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# collective bargaining

Issue 11/2011 | December

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

### Unions disappointed over first bargaining round

*December 21, 2011*

The vida and GPA-DJP trade unions have been involved in the first round of bargaining of the private health and social services agreement (BAGS-KV) that covers 90,000 workers. A starting point for wage increases is the rate of inflation in the year to October (3.04%). Although the unions found the negotiations constructive, they were disappointed that the employers' initial offer was well below this level. The next round of bargaining will be on 12 January.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/451>

German: [http://www.vida.at/servlet/Content ...](http://www.vida.at/servlet/Content...)

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## Belgium

### National strike over pensions and lack of consultation

*December 23, 2011*

The three public sector union federations supported the national strike action on Thursday 22 December in protest at the new government's plans for pension reform and its failure to have any consultation with the unions concerning these plans. The changes to pensions will mean working longer for a lower level of benefit as the effective retirement age is increased and the period for calculating pensions is increased from the last five years to the last 10 years in the job. Workers of all ages would be affected if the reforms go through unchanged. On Wednesday rail workers already started wildcat strikes in the south of the country and parts of Brussels. The Belgian rail system as a whole stopped operating from late on Wednesday evening and other public services including buses, trams and the metro, as well as postal deliveries were shut down in the 24-hour strike. Government buildings closed and hospital worked on emergency schemes (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 November 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/451>

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/12/22/belgium-strike-idUSL6E7NL36T20111222>

Dutch: <http://www.acodonline.be/artikels/persbericht.aspx?nr=2974>

French: [http://www.cgsp.be/code/fr/frame910d.html?id\\_page=8](http://www.cgsp.be/code/fr/frame910d.html?id_page=8)

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## Bulgaria

### Unions call off railway strike after agreement

*December 18, 2011*

On Saturday 17 December, the trade unions at the Bulgaria State Railways (BDZ) have called off the three-week nationwide strike against management plans to lay off 2,000 workers and stop some 150 trains from operating as part of austerity measures, while the government refused to sign a new collective agreement. On that day unions and BDZ management announced that they had reached agreement on a new contract. The unions were put under heavy pressure and the situation at the negotiating table was at times quite unclear. On 14 December union leaders said the BDZ management was practising a lockout. On 11 December BDZ had brought into effect a new timetable, which it stated rendered the strike illegal, as arbitration decisions on various issues were valid for the previous timetable but not for the new one (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 September and November 2011).

English: [http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/12/17/bulgaria-strike-railways ...](http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/12/17/bulgaria-strike-railways...)  
[http://www.sofiaecho.com/2011/12/11/1357460 timetable-change-makes-bulgarian ...](http://www.sofiaecho.com/2011/12/11/1357460_timetable-change-makes-bulgarian...)

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## Cyprus

### Number of anti-austerity strikes staged

*December 15, 2011*

In the course of the month a number of anti-austerity strikes took place in various sectors. On 15 December, when the House of Representatives was voting on the government's fiscal consolidation measures, air traffic controllers at the two airports staged a 12-hour strike. On 13 December, workers in the wider public sector including education, who staged a three-hour work stoppage against government austerity measures, demonstrated in the streets of the Nicosia capital.

English: [http://famagusta-gazette.com/cyprus-air-traffic-controllers-to-strike ...](http://famagusta-gazette.com/cyprus-air-traffic-controllers-to-strike...)  
[http://www.cyprus-mail.com/cyprus/students-and-workers-take-opportunity ...](http://www.cyprus-mail.com/cyprus/students-and-workers-take-opportunity...)

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## Czech Republic

### Health minister opposes doctors' claims

*December 30, 2011*

In reaction on the mobilisation of higher pay in the health sector, Health Minister Leoš Heger has argued that a large pay raise for hospital doctors would spark similar demands from other healthcare staff. He called the doctors' demands a "pipe dream." Heger argued that the budget increases in the end would double compared to the increases caused by the doctors' demands. The minister threatened that a state of emergency could be declared by the regional governors if the doctors follow through with their threat to leave. It could be imposed for a maximum of 30 days and would oblige doctors to fulfill their professional duties wherever the authorities dictate (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 October and November 2011).

English: [http://www.ceskapozice.cz/en/news/politics-policy/health-minister-doctors ...](http://www.ceskapozice.cz/en/news/politics-policy/health-minister-doctors...)

