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collective bargaining

Issue 7/2010 July/August

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

Employers join call for better conditions in care sector
Public sector unions reject pay freeze
Union welcomes tougher laws on employment rights

Belgium

Health employers refuse to sign early retirement arrangements

Croatia

Unions gather over 800,000 signatures for referendum

Cyprus

International unions urge government to return to social dialogue

Czech Republic

Unions disagree with reform of Labour Code

Denmark

Union wins important part-time workers' case
Union urges low-cost carrier to enter into agreements
Government claims there is no equal pay problem

Estonia

Closing gender pay gap difficult

Finland

Confederation proposes shared wage increase goal
Many pay claims in retail and catering

France

Unions mobilise for national day of action
General Motors workers accept pay freeze

Germany

IG Metall launches 6% wage demand
Union hotline to check compliance with care sector minimum wage
Union shows red card to employers' stalling tactics

Greece

Public transport strike scheduled for September

Hungary

New Reconciliation Council to convene
Much more collective agreements agreed in metal sector

Ireland

Croke Park deal disputes need prompt resolution
Outsourcing agreement in waste sector

Italy

Fiat plan sparks discussion on future of labour relations
Firefighters take action over cuts and contracts
Doctors strike over budget cuts

Latvia

World Bank president overestimates wages

Netherlands

University staff rejects pay freeze
Ruling on part-time workers' pay while training
Majority of union members back pension agreement

Norway

Union launches special website against post liberalisation
Union launches special website against post liberalisation

Poland

Mass protest planned against public sector freeze

Portugal

Strike at waste company
Local strike planned for 20 September

Romania

Minimum wage increase discussed

Slovenia

Government and unions fail to reach agreement

Spain

Regional union organisation appeals against pay cuts
General strike called for 29 September

Sweden

Two-year deal in care sector
Report exposes low pay on public projects
Two-year deals with KFS employer federation

Switzerland

A strike for and by women

United Kingdom

UNISON backs living wage call
Union goes to court to block planned NHS shake-up
Tribunal ruling backs union's equal pay claim
Rejection Of local government deal in Scotland
Unions argue the case for public sector pensions
Government plans cuts to civil service redundancy scheme

Austria

Employers join call for better conditions in care sector

August 14, 2010

The BFW employers' organisation has joined the trade unions' call for increased funding for the care sector and improved pay and conditions for care workers. The GPA-DJP and VIDA unions argue already for quite some time that care employees are underpaid and work excessive hours. Thus, the quality of care will suffer unless something is done to increase employment in the sector and improve the attractiveness of the caring professions.

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

Public sector unions reject pay freeze

August 4, 2010

The GÖD public services union has rejected recommendations from a report by the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) that there should be a pay freeze in the public sector or that increases should be below inflation or postponed. The union argues that this would affect purchasing power. It also argues to be in favour of a reform of the public sector salary system with higher rates for new starters. GÖD also points out that the education and age profile of the public sector are different from the private sector and account for higher salaries.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/374>
German: <http://www.goed.at/16301.html>

Union welcomes tougher laws on employment rights

July 21, 2010

The VIDA services union has backed a government initiative to better enforce minimum pay rates in collective agreements and other employment rights. The proposal is in preparation for the full opening up of the Austrian labour market to the rest of the European Union in 2011 and concern about social dumping. VIDA president Rudolf Kaske said that migrant workers in some border areas are already being paid 40% below the rate in the relevant collective agreement. Clearly, tougher measures are needed to ensure that employers pay the negotiated rates, Kaske argued.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/373>;
German: <http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=S03/Page> .

Belgium

Health employers refuse to sign early retirement arrangements

August 17, 2010

The SETCA/BBTK services union reports that a majority of employers in the non-profit health care sector are refusing to sign agreements setting out provisions for early retirement. The union believes that these employers are following the example of the main FEB employers' organisation that has been calling for a hard line on early retirement. SETCA/BBTK argues that these provisions are very important for a sector that is characterised by difficult and stressful occupations and where pay levels are modest.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/375>;

French: <http://www.setca.org/News/Pages/Communiquedepresse2082010soinsdesante.aspx> ;

Dutch: <http://www.bbtb.org/nieuws/Pages/Persbericht12082010gezondheidszorg.aspx>

Croatia

Unions gather over 800,000 signatures for referendum

July 20, 2010

The five union confederations that started to collect signatures calling for a referendum on the labour law reforms as proposed by the government, have announced to finally have gathered 813,016 signatures. Thus, the petition has by far surpassed the legal requirement of 10% of registered voters, or 449,506, to initiate the referendum. The signatures were submitted to Parliament Speaker, Luka Bebić on 14 July. It is expected that the verification of signatures will take at least one month (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 June 2010).

