60,000 workers daily

December 30, 2009

In 2009 Belgian employers saved more than one billion Euro as they made use of the temporary unemployment arrangements administered by the official employment agencies (RVA). According to a RVA report, in the first nine months of the year these arrangements covered a daily average of 64,700 temporarily unemployed; over the full year, a daily average of 60,700 is expected, more than doubling the 2008 average (31,200). Temporary unemployment peaked in February and March 2009, with a daily average of 100,000 workers covered (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 January and May 2009).

Dutch: <http://www.hln.be/hln/nl/957/Belgie/article/detail/1046866/2009/12/28/> .

Cyprus

Call for unemployment benefit period to be prolonged

December 1, 2009

The SEK union confederation has called for the unemployment benefit period to be extended from six to nine months, as a social measure to counter growing joblessness in the midst of the economic crisis. SEK cited statistics, according to which 17 to 29% of all registered as unemployed are out of a job for six months or more. The union confederation urged the Minister of Labour to give the issue top priority.

English: <http://www.cyprus-mail.com/cyprus/call-dole-period-be-extended-six-nine-months>

Czech Republic

Strike threat called off after settlement

December 15, 2009

Unions at the Czech plant of South Korean car maker Hyundai gave up their threat to go on strike after reaching an agreement with management, a company spokesman said. Unions declared a strike alert after accusing managers of imposing too much overtime and complaining about poor working conditions. The spokesman added that the company would not sanction about 400 staff at the plant that stopped working for an hour in protest against low salaries and overtime earlier this month. A news agency quoted Hyundai unions' head Radek Kuchar as saying his side was happy with "most of the agreement", adding "What we have achieved is that the people won't be sanctioned and overtime work will be reduced to a minimum." One day before the settlement, the KOVO union federation to which the Czech Hyundai unions are affiliated, said it was going to inform the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF) about the situation at the car maker.

English: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM> .;
<http://www.financninoviny.cz/zpravy/unions-want-to-resolve-hyundai-problems> .

Denmark

Gender pay gap in municipalities at 18%

December 17, 2009

A recently published report has found that the gender pay gap in local government is at 18% and even higher than in the private sector. The FOA public service union has called on municipal employers to address the problem and to start by ensuring that they provide wage statistics broken down by gender. According to FOA, a third of local authorities fail to comply with the Equal Pay Act and produce no data on the pay of their male and female workers.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/331>;
Danish: <http://www.foa.dk/Forbund/Presse.aspx?newsid={583834D5> .

Finland

Agreement reached in banking sector

December 18, 2009

After ten months of negotiations and a three-day strike earlier in the week of the 30,000 employees involved, a collective agreement has been agreed upon in the banking sector between the Federation of Finnish Financial Services and two unions, SUORA and the Federation of Professional and Managerial Staff (YTN). Under the contract, a general pay hike of Euro 18.50 a month, or at least 0.65%, will take effect from 1 January 2010. An increase of 0.95% will be paid by early June 2010. Separate talks are to be held on new pay increases for the autumn of 2010 and the summer of 2011.

English: http://yle.fi/uutiset/news/2009/12/banks_reach_labour_contract_1296841.html;
http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/news/2009/12/30000_finance_sector_workers .
via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Finland

Employers bury hope for framework pay deal

December 11, 2009

On 11 December, the Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK) broke off the talks on a framework for pay increases. The framework would have been a contract on economic policy aimed at promoting employment, to be agreed upon by the central social partner organisations. EK director Eeva-Liisa Inkeroinen issued a communiqué, saying that the discussions had come to an end. "The boundary disputes and oversized salary requirements demanded by certain trade unions are inappropriate in the current economic situation", Inkeroinen argued. Laury Lyly, chairman of the SAK union confederation, expressed his disappointment with EK's communiqué without delay: "Today it would be perhaps more important than ever for both employees

and employers to reach a collective agreement that would stabilize our economy and promote employment."

English: <http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Employers+bury+hopes+for+framework> .

