

collective bargaining

Issue 9/2009 October

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

Call for better pay and conditions for child care workers

October 23, 2009

The VIDA and GPA-DJP trade unions have called for private childcare providers to be covered by the BAGS health and social service sectoral agreement. At the moment these employees are not covered by a collective agreement. The unions argue that they have faced a significant increase in the demands made upon them but there has been no attempt to re-evaluate their jobs and negotiate an appropriate increase in pay levels. The unions also want to see a federal law to regulate conditions and minimum standards for childcare provision.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/327>;

German: [http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=S03 ...](http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=S03...)

Belgium

Agreement covering federal civil servants concluded

October 9, 2009

Unions have signed a new two-year agreement covering the 80,000 civil servants employed at federal level. Bearing in mind the difficult negotiating conditions, they are positive about the agreement that covers improvements in a broad range of employment conditions, including increases to the year-end bonus marking further progress towards a 13th month salary.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/324>;

Dutch: <http://www.acod-overheidsdiensten.be/>;

French: <http://www.cgsp-ministeres.be/>

Meter readers strike over temporary contracts

October 9, 2009

Employees of the Metrix meter reading company, a subsidiary of Sibelga, the company that manages the gas and electricity networks in Brussels, went on strike in protest at the high level of temporary contracts in the company. Only one in four workers are on permanent contracts compared with 75% in comparable companies in Flanders and Wallonia. The company has refused to increase the number of permanent contracts.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/324>;

Dutch: <http://nl.gazelco.be/2009/10/01/spontane-werkonderbreking-bij-metrix-sibelga/>

Unions submit demands in non-profit sector

October 9, 2009

The unions that organise around 50,000 workers in the non-profit sector in Wallonia and the French community have submitted (CNE- CG- CSC/BI – FGTB/HORVAL- SETCa) have submitted a number of demands to employers covering pay and employment conditions. The unions point out that their members deliver a range of vital health and social services, demand for which is increasing as a result of the current crisis. Among the main demands are harmonisation of pay with health workers at federal level, granting of a 13th month salary and extra leave. The unions also want money allocated to employment measures to ease the increasing workload faced by many workers in the sector.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/324>;

French: [http://www.setca.org/News/Pages/Uncahierderevendicationspourles50000 ...](http://www.setca.org/News/Pages/Uncahierderevendicationspourles50000...)

Bulgaria

Nationwide railway strike announced

October 16, 2009

After some limited warning strikes, the strike committee of the joint railway unions has announced a nationwide strike unless the management of the state-owned companies agrees to their demands. Demands include being paid on time, receiving all social benefits railway workers are entitled to, and, most importantly, putting an end to the planned layoffs of 2,000 workers in the two state-owned railway companies BDZ (Bulgarian State Railways) and NKZI (National Company Railway Infrastructure). The unions are also opposed to the shutting down of railway stations and lines in poor regions. The Transport Ministry recently announced that the railways face a large deficit, blaming this largely on the policies of the former government.

English: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=108980

Cyprus

Hospital workers walk out over understaffing

October 22, 2009

On 21 October, ward assistants at Limassol General Hospital held a 24-hour strike in protest against staff shortages and increased workloads. Strikers' representative Christos Ioannides warned that unless the hospital authorities respond to a letter from the health unions within ten days, hospital's ward staff was prepared to go out on indefinite strike. District Secretary of PEO civil servants' union, Adonis Papachristoforou, said the government had carried out an enquiry, which recommended the hiring of 180 extra staff. His counterpart in the SEK union, Charis Antoniadis, said that "everyone has admitted that clearly there is a problem at Limassol Hospital, but nobody is taking the initiative to solve it."

English: http://www.cyprus-mail.com/news/main.php?id=48429&cat_id=1

via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Cyprus

Denmark

Waste contractor sacks striking employees

October 23, 2009

The waste contractor HCS has sacked 50 refuse collectors after losing a number of its municipal contracts in the Copenhagen area. The workers had been on strike for three weeks over their working conditions. Despite being sacked they have been continuing their action against the company, picketing the HCS waste disposal units in Glostrup and on the island of Amager. Union activist Ronni Larsen was arrested on one of the latest demonstrations. The refuse collectors had discovered that they were working under much worse conditions than employees working on other contracts in the area. The Health and Safety Executive and the 3F trade union had taken hundreds of cases against the company.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/327>;

Danish: <http://forsiden.3f.dk/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20091027> ...