English: <http://www.imfmetal.org/index.cfm?c=23612&l=2>

Cyprus

International unions urge government to return to social dialogue

August 10, 2010

ICEM (International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions) General Secretary Manfred Warda, in a letter to Prime Minister Irsen Küçük, expressed anger at the police violence in Northern Cyprus on Monday, 2 August, when a peaceful protest was attacked by police in riot gear. 24 trade unionists were briefly arrested. Warda stated in his letter, "The ICEM shares the belief of our affiliate EL-SEN that trade unions must be included in the social dialogue process and in all considerations over new legislation that will directly affect workers' fundamental rights." The ITUC (International Trade Union Confederation) and the ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation) also called on the authorities to end the policy of anti-union harassment and to return to negotiations and social dialogue.

English: [http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/3946-ICEM-Urges-Northern-Cyprus ...](http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/3946-ICEM-Urges-Northern-Cyprus...)
<http://www.ituc-csi.org/repression-of-trade-unions-in.html?lang=en>

Czech Republic

Unions disagree with reform of Labour Code

August 31, 2010

The new coalition government has agreed to reform the Labour Code in force since January 2007. Proposed changes include liberalisation of employment for a set period without limitations, reduced severance pay for those working for an employer for less than two years, and enhanced opportunities for companies to employ people on a so-called "contract for the performance of a work assignment",

up to 300 hours a year. Whereas employer representatives welcome these changes, trade unions warn that the new coalition wants to reduce employees' security. The unions also disagree with the proposed cancellation of state subsidies of employee benefits, especially meal vouchers and the so-called "free rail passes" (discounted tickets for railway employees and their family members), which was unsuccessfully proposed by the government in 2008.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2010/07/articles/cz1007019i.htm>

Denmark

Union wins important part-time workers' case

August 17, 2010

The FOA public service union has won a key court case that states that part-time workers who suffer injuries at work can have their compensation based on a full-time worker's salary. The union has been pursuing this and similar cases on the basis that part-time work, particularly for many women workers, is only temporary, often coinciding with periods bringing up young children. Any injury compensation based on potential loss of earnings should therefore be based on the assumption that they would return to full-time employment.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/375>;

Danish: <http://www.foa.dk/Forbund/Presse?newsid> .

Union urges low-cost carrier to enter into agreements

July 7, 2010

The 3F union has called on an anti-union low cost carrier to enter into collective agreements or face industrial action. The union stated that Ryanair has to accept the Danish model of labour relations after it was revealed that the carrier had applied for room in the new low-cost terminal at Kastrup Copenhagen airport. 3F Kastrup, which represents a large proportion of Copenhagen's airport staff, is determined to make sure the employees will not pay for Ryanair's cheap service with their salaries and conditions. "Ryanair must follow the rules and agreements established for the Danish labour market. If it doesn't, we are ready to fight to secure our rights. We cannot accept that a company can practise social dumping," said union chairman, Henrik Bay-Clausen.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/4683>

Government claims there is no equal pay problem

July 5, 2010

The FOA public services union has criticised the labour and equality ministers for claiming that equal pay legislation does not need to be changed as men and women carrying out the same job and with the same training get the same pay. FOA points out that this narrow view of equal pay was left behind in the 1980s and the government-appointed wages commission reporting earlier in 2010 has confirmed that on average men are paid 18% more than women. The union believes legislation needs to be revised as it is not clear enough on the question of equal value.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/372>;

Danish: <http://www.foa.dk/Forbund/Presse?newsid> .