France

Dockers' strike disrupts ports

January 5, 2010

A strike by French dockers on 4 January disrupted freight traffic at France's two busiest ports, Marseille and Le Havre. The one-day nationwide strike was called by the CGT union to protest the government's port reforms and support demands for compensation for workers exposed to asbestos. About 16 ships were prevented from docking at Fos-sur-Mer and Marseille, according to Marseille port officials. The CGT union said all 1,800 freight workers in Le Havre and most of the 1,500 employees of the port authority had walked off the job. Under a law adopted in July 2008, France's seven major ports are turning to private companies to run many of their services to make them more competitive.

English: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/slideshow/ALeqM5hab> . via
http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=France

Government attacked over nurses pay

January 1, 2010

Trade unions have criticized health minister Roselyne Bachelot-Narquin for what they perceive as misleading statements about proposed increases to nurses' pay. The unions say that her claims that nurses will see their pay rise by Euro 2,500 only applies to a small proportion of specialist nurses and that this will only be from 2016. For new starters nurses' pay will be worth 20% more than the minimum wage from 2016. In contrast, at the beginning of the 1980s starting salaries for nurses were worth 50% more than the minimum wage. Unions are particularly angry about proposals to remove the right to retire from the age of 55.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/332>;
French: http://www.force-ouvriere.fr/page_principale/fede/index.asp?lk=fd&id .;
http://www.fed-cfdt-sante-sociaux.org/nego_fph.htm;
<http://www.sante.cgt.fr/spip.php?article4402>

Public service unions call for day of action

December 17, 2009

The CGT Public Services federation and the SUD trade union are joining for a day of action on 21 January in protest at government plans to reform local government. The unions argue that changes to the funding system and cutting jobs will undermine the proper provision of public services and lead to an increase in outsourcing to the private sector. The unions want to see a public debate about the public services, a withdrawal of plans to change public finance of local authorities, decent pay increases for local government workers to recoup their lost purchasing power, and a transfer to civil service status of the 30% of workers in local government who face more precarious employment arrangements.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/331>;
French: <http://www.spterritoriaux.cgt.fr/spip.php?article3609>

Student nurses win a victory over requisitions

December 10, 2009

Student nurses have won a victory in their battle to stop the government compelling them to work seven days a week for up to 14 hours a day in swine flu vaccine centres. Health minister Roselyne Bachelot-Narquin stated that student nurses cannot be requisitioned for more than ten hours a week or two sessions of five hours. In addition, student nurses are to get better pay. Earlier, student nurses opposed the conditions under which they were compelled to work in chaotic vaccine centres under the orders of bullying supervisors.

English: http://theflucase.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id .

French: <http://www.lesechos.fr/info/sante/020258893649.htm?xtor=RSS-2059>

Germany

Government agrees to waste sector minimum wage

January 1, 2010

Public services union ver.di has welcomed the government's decision to implement a minimum wage of Euro 8.02 an hour in the waste sector. The union had been concerned that the new coalition, involving the FDP liberal party, that came to power last year would not fulfil the commitment of the previous government to introduce a minimum wage for the sector. However, federal employment minister Ursula von der Leyen signed the regulation in December so that it would come into effect in January. Ver.di estimates that around 20,000 workers are likely to be better off with some having been employed on wages as low as Euro 4 an hour (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 November 2009).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/332>;

German: <http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id> .

Ver.di aims at 5% improvement for public sector workers

December 20, 2009

The local and federal government collective bargaining committee of the ver.di union met on 15 December to confirm its claim in the lead up to negotiations that begin on 13 February. Ver.di will be negotiating with the police (GdP), teachers (GEW) and civil service union (dbb tarifunion) on behalf of nearly two million workers in local and federal government. The main demand will be for a real increase in pay plus a number of other measures including provision of shorter working hours for older workers to create more jobs for younger workers and commitments to take on more apprentices, totaling a 5% increase. There will also be demands relevant to particular groups of workers such as better on-call and overtime payments for hospital employees. WSI, the research institute in the Hans Böckler Foundation, also on 15 December issued a report noting that nominal pay increases in the public services have amounted to around 17% since 2000, below the 21.4% increase recorded across the economy as a whole. On 20 December, Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble said to see "no scope" to pay ver.di's wage claim and to be "shocked" by the demand.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/331>;