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## Denmark

### Pay increase for state workers in line with private sector

*January 6, 2012*

State employees will see their pay increase by 1.3% on 1 April 2012 rather than the 1.7% forecast as part of the two-year agreement negotiated last year. This is part of the public sector pay mechanism that makes adjustments to keep pay in the state sector in line with developments in the private sector. Pay increases in the private sector turned out lower than anticipated.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/453>

Danish: <http://www.oao.dk/index.php>

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## Estonia

### Teachers' union prepares for strike

*December 14, 2011*

On 14 December, the board of the Education Personnel Union decided to begin preparations for a strike after receiving a letter from the chairman of the Parliament's Finance Committee saying that there is no possibility of a pay increase. Such an increase would only come with the reorganisation of the education system. According to Sven Rondik, union president, "That's the same as nothing, because reorganisation is a matter for the distant future." Rondik added that the strike may come as soon as late January or early February. The first steps in the process would be to apply to the State

Conciliator's office for the right to strike, and then poll union members. Support from other unions would also be sought, the union president said.

English: <http://news.err.ee/education/a7924b48-9669-4797-8430-52726f3ba387>

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## Finland

### **Gender pay gap narrowed in industrial sector**

*December 29, 2011*

In the second quarter 2011 the average hourly wage for female workers in the Finnish manufacturing industry was €13.70, against an average €16.14 for males, implying a gender wage gap of 15.1%. In one year the gap has slightly narrowed: in the second quarter of 2010 it was 15.6%, though with 15.0% it was already lower in the fourth quarter of 2006. Across industries, in 2011 the largest gender pay gaps were in the chemical industry (17.4%) and in energy supply (16.5%), the smallest in the paper industry (8.3%), the rubber industry (7.7%), and the paper&board product industry (5.0%). With 14.1%, the gap in the large technology industry was somewhat below average.

English: <http://www.artto.kaapeli.fi/unions/T2011/054>  
<http://www.artto.kaapeli.fi/unions/T2007/k21>

### **Paper unions make gains in new agreement**

*December 5, 2011*

The papermakers' unions, Paperiliitto and Ammattiliitto Pro, have agreed on new 25-month collective agreements with the Finnish Forest Industries Federation (FFIF), taking effect March 2012. On 28 November an accord between the employers' association in the transport, ports, and shipping industry and AKT, the Transport Drivers' and Port Workers' Union, opened the way; yet, though already on 23 November FFIF came to terms with the paper unions, FFIF was unwilling to sign the agreements until they had a guarantee that strikes would not occur in the transportation and export of pulp and paper products. The agreement in the paper sector follows the national framework agreement as of 13 October 2011. In March 2012, Ammattiliitto Pro members will receive a 1.6% across-the-board wage increase, in addition to an average 0.8% increase that will be negotiated locally and is part of a new salary structure. Paperiliitto members will receive a 1.5% increase, with 0.9% to be negotiated locally. In April 2013, the wage increase for Ammattiliitto Pro will be 1.3%, with a 0.6% award won on the new locally-negotiated salary structure. Paperiliitto's 2013 increase will be 1.2%, with 0.7% awarded locally. Another important gain is extra protection for workers when mills close. In effect, employers take on more responsibility for re-training and skill development, as well as workers given the flexibility to take new work in another enterprise and still qualify for redundancy benefits. Also, shop stewards and safety representatives who receive slightly higher pay for their responsibilities will get a 10% supplement on top of that higher pay (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 May and November 2011).

English: [http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4804-Paper-Unions-in-Finland ...](http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4804-Paper-Unions-in-Finland...)  
[http://www.helsinkitimes.fi/htimes/domestic-news/general/17410-transport-industry ...](http://www.helsinkitimes.fi/htimes/domestic-news/general/17410-transport-industry...)

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## France

### **Unions challenge minister on low pay in public sector**

*January 6, 2012*

Seven public service union federations (CFDT, CFTC, CGC, CGT, FSU, Solidaires and UNSA) have written a joint letter to the Public Service Minister on the issue of minimum pay and the purchasing power of public sector workers. The unions are unhappy about the unilateral decision by the ministry to increase the minimum salary in the public sector to bring it in line with the national minimum wage (SMIC), which was as of 1 January 2012 increased by 2.1% (to €1393.82 a month), while maintaining an overall freeze on public sector pay. The unions are calling for a pay increase to the index point on which all public sector salaries are based, along with a further increase to take

account of several years of below-inflation pay rises. They also want to see a general review of the public sector pay system. The FO-Fonctionnaire federation has also criticised the ministry's policy and called for a 5% increase on the public sector pay index point as well as allocating an additional 44 points to all public sector salaries.

English: <http://www.epso.org/cob/453>

French: <http://www.spterritoriaux.cgt.fr/spip.php?article5152>  
<http://www.fo-fonctionnaires.fr/>

### **Agreement ends airport security strike**

*December 27, 2011*

An agreement signed by unions has ended an eleven-day strike by security staff at the Paris Charles de Gaulle and Lyon Saint-Exupéry airports. The presidents of four unions agreed a €1,000 annual bonus for employees, as well as the employer's promise to assess and improve working conditions and an assurance of job security in the event of a change of service provider. Workers had demanded a wage increase of €200 per month as well as better working conditions. The CGT union has not yet signed the deal but has said it will consult its members.

