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collective bargaining

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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
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contents

Austria

Pay increases in outsourced services
Unions unhappy with private health pay offer

Belgium

Negotiations set to start over position of asylum service workers
No national agreement yet, temporary unemployment prolonged

Bulgaria

Railway unions oppose terms of loan memorandum
Priests found a trade union

Cyprus

Agreement not enough to avoid teachers' strike

Czech Republic

Widespread support for public sector strike

Denmark

PM announces phasing out early retirement

Finland

Broad political support for combating abuse of fixed-term contracts
Flight attendants' strike ends after tough negotiations

France

Action on 20 January over precarious employment
Union organises protest at Carrefour

Germany

Lidl surprises by proposing higher minimum wage
Ver.di launches pay claim for regional governments

Strike at RWE over pay offer
Paper workers reach wage terms for 2011
BWI and Pfleiderer sign international minimum standards agreement

Greece

Court declares aviation strike illegal
Seventh general strike against austerity measures

Hungary

Union and management reach agreement at General Electric
Unions protest against government measures

Ireland

Major union lobbying for general strike
Employers plea for halt to retail pay rise
Budget to hit low paid workers

Italy

Positive results from campaign to protect precarious workers
Fiat reaches agreement on labour concessions
Immigration staff strike against end of contracts

Latvia

Increase of national minimum wage

Malta

Living wage should be government priority

Netherlands

Unions call national demonstration in defense of public sector jobs
Rise of statutory minimum wage
Permanent jobs for casual workers at Ahold distribution centres
Agreement reached at TNT Post

Portugal

Unions take legal action to block pay cuts
Confederation warns government on minimum wage rise

Slovenia

Union confederation argues for increase of national minimum wage

Spain

Unions protest against regional and local government
Confederations threaten general strike against retirement age rise

Switzerland

Trade unions target widening income gap

United Kingdom

Civil service union attacks unfairness of performance-related pay
Third strike at Heinz suspended
Bargaining result in corrugated paper sector
Unions concerned about announcement of end to two-tier agreement

Austria

Pay increases in outsourced services

December 21, 2010

The GÖD public services union reports several negotiated pay rises in agreements that are now negotiated separately from the main public sector agreement. All five agreements will see pay increases from 1 January 2011. In the universities it will be ? 34.50 a month, meaning a 2.5% increase for the lowest paid. There is a 0.7% increase in the Academy of Sciences (ÖAW) but a minimum rise of ? 35. Workers in the Employment Service (AMS) will get 1.25% while employees at Research (Forschung) Austria will get 2.1%. The pay rise in the Federal Computing Service (BRZ) will be 1% with a ? 45 minimum and 1% on additional payments, meaning 2.87% for the lowest paid.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/393>

German: <http://www.goed.at/17014.html>

Unions unhappy with private health pay offer

December 21, 2010

On 16 December, 13 hours of negotiations over the agreement covering 80,000 workers in the private health and social services sector ended with no progress over the annual pay increase. The GPA-DJP and VIDA unions said the 1.3% offer from the employers was unacceptable, as it was below the trend of recent settlements and would mean a loss of purchasing power with inflation expected to reach 1.8%. They also said it was inadequate for a sector dominated by women where it was important to recognise the value of the work of such a vital service. Negotiations will resume on 12 January and the unions are planning actions in four cities on 26 January if there is no improved offer.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/393>

German: <http://www.gpa-djp.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename> .;

<http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer> .

Belgium

Negotiations set to start over position of asylum service workers

January 6, 2011

After a 24-hours' strike on 22 November, the CSCP/CCOD and CGSP/ACOD public service federations have managed some progress in their campaign to get employees of the Fedasil asylum service transferred to the federal civil service. These employees have been on fixed-term contracts and lower rates of pay than in federal civil service, and the unions are pushing for an end to precarious employment conditions. An agreement will be put to the unions on 17 January beginning a process of negotiation over the practical details (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 3 November 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/395>

French: http://csc-services-publics.csc-en-ligne.be/Nouvelles/Sectorielles/autorite_federal/actualites_federal/veritable_depart.asp

No national agreement yet, temporary unemployment prolonged

December 23, 2011

The union confederations and the main employers' associations, negotiating in the so-called Group of Ten, have been working for some weeks in December on an interprofessional accord (national agreement) on pay and conditions, but on 21 December they told the outgoing cabinet that there

were still disagreements and that they would not reach an agreement before the new year. At the same time, the Group of Ten asked the government to prolong the package of anti-crisis measures, including the temporary unemployment arrangement, due to end by 1 January 2011. On 23 December, the government answered that these measures were prolonged by just one month.