http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601100&sid=az2s_V_wgMRw

German: <http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id> .;

http://www.boeckler.de/pdf/pm_ta_2009_12_15.pdf

Daimler agrees to secure jobs for a decade at Sindelfingen

December 17, 2009

On 9 December, management at Daimler's biggest car factory in Germany signed a shop agreement that secures their jobs for 10 years, a guarantee that brought an end to protests over moving production to the US, organized by the IG Metall union and the local works council. All 37,000 employees at the Sindelfingen plant will not face any forced redundancies until the end of 2019, Daimler states. The *Financial Times* stressed that deal is unusual even in a country where similar agreements for shorter periods were common before the financial crisis. Daimler is to create 2,700 new jobs to compensate for moving production of the best-selling Mercedes C-Class saloon from Sindelfingen to Tuscaloosa in the US. The new jobs will stem from shifting production of the SL roadster model from Bremen to Sindelfingen and a pledge to continue producing the new generations of E-Class and S-Class saloons at the plant. The union is prepared to moderate its wage demands across German industry in an effort to save jobs. There is an escape clause for Daimler if the economy deteriorates rapidly.

English: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/f1280216-e5f3-11de-b5d7-00144feab49a> .;
<http://www.imfmetal.org/index.cfm?c=21695>;
<http://www.imfmetal.org/index.cfm?c=21695&l=2>

Greece

Unions plan protest strikes

December 24, 2009

On 22 December, the civil servants' trade union ADEDY announced that it plans to stage a 24-hour strike in late January or early February against the labour and wage reforms planned by the government, in the face of ballooning debt and deficits. "We will not accept that the cost of the crisis will be borne on our shoulders," ADEDY president Spyros Papaspyros explained to press agencies. The private sector union, the General Confederation of Greek Workers, also said to consider a strike.

English: http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/newsbriefs/setimes/ .
via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Greece

Hungary

Unions divided over transport strike

January 4, 2010

On 4 January, eleven unions at the Budapest transport company BKV and the Volan nationwide bus company have declared an indefinite strike beginning on 12 January, after rejecting the latest contract offer from management. Some unions accepted this proposal, but others -representing 65% of BKV employees, mainly bus drivers-- turned it down as they are unwilling to accept planned cuts in fringe benefits. However, the metro and the HÉV suburban railway, as well as most trams and trolleybuses may be running, as their Urban Mass Transport Union has accepted the new contract terms. Railway workers have also threatened to hold a series of strikes, and employees of public television MTV have convened a strike committee to protest over pay.

English: [http://www.caboodle.hu/index.php?id=12&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]](http://www.caboodle.hu/index.php?id=12&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[backPid]) .;
<http://english.mti.hu/default.asp?menu=1&theme=2&cat=25&newsid=266772>

Agreement on minimum wage increase

December 3, 2009

The National Interest Reconciliation Council (OET), in which trade union, employer and government representatives meet, has set the 2010 national minimum wage at HUF 73,500 (Euro 270) a month, up from HUF 71,500 or a 2.8% increase. The minimum wage for skilled

workers will rise from HUF 87,500 to HUF 89,500, or 2.3%. The minimum wage increase has been effected from 1 January 2010.

English: <http://www.silobreaker.com/hungarys-ot-agrees-on-2010-minimum> .;
<http://www.fedee.com/minwage.html>

Ireland

Unions dispute government claims about pay cuts

January 4, 2010

The IMPACT public services union has criticized the government for pushing ahead with plans for pay cuts in the public sector on the basis of claims that this was a trend in the private sector. However, a survey by consultants Mercer found only 9% of companies cutting pay while the majority of private employers looking to reduce salary costs implemented pay freezes or used other methods such as unpaid leave. Likewise, most recently Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) general secretary Sheila Nunan said the 17% drop in average take-home pay for its 35,000 members in 2009 was far higher than cuts for private sector workers.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/332>;
<http://www.impact.ie/iopen24/impact-says-mercer-report-private-sector> .;
<http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/teacher-pay-cuts-wipe-outbenchmarking> .

