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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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Austria

Union calls on parliament to address burn-out and stress

March 18, 2010

The VIDA services union is urging parliament to launch a study into the increasing pressure under which health and social care employees work. Long working hours, long periods on call and too few staff are creating major problems in the sector, and 22,000 workers signed a petition organised by VIDA and the GPA-DJP services union.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/358>;

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

Belgium

Union leaders warmed to GM plan over Opel Antwerp factory

March 22, 2010

Belgian union leaders have warmed to a plan by General Motors European arm Opel to grant a stay of execution to its plant in Antwerp and push through fewer job cuts than previously envisaged. GM said it was now proposing that the Opel Antwerp plant be allowed to hunt for an investor until the end of September. That investor would have to take over by the end of the year, union leaders said, adding GM was now also looking to cut 1,200 of the 2,600 jobs of Opel Antwerp. Rudi Kennes, main negotiator of the ABVV/FGTB union and Opel's European deputy labour leader, said the plans were a sign of progress, though the plant needed longer than six months to find an investor and the job cuts were more than the 1,000 maximum unions had been willing to accept (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 January 2010).

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSLDE62L20J20100322?>

Bulgaria

Agreement on levying unprovided people

March 21, 2010

The trade unions and the government have reached agreement on levying incomes of unprovided people, thus legalizing the non-regulated incomes of physical persons, as they stated at a press conference over anti-crisis measures. Yet, at the press conference a dispute rose over the proposed measures. Bozhidar Danev from the Bulgarian Industrial Association said that over the last 20 years many people received non-regulated incomes from the grey sector by not paying their taxes and insurances, and announced to discuss with the government whether to declare amnesty.

English: <http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=n213856>

Cyprus

Unions refuse reform cost of living allowance

March 21, 2010

On 20 March, the joint unions announced not to be prepared to accept a reform of the Cost of Living Allowance (CoLA) or any other government measures which will negatively affect the standard of living of employees, and more in particular those in the lowest wage bracket. Representatives of the three major union federations, PEO, SEK and DEOK, made the statement in response to the government's proposed austerity measures.

English: <http://www.cyprus-mail.com/cyprus/unions-say-don-t-touch-cola/>
via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Cyprus

Czech Republic

Unions call off transport strike

March 4, 2010

The transport unions called off the strike planned for Thursday 4 March, giving parliament time to decide on their demand to cut taxes on non-wage benefits that are already part of work contracts. They did so after the caretaker cabinet and the lower house of parliament gave in to their demand to repeal a tax hike on benefits such as cheap transport fares, pointing at "the positive legislative progress so far" (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 February 2010).

English: <http://www.forexyard.com/en/news/Czech-unions-call-off-transportZ>
via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Czech+Republic

Denmark

Transport workers win measures to tackle social dumping

March 24, 2010

A ground-breaking collective agreement employers is set to help combat social dumping and discrimination against foreign nationals. The 3F union has negotiated an agreement with employers' representative Dansk Industri (DI) which is unique in that it entitles shop stewards to access wage slips and other information if the union believes that overseas workers are being paid less than their Danish counterparts. The new clause is likely to be inserted into the majority of collective agreements across the transport sector. In addition, company members of DI will inform the union when they use a contractor. This will enable the union to enforce their collective agreement and to take industrial action against the contractor if necessary. The clause will not only apply to Danish contractors but also to overseas companies operating in Denmark.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/4322>

Finland

University agreement secured after strike threat

March 18, 2010

After some hard bargaining and the threat of strike action across the university sector, unions have managed to negotiate a deal that they believe delivers good employment protection with the employer withdrawing their demands for much greater working time flexibility and cuts in sick pay. The agreement runs from 1 March 2010 to 29 February 2012 and includes a pay increase of 0.98% from 1 November 2010. This is a 0.4% general increase and a 0.58% installment for the development of the salary system. In addition, a 5.5% lump sum of the monthly salary will be paid to compensate for the postponement of pay increases from this spring to the beginning of November 2010.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/358> ; http://www.pardia.fi/in_english/?

State sector unions avoid pay freeze

March 18, 2010

Negotiations in the state sector were initially difficult as the government wanted to freeze pay over the next two years. However, the unions managed to negotiate increases in pay and protection of the employment status of civil servants in light of the major reforms taking place across the state sector. The agreement runs from 1 March 2010 to 29 February 2012. An across-the-board-increase of 0.55% will be paid as of 1 March 2010 and an agency-specific instalment of 0.43%, which is to be agreed and implemented locally, will be paid on 1 September 2010. The agreed increases for the year 2010 are in total around 0.98%. Increases for 2011 will be negotiated by the end of January 2011. Antti Palo, President of Pardia, the Federation of Salaried Employees, called the outcomes satisfactory.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/358>; http://www.pardia.fi/in_english/?

