

collective bargaining

Issue 8/2009 September

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 predict challenging pay round

September 13, 2009

The GDG local government union and other trade unions are preparing for difficult negotiations in the coming pay round as employers continue to talk about freezing pay. The unions reaffirm the importance of maintaining living standards, and warn about the risks of a deflationary spiral if workers are denied a pay increase. They also point out that they have a history of responsible negotiations where they aim to protect workers' earnings while maintaining employers' competitiveness. The unions have set up an online calculator so union members can work out the impact of a pay freeze in the longer term.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/319>;

German: <http://www.gdg.at/servlet/...>

Belgium

Opel workers protest over threatened Antwerp factory

September 23, 2009

Some 3,000 Opel workers and union leaders from across Europe protested on Wednesday against the threatened closure of the carmaker's plant in Belgium, with a 2,600 workforce. More than 20 coachloads of workers arrived from Germany, filling the area with their yellow "Wir sind Opel" (We are Opel) T-shirts. A giant banner with the same logo hung from the Antwerp plant. Union officials were also present from Britain, Spain, Poland, the Netherlands, Austria and Hungary. The crowd held hands to form a giant circle in a field in front of the plant before union leaders took to the podium. On the same day, the EMF (European Metalworkers' Federation) Coordination Group agreed to enter into negotiations with the new Opel management on the restructuring process and the new structure of Opel.

English: <http://www.emf-fem.org/Media/Latest-news/GM-Opel-solidarity-and-unity>;

<http://www.reuters.com/article/rbssConsumerGoodsAndRetailNews/...>

Czech Republic

4% wage cut for state officials

September 21, 2009

The government has announced for 2010 a wage cut of 4% for Czech constitutional officials, including judges and state attorneys. The pay of clerks and other public sector employees is also to be cut by 4%. Finance Minister Eduard Janota originally spoke about wage decreases up to 20%.

English: <http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/czech-govt-for-4-cut...>

Denmark

Agreement delivers more full-time jobs

September 13, 2009

The FOA public services union has welcomed the fact that as a result of an agreement negotiated in 2007 more full-time jobs have been made available for part-time workers. The union says that some 2,300 health and social workers have moved from part-time to full-time work. The FOA is urging municipal and regional authorities to do more to encourage the move the full-time hours where employees want to do so.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/319>

France

Unions mobilise again

September 30, 2009

Six unions and union confederations have again agreed to co-ordinate their campaigning and mobilise for 7 October to maintain their protests against government policy and in support of pay as well as proper collective bargaining in the public sector. The CGT, CFDT, CFE-CGC, FSU, UNSA and Solidaires are backing the action which will coincide with the World Day for Decent Work which is again being co-ordinated by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/323>;

French: <http://www.spterritoriaux.cgt.fr/spip.php?article3401>

Union attacks EDF for lack of responsibility

September 13, 2009

FNME-CGT, the CGT-affiliated union for mining and energy, has criticised the EDF energy company and its eRDF subsidiary for failing to support workers who were dismissed when a meter-reading was awarded to a new company. The new contractor also refused to abide by an employment tribunal decision that the workers should be reinstated. The union accused EDF of failing to comply with its own social responsibility code on sub-contractors and undermining its own claims to be supporting employment during the crisis.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/319>;

French: <http://www.fnme-cgt.fr/pages/communiqu.php?id=29>

Germany

Pay agreement at Volkswagen

September 28, 2009

Volkswagen AG, Europe's biggest carmaker, will increase pay and institute performance-linked bonuses under an accord reached on 28 September, covering 95,000 manufacturing workers in western Germany. Earlier, the IG Metall union planned to stage work stoppages should a pay agreement not be reached. Management and IG Metall leaders agreed on a 4.2% raise to take effect on 1 January, 2010. Terms for payments tied to individuals' performance will be arranged for when the next contract starts in 2011, said VW's chief negotiator. The 18-month pay contract is in effect from August 1, 2009, till January 31, 2011. Workers will receive bonuses of Euro 510 in October and Euro 200 in February 2010. The performance-linked bonuses would average Euro 100 a month.