Union puts gender equality into focus

October 21, 2009

HK (National Union of Commercial and Clerical Employees), Denmark's largest trade union, has started a comprehensive campaign to push parliament into making laws enforcing equal pay and rights for women in the workplace. Unless the existing legal framework, according to HK the gender pay gap is nearly 18%. Says HK president, Kim Simonsen, "It's embarrassing that the difference between men's and women's salaries is so large." The cause for equal pay received a boost earlier this month, when the Supreme Court ruled in favour of a female sales consultant who found she was earning 7,500 Danish crowns (Euro 1,010) a month less than her male colleagues. After a 10-year court battle, the woman finally won her case and was awarded back pay compensation.

English: <http://www.cphpost.dk/component/content/47261.html?task=view>

via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Denmark

Finland

State sector union protests over job threats

October 23, 2009

The state sector union Pardia interrupted its general assembly meeting on 21 October to protest outside parliament over planned government budget cuts, which the union believes may lead to temporary lay-offs and job losses. Pardia is concerned about the implications of the cuts for the development of the state sector and the quality of services. In a survey of members, the union found nearly one in three members perceives that their job is under threat.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/327>;

http://www.pardia.fi/in_english/?x126=1133193

Finnish pilots' union to enforce training ban

October 20, 2009

On 20 October, the Finnish Airline Pilots' Association decided it would impose a training ban on Finnair in two weeks' time. The union said Finnair pilots would refuse to train other carriers' pilots in protest against Finnair's plans to outsource some domestic and European short-haul flights. A pay and conditions agreement covering Finnair pilots expired more than a year ago, but talks on a new one stalled over the outsourcing plans.

English: <http://newsroom.finland.fi/stt/showarticle.asp?intNWSAID> ...

France

Power station workers take strike action

October 23, 2009

Workers at the Lucy power station in the Bourgogne region began strike action on 21 October in protest at company plans for the closure of a part of the site and further restructuring. The coal-fired plant is owned by the SNET company which was recently taken over by German energy multinational EON. The FNME-CGT union argues that the company has failed to abide by agreements about maintaining the site, has plans for further jobs cuts after closing one part of the site in 2013, and has failed to negotiate a proper mobility

agreement.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/327>;

French: <http://www.cgtsnet.fr/news.html>

Germany

Gender pay gap already early in career

October 1, 2009

Already at the start of their career, women experience a clear wage gap compared to men. Women with less than three years of experience earn on average 18.7% less than their male colleagues. As their careers develop, the gender pay gap increases. These are some outcomes of a recent research project, undertaken by the WSI institute in the Hans-Böckler-Stiftung and based on data from the German WageIndicator, Lohnspiegel. Says dr. Reinhard Bispinck, project leader, "These results cannot fully be explained by different occupational levels or specific career choices, they merely point at continuous wage discrimination."

English: [http://www.wageindicator.org/main/WageIndicatoregazette/ ...](http://www.wageindicator.org/main/WageIndicatoregazette/)

German: http://www.boeckler.de/547_97029.html

Services union launches member consultations for negotiations

October 23, 2009

The energy section of the ver.di services union has begun consulting members over forthcoming pay negotiations over the public sector agreement covering municipal utility companies (TV-V). The union warns that bargaining is likely to be tough in the current economic climate with local authorities pleading austerity. However, the union believes that it is important to secure real increases in pay to help maintain consumer spending in response to the crisis and it lists recent bargaining results in the energy sector and wider economy to support its argument.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/327>;

German: [https://energie-bergbau-ver-und-entsorgung.verdi.de/tarifarbeit/oeffentlich ...](https://energie-bergbau-ver-und-entsorgung.verdi.de/tarifarbeit/oeffentlich...)

Cleaners launch general strike

October 20, 2009

On 20 October, German cleaners launched a general strike for decent wages and other employment conditions. On the first strike day, some 1,000 cleaners would have downed their tools and more are expected to join them. In numerous offices, public institutions and hospitals, dirt is piling up and airplanes have to depart late or uncleaned, union IG BAU has announced. Measures have been taken to prevent problems at critical services such as intensive care facilities. Among other things, the union demands a pay rise and a reduction of the pay gap between cleaners in the East and the West of Germany. Currently, the minimum wage is Euro 8.15 per hour for cleaners in the West, and Euro 6.58 in the East. Many of the cleaners are immigrants. "We live in Europe, but our living conditions are not up to European standards," cleaner Habibe Karafil told newspaper Milliyet.