France

Public workers on strike

March 23, 2010

Public-sector workers across France went on strike on Tuesday 23 March to protest the country's economic woes and the government's unpopular reforms. The strike caused some disruption for commuters in French cities. Trains to Britain and Belgium were running normally, but only 65% of traffic was being guaranteed within France. Unions say French President Nicolas Sarkozy's conservative government has not offered satisfactory plans on jobs, salaries, purchasing power and working conditions, and they hope to hammer home that message in the wake of Sunday's regional election defeats. After that defeat, Sarkozy fired his labour minister, Xavier Darcos.

English: <http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2010/03/23/france-strike.html>

French: <http://www.spterritoriaux.cgt.fr/spip.php?article3870>

Strike over threats to pre-school provision

March 18, 2010

The Interno federation affiliated to the CFTD union confederation has organised a national strike on 11 March in protest at changes to regulations covering nurseries that will lead to lower staffing levels and the employment of less qualified staff. The union is concerned about the implications for both nursery workers and the children in their care.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/358>;

French: <http://www.cfdt.fr/rewrite/article/24797/zoom-sur/petite-enfance>

Germany

Collective agreements pay off for German MBA's

March 29, 2010

"Diplomkaufleute" (a German business administration degree, similar to MBA) covered by collective agreements earn on average Euro 4,434 monthly, that is Euro 410 more than their colleagues in companies without such agreements. This is a striking result of a recent on-line survey through the continuous *WageIndicator* web survey (in Germany called *Lohnspiegel*), in which about 3,000 German MBA's participated. While their monthly average salary stands at Euro 4,210, average earnings across industries are highest in banking (Euro 4,713). Other striking results in the *Lohnspiegel* survey are that experience also pays off (with salaries of those with over 20 years experience averaging Euro 5,283, as against Euro 3,254 for starters), and that female MBA's with an average Euro 3,705 earn 18% less than their male colleagues (Euro 4,506). At the very start of their career, female MBA's experience a gender pay gap of 14%.

German: <http://www.lohnspiegel.de/main/zusatzinformationen/diplomkaufleute>

Minimum wage for nursing staff ends wage dumping

March 25, 2010

The ver.di services union welcomes the decision in favour of a minimum wage for nursing staff ("Pflegemindestlohn") and hopes that the decision will soon be put into practice. Ver.di board member, Ellen Paschke, said: "This decision is long over due. Anyway, it terminates extreme forms of wage dumping." Earlier, representatives of employers and employees in the relevant committee at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs agreed upon a minimum wage, to be effected as of 1 July 2010, for the western part of the country of Euro 8.50 and for the eastern part of Euro 7.50. Paschke added that employee representatives and part of the employers were in favour of a clearly higher minimum wage, and that a differentiation between West and East 20 years after the unification could hardly be justified.

German: <http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id=2f47715e-37f9>

Lufthansa cabin crews may join pilots in new strike

March 24, 2010

One month after Lufthansa flights were disrupted by a pilots' strike, the pilots' union Cockpit is planning a new four-day strike. This time, however, the airline is facing more pressure as negotiations with the UFO cabin crew union head towards an impasse. Prior to entering a second round of negotiations with Lufthansa on Wednesday 24 March, UFO representative Joachim Muller said that he doubted a strike could be avoided. Lufthansa wants to increase the hours cabin crews work before their overtime pay starts, alter the structure of their pay raises, and link portions of their income to profit levels. UFO may coordinate its efforts with Cockpit, which is planning to strike from April 13 to 16. The two unions will have a joint meeting April 12 in Frankfurt.