Estonia

Closing gender pay gap difficult

July 14, 2010

According to a Eurostat study, Estonia in 2007 had the highest unadjusted gender pay gap in the European Union (30%). Researchers, equality experts and even government officials recently acknowledged the difficulties in closing this gap in Estonia. While equality legislation exists, the

difficulty is in implementing it and the challenge facing women who want to pursue an equal pay case. The gender specialist in the Ministry of Social Affairs, Christian Veske, admitted that someone who feels discriminated against should appeal herself. The country's equality commissioner, Margit Sarv, said that this takes a lot of courage, adding that only seven women have made an official complaint under the legislation in the last five years despite the country's large pay gap.

English: <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/26555/>

Finland

Confederation proposes shared wage increase goal

August 26, 2010

The Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK) wants a collective wage increase goal for all employees. SAK chairman Lauri Lyly's proposal opposes the position of the EK employers' federation (Confederation of Finnish Industries) to have a collective wage increase ceiling of maximum 1%. According to Lyly, the confederations SAK, the Finnish Confederation of Professionals (STTK) and the Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff (Akava) should define a shared increase goal as to ensure purchasing power and equal wage development. STTK's chairman Mikko Mäenpää has reacted positively on Lyly's remarks. Mäenpää believes that unions should unify their ranks across confederation and sector divisions.

English: [http://www.helsinkitimes.fi/htimes/domestic-news/general ...](http://www.helsinkitimes.fi/htimes/domestic-news/general...);
[http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/news/2010/08/industry_federation_wants .](http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/news/2010/08/industry_federation_wants_) ;
via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Finland

Many pay claims in retail and catering

June 23, 2010

The Service Union United (PAM) at any given time has some 600 cases in which members, individually or collectively, disagree with their employers in retail and catering. Half of all cases concern pay claims, Kaarlo Julkunen, PAM's vice president explained in an economic daily; two thirds involve young employees and immigrant workers who are disgruntled by low pay, and catering is doing worse than retail. Julkunen also noted positive developments. For example in 2002, when the German-based retailer Lidl started up in Finland, it achieved a reputation for frequent disputes with its employees. Since then, Lidl's behaviour has improved and it no longer differs from other retail chains, Julkunen says. He referred to a network of shop stewards established at Lidl following the model of other retailers operating throughout the country.

English: <http://www.artto.kaapeli.fi/unions/T2010/n20>

France

Unions mobilise for national day of action

August 23, 2010

Unions across the public and private sector are mobilising for a national day of action on 7 September in protest at the government Bill to raise the retirement from 60 to 62 and to other reforms in the retirement system. The National Assembly's social affairs committee voted in favour of the Bill on 22 July, enabling it to go to Plenary debate in the lower house on 7 September, and to the Senate in October. Unions are calling for the retention of the right to retire at 60 and want a minimum pension of Euro 1,600 a month. The unions in the public sector also want to see an increase in public sector pay to compensate for the loss of purchasing power over several years (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 May and June 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/374>; [http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief ...](http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief...)
French: <http://www.spterritoriaux.cgt.fr/spip.php?article4131>

General Motors workers accept pay freeze

July 20, 2010

Car workers in eastern France agreed to a salary freeze and reduction in days owed as part of conditions imposed by General Motors Co GM.N (GM) to keep the plant in question open. GM had originally put the Strassbourg plant, which produces automatic transmission systems for GM and BMW cars, up for sale, but failed to complete the transaction. After emerging from bankruptcy in 2009, GM offered to repurchase the plant on 16 July for a symbolic Euro and on condition that costs fall by 10%. Under these conditions, 70% of the 1,150 workforce accepted a salary freeze for two years and a reduction of time off taken for accumulating extra hours.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSLDE66J0GD20100720>
via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=France

Germany

IG Metall launches 6% wage demand

August 30, 2010

On Friday August 27, the Northwestern steel branch of IG Metall opened the wage negotiation season by demanding a 6% wage hike for about 85,000 workers. The union branch stated it was time workers joined in the fruits of the upswing after years of wage moderation. The wage demand includes steel workers in North Rhine-Westphalia, as well as Lower Saxony and Bremen. It also asks for shortening working hours for older workers. One day earlier the DGB confederation made clear that German unions more generally will not settle for modest pay rises after accepting moderate wage deals in recent years due to the economic crisis. DGB chairman, Michael Sommer, was quoted saying, "We're not going to hold back in this upturn, now it's our turn."