Unions protest over savage budget cuts

December 17, 2009

Trade unions continued to mobilize in protest at the government's budget proposals that imply Euro 4 billion in cuts. Social and welfare payments are affected while public sector workers will see their pay cut by 6 to 8%. This follows on from last year's "pensions levy" which effectively meant a 7% cut in take home pay for public sector workers. The 24-hour public service strike of 24 November was followed by a demonstration of nurses, teachers and other public servants outside Leinster House, the Irish parliament building, on 15 December. David Begg, general secretary of the ITUC confederation, in addressing the protest criticized Finance Minister, Brian Lenihan, who referred to a war against public servants.

English: http://www.impact.ie/iopen24/-t-297_300_496.html ;
<http://www.siptu.ie/PressRoom/NewsReleases/Headline/Name,11354,en.html>

Italy

Public sector unions claim success after strikes and demonstrations

December 17, 2009

The three public service federations have been mobilizing to put pressure on the government to ensure that public sector pay increases are properly funded. In the past unions have negotiated pay increases with the ARAN negotiating body only to find that the government causes problems by failing to allocate resources in the budget. Pay agreements will now cover three-year periods rather than two. The FP CGIL federation organized a public sector wide strike on 11 December while the CISL and UIL federations organized a range of demonstrations around the country beginning on 2 December.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/331>;
Italian: <http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/12477>

Malta

Teachers' union declares industrial dispute

January 5, 2010

The Malta Union of Teachers has declared an industrial dispute with the government, as it had announced to do if by 1 January 2010 no progress was made on the long-running issue of payment of allowances. According to the union, the government had committed itself in June 2009 to examine the situation with regard to allowances by 1 January, but it had not been informed of any progress. The union council will meet again on 11 January and may order industrial action if the situation remains unchanged. Teachers went out on a one-day strike over the same issue last year and also observed a work-to-rule.

English: <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20100105/local/teachers> .via
http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Malta

Netherlands

Fears for race to the bottom revive as post firms win case

January 2, 2010

Budget postal delivery firms Sandd and Selekt Mail (DHL) have won their lawsuit against the Dutch state about employing permanent staff. The court in The Hague ruled that the Ministry of Economic Affairs cannot force them to employ delivery workers at regular terms instead of paying piece rates. The deal to make Sandd and Selekt compete on more equal terms with former state monopoly TNT was one of the main conditions the government attached to the liberalisation of the postal market. In a reaction a ministry spokesman said the ruling is being studied carefully. "Paramount is that a 'race to the bottom' in terms of pay and conditions for postal delivery workers must be avoided," junior Economic Affairs minister Frank Heemskerk earlier stated in reaction of union fears in this direction (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 March and October 2009).

English: http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2009/12/post_firms_win .
Dutch: *De Volkskrant*, 2 Januari 2010

Massive majority against local government pay freeze

January 1, 2010

With 97%, municipal workers voted overwhelmingly against a two-year pay freeze in a referendum organised by the trade unions. The VNG employers' organisation rejected the result, arguing that there was only an 18% turnout and assumed that those who didn't vote supported the pay freeze. The unions pointed out that the turnout would have been higher had the employers not refused to facilitate the referendum.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/332> ;
Dutch: <http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/nieuws/nieuws/abvakabo-fnv-vindt> .;
http://www.mijnvakbond.nl/VNG_slaat_plank_mis_met_commentaar .

Part-time unemployment scheme prolonged

December 8, 2009

The government has prolonged the part-time unemployment scheme that it introduced as of 1 April 2010 and that was due to end by 1 January, with three months till 1 April 2010, or earlier if the Euro 950 million reserved for the scheme is exhausted. Employers participating in the scheme before 1 April 2010 can be funded to maximum 15 months. From April-November

2009, 3,800 companies have used the scheme on behalf of 40,000 workers, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment published (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 February, March, April and May 2009).

Dutch: http://home.szw.nl/index.cfm?menu_item_id=13763&hoofdmnu_item_id .