English: <http://connexionfrance.com/france-union-airport-strike-end-deal...> via  
[http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show\\_news.pl?country=France](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=France)

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## **Germany**

### **Regional government agrees to minimum wage in contracting**

*January 6, 2012*

The regional government of North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW) has agreed to implement new procurement regulations that include a requirement on contractors to comply with a minimum wage of €8.62 an hour. The rules also require compliance with collective agreements in the transport sector along with ILO conventions and measures relating to women workers and the environment.

English: <http://www.epso.org/cob/453>

German: [http://www.boeckler.de/wsi-tarifarchiv\\_35834.htm?id=38548](http://www.boeckler.de/wsi-tarifarchiv_35834.htm?id=38548)  
[http://www.boeckler.de/index\\_tariflichermindestlohn.htm#cont\\_17936](http://www.boeckler.de/index_tariflichermindestlohn.htm#cont_17936)

### **Industrial action help win agreement at care home company**

*December 21, 2011*

The ver.di services union has negotiated a new agreement at the Alpenland care home company in Berlin, which will mean minimum increases of 2.5% from 1 January and a lump sum payment of €235. Care assistants and nurses will get higher increases of 5.9% and 8.3%. The negotiations over a new agreement have been going on for over two years and led to a long dispute in 2011 involving protest and strike action (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 July-August and September 2011).

English: <http://www.epso.org/cob/451>

German: <http://www.verdi.de/themen/nachrichten/++co++237d...>

### **First step towards agreement at CFM services company**

*December 21, 2011*

The ver.di services union reports that campaigning and industrial action at the CFM facilities management company have produced some initial improvements for workers and the promise of further negotiations in 2012. The union began negotiating with CFM in May 2011, but has been in dispute with the company since September 2011. The company provides cleaning, catering and other services to the Charité hospitals in Berlin. In January 2012 all low-paid employees will get a minimum wage from the company of €8.50 an hour and employees will also receive a €300 lump

sum payment (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 October 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/451>

German: <http://www.verdi.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/++co++aee9...>

### **Unions secure 2.7% increase at RWE**

*December 5, 2011*

On 29 November the two unions involved, IG BCE and ver.di, reached agreement with the German energy group RWE services union on a 13-month deal for the company's 25,000 employees in Germany. In mid-November, in the run up to the settlement, unions had threatened warning strikes. The new deal provides a 2.7% salary increase from 1 December 2011, and sets out new talks on improving job security and trainee prospects. A binding agreement was reached to open discussions in the second quarter of 2012 on the renewal of the Job Security Agreement, due to expire by the end of 2012, to safeguard jobs in the group.

English: <http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4805-German-IG-BCE-Secures...>

## **Greece**

### **Unions oppose further wage cuts**

*January 5, 2011*

Trade union leaders have indicated that they are unwilling to agree to a reduction in the minimum wage and private sector salaries despite demands from the country's lenders to do so. In mid-December, Prime Minister Lucas Papademos told union leaders that Greece might have to reduce its minimum wage and private sector workers could have to accept severe wage cuts as part of the reforms needed to secure funding without which the country would be likely to go bankrupt by March. In early January, Yiannis Panagopoulos, president of the private sector confederation GSEE, said that the country's competitiveness was not being affected by the level of wages and that his union would not agree to the minimum rate and to the 13th and 14th monthly salaries being reduced or scrapped. He got support from the ranks of SME's. The president of the General Confederation of Greek Small Businesses and Traders (GSEVEE), Dimitris Asimakopoulos, said that he was unwilling to change the terms of collective contracts and would resist an attempt by the government to do so through a change in labour laws (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 February, March, April, May, June, September, October and November 2011).

English: [http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/\\_w\\_articles\\_ws1e1\\_1\\_05/01/2012\\_421260](http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_ws1e1_1_05/01/2012_421260)

### **Report of High Level Mission on conventions considered**

*December 16, 2011*

As reported earlier, in September 2011 High Level Mission of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) visited Greece and had extensive meetings with all relevant actors of the country's labour market. The mission was sent to consider the application of a number of international conventions ratified by Greece in the area of freedom of association, collective bargaining, wages, social security, employment policy, which according to the Greek trade unions were violated. The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations of the ILO considered the report of the Mission on 9 December. The Committee underlined the important role that can be played by the ILO to support government and social partners in the development and implementation of relevant and appropriate reforms to the labour market and its institutions so that these are in conformity with ratified International Labour Standards. The committee further emphasized the need for rapid support to bolster the labour relations system, promote collective bargaining and create a meaningful space for social dialogue which builds upon the traditions of the social partners. The Mission report is publicly accessible (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 June and September 2011).