English: <http://www.thelocal.de/money/20100827-29451.html>;
<http://af.reuters.com/article/metalsNews/idAFLDE67S04Q20100829>
German: http://www.boeckler.de/show_chronik.html?chronik_eintrag=/html/108693.html

Union hotline to check compliance with care sector minimum wage

August 17, 2010

Services union ver.di has welcomed the fact that the promised minimum wage regulation for the 750,000 workers in the care sector came into force on 1 August. Workers are now entitled to a minimum hourly rate of Euro 8.50 in the West and Euro 7.50 in the East. The rates will be increased to Euro 8.75 and Euro 7.75 from 1 January 2012 and to Euro 9.00 and Euro 8.00 from 1 July 2013. Ver.di had called for a higher rate and remains disappointed that there are different rates for East and West Germany. The union set up a telephone hotline for employees to report problems of compliance. Evidence from calls indicates that employers were not complying with the new regulations as they included holiday pay, Christmas pay, shift allowances and bonuses in their calculation of pay when it should just be basic pay. Said ver.di board member Ellen Paschke, "Employers seem to try everything as to evade the minimum wage regulation" (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 March and May 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/375>; <http://www.epsu.org/cob/374>
German: <http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews>.

Union shows red card to employers' stalling tactics

August 4, 2010

Services union ver.di has criticised the BDE private waste sector employers for playing for time in the current negotiations. The union's main demands are a 3% pay increase plus the abolition of the two lowest pay grades. Ver.di is particularly concerned that employers are talking about new employees starting on 80% of the normal rate and argues that the risk would be that these lower rates would be made permanent, so creating a two-tier pay system.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/374>;

German: https://ver-und-entsorgung.verdi.de/abfallwirtschaft/tarifarbeit_tarifpolitik/private .

Greece

Public transport strike scheduled for September

August 30, 2010

Public transport workers, including those of the national railway system (OSE), have planned a five hours' strike to be staged during the first ten days of September. The transport workers want to protest against privatisations, firings, wage cuts and the trimming of benefits. Union representatives will hold a joint press conference in Thessaloniki during the International Fair in mid-September as to explain their stance, which is likely to include further protest action.

English: <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2010/08/30/new-protests-are-being-prepared/>

Hungary

New Reconciliation Council to convene

August 31, 2010

The Minister of Finance and Economy, György Matolcsy, has convened the National Interest Reconciliation Council for the first time since the new government has been established. The Minister's aim is to mark out the new Council's framework. The Reconciliation Council is a tripartite forum involving employees' federations, employers' associations and government representatives. Earlier, the trade unions urged for the Council to convene, as many relevant decisions regarding the workers were already taken in the last three months.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent

Much more collective agreements agreed in metal sector

August 31, 2010

In 2010, three times more collective agreements than in previous years have been concluded by the Metalworkers' Union, representing 30,000 employees at 260 workplaces, according to union president Béla Balogh. Balogh said that there had been no significant wage developments during the economic crisis, and expressed the wish that with the end of this difficult period, it would be possible to revive wage negotiations.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent

Ireland

Croke Park deal disputes need prompt resolution

August 31, 2010

The implementation body overseeing the "Croke Park" national agreement, chaired by former chief executive of the Courts Service P.J. Fitzpatrick, has told employer and union representatives it wants any disputes on interpretation and implementation of the agreement to be resolved as promptly and as possible. The body has also said a "one-size-fits-all approach" will not work and each public service sector will have to decide how best to implement the terms of the agreement. The public service union, IMPACT, has issued a circular to its members detailing the measures outlined by the implementation body. The union's general secretary, Shay Cody, told members that while much of its communications will centre on aspects of the change programme, "the value of any change in addressing the pay issue for public servants will not be lost sight of by the body" (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 April, May and June 2010).

English: [http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/croke-park-deal-disputes ...](http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/croke-park-deal-disputes...)