Dutch: http://www.abvv.be/web/guest/press-releases-nl/-/press/71265/&p_l_id=13635;
http://www.abvv.be/web/guest/press-releases-nl/-/press/72985/&p_l_id=13635

French: http://www.abvv.be/web/guest/press-releases-fr/-/press/72993/&p_l_id=14124;
http://www.abvv.be/web/guest/news-fr/-/article/84204/&p_l_id=10624

Bulgaria

Railway unions oppose terms of loan memorandum

December 15, 2010

The two major railway unions, affiliated with the CITUB and CL Podkrepa confederations, have opposed vigorously the terms of a loan memorandum that the government signed with the World Bank, and declared determination for all-out strikes. Leaders of the two unions said to have had "long and hard talks" with representatives of the Transport Ministry, the Finance Ministry, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the memorandum. According to the union leadership the stipulation in the memorandum for a 30% reduction of the spending for personnel remained unacceptable, as they would cause massive layoffs with thousands of workers losing their jobs as well as create a direct threat to the safety of railway operations. "The railway workers will strike to the very end if the text of the memorandum is not amended," declared the president of the KNSB railway union, Petar Bunev.

English: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=123214

Priests found a trade union

December 13, 2010

Bulgarian orthodox priests have founded a trade union unit as part of the Podkrepa CL confederation. The news has been confirmed by the leadership of Podkrepa. The organization unites priests, sextons, administrative servants of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and candle manufacturers. The unrest among church servants started in the town of Vratsa, where priests in complained they did not receive their salaries on time and lacked health and retirement insurance. "Priests to have a trade union? This is absurd!", Vratsa metropolitan Kipriyan reacted, arguing "The canons forbid it."

English: <http://paper.standartnews.com/en/article.php?d=2010-12-14&article=34959> via
http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Bulgaria

Cyprus

Agreement not enough to avoid teachers' strike

December 14, 2010

PASYDY, the civil servants' union, on 13 December cancelled a planned strike over government austerity measures after a meeting of the three major unions, PASYDY, SEK and PEO, with the country's Finance Minister, Charilaos Stavrakis. Yet, the teachers' unions went ahead with their two-hour work stoppage on Thursday 14 December. Initially the unions were furious as they said the government proposals targeted the masses and left the wealthy untouched. For example, the measures included the introduction of a 5% VAT on food and medicine in 2011. Stavrakis pledged to re-table proposals to tax wealth as soon as possible in consultation with the political parties and unions. PASYDY president Glafkos Hadjipetrou welcomed the agreement with the government, saying that "we can find the appropriate measures to exit the crisis through dialogue, without provocation and recriminations."

English: <http://www.cyprus-mail.com/cyprus/round-one-civil-servants/20101214>

Czech Republic

Widespread support for public sector strike

December 21, 2010

The CMKOS trade union confederation has reported solid support for the strike in the public sector organised on 8 December. Nearly 150,000 employees of health services, education, state administration, cultural facilities and other public services took part directly. The action was in protest against government plans to cut the public sector pay bill by 10% in 2011. Other plans include public sector pay reform that could mean further cuts in pay, although implementation of the new scheme may not happen in 2011. CMKOS also reports a majority of public opinion in favour of the public sector strike action. Low pay in the health sector has also led to a campaign by doctors, with many resigning in protest at the government's failure to maintain pay and funding (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 November 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/393>; <http://www.cmkos.cz/homepage/2791-3>;
[http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/total-of-3513-czech-hospital-doctors ...](http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/total-of-3513-czech-hospital-doctors...)

