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Issue 6/2010 June

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

Collective agreement for all rescue and ambulance services

June 21, 2010

The VdA and GPA-djp unions have succeeded in agreeing a collective agreement for all qualified rescue and ambulance services. Earlier, there was only a collective agreement for the Red Cross services. Already two years ago, employees of the private rescue and ambulance services protested against low pay and bad working conditions. "There is no longer room for companies trying to run a business based on wage dumping", Karl Proyer of GPA-djp said, adding that more improvements

should follow, like countrywide wage schemes instead of regional wage differences

German: <http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=S03/Page/Index&n>

Belgium

Protests produce results in non-profit sector

June 21, 2010

The SETCA services union reports that the regional government of Wallonia has agreed to allocate an additional Euro 45 million to the non-profit sector in response to demands from the trade unions. The sector includes a range of health and social services and the extra cash will cover a harmonisation of pay structures across the sectors, proper application of elements of the 2007-2009 agreement and a range of measures on employment. The union sees this as a first step to meeting its collective bargaining demands and believes that union action, including a national demonstration on 8 June, was important in achieving this. Yet, the negotiations for a federal (countrywide) agreement are still dragging, on the employers' side obviously hampered by the formation of a new government. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 April and May 2010)

English: <http://www.wepsu.org/cob/369>

French: <http://www.setca.org/News/Pages/communiquedeppresse10062010region>

Dutch: <http://www.aclvb.be/publicaties/nieuws/nieuwsitem/detail/nationale-betoging>

Croatia

Unions succeed in gathering enough signatures for referendum

June 24, 2010

Five union headquarters managed to collect over 720,000 signatures calling for a referendum on labour law reforms, the organisers announced by June 24. The required number of signatures for calling a referendum was 10% of voters, or 449,506, which the organisers surpassed. The union confederations have for months been in negotiations with the government in order to prevent changes to the labour code that would undermine collective agreements. They called for urgent talks when it emerged that the government was trying to implement the change to the labour code without any consultation with the unions. In their efforts to win broader support, they started collecting signatures to have a referendum.

English: http://www.croatiantimes.com/news/Business/2010-06-24/11890/_Labour_unions;
<http://www.wepsu.org/cob/369>

Finland

Unions succeed in defending purchasing power

June 22, 2010

Late May 2010, when the Food Workers' Union SEL signed the new collective agreement for food workers, an unusually long round of bargaining came to an end. At the backdrop of the difficult economic conditions the trade unions have fared well. In autumn 2009 the agreements raised wages by between 0.5 and 0.6%, whereas the agreements signed in spring 2010 saw a rise of about 1%. The agreements did not bring major changes in working conditions. Already in the previous bargaining round a number of unions secured a six-day paid paternity leave period for their members, and now many more have managed to do the same. Shop stewards' rights were improved. Also parents' rights to stay at home to take care of a sick child were expanded. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 April and May 2010)

English: <http://www.warttokaapel.fi/unions/T2010/n17>

via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_newspl?country=Finland

Unions criticize state productivity scheme

June 21, 2010

Public services union JHL and other unions in the state sector have called for the state productivity scheme to be abandoned. The scheme was set up in 2003 and initially had trade union support in that its aim was to increase productivity in response to the need to adjust to the ageing of the workforce. However, now the unions argue that the scheme is focusing on cutting jobs and even quote management consultant reports that claim that job cuts can undermine public sector productivity. For instance, a PricewaterhouseCoopers report evaluating the scheme also argued that reducing personnel does not necessarily improve productivity.

English: <http://www.jhl.fi/portal/en/news/archive/?bid=217>

France

National strike over pension reform plans

June 26, 2010

The 24 June nationwide strike organised by five union organisations (CFDT, CGT, FSU, Solidaires and UNSA) mobilised hundreds of thousands of workers in protest at government plans to increase the retirement age from 60 to 62 as well as to increase employees' pension contributions. In particular in Marseille and Lyon participation in demonstrations surpassed that of earlier occasions. The unions argue that the changes will mean that as a result of the various breaks in their careers many women will have to work until the age of 65 to get a full pension. They point out that generally the reforms do not acknowledge the scale of the gender pension gap nor the need to take account of difficult and dangerous occupations. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 May 2010)

English: <http://seerpress.com/pension-reform-leads-to-union-strikes-in-france/1778/>;