Outsourcing agreement in waste sector

August 17, 2010

The SIPTU general union has negotiated a deal to ensure that the "Croke Park" national agreement provisions on outsourcing are applied to the waste sector in Dublin. The union had threatened strike action against Dun Laoghaire council because it had intended to outsource waste collection services to the private company, Panda, without any consultation. The "Croke Park" agreement makes clear that public sector employers can only outsource after full consultation with the trade unions. There will be some outsourcing but union members have also agreed a new redundancy and compensation package (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 April, May and June 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/375>;

<http://www.siptu.ie/PressRoom/NewsReleases/2010/Name,11822,en.html>

Italy

Fiat plan sparks discussion on future of labour relations

August 2, 2010

In what could revolutionise the country's labour relations, auto manufacturer Fiat has announced plans to create a new global megagroup with U.S. automaker Chrysler, adding that it will no longer be part of Confindustria, the employers' association. The announcement came after Fiat's CEO Sergio Marchionne disclosed his plans to leave Confindustria, just days after the firm promised to keep its plans on hold for two months. Marchionne also suggested the scrapping of the national steelworkers' collective agreement. "Fiat should not stop being a member of Confindustria and it should not seek roads outside (standard) labour relations," Labour Minister Maurizio Sacconi reacted. FIOM, the metal federation affiliated with CGIL, described the Fiat plan as the most serious attack on workers' rights in the past six decades. Other unions reacted in more moderate terms but condemned Fiat's plans as well.

English: [http://www.allheadlinenews.com/articles ...](http://www.allheadlinenews.com/articles...)

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

Firefighters take action over cuts and contracts

July 21, 2010

Firefighters organised by the CGIL, CSIL and UIL public service federations were involved in a national four-hour stoppage on Tuesday 20 July. The unions organised the protest in response to government plans for budget cuts and demands to conclude a new collective agreement, as the previous one expired two and a half years ago.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/373>;

Italian: <http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/14721>

Doctors strike over budget cuts

July 21, 2010

A national strike by doctors took place on Monday 19 July in protest at government plans to cut health budgets. Doctors' unions warned that the cuts will mean 30,000 fewer doctors in four years' time while the number of fixed-term workers will be slashed. Unions are concerned about the implications of these cuts for the level and quality of health services provided.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/373>;

<http://www.allheadlinenews.com/articles/7019333502#ixzz0uDwNqPaK>

Latvia

World Bank president overestimates wages

August 18, 2010

Latvia needs to continue implementing structural long-term reforms to achieve recovery of the country's economy, declared World Bank President Robert B. Zoellick in his three-day visit to the Baltic country last week. During the visit in the Latvian city of Sigulda, Zoellick met with unemployed people participating in the so-called 100 lats (140 euros) program, formed by temporary employment provided by the Latvian government to its poorest citizens. Under a scorching sun, the World Bank president listened with interest to workers who are trying to clear areas infected with toxic and invasive plants, and he felt a little embarrassed when he asked if this is a one-day salary, as the workers explained to him that 100 lats is a monthly fee for an eight-hour working day.

English: <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/26786/>

Netherlands

University staff rejects pay freeze

August 31, 2010

Following municipal and provincial employees, university staff is rejecting the pay freeze that the current government announced in spring for the public sector at large. By 1 March, 2010, the collective agreement for the universities expired; negotiations have ended up in a deadlock as the union demands of 1.25% and employment guarantees have been rejected by VSNU, the university employers' organisation. According to Hugo Levie, VSNU negotiator, the unions' wage demands are "reasonable", but the universities are simply in lack of money. The Abvakabo FNV union used the celebrations of the opening of the Academic Year in Nijmegen and Delft, on 30 August, to start actions, which will be pursued on 6 September, when in the other university cities the Academic Year will formally start. The union argues that a pay freeze for universities is at odds with the country's ambition to expand as a "knowledge economy."

Dutch: *De Volkskrant*, August 31, 2010;

<http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/nieuws/nieuws/investeren-in-personeel> .

Ruling on part-time workers' pay while training

August 17, 2010

The Equal Treatment Commission has ruled that part-time workers should be fully paid for any work-related training they do. The case involved a part-time worker covered by the care sector agreement who worked 16 hours a week as a care assistant but who undertook a training course of 28.8 hours a week. The Commission agreed with the union that payment should be on the basis of the 28.8 hours and not on the basis of a special rate for trainees in the collective agreement. In this case it meant the monthly salary should be Euro 1,383 a month rather than Euro 1,060.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/375>

Dutch: <http://www.cgb.nl/oordeel/2010-123>

Majority of union members back pension agreement

July 2, 2010

The referendum in writing the FNV union confederation organised between 19 June and 1 July among the 1.2 million members of its affiliated unions on the basic national agreement on the pension age union negotiators agreed last May, produced an 80% majority of about 160,000 voters in favour of the agreement. The accord provides for lifting the current age from 65 to 66 years by 2020, with flexibility to retire earlier on a lower pension (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 May and June 2010).