Denmark

PM announces phasing out early retirement

January 3, 2011

The nation's early retirement scheme is a drain on the social welfare system, according to Prime Minister (PM) Lars Løkke Rasmussen. In his New Year's Day speech Rasmussen announced to gradually eliminate the so-called efterløn programme, currently permitting individuals who have paid into the system for 30 years to receive a partial pension five years before the official retirement age of 65. The early retirement programme was introduced in 1979 as a way to provide older manual labourers a way to stop working, as well as to help alleviate unemployment. According to the PM, it costs DKK 16 billion (Euro 2.15 billion) annually.

English: [http://www.cphpost.dk/news/politics/90-politics/50749-pm-phase-out ...](http://www.cphpost.dk/news/politics/90-politics/50749-pm-phase-out...) via
http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Denmark

Finland

Broad political support for combating abuse of fixed-term contracts

December 13, 2010

The Finnish Parliament voted on 19 November 105 to 67 to challenge the government's job creation policies in a no confidence ballot aimed at stemming the grey economy. The vote was highly significant since was supported by many parliamentarians of the country's centre-right ruling government and met little employer opposition. It sets the stage for better and more worker-friendly amendments in 2011 to be included in the Finnish law on the Contractor's Obligations and Liability when Work is Contracted Out. The SAK union confederation, commenting on the vote, said any new national legislation would likely limit employers' use of fixed-term contracts and prohibit employers from repeatedly using temporary workers when their need is a permanent workforce (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 November 2010).

English: [http://www.icem.org/en/73-Contract-and-Agency-Labour ...](http://www.icem.org/en/73-Contract-and-Agency-Labour...)

Flight attendants' strike ends after tough negotiations

December 10, 2010

After a dispute for over a week, grounding many flights, negotiations between Finnair management and the Finnish Cabin Crew Union (SLSY) resulted in an agreement based on a new wage deal proposal made by the state mediator Esa Lonka. Details were not yet revealed. At times, negotiations were turbulent. Sources close to the talks say Finnair threatened employees with redundancies and a

breakup of the company, which was confirmed by Thelma Åkers, president of SLSY. In her view, the threat of redundancies appeared real and did have an effect on the final outcome (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 November 2010).

English: [http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/news/2010/12/finnair_quotthreatenedquot_cabin_crew ...](http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/news/2010/12/finnair_quotthreatenedquot_cabin_crew...);
<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSLNE6B901F20101210>

France

Action on 20 January over precarious employment

January 6, 2011

The CGT federation representing local and regional government is organising a day of action, including strikes, on 20 January in protest at the spread of precarious employment conditions across the sector. The federation estimates that there are around a million workers in the public sector who do not have full civil service status. The union is calling for all workers in the sector to be transferred to civil service conditions and restrictions placed on the extent to which local government employers can take on employees on precarious terms and conditions.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/395>

French: <http://www.spterritoriaux.cgt.fr/spip.php?article4433>

Union organises protest at Carrefour

December 17, 2010

The CGT commercial services union has called for a one-day action in all stores of the country's largest retailer, Carrefour, on Saturday 18 December, in the run-up to Christmas. The protest is against deteriorating working conditions and management plans to restructure the distribution organisation and extend night shifts. Workers are encouraged to stop work, walk out, spread leaflets or sign a petition. Carrefour would not comment on the likely impact of the action.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSLDE6BF1DY20101216>

Germany

Lidl surprises by proposing higher minimum wage

December 22, 2010

In the midst of negotiations between services union ver.di and the German Retail Federation (HDE) over a minimum wage for the 2.7 million retail workers, where an hourly base rate somewhere between ? 7 and ? 8.80 has been discussed, Juergen Kisseberth, director of discount supermarket chain Lidl, has come up with a proposal for a minimum hourly rate of ? 10. Some critics of Lidl reacted surprised, as the discounter has been under fire in recent years for treating employees and suppliers poorly on a number of occasions. Ver.di officials have avoided speculations about the company's motives. Union spokeswoman Cornelia Hass said, "We hope that this good example will be followed by other chains. A lot of retailers think it's acceptable to pay wages that their workers cannot live on in order to keep a competitive edge. Lidl pays good wages but still has a good competitive position. There really is no more convincing argument", adding "This is a positive signal, but they will have to go a lot further before you hear me calling them a model company."