<http://www.ipsu.org/cob/369>

French: <http://www.cgfr.fr/spip.php?article37507>

Germany

Day of action over pay and rights in church organisations

June 21, 2010

The Verdi services union organised several demonstrations around the country on 9 June in its continuing campaign to secure better pay and conditions for employees of church-run health and social services. The church organisations have challenged the right to strike in the sector and have refused to negotiate proper collective agreements. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 February and April 2010)

English: <http://www.ipsu.org/cob/369>

German: https://gesundheits-soziales-verdide/kirchen_diakonie_caritas/diakonie

Deutsche Post plans to downgrade jobs and sell offices

June 13, 2010

According to business magazine *Wirtschaftswoche*, Deutsche Post is preparing to implement a massive savings programme, including the sale of a number of post offices, consolidation of package and letter delivery services, and downgrading jobs to reduce wages. Although redundancies have been ruled out until at least the middle of next year, the magazine reported that Deutsche Post is increasingly transferring work to its low-paying subsidiary First Mail. First Mail workers are paid Euro 980 an hour, compared to an average Deutsche Post wage of Euro 1400. First Mail is said to have increased the numbers of trainees in preparation for taking over more work.

English: <http://www.thelocal.de/national/20100613-27823.html>

Greece

National strike against pension reforms and public sector cuts

June 29, 2010

On 29 June, the day of the parliamentary treatment of the pension reforms, thousands of workers throughout the country walked off the job in a general strike that disrupted public transport, left hospitals operating on emergency staff and pulled all news broadcasts off the air. The fifth national strike day was in particular aimed against pension reforms, implying that most workers will have to work three to five years longer before retirement. Moreover, public sector unions in the ADEDY confederation continue to stress that cuts in public sector pay will see workers lose up to 35% of pay in real terms over the next four years. Jointly, unions oppose the wide range of other measures the government is pushing through including changes to labour law that will undermine collective agreements.

English: [http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iXUJvBknZVGqsBenIus;](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5iXUJvBknZVGqsBenIus;http://www.wepsu.org/cob/369)
<http://www.wepsu.org/cob/369>
Greek: <http://www.adedy.gr/adedy/site/home/wscsp>

Hungary

Parliament approves new law on status of public servants

June 24, 2010

The new parliament has approved the law on the legal status of public servants. The parliament passed the law, though the president of Hungary, László Sólyom, returned it to the legislators for reconsideration. The president did not want to sign the law because employees would be allowed to be dismissed without any justification; he added that laying off without giving the exact reasons is incompatible with EU law as well. The Confederation of Unions of Professionals (ÉSZT) emphasized that employees should protest as the new law is incompatible with EU law and ILO standards.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent

Ireland

Majority of unions vote to accept deal with government

June 21, 2010

On 16 June, the committee covering 19 public services unions in the ICTU confederation has voted to accept the so-called Croke Park deal by a margin of almost two-thirds. The agreement commits the government not to cut public service pay again, and to begin the process of reversing recent pay cuts as savings flow from the substantial reforms set out in the deal. It also contains a government commitment to avoid compulsory redundancies, plus important safeguards on pensions and outsourcing. Public service pay has been cut by an average of 14% over the last 16 months through the so-called 'pension levy' and reductions in pay scales introduced in the last budget. On 25 June, however, the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI) reaffirmed its opposition to the Croke Park deal, and said it will not be bound by the decision of the ICTU committee. The Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland (ASTI), which also rejected the deal, will review its campaign against the deal at an executive meeting in early July. Both teaching unions are set to wait until August before deciding on industrial action - over and above the work-to-rule directives already in place. Primary teachers, members of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), have lifted their work-to-rule directives after INTO membership voted to back the Croke Park deal. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 April and May 2010)

English: <http://www.wepsu.org/cob/369;>
<http://www.independent.ie/national-news/strike-threat-lifted-after-croke-park;>
<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2010/0625/1224273270178.html>

Italy

Massive protest against austerity cuts

June 26, 2010

On Friday 25 June tens of thousands of Italians took to the streets to protest public spending cuts that are part of a tide of government austerity washing over Europe. The series of demonstrations was organised by the CGIL union confederation. The government's austerity plan includes a 10% budget cut across government departments. Union activists say they recognize the need to reduce Italy's budget deficit but that the axe falls hardest on those who can bear it the least. "We say no to this budget. It is wrong, unjust, it stunts growth, it does not kick-start production, it doesn't touch the rich, and it punishes workers," CGIL leader Fulvio Mammoni told thousands of protesters in Naples.