English: <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601100&sid=a77VLR6fem5A;>

<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601100&sid=aHbOFypT8OYw> via
http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Germany

Week of action for better pay in church organisations

September 30, 2009

Services union ver.di organised a series of strikes and demonstrations between 22 and 25 September as part of a campaign to secure decent pay for decent work in church organisations. The union says that there have been no pay increases in the sector for over four years and that the main employers' organisation, the VdDD, is pursuing a wage dumping policy to finance the expansion of its organisations. The union has also attacked church employers for arguing against their employees' right to take strike action.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/323>;

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

National action by elderly care workers

September 30, 2009

Services union ver.di has organised a national campaign of action by workers in elderly care calling for combining improved financing for the sector with higher pay. The union argues that workers are facing much heavier workloads and that they need improved pay and working conditions and financial support for training. Action around the country is making people aware of the pressures that care workers face. The action is part of a longer term campaign to raise issues of patient care and working conditions in the sector as well as the need to re-evaluate jobs in the sector.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/323>;

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

Ireland

Coca Cola rejects Labour Court proposals to end strike

September 30, 2009

Coca Cola HBC Ireland has rejected the Labour Court recommendation to resolve the six weeks' long strike at the firm, while the SIPTU union has accepted the proposals. The Court recommended that the company should offer a redundancy package in line with previous redundancy arrangements agreed with SIPTU. It also called on both parties to conduct a feasibility study in relation to the retention of jobs at the company's Ballycoolin plant in Dublin. The dispute began when 130 workers found their jobs unilaterally transferred to subcontractors on much poorer pay and conditions. SIPTU national industrial secretary, Gerry McCormack, said that the dispute would continue.

English: <http://www.siptu.ie/PressRoom/NewsReleases/Headline/Name,11101,en.html>

Union confederation to stage day of protest

September 30, 2009

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) is to stage a national day of demonstration in November in an effort to try to influence government's decisions on the forthcoming budget. ICTU president Jack O'Connor said this would involve marches in about six locations on the afternoon of Friday, 6 November. The Congress will reactivate its campaign for the implementation of a 10-point plan for dealing with the economic crisis in "a fairer way". A day earlier, the large SIPTU union lodged a claim for a 3.5% pay increase for about 34,000 staff in the health service, arguing that it represented the first phase of the rise due under the national pay deal negotiated last autumn. The Government subsequently froze these increases for staff in the public sector. Asked about this pay claim, O'Connor said that he would not stop members taking industrial action in pursuit of such claims.

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/breaking/2009/0930/breaking11.htm>;

<http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/siptu-warns...> via

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

Italy

Unions reject public sector pay freeze

September 30, 2009

The FP CGIL public service federation is warning of a pay freeze facing public sector workers. After a first meeting between the government and social partners, the union reports that the government said there is not a single Euro available to fund a pay increase in the public sector. FP CGIL argues that workers should not be made to pay the price for the crisis and that unions will have to mobilise in a campaign against the government. The FP CISL public service federation has also given a "clear no" to the idea of a public sector pay freeze.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/323>;

Italian: <http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/11541>

Private health workers still waiting for renewal of agreements

September 13, 2009

During September the three public service federations are mobilising their members in another push to renegotiate the collective agreement covering the 150,000 workers in the private health sector. The unions will make this a public campaign highlighting the connection between quality services and treating workers with respect – pay and conditions in the sector should have been renegotiated in a new collective agreement four years ago. The unions want the employers to make a public commitment to renegotiate the contract and have called on the public authorities to put pressure on them as well (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 July-August 2009).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/319>;

Italian: <http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/11403>

Jobs saved at Fiat plant

September 18, 2009

On 9 September at the Ministry of Labour an agreement was reached by the Italian metalworker trade unions FIM, FIOM and UILM about the CNH plant, avoiding closure of the plant in Imola that the Fiat group had announced a few months ago. The collective agreement, which was reached after 81 days of picketing the plant, was reached in co-operation with the local union structures and the regional government. It notably provides for using the "Cassa Integrazione for crisis" (12 months), through which public funding Imola workers will not be dismissed.