Poland

Solidarnosc protest in Warsaw

December 15, 2009

Members of Solidarnosc launched a highly visible demonstration in Warsaw as to put pressure on the government to do more to protect jobs in heavy industry. They carried the white and red flags of the union and set fire to a pile of tires amidst a cacophony of horns. The rally took place outside the Prime Minister office. In particular, Solidarnosc is demanding that the government provides unemployment benefits for people laid off from the shipyards in Gdansk. Solidarnosc members are also keen for the government to help bolster the anemic armament, railway and shipbuilding industries.

English: <http://www.wbj.pl/article-47860-solidarnosc-trade-union-members-protest> .

Portugal

Minimum wage lifted by 5.6%

December 14, 2009

In early December, the government of Prime Minister José Sócrates recently outlined plans to raise the country's minimum wage by 5.6% to Euro 475 a month. The wage hike came as another step in a minimum wage increase policy that Sócrates' government started in 2005. The Prime Minister explained, "Maybe some will criticize this decision by the government as we're still in a period of economic hardship, but it is in difficult times that we have to pay more attention to those who need it, to promote measures that reduce inequality and combat poverty." The main union confederation, CGTP, said the Euro 475 level matched its own proposal. The minimum wage hike has been effected from 1 January 2010.

English: <http://www.neurope.eu/articles/98086.php>;
<http://www.fedee.com/minwage.html>

Slovakia

Minimum wage increased by 4.1%

January 5, 2010

Slovakia's minimum wage has been increased by 4.1% to Euro 307.70 per month as of 1 January 2010, in line with a government decision made in October. The Labour Ministry originally planned to increase the 2009 minimum wage of Euro 295.50 by 8.1% as proposed by the union movement. The tripartite Economic and Social Council met several times to discuss the issue but was unable to reach agreement. "I insist that this (increase) shouldn't have the sort of impact that could cause a problem," said Labour Minister Viera Tomanová, adding that the government is protecting the most vulnerable group of citizens.

English: http://www.spectator.sk/articles/view/37532/10/slovakias_minimum .;
<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2009/10/articles/sk0910019i.htm>

Spain

Unions sign equality agreement with water company

January 1, 2010

The FSC-CCOO and FIA-UGT trade union federations have signed a new agreement on gender equality with Aqualia, one of the biggest water companies in Spain that provides services for 850 municipalities. The agreement requires the unions and employer to work together on a range of issues, including employment, training, promotion and pay. It also covers sexual harassment, an issue on which the company already had an agreement.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/332>;

Spanish: <http://www.fsc.ccoo.es/webfsc/menu.do?Inicio:70173>

Union confederations criticize 1.5% minimum wage increase

January 1, 2010

In its final Cabinet meeting of the year, the government approved a 1.5% increase in the national minimum wage, to Euro 633.30 a month in 2010. However, during the campaign leading up to the last General Election Prime Minister Zapatero promised to raise the minimum wage to Euro 800 by 2012 if his Socialist Party was re-elected for a second term. The CCOO and UGT union confederations have criticized the 1.5% increase as they believe this calls into question the government's commitment to achieve the Euro 800 target timely. The confederations support the idea that the level of the minimum wage should be at least 60% of average earnings.

English: <http://www.barcelonareporter.com/index.php?/news/comments/spain> . ;

<http://www.epsu.org/cob/332>;

Spanish: <http://www.fsc.ccoo.es/webfsc/menu.do?Inicio:70476>;

<http://www.ugt.es/actualidad/2009/diciembre/c30122009.html>

Unions demonstrate over government response to the crisis

December 17, 2009

The CCOO and UGT confederations organised a major demonstration in Madrid on 12 December challenging the government's response to the crisis. The unions argue that proper social dialogue and collective bargaining are key to ensuring a way out of the recession that defends and creates jobs and public services. The confederations have agreed on 12 action points that include a demand for a fairer tax system to fund more public investment in transport, health and education.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/331>;

Spanish: <http://www.fsc.ccoo.es/comunes/temp/recursos/99922/301510.pdf>;

<http://www.ugt.es/actualidad/2009/diciembre/a14122009.html>

Sweden

Municipal union calls for higher pay and greater equality

January 1, 2010

Municipal union Kommunal calls for a pay increase of at least SKr 620 (Euro 61, 2.6%) a month this year along with higher pay increases (SKr 745 or Euro 73) in sectors where women predominate to help close the gender pay gap. The union also wants to see a strong central agreement backed up with local collective agreements to ensure that there is a clear link between the main pay negotiations and bargaining at local level. The other main bargaining issues include the need to reduce the use of temporary workers, improvements to working conditions and greater equality in terms of gender, race, age, religion and sexual orientation.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/332>;

Swedish: <http://www.kommunal.se/Kommunal/Medlem/Avtal-och-lagar/Lonekamp> .