English: <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-italy-strikes>

Public service federations continue action against government plans

June 23, 2010

Already before the national strike on 25 June, FP CGIL public services federation reacted to government plans to cut public spending by organising a national demonstration on 12 June. The cuts will have a direct impact on public sector workers' pay. Previously agreed pay increases will be reduced and workers are also likely to lose the productivity-related elements of their salaries. The CISL FP federation also states to have chosen the way of confrontation with the government. While agreeing on the necessity to rationalise public expenditure, this federation considers in particular the announced three-year pay freeze for public workers unfair, urging instead for a restart of second level bargaining in order to reorganise the use of resources in every administration, and use the savings to improve both public services and public workers' wages.

English: <http://www.wepsu.org/cob/369;report> CISL FP International Office (Mirko Checcachi)

Italian: <http://www.fpcgilit/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/14342>

Netherlands

Unions angry at size of TNT job losses

June 28, 2010

The unions organising postal workers have said to be shocked that so many delivery workers are to lose their jobs in a major shake-up of TNT services. All 15,000 delivery workers who work over 25 hours a week may face dismissal and 11,000 jobs may be lost, as TNT argues to have to head off competition from budget delivery firms like Sandd. Earlier this year, union members rejected a management jobs guarantee in return for 15% pay cuts, and agreed to accept job losses instead. Yet, a spokesperson of the Abvakabo FNV said, "We had expected this to affect 11,000 delivery workers and that between 4,000 and 5,000 would lose their jobs." CNV Publieke Zaken union spokeswoman Inge Bakker stated: "If our members ask us to strike, we will of course think about doing that." While unions have placed hope on a planned parliamentary debate about workplace conditions at TNT, Bakker acknowledged there were few options left.

English: http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2010/06/post_unions_angry;

<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSLDE65R1MP20100628>

Dutch: *De Volkskrant*, May 28, 2010; *NRC-Handelsblad*, May 28, 2010

Waste agreement protects purchasing power

June 21, 2010

Unions and employers in the waste and environment sector have agreed basically on a 12-month deal that provides a 11% pay increase, implying that purchasing power has been protected. The agreement also includes an amount equal to 0.4% of the pay bill that will fund initiatives related to recruitment and promotion.

English: <http://www.wepsu.org/cob/369>

Dutch: <http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/nieuws/nieuws/koopkrachtbehoud-voor-mede>

Confederation organises referendum on basic pension agreement

June 18, 2010

The FNV union confederation has organised a referendum in writing among the 12 million members of its affiliated unions on the basic national agreement on the pension age agreed last May. The accord provides for lifting the current age from 65 to 66 years by 2020. The ballot ends 30 June. The council of one of the major critics of the plans in an earlier stage, public services union AbvaKabo FNV, has advised to vote in favour of the agreement (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 May 2010)

English: <http://unionrenewalblogspotcom/2010/06/referendum-on-dutch-pension>

Dutch: <http://www.depers.nl/economie/484814/Kritische-FNV-bond-groen-licht>

Norway

Strike avoided and pay increase for oil workers

June 28, 2010

The IndustriEnergi (IE) union has successfully negotiated a pay increase for its members at Statoil's offshore Gullfaks B and Gullfaks C fields, and at Shell's Draugen field, in the Norwegian sector of the North Sea. Talks between union officials and the Norwegian Oil Industry Association, mediated by the Norway's National Arbitration Tribunal, reached agreement that avoided strike action after extending a midnight deadline. "We feel relieved that we could avoid a strike," EI president Leif Sande stated, "We did not get everything, but we got a good wage increase and better compensation." The new agreement sees a NOK 10,000 (Euro 1,275) annual increase in general wages for some 6,700 workers. In addition, shift, conference and holiday supplements will be increased.

English: <http://www.icemorg/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/3887-Strike-Avoided>

Municipal strike ends with 35% increase

June 21, 2010

An agreement has been reached in the municipal sector after two weeks of strike action of 45,000 workers, the most significant industrial action in the country for over 30 years. Overall the increase is around 35% and includes amounts for local agreements as well as provisions for tackling the gender pay gap - a key element of the unions' demands. The basic general increase is 21% or 7,100 NOK.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/369>;

<http://norwaypost.com/news/nationwide-strike-ended.html>

Norwegian: <http://www.fagforbundet.no/forsida/tariff/>

Poland

Copper miners in strike ballot

June 28, 2010

Negotiations between trade unions and management have failed at copper mining giant KGHM Polska Miedz, and a strike ballot is underway. Unions have demanded a guarantee of employment for up to 20 years and increases to 300 zloty (Euro 72) monthly, but management is in particular rejecting the employment guarantee demand. The results of the ballot will be known in August.