English: <http://www.imfmetal.org/index.cfm?c=20671&l=2>

Lithuania

Service workers union settle contract with G4S

September 3, 2009

The Lithuanian Service Workers Trade Union has settled its second collective agreement with G4S. Their first agreement, signed in 2007, was the first collective agreement in the security sector in Eastern Europe. The Lithuanian Service Workers Trade Union fought for seven years to get its first collective agreement, during which time they organized another 800 security workers. The union attributes much of their initial organizing success with the support they received from the Lithuanian Commerce and Cooperative Trade Union and Dansk Funktionvorbund. Under the new agreement, union representatives discuss possible salary raises twice a year and they have access to a joint labor-management committee to challenge disciplinary penalties imposed on members.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/Apps/UNINews.nsf/...>

Netherlands

Social partners remain divided over retirement age

September 30, 2009

On the evening of 30 September, the negotiations between employers' associations and the three main union confederations in the Social-Economic Council (SER) on the retirement age finally broke down. The government had given social partners room till October to develop an alternative for its plans to gradually lift the retirement age to 67. The main issue of disagreement remains the age on which workers can count on the general state pension (AOW), which the unions want to keep longer at the age of 65. Government and

employers argue that the joint plan that the union confederations finally agreed upon, creates substantially less than the Euro four billion savings on the government budget that are judged necessary.

Dutch: <http://www.bnr.nl/artikel/13331919/ser-overleg-aow-mislukt>

Employers make concession after 'final' offer

September 13, 2009

After union members in the waste and environment sector overwhelmingly rejected the employers' "final" offer of a 1% pay increase, the employers made a further improved offer. The 1% pay increase backdated to 1 June will stand, but a further increase will be paid if inflation rises above 1% at the end of the year. The ABVAKABO FNV union had indicated that it was willing to be flexible on pay if the employers would make some guarantees on jobs; discussions on employment in the sector are continuing.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/319>;

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

Unions reject prison restructuring plans

September 13, 2009

The public service unions ABVAKABO FNV, BPSAG and CNV Publieke Zaak have rejected the Ministry of Justice's five-plan 2009-2014 for the prison service. The plan includes proposals to cut 1,200 jobs and close a number of institutions across the country. The unions have called for major changes to the plans including clear commitments about how to deal with the impact of staff of any restructuring. The unions point out that the prison service needs well-trained staff and the five-year plan needs to be clear how to ensure employment levels and expertise will be maintained.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/319>;

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

Norway

Energy sector dispute settled

September 13, 2009

Unions in the energy sector have managed to secure a change in the way local pay increases are allocated. Several unions have argued that the local additions should be flat rates rather than percentage increases that benefit the higher paid more. A settlement was reached with the aid of the mediation office and a general increase of 925 Krone (Euro 107) applies from 1 July. A committee has also been established to look at how the local wage negotiations will work in future.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/319>;

Norwegian: <http://www.elogit.no/index.gan?id=11466&subid=0>

Poland

Unions take LOT to court

September 21, 2009

The board of Polish airlines, LOT, plans to dismiss 450 people starting in October, as well as unilaterally worsening working conditions. On 21 September, the unions involved decided to take LOT to court, claiming that these plans are not in accordance with the collective agreement in LOT. Though the Board cancelled that agreement in June, effective by the end of September, the unions claim that the old agreement is binding until a new one is in place. Earlier in September, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) launched a campaign to back the struggle of the LOT workers. ITF and ETF note that the airline has already embarked on anti-union practices, notably dismissing Elwira Niemiec, president of the Polish Cabin Crew Union, and Grzegorz Kossowski, president of the LOT Polish Airlines Employees Union.

English: http://www.pracownik.net.pl/unions_take_lot_to_court;

www.itfglobal.org/campaigns/LOTdispute.cfm

Portugal

Public administration agreement signed

September 30, 2009

The SINTAP and STE public sector unions were among those signing a new collective agreement covering workers in public administration. The agreement lays down rules regarding training, working time - including flexible working hours - and telework. SINTAP believes the agreement will be an important step towards ensuring equal treatment of workers across the public administration. The agreement has not been signed by all public sector trade unions.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/323>;

Portuguese: <http://www.sintap.pt/>

National public sector strike over working conditions

September 30, 2009

The STAL local government union says that around 60% of council workers joined the national strike on 16 September in defense of public sector workers' rights and against government proposals on worker mobility in the public sector, performance management and reorganisation of municipal services.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/323>;

Portuguese: http://www.stal.pt/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=438&Itemid=1