English: [http://unionrenewal.blogspot.com/2009/10/germany-cleaners ...](http://unionrenewal.blogspot.com/2009/10/germany-cleaners...)

Hungary

Joint strike action of railway workers

October 22, 2009

On 19 October, railway workers went on a nationwide strike after the government announced plans to slash the railway budget and close railway lines. Protest focused on proposals to withdraw 40 billion HUF (Euro 146 million) in funding from the railway industry, as well as to close some 30 lines, affecting 5,000 workplaces. Talks between the government and the unions on 20 October as to resolve the dispute failed, and were followed by a two-hour warning strike on Tuesday 27 October. The next negotiation round is set on 2 November. According to our Hungarian spokesperson, this was the first railway strike since 2000 called for by all five unions involved.

English: [http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail ...](http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail...);

Ireland

Public services union calls for 24 hour strike

October 23, 2009

Members of the IMPACT public services union have voted overwhelmingly in favour of strike action in response to the government's latest proposals for cuts in public sector workers' pay. The union will call on other public sector unions to join a 24-hour stoppage on 24 November. Six unions have joined together in an alliance of public sector workers delivering frontline services. The general union SIPTU along with unions representing nurses, firefighters, police (Garda) officers and prison officers have set up the 24/7 Frontline Service Alliance and they will all be balloting their members on strike action.

English: [http://www.impact.ie/iopen24/impact-propose-hour-public- ...](http://www.impact.ie/iopen24/impact-propose-hour-public-...);
<http://www.siptu.ie/PressRoom/NewsReleases/2009/Name,11192,en.html>

Boots workers to fight back against pay cuts

October 22, 2009

The Mandate trade union is balloting workers in Boots retail stores throughout the country for industrial action. Mandate and Boots management entered a series of negotiations as the company insisted on a range of cost saving measures. These talks recently collapsed following disclosure that the company is still highly profitable. As a result, Boots threatens to terminate all previously negotiated agreements with Mandate and plans, among other things, 25% reductions in public holiday pay and Sunday premiums.

English: <http://www.mandate.ie/Campaigns/Boots-Campaign.aspx>;
<http://www.uniglobalunion.org/Apps/iportal.nsf/pages/homepageEn>

Marine Terminals dispute ended

October 21, 2009

The fifteen week dispute at Marine Terminals Ltd in Dublin Port has ended following a decision by the company to accept a Labour Court recommendation on job retention and redundancies. According to SIPTU Regional Secretary, Christy McQuillan, the parties will begin discussions immediately to give effect to the recommendations of the Court. "We welcome the improved redundancy offer and note the courts' recommendation that the parties engage directly with a view to resolving other issues including the number of jobs and the selection process for any further redundancies", he said (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 July-August 2009).

English: <http://www.siptu.ie/PressRoom/NewsReleases/Headline/Name,11191,en.html>

Italy

Unions call for strike in waste sector

October 23, 2009

The three main unions – affiliated to the CGIL, CISL and UIL confederations– have called for strike action in the waste sector on 20 November in response to government plans for the sector. These will lead to privatisation or some form of public private partnership with at least a 40% share going to the private sector. The implications are that there will be very few services that will continue to be run by in-house providers. Apart from the likely impact on pay and conditions, the unions are worried about the effect of the reforms on environmental policies and the quality of service.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/327>;
Italian: <http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/11897>

Netherlands

FNV confederation remains opposed to government pension plans

October 24, 2009

After the social partners did not reach agreement on this issue, in mid-October the Dutch government

announced its plan to increase the state pension age from 65 to 67, in two steps. Those aged 55 or older before 1 January 2010 keep their current rights, but for those born 1955 or older from 2020 on the retirement age will be 66, to be lifted in 2025 to 67 for those born 1960 or later. Moreover, employers will have to take steps to ensure staff does not perform 'heavy' jobs for more than 30 years or pay them an extra pension for two years. FNV, the main union confederation, remains opposed to the plans and plans to mobilise its membership for demonstrations, whereas the smaller CNV and MHP confederations are willing to give in. FNV notably questions the practicality of the plans, and already broke off talks with the main employers' association on drawing up a definition of 'heavy jobs'.

English: [http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2009/10/union_ ...](http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2009/10/union_...)

Dutch: various newspaper messages; [http://home.szw.nl/index.cfm?menu_item_id=16365 ...](http://home.szw.nl/index.cfm?menu_item_id=16365...)