English: http://www.thenewspl/business/artykul134445_kghm-workers-in-strike

Portugal

Public sector unions protest lack of social dialogue

June 21, 2010

Four days of trade union demonstrations around the country lead up to the delivery of a protest letter to the prime minister on 17 June by public sector trade unions in the FESAP federation. The unions have attacked the government's plans to freeze public sector pay and its other proposals for public spending. The unions are particularly angry about the failure of the government to maintain

any process of social dialogue

English: <http://www.wepsu.org/cob/369>

Portuguese: http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_newspl?country=Portugal

Romania

VAT raise instead of pension cuts

June 29, 2010

After the Constitutional Court blocked the government's plans to cut pensions by 15%, the government announced to raise the Value-Added-Tax (VAT) by 5%. From 1 July, VAT will go up to 24%, while the flat-rate income tax will remain at 16%. Till the very end, pensioners had fiercely protested the planned cuts, also outside Constitutional Court in Bucharest during the Court meeting. After the national strike of 31 May, trade unions continued their protests right up to the national mobilisation outside parliament on 15 June. On that day, over 20,000 workers and pensioners gathered for a human chain around the Romanian Parliament. The action on 15 June was to provide support to the vote of no confidence in the government. However, the government survived and pressed ahead with the cuts that were due to take effect from 1 July.

English: <http://www.euronews.net/2010/06/26/romanian-government-raises-vat>;
<http://www.wepsu.org/cob/369>; <http://www.wepsu.org/a/6603>

Spain

Strike leads to closure of Madrid's metro

June 29, 2010

On Monday 28 and Tuesday 29 June, a two days' strike forced the closure of Madrid's metro system on the second day. While the announced public sector pay cuts were not originally aimed at public company workers such as transport, Madrid's regional conservative government extended the cuts to the metro employees. Under Spanish law workers are supposed to provide agreed minimum levels of services, which kept Madrid's underground rail service running about 50% of trains on the first day. On Monday evening, an assembly of workers decided to make Tuesday a total walkout, a union spokesman said, breaking minimum service agreements for the first time in the last two decades.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE65S1E620100629>

Parliament ratifies labour reforms

June 22, 2010

The parliament has ratified the labour reforms designed to bring down high unemployment. Measures include promoting youth employment and cutting the cost of firing workers. Only members of Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero's Socialist Party voted in favour of the labour reforms. Thereforms can still be amended in parliament over the coming months. Earlier in June, tripartite talks with union confederations and employers' organisations on the reforms ended in a deadlock, in spite of an extension of the planned deadline by a week. (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 May 2010)

English: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/world/europe/10385834.stm>

General strike called for 29 September

June 21, 2010

Following the public sector strike on 8 June, the main union confederations have called for a general strike on 29 September in protest at the government plans for public spending cuts and labour law reforms. This is the date of the ETUC's European-wide mobilisation with its key demands of "No cuts, more growth". The Spanish unions have other action planned in the meantime with mobilisations in the regions on 30 June and then in Madrid on 9 September.

English:<http://www.wepsu.org/cob/369>

Spanish :http://www.fspugtes/UGT_y_CCOO_convocan_huelga_general.htm

Sweden

State sector negotiations could prove challenging

June 21, 2010

Unions putting forward claims to state sector employers think that there is a big gap to close in the forthcoming negotiations. The OFR negotiating cartel wants to see pay increase in line with the private sector as well as action on work-life balance. The SEKO services union is concerned about employment security particularly for women and young workers. It also wants a general wage increase of 26% but says that there is nothing on offer from the employers.

English:<http://www.wepsu.org/cob/369>

Swedish:<http://www.storg/aktuellt/avtal-2010/avtalsrorelsen-inom-arbetsgivarverket>;

<http://www.sekose/Aktuellt/Nyheter/2010/Juni/SEKO-har-vaxlat-avtalsyrkanden-med>

Pilot strike after failing negotiations

June 16, 2010

From 6 June on, a number of strikes of about 2,000 pilots working for four regional Swedish airlines stalled almost all domestic flights. The Swedish Airline Pilots Association (Svensk Pilotförening - SPF) rejected the mediators' offer and a final attempt to resolve the conflict failed. At the heart of the conflict is the issue of the airlines' right to hire pilots through temporary agencies. On this behalf, employers have called for changes in existing collective agreements, with according to the union a negative impact on pay of existing employees. "The offer cuts pilot pay by 15-20% and at the same time increases working hours from 40 to 47.5 hours a week," SPF wrote in a statement. By June 16, Spirit Airlines, one of the four employers involved, had made a deal with their workers, but tensions remained with the other three.