Unions oppose employers using more agency staff

January 1, 2010

Six unions affiliated with the LO blue-collar confederation (Byggnads, Transport, Seko, Fastighets, Mälarna and Elektrikerna) have called on employers not to dismiss workers and take on agency staff instead.

A survey commissioned by the six unions shows that over 80% of workers would expect the unions to take action to stop employers replacing permanent staff with agency workers. The issue will be an important one in this year's collective bargaining.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/332>;

Swedish: <http://www.transport.se/home/trp2/home.nsf/pages/0AC932> .

Switzerland

Public sector union backs pay gap campaign

December 17, 2009

The VPOD public service union is supporting the 1:12 initiative launched by the Young Socialists. The campaign is aimed at stopping the growing gap between the low paid and the high paid and proposes a limit so that the highest paid person in an organisation gets no more than 12 times the salary of the lowest paid. VPOD says that this is already an element of pay systems in some parts of the public sector, with the pay structure at the City of Zürich limiting the top of its 18-grade pay system to 4.5 times the level of pay at the bottom.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/331>;

German: <http://www.vpod.ch/aktuell/nachrichten/ansicht/article/vpod> .

United Kingdom

Hospital workers strike to get nationally agreed pay

January 5, 2010

Cleaners, porters, cooks and other workers employed by the Sodexo company at North Devon District Hospital in the South West of England were due to take two days' strike action on 4 and 5 January. They are protesting about the failure of the company and the hospital to ensure that the workers are paid in line with the national health sector agreement (Agenda for Change).

Higher pay rates should have been introduced in as long ago as 2006.

English: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/devon/8440475.stm;

http://www.unison.org.uk/news/news_view.asp?did=5837

Massive NHS spending to resist equal pay

January 4, 2010

Using Freedom of Information legislation, public service union UNISON discovered that since 2000 the North Cumbria NHS (National Health Service) trust has spent a massive UKP 3.3 million (Euro 3.66 million) on lawyers in an attempt to stop low-paid women winning equal pay. The vast outlay is in shocking contrast to the earnings of some of the trust's own low-paid employees, such as cleaners and cooks, earning UKP 6.77 (Euro 7.51) an hour. Dave Prentis, UNISON general secretary, urged management to

negotiate a way through rather than persist with a "scandalous waste of money." He added: "While North Cumbria is clearly one of the biggest spenders, it is not alone. Trusts in other parts of the country are racking up lawyers' fees fighting equal pay. I would urge all of them to come to the negotiating table as soon as possible and stop pouring money down the drain."

English: http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=1685

Civil service unions angered by change to redundancy scheme

December 31, 2009

The PCS and other civil service unions are considering a legal challenge and possible industrial action in response to the government's unilateral decision to change the civil service compensation scheme. The unions believe the government is planning further job cuts and is looking to reduce the cost of making civil servants redundant. Said Mark Serwotka, PCS general secretary: "The government has an opportunity to avoid legal and industrial action by ensuring officials honour ministerial promises to make the changes through negotiation rather than imposition." PCS is set to ballot its 270,000 members in January, threatening disruption at jobcentres, revenue and customs, immigration, the coastguard and other bodies in the compensation dispute.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/331>;
http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/index.cfm/id/ .;
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2009/dec/31/strikes-unions-unrest-militancy>

Union ballots at National Grid

December 17, 2009

Members of UNISON at the National Grid utilities company are voting on an overtime ban and work-to-rule in protest at the company's pay offer. National Grid has offered just a lump sum payment and also wants to introduce poorer terms and conditions for new starters.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/331>;
http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=1672

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