Dilemma for unions at TNT Post

October 27, 2009

TNT has announced that after union members in May 2009 rejected a proposal for the reorganization at TNT Post in the Netherlands, it has decided to go ahead with thousands of job cuts, only wanting to employ part-time workers from now on. Based on two research reports presented in late October, the five unions involved conclude that either job cuts or wage cuts are inevitable, though –also according to one of the reports- these cuts can be less deep than suggested by TNT. The unions announced to organise a referendum, in which TNT workers will be asked to choose either for wage cuts or for continuous wage increase, recognizing that the last option will most likely lead to forced dismissals.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/Apps/iportal.nsf/pages/homepageEn>;

Dutch: [http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/vakbonden_prijsoorlog ...](http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/vakbonden_prijsoorlog...);

[http://www.volkskrant.nl/economie/article1308095.ece/Vakbonden_ ...](http://www.volkskrant.nl/economie/article1308095.ece/Vakbonden_...)

Refuse collectors take strike action

October 23, 2009

Workers in the waste collection service in the city of Leyden took strike action on 21 October in protest at municipal plans to privatise this service. The workers are hoping that privatisation will be postponed and that the union will be able to negotiate changes and improvements to the service. Further strikes may follow if the municipality goes ahead with privatisation.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/327>;

Dutch: http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/vuilnismannen_in_leiden_staken/

Norway

Plea for tackling gender pay gap

October 23, 2009

The Fagforbundet municipal union is calling for public sector unions to co-ordinate their pay claims next year with special negotiations over how to deal with pay inequality. Average pay in the public sector, where 70% of workers are women, is lower than in the private sector where 70% of the workers are men. The specially convened pay commission argued that around 3 billion kroner (Euro 360 million) will be needed to close the gender pay gap. Fagforbundet wants to see the unions get together following the main public sector negotiations next spring to work out how to deal with the issue. The union refers to the successful co-ordination over pensions early this year that stopped government plans to reduce pension benefits.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/327>;

Norwegian: http://www.fagforbundet.no/forsida/?article_id=44092

Poland

Demonstration for better severance packages

October 23, 2009

Over 2,000 unionists from all over the country, mostly from the Solidarity union, and workers from the H. Cegielski plant in Poznan demonstrated in defense of the workplace and to demand higher severance pay for sacked workers. Cegielski, a manufacturer of heavy metal products, went into trouble not least due to the demise of the shipyard industry in Poland. Solidarity and OPPZ, the largest unions involved, agreed in September to group dismissals of 497 workers, and are actually demonstrating for better severance packages

as well as in defense of the remaining jobs at the factory.

English: http://pracownik.net.pl/demonstration_in_defense_of_cegielski_workers
via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Poland

Romania

Civil servants union postpones strike

October 20, 2009

The executive office of the Trade Union of Civil Servants (SNFP) has decided to postpone the all-out strike scheduled for October 25, union leader Sebastian Oprescu told a press agency. He emphasized that the recent collapse of the government asked for a responsible union attitude, but warned against the non-observance of labour legislation under pressure of crisis conditions. "This is one of the reasons for which we consider that the public administration needs parliament's special attention", Oprescu said.

English: <http://www.emportal.rs/en/news/region/101896.html>
via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Romania

Massive support for public sector strike

October 9, 2009

Reports indicate that over 750,000 workers took part in the national public sector strike on 5 October in protest at government plans to cut pay and jobs. The government proposals are in response to a loan agreement with the International Monetary Fund and European Union. The government wanted to implement a new public sector pay structure without negotiating with the trade unions (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 September 2009).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/324>;
<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2009/09/articles/ro0909019i.htm>

Spain

Opel workers accept job cuts plan

October 26, 2009

Workers at the Opel auto plant in Figueruelas, northern Spain, have accepted a plan by Canadian auto parts maker Magna International that would see the loss of 900 jobs, unions said. Members of the UGT and CCOO unions approved the plan by a large majority, and its leaders lifted a strike call. The plan envisages the loss of 900 of the more than 7,000 jobs at the factory, less than the 1,300 Magna had sought when the talks began last week and around half the number it had originally proposed. Magna also undertook to maintain the bulk of the existing production at the plant, which produces the Corsa model. The Spanish unions had feared some of the production would be moved to Germany.

English: [http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5j ...](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5j...)