Dutch: <http://www.fnv.nl/publiek/themas/aow/nieuws/referendum> .

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2010/country/netherlands.htm>

Norway

Government imposes arbitration to end hospital strike

July 21, 2010

After two weeks, the government has ended a strike by members of the YS Confederation of Vocational Unions in the hospitals by imposing compulsory arbitration. YS president Tore Eugen Kvalheim said to be disappointed with the government's action having taken measures to ensure patient safety during the strike, and argued that it had been up to the employer's organisation, Spekter, to call for arbitration and not the government. The union congratulated its members on their willingness to take strike action in support of equal pay for work of equal value.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/373>;

Norwegian: <http://www.ys.no/kunder/ys/cms.nsf>.

Union launches special website against post liberalisation

July 2, 2010

The Postkom union has stepped up its fight against the proposed mail directive and wants to mobilise popular resistance. "We are launching the campaign website www.postdirektivet.no to inform about the directive and bring up our points," said Odd Christian Øverland, union chairman. Postkom has long worked against the EU's third directive mail to be included in Norwegian law as they believe that will be against consumers' interests. In particular, the mail directive will affect communities outside the Oslo area in the form of poorer and more expensive postal services, according to the union.

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

Poland

Mass protest planned against public sector freeze

August 27, 2010

The Solidarity trade union has announced a mass demonstration against the government public sector pay freeze on 22 September in Warsaw. "We're preparing for the demonstration. The trade union will cover the protesters' travel expenses," says Janusz Sniadek, leader of Solidarity. He announced that thousands of firefighters, customs officers, state administration employees and probably police officers will march on the rhythm of an orchestra provided by coal miners. In contrast of the pay freeze that the government announced to reduce its debt, employees of state-owned institutions demand a 5.3% pay increase for 2011.

English: http://www.thenews.pl/business/artykul138472_trade-unions-plan ...

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

Portugal

Strike at waste company

August 17, 2010

Members of the STAL union are taking strike action against the Resiestrela waste company that provides services to 13 municipalities. The union is calling for the right to negotiate a proper collective agreement and accuses the management of the company of adopting an anti-trade union stance.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/375>;

Portuguese: http://www.stal.pt/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=526&Itemid=1

Local strike planned for 20 September

August 4, 2010

The STAL local government union is continuing its campaign of protest against government policy and in defence of employee rights in the public sector. After a series of rallies in August, the union will organise a one-day strike on 20 September and on 29 September it will join the CGTP-IN

national demonstration in support of the ETUC's European day of action.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/374>;

Portuguese: http://www.stal.pt/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=524&Itemid=1

Romania

Minimum wage increase discussed

August 23, 2010

In meetings with Prime Minister Emile Boc and union leaders, the increase of the statutory minimum wage has been discussed. The government suggested an increase from the current level - established by 1 January 2009- of RON (New Lei) 600 (Euro 141) to RON 640 (Euro 151) monthly, whereas the union movement proposed a larger increase, to RON 750 (Euro 177). The president of the National Trade Union Bloc (BNS), Dumitru Costin, said that the maintenance of the minimum wage at a low level was a masked form of maintaining tax evasion. The parties agreed to continue talks.

English: <http://www.emg.rs/en/news/region/130558.html>

Slovenia

Government and unions fail to reach agreement

August 30, 2010

The government and the majority of public sector unions failed to break the deadlock in negotiations on a planned pay freeze in the public sector in what was seen as a last attempt on Monday 30 August. This implies that the government will pass over the unions and will introduce the freeze with a new law, but also that the strike remains on that was announced for 27 September by unions representing about half of public sector workers.