English: <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,14732011,00.html>

Ver.di launches pay claim for regional governments

December 21, 2010

A pay claim of ? 50 plus 3% has been put forward by ver.di's collective bargaining committee for regional government. The agreement covers 585,000 workers in 14 of Germany's 16 Länder (Berlin and Hesse are covered by separate agreements). The pay agreement would also normally be extended to cover the 1.07 million civil servants in the regions. Ver.di says that the level of the increases reflects the need to keep up with living costs and with salary levels in federal and local government.

The union argues that it is also an important contribution to boosting domestic demand in the country.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/393>

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

Strike at RWE over pay offer

December 21, 2010

Services union ver.di along with the IG BCE union organised warning strikes across all departments of the RWE energy company on 16 and 17 December. The action involved around 6,000 workers and was in protest at the management's offer of a 2.4% pay increase plus lump sum payment. The unions argue that this is an insult in view of the company's massive profits and they have demanded a rise of 6.5%. A union spokesman stressed that the unions were mindful that customers would not be left without energy supply in the winter and that security at nuclear plants would be safeguarded.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/393>;

<http://af.reuters.com/article/energyOilNews/idAFWEA785820101216>

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

Paper workers reach wage terms for 2011

December 13, 2010

As of 1 January 2011, 45,000 German paper workers will see a 2.5% wage increase. That was the negotiated result in the third round of bargaining that concluded on 2 December between the IG BCE union and Deutschen Papierindustrie (VAP), the employers' association. The new collective agreement will run until 30 November 2011 and for the first time ties together under one agreement workers employed at some 220 paper mills in Germany's western and eastern regions. IGBCE also attained improvements in the pension plan, in holiday pay and in shift pay. The two sides reached agreement over the use of temporary workers, preventing the abuse of such workers.

English: <http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/?date=2010-12-13#4168>

BWI and Pfleiderer sign international minimum standards agreement

December 6, 2010

The Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI), IG Metall, the European Works Council (EWC) of Pfleiderer AG, and the management of this German wood-based materials producer have concluded an International Framework Agreement (IFA). In the agreement, signed in Frankfurt on 30 November, the company undertakes to comply with minimum standards for the working conditions of all the workers in its domestic and especially foreign entities. Wolfgang Rhode, an executive member of IG Metall's board, sees the agreement as a way to agree minimum social standards and labour rights within internationally operating companies, in the absence of enforceable government regulations. The Pfleiderer Group employs about 5,600 employees worldwide at 22 locations in Germany, the United States, Canada, Russia, Sweden and Poland.

English: <http://www.bwint.org/default.asp?Index=3193&Language=EN>

German: <http://www.bwint.org/default.asp?Index=3188&Language=DE>

Greece

Court declares aviation strike illegal

December 28, 2010

A 48-hour strike called by the civil aviation staff union OSYPA on December 29 and 30 has been declared illegal by an Athens first-instance court, after management at the Civil Aviation Service (CAS) filed to have the strike declared illegal. Members of OSYPA said in response to the ruling that they would resort to other forms of labour mobilisation in protest against the government's plans for mandatory transfers of some 500 mechanics and pilots of the former Olympic Airways currently

employed by the CAS.

English: http://www.express.gr/news/ellada/399267oz_20080225399267.php3

Seventh general strike against austerity measures

December 21, 2010

Trade union protests against the government's austerity measures continued with a general strike, the seventh in 2010, on 15 December. The most recent proposals from the government include caps on salaries in state-owned companies as well as changes in the employment law as to allow private sector employers to ignore collective agreements (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 September, October and November 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/393>;
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11998632>
Greek: <http://www.adedy.gr/adedy/site/home/ws.csp>

Hungary

Union and management reach agreement at General Electric

December 29, 2010

Management and unions at US-based General Electric's (GE) Hungarian lighting division have reached agreement on steps to be taken in 2011 as part of two-year restructuring program. In 2011-2012 GE plans to lay off 2,109 workers, 461 less than it announced in October 2009. GE said that workers that will be dismissed will get benefits over the amount laid down in the collective contract. The company promised to co-operate with government and unions to support workers affected by the lay-offs.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent

Unions protest against government measures

December 6, 2010

Over 3,000 people turned out for a protest against the government's methods and actions organised by three union confederations, in Budapest outside the Academy of Sciences on Saturday 4 December. The demonstration was organised by a committee made up of the National Confederation of Hungarian Trade Unions (MSzOSz), the Autonomous Trade Union Confederation (ASzZs) and the Forum for the Co-operation of Trade Unions (SZEF). Leaders of these confederations said that a parliamentary majority has approved and is preparing to approve legislation that conflicts with the constitutional rule of law as well as basic EU rights. The union leaders and some MPs spoke in favour of legal security in the public sector, a predictable and fair pension and tax regime and for wages that can help make people earn a living (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 November 2010).