English: <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,5384770,00.html>

Greece

Confederation plans further strike action

March 18, 2010

The ADEDY civil service confederation has warned of further strike action in April in protest at cuts to public sector pay and pensions. ADEDY joined with the GSEE private sector confederation in a general strike on 11 March. Following a two-day strike on 16-17 March, energy workers have threatened another 48-hour strike unless the government withdraws a 7% pay cut and 10% cut in pensions.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/358>; <http://uk.reuters.com/article/>;

Greek: <http://www.adedy.gr/adedy/site/home/ws.csp>

Hungary

Union to sue retailer Tesco for equal pay

March 25, 2010

The Independent Union of Retail Workers has turned to all Labour Courts throughout the country where Tesco supermarkets are located in order to press the UK retailer to pay equal wages. Csaba Bubenkó, union President, said wages of Tesco employees performing the same job may differ 10, 20 or even 30 % depending on the location of the store. He added that Tesco pays less in regions where the unemployment rate is higher, thus saving at least HUF 1 billion (Euro 3,8 million). Tesco has replied that the same job means the same wage within a store.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent

Ireland

Public sector talks continued

March 29, 2010

On March 29, public service unions and government officials reconvened for talks aimed at resolving the row over public sector pay and reform. Public service unions have been engaged in a go-slow industrial action for two months in protest at pay cuts. Labour Relations Commission (LRC) Chief Executive, Kieran Mulvey, said that negotiators had "brought a lot of the issues a long way" in the marathon talks. However, he admitted that the crucial issue of pay still had to be tackled. A day earlier, the Community Platform, representing 29 national anti-poverty and equality organisations, urged the government to work with the trade union confederation (Irish Congress of Trade Unions, ICTU) to agree a solution for low-paid public sector workers and avoid social welfare services being affected by industrial action over the coming weeks. Speaking on behalf of the Community Platform, Anne Costello said it stood in solidarity "with those public sector workers who have been hit so hard by the unequal choices made by this government."

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2010/0329/>;
<http://www.rte.ie/news/2010/0329/pay.html> via <http://www.labourstart.org/>

Italy

Confederation claims a million workers on the streets

March 18, 2010

On 12 March the CGIL union confederation organised a four-hour general strike and a series of demonstrations across the country in protest at the government's policies on dealing with the crisis, taxation, employment rights and migrants' rights. The confederation claims that one million workers flooded into the country's squares. CGIL General Secretary, Guglielmo Epifani said during a demonstration in Padua: "Unemployment rises, especially in more industrialized areas, and the government does nothing. Taxes are paid only by workers and retirees". He warned for a labour law reform, blaming the government of "bringing down the rights through a kind of arbitration which forces workers to abandon the labour courts."

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/358>; <http://www.cgil.it/>;
Italian: <http://www.cgil.it/dettagliodocumento.aspx?ID=13331>

Malta

New rights for part-time employees

March 30, 2010

Part-time employees are now entitled to equal hourly pay pro rata what their full-time counterparts receive, thanks to an amendment to the law on Employment and Industrial Relations. The amendment came into force on 12 March. The regulation applies to all part-time employees who are employed as from the date of publication, in the Government Gazette on 12 March 2010.

English: <http://www.independent.com.mt/news.asp?newsitemid=103370>

Netherlands

Cleaning strike continued

March 29, 2010

After five rounds of negotiations for a new collective agreement, unions and employers in cleaning have not approached. The employers' association sticks to a pay freeze, while the FNV Bondgenoten Union emphasizes the modest demands of the cleaners, in starting up the "two dimes campaign" as part of the "Clean Enough" campaign, pointing at the net demand of Euro 0.20 hourly extra each for 2010 and 2011. The selective strike and related actions continue. The earlier attitude of major cleaning principals that they were no party in the conflict seems to change as both Dutch Railways (NS) and Schiphol Airport have announced to be willing to play a mediating role. Meanwhile, public support for the strike is growing. With the cleaners' actions as a trigger, in the Dutch parliament and in a number of municipalities discussions have started up concerning sustainable procurement, including minimum wage and quality of work standards (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 February 2010).

Dutch : http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/branches_bedrijven/branches/
English: <http://unionrenewal.blogspot.com/2010/03/cleaners-strike>

Union announces demands for Corus agreement

March 19, 2010

The FNV Bondgenoten union has announced its demands for the new collective agreement at the Corus steelworks, subsidiary of the Tata Steel Group and employing 9,500 workers, after preparations with members. The spearheads are a larger focus on youth and a floor for pay increase for the low-waged, and the union asks a clear statement of Corus concerning the state pension reform plans. FNV Bondgenoten wants a wage increase of 2% by 1 April 2010 for one year, with a floor of Euro 416.38 per percent per year. The union demands the salary scales of young employees

to be increased 2% by 1 January 2011. The current collective agreement expires on 1 April 2010.