English: <http://www.sta.si/en/vest.php?s=a&id=1548383>;

<http://www.sta.si/en/vest.php?s=a&id=1547169>

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

Spain

Regional union organisation appeals against pay cuts

August 17, 2010

The CCOO union confederation's public sector organisations in the Extremadura region of south west Spain have lodged over 450 appeals against the pay cuts being imposed by the public authorities. The appeals cover nearly 80,000 workers in the regional administration and local authorities as well as workers in universities. The actions challenge the pay cuts on the basis of the infringement of union rights to collective bargaining and the maintenance of pay and employment. Earlier, the CCOO confederation attacked the Socialist government for what is allegedly the biggest attack on workers' rights since the transition to democracy in the 1970s. CCOO general secretary Ignacio Fernández Toxo said that the change in the law gives too much flexibility to employers in terms of setting wages and working time and will undermine sectoral collective agreements leading to damaging wage competition.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/375>;

Spanish: <http://www.fsc.ccoo.es/webfsc/menu.do?Inicio:95068>

Federation welcomes equality plans but is critical of implementation

July 21, 2010

The FSC-CCOO public services federation is positive about the drawing up of equality plans across the state administration sector, but argues that more needs to be done to ensure they are properly

implemented. In particular, the federation wants to see a timetable and deadlines and believes that more resources, including staff, need to be made available to put the plans into effect.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/373>

Spanish: <http://www.fsc.ccoo.es/webfsc/menu.do?Actualidad:Mujer:Actualidad:93877>

Sweden

Two-year deal in care sector

August 17, 2010

The Kommunal municipal union has signed a new two-year agreement with the health employers' organisation, covering workers in the care sector and the period July 1, 2010 - August 31, 2012. The pay increases are in line with increases in other sectors, but the union says the negotiations were difficult and it had to resist employer attempts to undermine employment conditions. The pay rise will be at least SEK 490 (Euro 52) backdated from 1 July 2010 and at least SEK 480 (Euro 51) from 1 August 2011. Minimum rates for full-time workers above 19 years will be at least SEK 15,685 (Euro 1,663) from 1 July 2010 and SEK 16,070 (Euro 1,703) from 1 August 2011, while workers with vocational education and a year of continuous employment in the profession after graduation will be on a minimum of SEK 17,385 (Euro 1,843) from 1 July 2010 and SEK 17,770 (Euro 1,884) from 1 August 2011.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/375>

Swedish: [http://www.kommunal.se/Kommunal/press/Pressmeddelanden ...](http://www.kommunal.se/Kommunal/press/Pressmeddelanden...)

Report exposes low pay on public projects

July 21, 2010

The LO union confederation has investigated three major public infrastructure projects and exposed how pressure from public authorities to keep costs low has led to sub-contractors paying foreign workers as little as 55% of the wage a worker would receive if covered by the relevant collective agreement. The report also notes how employers change their names and restrict contracts to six months to avoid Swedish tax rules. The projects investigated also show higher accident rates than the industry average. The confederation wants to see changes to public procurement practices that include a requirement to apply the industry collective agreement in contracts.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/373>

Swedish: [http://www.lo.se/home/lo/home.nsf/unidview ...](http://www.lo.se/home/lo/home.nsf/unidview...)

Two-year deals with KFS employer federation

July 5, 2010

Earlier in June and July, the Kommunal union signed 10 two-year agreements with the KFS employers' organisation. KFS brings together 600 companies with around 35,000 employees providing a range of municipal services, such as consulting, museums, health, and education. Around 80% of the KFS member companies are owned by local authorities while the rest are partially or wholly privately owned. Kommunal believes the agreements are in line with the overall settlement in the municipal sector. They provide for increases of 1.1%-1.5% in 2010 rising to 2.2% to 2.6% in 2011. Some agreements express monthly increases in SEK, ranging from SEK 300 (Euro 31) to SEK 450 (Euro 47) in 2010 and from SEK 520 (Euro 54) to SEK 550 (Euro 57) in 2011.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/372>

Swedish: <http://www.kommunal.se/Kommunal/Nyheter/2010/Juli/Tio-nya-avtal-med-KFS/>

Switzerland

A strike for and by women

August 17, 2010

The SGB/USS trade union confederation has expressed its solidarity with the cleaners on strike against the ISS multinational that operates at Geneva airport. The company has ignored two collective agreements and reduced pay rates for the cleaners. The SGB/USS has underlined the importance of the dispute and its implications for defending pay and conditions and preventing a spread of wage dumping. The organising VPÖD-SSP union argues that the Geneva authorities, that own the airport, should insist on ISS to comply with the collective agreements or ban the company from operating at the airport. The cleaners have been involved for over five weeks in what VPÖD-SSP president, Katharina Prelicz-Huber, has called "a strike for and by women".