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Romania

Public sector unions plan general strike

September 30, 2009

Public sector unions have called for a public sector-wide strike on 5 October in protest at the government's plans to impose a new pay structure. The government is responding to demands from the International Monetary Fund to reduce public spending and reform public sector pay as part of a loan package that was also negotiated with the European Union. The unions argue that groups of workers will be left worse off by the changes but that they will call off the strike if the government agrees to negotiate over reforms to the pay system. "This is an alarm bell for the government," said Aurel Cornea, leader of the education union.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/323>;

<http://www.balkans.com/open-news.php?uniqueid=20201491>

Romanian: <http://www.sedlex.ro/main/noutati.php?section=1&id=235>

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Slovenia

Strike called off as energy union talks to government

September 13, 2009

After a warning strike on 24 August, the SDE energy union has managed to secure talks with the government over plans to unbundle the Slovenian electricity network from the retail business. A strike planned for 14 September has been called off following the government's agreement to have a proper process of social dialogue over the changes.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/5679>

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Spain

Unions sign three-year agreement with government

September 30, 2009

The three main Spanish public service federations, CCOO, UGT and CSI-CSIF, have signed a new agreement with the government covering 2010-2012. On pay the agreement allows for a 0.3% increase in 2010, but a revision clause in the agreement allows for a higher increase to maintain purchasing power. The agreement includes a number of other measures covering modernisation of the public administration and implementation of elements of the basic law on public employment that was passed in 2007 but not fully put into effect.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/323>;

Spanish: http://www.fspugt.es/La_FSPUGT_rubrica_el_Acuerdo...

Sweden

Union argues for higher pay for ‘women’s’ jobs

September 13, 2009

Local government union Kommunal believes that the approach of unions in the LO confederation in 2007 to negotiate higher pay increases for jobs where women make up the majority of workers has contributed to closing the gender pay gap. The union argues that it is unacceptable that “women’s” jobs are undervalued and believes there is still a long way to go to close the gap.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/319>;

Swedish: <http://www.kommunal.se/press/Pressmeddelanden/22857/>

Switzerland

30,000 demonstrate for fairness in crisis

September 30, 2009

Over 30,000 people manifested in the streets of Switzerland’s capital, Bern, on 19 September, in what the national general workers’ union, Unia, billed as a day in which workers declare, “We Will Not Pay for the Crisis.” The manifestation, sponsored by all Swiss trade unions, was intended to serve notice to a parliament that it must adopt new policies to secure work, wages, and pensions in the face of the global economic crisis. The manifestation, in terms of sheer numbers, exceeded the expectations of the organisers. The VPOD/SSP public services federation stressed the need to maintain public services particularly at a time of recession and called for measures to improve public services such as an investment in improved childcare.

English: <http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/3401-30-000-Take-to-Streets...>;

<http://www.epsu.org/cob/323>;

French: <http://www.icem.org/de/78-ICEM-InBrief/3401-?la=FR>

Canton employees demonstrate over changes in pay

September 13, 2009

The VPOD public service trade union joined other unions in a demonstration on 10 September in protest at the proposals by the Zürich canton to make changes to the wage system covering employees in the regional authority, local health service and university. The changes would mean no general pay increases but only bonuses for individuals. The unions believe this will lead to greater inequality.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/319>;

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

United Kingdom

National Grid workers on strike

September 13, 2009

Workers at the National Grid in Newcastle took strike action on 11 September in protest at the company’s plans to close the site and transfer work overseas. The action may spread to other sites that are affected by the company’s restructuring proposals (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 June and July-August 2009).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/319>; <http://www.nationalgreed.co.uk/>

Finance staff at Capita strike in pay row

September 23, 2009

On 23 and 24 September, the union members at finance company Capita headquarters in Glasgow went on strike in a dispute over a “derisory pay offer”. The Unite union has written to Capita’s clients to make them aware of the breakdown in negotiations between the union and Capita. Rob MacGregor, Unite national officer, said: “Capita staff is being forced by their employer to accept an insulting pay offer while their CEO,

Paul Pindar, awards himself a package worth UKP 9.8 million. This hypocrisy by Capita, at a time when the staff in Glasgow are bringing the company good profits, is truly shameful.”

English: http://www.unitetheunion.com/news__events/latest_news/finance_staff_at_capita...

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