English: message of EUCOBAN network of EMF / EFFAT / ETUF-TCL / EMCEF

Unions suspend negotiations with local government

March 18, 2010

Following further negotiations on 8 March, the local government employers are sticking to their demand for a pay freeze. In response the three trade unions involved - FNV Abvakabo, CNV Publieke Zaak and CMHF - have announced that they will suspend all consultations with the employers over issues like restructuring for at least three months. The unions are determined to secure a deal that at least protects their members' purchasing power (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 December 2009 and Year 3 January and February 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/358>

Dutch: <http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/Thema's/cao-lagere-overheden1/?OverviewType;>
http://www.cnvpubliekezaak.nl/Oproep_aan_OR_overleg_Gemeenten_op_te

Norway

Private sector union brakes off negotiations

March 23, 2010

On 22 March, Fellesforbundet, the largest private sector union, broke off negotiations in the metal sector with the employers' federation Norsk Industri. The result of negotiations in the metal sector, together with those in the textiles and clothing sector, the packaging sector and a couple of smaller sectors will be decisive for bargaining outcomes throughout the country. After more than a week of negotiations, Fellesforbundet President Arve Bakke gave up concluding collective bargaining without mediation. "We have a responsibility towards every low paid worker in Norway and the offer made by Norsk Industri does not come close to shouldering this responsibility. There was also no substantial move on other important questions like securing normal working hours and keeping guaranty wages for all low paid workers in industry. Also there was no move on our demands for fairer treatment of foreign workers and rotation schedules for workers far away from home", Bakke said.

English: message of EUCOBAN network of EMF / EFFAT / ETUF-TCL / EMCEF

Poland

Tensions rise at LOT airlines

March 25, 2010

From coming April on, LOT Polish Airlines plans to change its labour and wage system, which according to the company's trade unions will imply lower wages. Neither the Transport Pilots Trade Union nor the Trade Union of Cabin Crew are willing to accept the proposed changes and are now in a dispute with the airline's management. Strikes seem imminent, as the unions do not rule out strike action. By March 30, the matter will be taken up by the Tripartite Commission (KT).

English: <http://www.wbj.pl/article-49020-lot-labor-tensions-rise-strikes>
via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Poland

Portugal

High level of support for public sector strike

March 18, 2010

Both the STAL and SINTAP trade unions report a very high level of support for the national public sector strike held on 4 March. They estimate turnout at between 75% and 85% with all parts of the public sector affected. The strike was in protest at the government's call for a public sector pay freeze

and with a demand for a proper process of negotiation.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/358>;

Portuguese: <http://www.sintap.pt/downloads/up665.pdf>;

http://www.stal.pt/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=469&Itemid=1

Romania

New collective agreement for metro workers

March 25, 2010

Metro workers in Bucharest have won a new collective agreement ending a five-month-long dispute. The workers represented by the Uniunea Sindicatelor Libere Metrou (USLM) union suspended strike action planned for 18 March after managers of the state-owned company Metrorex and the union signed a new collective agreement. The settlement includes a reasonable wage increase, a commitment to retain all jobs, the harmonisation of benefits for certain categories of employees and a pledge to improve working conditions. The existing agreement had expired on 1 November 2009; negotiations on new agreements normally take place 30 days before expiry. USLM organised a protest on 29 October calling on government to approve Metrorex's budget for 2009-10; its failure to do so blocked negotiations. It also took a number of other steps to resolve the matter, including a picket in front of the Romanian government headquarters as well as strikes on 12 and 17 November, which the government suppressed through legal action.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/4328>

Slovenia

National minimum wage increased

March 18, 2010

After a major trade union demonstration and months of negotiations, employers and unions have agreed to increase the national minimum wage. There will be three increases over the next three years in order to bring the minimum wage in line with the basic living costs for a single person household. The overall 22.9% increase will take the net minimum rate to Euro 562 a month by 2012, via Euro 510 in 2010 and Euro 530 in 2011 (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 November 2009).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/358>;

<http://www.sloveniatimes.com/en/inside.cp2?uid>

Spain

Preliminary agreement at Opel Zaragoza

March 16, 2010

After ten hours of negotiations, the management of the General Motors (GM) Opel plant in Figueruelas, near Zaragoza, and the workers' monitoring commission of the plant reached a preliminary agreement to be ratified by employees. As reported by the UGT Secretary General in the plant, Peter Bona, the agreement implies lay-offs for 900 of 7,000 Opel Zaragoza workers. For the remaining workforce, a collective agreement will be in force including a 1% pay increase in 2010 and 2% increase each in 2011 and 2012.