English:<http://breakingnews.gaeatimes.com/2010/06/16/pilots-union-says-it-has>;

<http://www.thelocal.se/27072/20100607/>

Switzerland

Women demonstrate over pension age and child care

June 21, 2010

The SSP-VPD public services union backed the national demonstration on 14 June over childcare provision and proposals to increase the retirement age for women. The union has criticized the federal government for plans to cut back a scheme that has actually increased childcare places in recent years, although there is still a major shortage across the country. Once again, the union pointed at the backward position of Switzerland concerning child care (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 April 2010).

English:<http://www.wepsu.org/cob/369>

French:<http://www.ssp-vpd.ch/actualites/nouvelles/ansicht/article/14-juin-2010>

German:<http://www.vpod.ch/aktuell/nachrichten/ansicht/article/-869e5f4949>

FIFA gets yellow card

June 11, 2010

On 10 June 1,000 workers' delegates participating in the International Labour Conference (ILC) in Geneva presented Yellow Cards to the FIFA. The Building and Wood Workers International (BWI) and Swiss Labour Assistance (SLA) argue that FIFA has consistently evaded social responsibility for wages and working conditions of the construction workers employed in building stadiums in South Africa for the FIFA World Cup event. For instance, 70% of workers were given short term contracts with no job security by labour brokers and subcontractors. The BWI wishes to record that FIFA has

undermined the most elementary principles of the ILO Decent Work and FIFA must be given a Yellow Card", said Ambet Yuson, General Secretary of the BWI addressing the ILC "In the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, if FIFA will not take serious steps to improve the working conditions of the workers and promote ILO core labor standards in the procurement policies, we will give them a Red Card", he continued. Earlier, BWI criticized working conditions and safety provisions in stadium building in Poland for the UEFA Europe Cup 2012

English: <http://www.bwintorg/default.asp?Index=2781&Language=EN>; <http://www.bwintorg/default.asp?index=2785&Language=EN>

French: <http://www.winterportalch/fr/actualites/nouvelles/2010/des-syndicats-du-monde>

United Kingdom

Private sector settlements will not compensate for public sector squeeze

June 30, 2010

Private sector pay settlements are not keeping pace with inflation, according to data for May from the Labour Research Department (LRD). Also, earnings in the private sector may not be able to offset the effect of pay curbs in the public sector. The three-monthly median (midpoint) for May remained steady at 2%, the same as the previous month. LRD data available so far indicate that the median for new settlements in the public sector has fallen to 1%. In the private sector pay freezes affected 13% of settlements (19% of new settlements) in the three months to May, little changed from April but down on the higher proportion of freezes recorded earlier this year. Lewis Emery, LRD's pay and conditions researcher, said: "Although currently a degree of stability has emerged in wage deals, pay rises of less than half the rate of inflation spell cuts in living standards for workers in general, not just the public sector" (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 May 2010)

English: LRD Press Release <http://www.lrd.org.uk/issue.php?pagid=1&issueid=1392>

New offer from BA could postpone strike

June 21, 2010

On Sunday June 27, Unite, the union involved in the industrial dispute at British Airways (BA), that a new offer from BA could lead to the postponement of the new industrial action ballot which was set to begin on Tuesday, June 29th. Unite joint general secretary Tony Woodley said: "As a consequence of the company's last and final offer the union and its representatives will have no choice but to delay our vote in order to allow our members to consult on the offer." However, Unite has warned that it is not in a position to recommend the BA proposal to members because it does not fully reinstate staff travel arrangements that gave rise to earlier strike action (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 May 2010)

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

Union wins second court rules over redundancy scheme

June 21, 2010

Following its earlier victory over the government, the PCS civil service union has won a second High Court ruling over the redundancy compensation scheme. After the first ruling the government was supposed to agree changes to the scheme with the union. However, the two sides did not agree and in this second ruling the court has decided that most of the government-imposed changes (apart from those dealing with age discrimination) to the scheme are null and void. The new coalition government will now have to negotiate with the union if it wants to make any changes to the scheme. PCS deputy general secretary Hugh Lanning said: "We are delighted with the ruling, that proves our members were right to oppose the cuts that the previous government tried to force through" (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 December 2009; Year 3 February, April and May 2010)

English: <http://www.pepsu.org/cob/369>;
http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/indexcfm/id/7518B8FC

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