English: http://hatc.hu/editor_article.php?aid=3076 via
http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Hungary

Ireland

Major union lobbying for general strike

January 5, 2011

The Unite trade union is lobbying within the ICTU confederation in support of a general strike as a "clear message to the government in waiting" that it must change the country's economic direction. The 60,000-member union's motion for a general strike was presented to the ICTU executive council in December and was referred on to the confederation's powerful general purpose committee, which will meet on 11 January. In a letter to the ICTU, Unite Irish secretary Jimmy Kelly said the massive turn-out for the ICTU protest march last November indicated that "a consensus is emerging over an alternative economic, fiscal and banking strategy to that of the government's and the prevailing

austerity orthodoxy" (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 November 2010).

English: [http://www.irishe Examiner.com/ireland/union-leader-wants-general-strike ...](http://www.irishe Examiner.com/ireland/union-leader-wants-general-strike...)

Employers plea for halt to retail pay rise

December 22, 2010

IBEC, the employers' association, has called for a planned pay rise of 1.25% in the grocery retail sector to be put on hold. The increase, which is to come into effect in January, is due under the terms of an employment regulation order (ERO) for the sector. These orders set wage levels and other terms of employment (slightly) above the minimum wage, and are used in low-wage sectors such as retail, catering and hospitality. The Mandate union has accused IBEC of reneging on its commitments. Mandate general secretary John Douglas regarded the move, taken together with the recent cut in the minimum wage, as another attack on the lowest paid workers, and referred to the fact that the Labour Court had approved the increase (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 November 2010).

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/breaking/2010/1222/breaking42.html>

Budget to hit low paid workers

December 21, 2010

The government reaction to the latest banking crisis in Ireland is another budget with deep cuts across welfare and other public services. IMPACT union general secretary Shay Cody said that tax rises and cuts in the minimum wage will hit low paid workers in general, while new public sector workers (those taken on despite the recruitment freeze) will be on starting pay 25% lower than two years ago. Moreover, in November the Department of Education and Skills issued a circular to all schools and vocational training centres instructing them to impose pay cuts, averaging 5%, on up to 17,000 low paid staff from 1 January 2011. IMPACT, representing many of these workers, has announced to challenge this pay cut.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/393>;
<http://www.impact.ie/iopen24/budget-2011-education-cuts> .;
<http://www.impact.ie/iopen24/predictable-budget-recipe> .

Italy

Positive results from campaign to protect precarious workers

January 6, 2011

Two regional collective agreements in the health sector and one agreement covering employees dealing with migrant workers mean that many fixed-term workers in these branches will have their contracts extended rather than face dismissal in January. The FP-CGIL has been campaigning against government legislation that posed a threat to tens of thousands of temporary workers across the public services. These new agreements will provide some protection but the union will continue its campaign to ensure more fixed-term workers get their contracts renewed (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 November 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/395>

Italian: <http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/16319>

Fiat reaches agreement on labour concessions

December 24, 2010

FIOM, the CGIL-affiliated metal union federation, withheld its support from the agreement with Fiat on Thursday 23 December reached with the unions in view of the company's 1 billion-euro investment plan for its Mirafiori car plant near Turin in exchange for labour concessions. Fiat plans to assemble up to 280,000 vehicles a year for the Jeep and Alfa Romeo brands as part of a joint venture with American Chrysler. Fiat's CEO Sergio Marchionne said, "We now need to work on defining a collective agreement specific to the joint venture that will enable workers to transfer to

the new Fiat-Chrysler enterprise." In the negotiations up to the accord Marchionne has caused a lot of irritations, in particular when he threatened to relocate production abroad. The government has accused him of forgetting that Rome has bailed out Fiat in times of trouble, while workers have said they are underpaid, overworked and underappreciated (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 July-August and September 2010).