English: <http://www.barcelonareporter.com/index.php?/news/comments/>

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

Sweden

Confederation co-ordinates action around collective bargaining

February 15, 2010

From 13 March on, affiliates of the LO blue-collar workers' confederation have been involved in a range of demonstrations and events throughout the country highlighting the importance and value of collective agreements. The main collective bargaining round is underway and LO wants to ensure that workers are aware of the benefits of collective agreements, to those covered by them but also to the working of society and the economy in general.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/358>;

Swedish: <http://www.lo.se/home/lo/home.nsf/unidview/>

United Kingdom

Gap closes between new and existing long-term agreements

March 29, 2010

The latest figures published in the Labour Research Department's Workplace Report magazine, based on LRD's database of negotiated settlements, suggest that there is now little gap between the increase in lowest basic rates in new deals and those under existing long term agreements. For the three months December 2009-February 2010, LRD's published mid-point for settlements monitored was 1.6%. This is only slightly up on the previous 1.5% figure (November-January). Pay freezes still account for just over a quarter (28%) of December-February settlements. In new settlements only (excluding existing long-term agreements) the mid-point for the three months up to and including February was 1.5%, with pay freezes making up almost four out of ten (39%) of these.

English: <http://www.lrd.org.uk/issue.php?pagid=1&issueid=1373>

Union welcomes announced national minimum wage increase

March 25, 2010

The GMB union has welcomed the announcement of the government that it has accepted the recommendations from the Low Pay Commission (LPC) on the new rates for the National Minimum Wage. The new rates, which will come into force on 1 October 2010, will be UKP 5.93 (currently Euro 6.64) per hour for workers aged 21 and over (a 2.2% increase); UKP 4.92 (Euro 5.51) per hour for 18-20 year olds (plus 1.9%), and UKP 3.64 (Euro 4.07) per hour for 16-17 year olds (plus 2%). Paul Kenny, the union's General Secretary, said: "The increase is much needed by the lowest paid in these difficult times and will help to boost consumer demand and thereby sustain the recovery underway."

English: http://www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/latest_news/national_minimum

Civil service union responds to government budget

March 25, 2010

On 24 March (budget day), PCS, the public and commercial services union, responded to the government budget as up to 200,000 civil and public servants from across the country stayed away from work in a strongly supported budget day strike over cuts to redundancy pay. Mark Serwotka, PCS General Secretary, said: "Today's budget of so called efficiency savings, makes it clear that the reason the government is ripping up the contracts of loyal civil servants is to make it easier and cheaper for whoever wins the election to cut them. It is ludicrous to think that efficiency savings can be somehow pulled out from down the back of the sofa and have no effect on services."

English: http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/index.cfm

Strong vote in British Gas strike ballot

March 23, 2010

In a ballot closing 23 March, GMB members working for British Gas have voted 82% in favour of strike action on a 61% turnout. GMB General Secretary Paul Kenny said, "We are giving British Gas a week to give us a constructive response. We want an independent inquiry into the profit-at-all-costs culture at British Gas." Earlier the 8,000 employees involved, mainly engineering workers, gave 90%

support for action in a consultative ballot. They are responding to threats from management to cut up to 25% of full-time equivalent staff working in non-customer facing roles.

English: <http://l-r-c.org.uk/blog/post/strong-vote-in-gmb-british-gas-ballot/>;
http://www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/latest_news/british_gas_ballot.aspx

Union highlights impact of pay freeze on low-paid women

March 18, 2010

Public services union UNISON has called on local government employers to withdraw their demand for a pay freeze. The union argues that women will be most affected by a freeze as three out of four local government workers are women and two-thirds of them earn less UKP 18,000 (Euro 20,000) a year. Heather Wakefield, UNISON Head of Local Government, said: "Council staff are already some of the lowest paid workers in the public sector. They are facing the grim prospect of a pay freeze from April, just as inflation is on the up. Many are worried about losing their jobs, whilst working harder than ever, covering vacant posts, to keep services running."

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/358>;
http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=1783

For more information, please contact the editor Maarten van Klaveren, Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies (AIAS) M.vanKlaveren@uva.nl or the communications officer of the ETUI, Mariya Nikolova mnikolova@etui.org. For previous issues of the Collective bargaining newsletter please visit www.etui.org/publications. You may find further information on the ETUI at www.etui.org, and on the AIAS at www.uva-aias.net. © ETUI aisbl, Brussels 2010. All rights reserved. We encourage the distribution of this newsletter and of the information it contains, for non-commercial purposes and provided the source is credited. The ETUI is not responsible for the content of external internet sites. The ETUI is financially supported by the European Community. The European Community is not responsible for any use made of the information contained in this publication.

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