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/375>; <http://www.epsu.org/cob/374>

French: <http://www.ssp-vpod.ch/actualites/nouvelles.html>;

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

United Kingdom

UNISON backs living wage call

August 24, 2010

UNISON public services union has welcomed plans of Labour leadership candidate, Ed Miliband, to push for a living wage. Miliband has proposed that companies which agree to pay a living wage of at least UKP 7.60 (Euro 9.20) an hour would get a tax reduction. The union's Labour Link has backed the plan, pointing out that a living wage of UKP 7.60 will mean a lower bill for tax credits and benefits while raising more income tax and national insurance from employees and employers, saving UKP 4.1 billion from public funds. Miliband's proposal foresees that some of this saving could be recycled into a small tax reduction in corporation tax for companies who pay the living wage, rather than the national minimum wage of UKP 5.83 (Euro 7.05) an hour. "UNISON has been making the case for the living wage for 20 years and one advantage has been that it tackles poverty, reduces social expenditure and increases revenues," commented UNISON Labour Link chair Steve Warwick.

English: http://www.unison.org.uk/news/news_view.asp?did=6301

Union goes to court to block planned NHS shake-up

August 24, 2010

UNISON public services union has announced to go to court to try to block the government's plans for a radical reorganisation of the National Health Service (NHS). Consultation on plans to give general practitioners (GPs) control of UKP 80 billion (Euro 97 billion) NHS spending runs until October, but the Department of Health has already indicated the plans are non-negotiable. UNISON claims this makes the process unlawful.

English: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/aug/24/unison-court-nhs-shake-up>

Tribunal ruling backs union's equal pay claim

August 17, 2010

Healthcare assistants, domestic supervisors and reception staff, overwhelmingly women, working at a National Health Service Trust (St Helen's and Knowsley), have won an Employment Appeal Tribunal case on equal pay. The case, backed by UNISON, argued that the women were paid lower rates for unsocial hours working on Saturdays and Sundays when compared to men in comparable jobs. The ruling could be important for women working in other NHS Trusts where there are gender differences in unsocial hours payments.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/375>

http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=1939

Rejection Of local government deal in Scotland

August 4, 2010

Local government union members in Scotland have voted by a massive majority to reject a three-year agreement that would have provided increases of 1% this year, followed by a pay freeze and then 0.5% in 2012. The local government unions, UNISON, GMB and Unite, will meet to discuss their pay campaign. Meanwhile, the same unions have registered a dispute with local government employers in the other main agreement that covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Unions are angry that employers are maintaining the pay freeze, refusing to pay low paid workers the UKP 250 (Euro 302) approved by the coalition government, and also recommending local deals to undermine the national agreement.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/374>;
http://www.unison.org.uk/news/news_view.asp?did=6281;
http://www.unison.org.uk/news/news_view.asp?did=6273

Unions argue the case for public sector pensions

August 4, 2010

In the face of widespread attacks on public sector pensions, unions are putting together their evidence for the government-appointed Hutton committee that has been charged with reviewing the system. The PCS civil service union has submitted a detailed report setting out how recent changes to the civil service pension scheme have been acknowledged by the National Audit Office as putting it on a sustainable footing. The Unite union argues that the government has already pre-judged the review by changing the way that public sector pensions are protected against inflation.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/374>;
[http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/recent-news.cfm ...](http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/recent-news.cfm...);
http://www.unitetheunion.org/news_events/latest_news/unite_fears.

Government plans cuts to civil service redundancy scheme

July 21, 2010

The PCS civil service union may return to the courts to defend the current redundancy compensation scheme. The union recently won two High Court rulings against the previous government that had tried to change the scheme without proper negotiation. Despite these rulings, the new government is pushing through legislation to cut the scheme. PCS is also challenging the government's claims about the scheme, arguing that it has exaggerated the levels of compensation by focusing on the maximum payments for those with the longest service. PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka said: "We will be studying the proposed legislation in detail, but our advice suggests the government might be repeating the mistakes of the previous administration in acting outside the law, simply to make it easier and cheaper to cut tens of thousands of jobs" (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 April, May and June 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/373>;
[http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/index.cfm ...](http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/index.cfm...)

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