English: [http://www.adnkronos.com/IGN/Aki/English/Business/Italy-Union-to-strike ...](http://www.adnkronos.com/IGN/Aki/English/Business/Italy-Union-to-strike...)

Immigration staff strike against end of contracts

December 21, 2010

The three main union federations in the public service have organised strike action by staff working for the police and immigration services. They are protesting against a decision to terminate thousands of fixed-term contracts at the end of the year. The unions argue that this will undermine the crucial services that these workers provide some of whom have been employed for up to seven years.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/393>

Italian: <http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/16157>

Latvia

Increase of national minimum wage

December 1, 2010

The Latvian government has confirmed that the national minimum wage will be increased from the current LVL 180 (before tax) per month by 11.1% to LVL 200 (? 286). Press messages state that the increase will come into force "from next year", leaving unclear if this effectively means from 1 January 2011 on. The last uprating of the country's minimum wage took place as of 1 January 2009.

English: <http://www.reitingi.lv/en/news/latvia/2645.html>

Malta

Living wage should be government priority

January 3, 2011

2010 had seen a decline in people's purchasing power due to higher energy costs, General Workers Union (GWU) president Victor Carachi said in his New Year's address. The confederation leader emphasized the need for concrete measures to protect those who have fallen beneath the poverty line. The government's main aim in 2011 should be to discuss the union proposal to come to a Living Wage and see to its implementation in the shortest time possible, according to Carachi. He added the union priorities this year will be safeguarding decent work conditions and tackling precarity.

English: [http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/living-wage-should-be ...](http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/living-wage-should-be...)
via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Malta

Netherlands

Unions call national demonstration in defense of public sector jobs

January 6, 2011

The public services unions jointly are organising a national demonstration on 17 February in the Hague in protest at the government's attacks on the public and education sectors and public service workers. A union manifesto highlights the vital services provided by public sector workers and emphasizes their right to freely negotiate their pay and conditions. The unions argue that the public sector should not bear the brunt of austerity measures and call for measures to avoid job cuts, as well as that redundancies would be short-sighted in view of the increasing trend to retirement arising from the ageing public sector workforce. The Abvakabo FNV union adds that a meeting with

the Home Affairs minister on 17 December was disappointing in terms of the prospects for the negotiations over a new agreement covering the civil service. The minister confirmed that the government would be looking for job cuts and a pay freeze. The union reaffirmed its call for a 2% pay increase and a stop on job cuts.

English: <http://www.epso.org/cob/395>

Dutch: <http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/nieuws/nieuws/samen-sterk-voor-publiek-werk>;
<http://www.mijnvakbond.nl/Onderteken-manifest-publieke-sector>

Rise of statutory minimum wage

December 30, 2010

The statutory minimum wage of the Netherlands has been increased as of 1 January 2011, by 0.59% to ? 328.70 weekly / ? 1,424.40 monthly for adult workers, that means those of 23 years and older (plus 8% holiday bonus). The Netherlands is still known for its exceptionally long tail of youth minimum wages, starting with 30% of the adult rate or actually ? 98.60 weekly / ? 427.30 monthly for 15-year-olds, again not included the holiday bonus. Though the Netherlands has a tradition of politically motivated minimum wage freezes, the current government coalition has left the uprating mechanism untouched.

Dutch: [http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/minimumloon ...](http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/minimumloon...);
<http://www.loonwijzer.nl/home/salarischeck/minimumlooncheck>

Permanent jobs for casual workers at Ahold distribution centres

December 18, 2010

After two weeks of strikes, strategically in the Christmas sales peak, in the six distribution centres of supermarket chain Albert Heijn (AH) unions and management reached a basic agreement. AH is market leader and the main Dutch subsidiary of Ahold. As one of the union spearheads was bringing down the share of flexible workers in the centres' workforce, currently one-third, the fact that the agreement includes the offer of permanent contracts for 200 agency workers and workers with fixed-term contracts is regarded as a major result on the union side. Total employment in the AH distribution centres will remain at the same level. Over 2011 and 2012, twice a 2% pay hike has been agreed. FNV Bondgenoten union negotiator, Marcel Nuyten, praised the efforts of the AH workers involved.

English: <http://unionrenewal.blogspot.com/2010/12/permanent-jobs-for-casual> .