Sweden

Unions highlights benefits of collective bargaining

October 23, 2009

A number of unions affiliated to the TCO white-collar confederation have joined in a campaign as to highlight the benefits to workers of collective agreements. The unions believe that, while many young people understand the need for strong trade unions, they are not fully aware of the role unions play in delivering collective agreements that provide decent pay and pensions as well as other benefits like good maternity leave. The unions are running information campaigns on their websites as well as in the press and on TV.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/327>;
Swedish: https://www.sktf.se/Templates/Page_____32864.aspx

Co-ordinated action helps reducing gender pay gap

October 23, 2009

The latest wage report from the LO confederation concludes that a co-ordination of policies by its affiliates has delivered higher pay increases for women workers and a closing of the gender pay gap. However, on average among blue-collar workers men still earn SEK 2,900 (Euro 285) per month more than women. The report also notes that the average pay of blue-collar workers has increased at a much lower rate than that of white-collar workers over the last 10 years, which means that the gap between the two has risen from 36% to 44%.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/327>;

<http://www.lo.se/home/lo/home.nsf/unidView/405482775AE41F4DC125764D0062FFD9>

Health employers pull out of pay agreement

October 9, 2009

Municipal and healthcare union Kommunal is very concerned that some 4,000 personal health care assistants will not get a pay increase next year, as a result of the decision by the Vårdföretagarna health employers' organisation to terminate a pay agreement with the union. Kommunal says it will continue to negotiate on the workers' behalf to see if an increase can be achieved. It is highly critical of the employers' organisation and says this is a blow to any further progress towards equal pay.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/324>;

Swedish: <http://www.kommunal.se/press/Pressmeddelanden/23026/>

Switzerland

Hospital workers mobilise over pay and conditions

October 9, 2009

Over 300 health workers took to the streets of Fribourg in a campaign to secure an increase in shift premia for night work. The SSP public service union wants to see hospitals honour the minimum legal requirements of a 10% addition for night work and full compensation for on-call duties but also is claiming a 20% allowance for night work in line with practice in most other cantons (regions).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/324>;

French: [http://www.ssp-vpod.ch/actualites/nouvelles/ansicht/article/300-salarie- ...](http://www.ssp-vpod.ch/actualites/nouvelles/ansicht/article/300-salarie-...)

United Kingdom

Unions aim to secure best deal for National Grid workers

October 23, 2009

The three main unions in the National Grid energy company – Unite, UNISON and GMB – have conceded that the planned closure of the company's Newcastle site will go ahead in 2010 with many of the jobs being moved to India. The unions ran a joint campaign focusing on the massive profits being made by the company but they are now shifting their focus to negotiating the best severance packages for their members (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 July-August 2009).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/327>;

<http://www.gmb.org.uk/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=99169>

Royal Mail dispute still unsolved

October 28, 2009

Since Spring 2009, the Communication Workers Union (CWU) has been involved in a dispute with Royal Mail. Since June, local strikes took place across the UK. In a weblink for the general public, CWU explains that postal workers are facing threats to job security (full-time to part-time, compulsory redundancies), impossible work targets, and cuts in pay (longer hours for no pay). On 13 October, CWU made a fresh offer to the Royal Mail Managing Director, basically emphasizing that "change will be introduced by agreement". By 23 October, 120,000 postal workers went on strike nationwide and Royal Mail had to shut down its service. On 26 October, negotiations resumed with the mediation of General Secretary of the TUC Brendan Barber, and on 28 October the CWU leadership said to have had "the most useful and productive discussions since the dispute commenced", but still it remained unclear whether the union proposal was accepted by Royal Mail management.

English: <http://www.cwu.org/royal-mail-dispute.html>;

Local government unions submit pay claim

October 23, 2009

The three main local government unions, UNISON, GMB and Unite, have submitted their pay claim for 2010. They are calling for a 2.5% pay increase with a minimum increase of UKP 500 (Euro 560) per year. The unions believe that this is modest but realistic claim and that local authority finances can cope with the rise.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/327>;
http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=1619

Local union negotiates “living wage”

October 9, 2009

UNISON members at Oxford City Council have voted in favour of a new pay structure that includes a minimum pay rate of UKP 7 (Euro 7.55) an hour. The UNISON branch is happy with a the new simpler pay structure in the council and the setting of a “living wage” well ahead of the national minimum wage that has been raised to UKP 5.80 (Euro 6.25) an hour for workers aged 22 and older from October 2009.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/324>; <http://www.unison.org.uk/bargaining/index.asp>

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