Dutch: [http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/mijnbranche/bedrijven/albert_heijn_distributie ...](http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/mijnbranche/bedrijven/albert_heijn_distributie...)

Agreement reached at TNT Post

December 16, 2010

In the night of 15 December, the three unions involved, Abvakabo FNV, CNV Publieke Zaak and BVPP, have reached a basic agreement with TNT Post, after four strikes in one month. Still 11,000 jobs at TNT Post will get lost, but forced dismissals have been reduced from 4,500 to 2,300. In the final negotiations, TNT Post gave up its earlier condition of wage moderation, and that opened the way for an agreement. The unions are glad with the result, but still worry about the concrete shape of reorganisations within TNT, which as they say need to be monitored closely (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 June, October and November 2010).

English: [http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2010/12/tnt_post_unions_reach ...](http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2010/12/tnt_post_unions_reach...)

Dutch: *De Volkskrant*, 14 and 16 December 2010; *NRC-Handelsblad*, 16 December 2010

Portugal

Unions take legal action to block pay cuts

January 7, 2011

The Frente Comum federation of public service unions, including STAL, are using the courts in an attempt to block the implementation of pay cuts across the public sector for those earning over ?

1,500 a month. These cuts range from 3.3% to 10%. The unions have taken out injunctions against individual local authorities that they hope will force employers to put on hold the planned pay cuts. Mario Nogueira, head of the Fenprof teachers' union, told reporters outside the Lisbon Administrative Tribunal that the pay cuts infringed the law, and that this viewpoint was supported by legal experts the unions had consulted.

English: [http://www.forexyard.com/en/news/Portugal-unions-challenge-govt ...](http://www.forexyard.com/en/news/Portugal-unions-challenge-govt...)

Portuguese: [http://www.stal.pt/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id .](http://www.stal.pt/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id...)

Confederation warns government on minimum wage rise

January 6, 2011

The CGTP union confederation has warned the government that it would resist government plans to rescind agreement on raising the monthly minimum wage by 1 January 2011, as part of the austerity measures of the administration of Prime Minister José Sócrates. The confederation, strengthened by the success of the general 24-hours strike it jointly organized with the UGT-P confederation, said the minority Socialist administration "is doing everything to flee from fulfilling the agreement" it signed in 2006. Earlier, PM Sócrates argued that the economic projections made in 2006 had changed and the remaining minimum wage hike had to be renegotiated as it would make the country's economy even less competitive (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 November 2010).

English: [http://www.forexpros.com/news/interest-rates-news/top-portugal-union-warns ...](http://www.forexpros.com/news/interest-rates-news/top-portugal-union-warns...)
via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Portugal

Slovenia

Union confederation argues for increase of national minimum wage

December 23, 2010

The country's largest union confederation, ZSSS, is calling for an increase of the national minimum wage, since 23 February 2010 set at Euro 562 per month. ZSSS says that other factors besides inflation should be calculated in the adjustment of the minimum rate for January 2011, including the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, which already for 2009 was calculated at Euro 593. This implies that the minimum wage would have to be raised by Euro 31, ZSSS executive secretary Ladislav Rozic told a press conference. The Ministry of Labour, the Family and Social Affairs argued that it is impossible to adjust the minimum rate other than to rising consumer prices, but Rozic referred to a resolution adopted by the European Parliament in October which says that a living wage must always be above the poverty threshold.

English: <http://www.balkans.com/open-news.php?uniquenumber=86161;>
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/focus_page ...](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/public/focus_page...)

Spain

Unions protest against regional and local government

January 6, 2011

The FSC-CCOO and FSP-UGT public service federations have organised protests and legal challenges against local government in Madrid and the regional government of Murcia. In both cases, the authorities have attempted to make changes to employment conditions which they have no legal right to do. Over 15,000 workers joined a demonstration in Murcia that called for the resignation of the president of the regional government.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/395>

Spanish: <http://www.fsc.ccoo.es/webfsc/menu.do?Actualidad:Federal:Actualidad:112365;>
[http://www.fspugt.es/UGT_y_CCOO_demandan_del_Gobierno_que_se_promueva ...](http://www.fspugt.es/UGT_y_CCOO_demandan_del_Gobierno_que_se_promueva...)

Confederations threaten general strike against retirement age rise

December 21, 2010

The CCOO and UGT trade union confederations have warned the national government against increasing the retirement age from 65 to 67. The unions have organised protests against the pension reforms before and renewed their determination to fight the changes during their demonstrations against the government's austerity measures on 15 December. The unions say that the government response will be crucial in determining whether action will go ahead in January.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/393>;
[http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-12-18/spain-s-unions-protest-austerity ...](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-12-18/spain-s-unions-protest-austerity...)
Spanish: <http://www.ugt.es/actualidad/2010/diciembre/a18122010.html>

Switzerland

Trade unions target widening income gap

January 5, 2011

Paul Rechsteiner, president of the Swiss Federation of Trade Unions (SGB/USS), has announced the launch of a trade union initiative for the introduction of minimum wages later in January to protect employees against attempts to undermine salary levels. Switzerland has no statutory minimum salary, though minimum standards exist in most trades and professions. Rechsteiner said his confederation was worried about the continuous loss of purchasing power of the low and average wage earners, and the widening income gap with the rich.

English: [http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/Trade_unions_target_widening_income_gap ...](http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/politics/Trade_unions_target_widening_income_gap...)
via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Switzerland

United Kingdom

Civil service union attacks unfairness of performance-related pay

January 6, 2011

The main civil service union, PCS, has called for the abolition of performance-related pay in the civil service. In reaction to news that UKP 40 million (? 47.4 million) was distributed as performance-related bonuses in the Ministry of Defence alone, the union argues that this should be distributed more fairly among all workers. General Secretary Mark Serwotka said: "PCS believes the system of performance related pay in the civil service, imposed by a previous Conservative government, is an unfair way to reward staff and should be scrapped with the money redistributed in overall salaries."

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/395>;
http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre .

Third strike at Heinz suspended

January 4, 2011

A planned strike on Wednesday 5 January of nearly 1,200 workers at Heinz' flagship factory near Wigan has been called off after a new pay offer from the company. Talks on 4 January between the Unite union and management resulted in the new package being put to workers. The union agreed to suspend the strike ahead of a fresh ballot of its members over the offer, but said if the offer is rejected there will be another strike on 11 January. Under the new deal, workers would receive a 3.5% rise in the first year plus a UKP 200 (Euro 237) one-off payment and a 3.4% increase in the second year. A further increase for shift workers of between 0.6% and 1.6% is also part of the deal. The union earlier held two 24-hour strikes in December. The first strike, on 15 December, took place in reaction of a pay offer below the inflation rate, with by contrast the profit margins of the food manufacturing giant rising quickly.

English: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-12115396>;
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-12067138>;
<http://cms.iuf.org/?q=node/661>

Bargaining result in corrugated paper sector

December 23, 2010

In mid-December bargaining in the corrugated paperboard industry concluded, with negotiators for the Unite and GMB unions coming to wage terms with the Confederation of Paper Industries (CPI). The CPI, representing major corrugated boxboard and packaging employers at some 50 plants mainly belonging to D.S. Smith, SmurfitKappa and SAICA, agreed to raise their wage offer from 2.1% to 2.5%. The offer, if accepted by members from the two unions in January, will be retroactive to 1 September 2010, the date a prior one-year accord expired. Unite National Officer Peter Ellis said the tentative settlement falls into the upper level of median pay awards in all industries, and Unite's bargaining panel will strongly recommend acceptance. Bargaining started in July, but became bogged down in October when CPI offered a pay hike of less than half of the consumer price index.

English: <http://www.icem.org/en/19-Pulp-Paper/4180-UK's-Unite-GMB> .

Unions concerned about announcement of end to two-tier agreement

December 21, 2010

Unions have expressed their concern about the coalition government's intention to abolish the two-tier employment code in the public sector. The code was agreed with the previous Labour government after long periods of campaigning and lobbying by public sector unions. The aim was to ensure that private contractors supplying services to public authorities would apply the same minimum rates of pay as public sector agreements. Dave Prentis, General Secretary of the UNISON union, characterized the abolishment as another attack on low-paid workers in particular, many of whom are women. UNISON has called on the government to carry out an equality impact assessment as a matter of urgency.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/393>;
http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=2085

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