English: [http://www.ilo.org/global/standards/WCMS\\_170435/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/standards/WCMS_170435/lang--en/index.htm)



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## Hungary

### **State Television officials on hunger strike and fired**

*December 31, 2011*

On 12 December, MTVA (Hungarian State Television) in-house union chief Balázs Navarro Nagy and union vice-president Aranka Szávuly went on hunger strike opposite the channel's headquarters on Saturday 31 December to protest government meddling in news programmes. On Tuesday 27 December, MTVA announced that the two journalists were fired, arguing that the two had breached the media law and the public media code banning all expression of political opinion. According to Navarro Nagy, MTVA tried to fire the two reporters a few weeks ago but failed without the trade unions' support.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent;

[http://www.thenewage.co.za/38932-1020-53-Hungarian\\_TV\\_sacks\\_journos\\_striking ...](http://www.thenewage.co.za/38932-1020-53-Hungarian_TV_sacks_journos_striking...)

### **Government continues talks with doctors**

*December 31, 2011*

The government has outlined a scheme to disaffected junior doctors aimed at improving wages across the medical profession, the head of the Hungarian Residents' Association told reporters. After a meeting lasting over three hours with Miklos Szocska, the state secretary for health affairs, Magor Papp said the government's offer could lead to a genuine improvement in 2012, but he refused to elaborate on its details. "Nothing has been decided yet, but progress has been made to prevent a human resources disaster," Papp said. Doctors dissatisfied over low pay and tight health budgets had started their protest demanding that the salaries for doctors should be three times the national average, targeting a monthly net HUF 200,000 (€642) for junior doctors and HUF 300,000 (€964) for specialists.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent

### **Minimum wages increased**

*December 29, 2011*

By regulation as of 27 December, the government has increased by 1 January 2012 the minimum wage from HUF 78,000 to HUF 92,000 (€296) per month, or by 18%. At the same time the so-called guaranteed wage minimum has been lifted from HUF 94,000 to HUF 108,000 (€347) monthly, or by nearly 15%. This latter minimum is established for those who have at least secondary education or secondary professional education and perform work which requires at least secondary professional education.

English: message of Szilvia Borbély, MARMOL research Budapest

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## Ireland

### **Government reinstates elements of JLC system**

*December 22, 2011*

The government has published legislation to reinstate elements of the Joint Labour Committee (JLC) system of wage setting. The system, which provided legal guarantees of pay and conditions for around 200,000 workers, was found to be unconstitutional earlier in 2011. However, the new system will see a reduction in pay and protections for many workers. Under the new provisions, the number of JLC's will be cut from 13 to six. Previously there were around 300 different pay rates depending on experience and other factors but in future, JLC's can only set a basic adult rate and two increments for experience. Employers can either pay a premium for Sunday work, previously obligatory, or give the worker time off in lieu, which could hit take-home pay. The government insists that workers continue to be protected by their existing employment contracts, but some



employment experts acknowledge that the new system gives fewer guarantees to workers (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 January, February, March, May and July-August 2011).

English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2011/1222/jlc.html>

### **Employer groups seek to leave pay agreement**

*December 14, 2011*

Two major employer groups in the electrical industry have applied to withdraw from a legally binding agreement which sets pay and conditions for up to 10,000 electricians. In October 2011, the Association of Electrical Contractors in Ireland (AECI) executive wrote to the Labour Relations Commission (LRC) not only informing it of its withdrawal from the negotiations on a new registered employment agreement (REA) for the industry, but also that it was “pursuing members’ instructions for the removal of the REA for this industry.” In December, the AECI along with the other main employers’ body, the Electrical Contractors’ Association, jointly wrote to the Labour Court giving six months’ notice of their intention to apply for cancellation of the REA. If both are allowed to withdraw, the REA will essentially become defunct. The Technical Electrical and Engineering Union (TEEU) has warned that any attempt by an employer to unilaterally cut pay will be met by industrial resistance.

English: <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/electrical-employer-groups-seek ...>

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## **Italy**

### **Further strike action planned in private waste sector**

*January 6, 2012*

The FP-CGIL public services federation along with the three other federations in the private waste sector (FIT-CISL, UIL TRASPORTI and FIADDEL) is planning two further days of strike action on 16 and 17 January, following the one-day strike on 29 November last year. A central demand in the dispute is maintenance of the sector agreement, which is under threat as a result of demands to liberalise the industry. Another issue is safety at work in the sector. The November strike had a high turnout, with the support of an estimated 80% of workers. A meeting with employers on 1 December did not resolve the dispute (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 November 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/453>; <http://www.epsu.org/cob/450#a8234>

Italian: <http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/20823>  
<http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/20503>

### **Unitary strike of metalworkers' unions**

*December 24, 2011*

The three metalworkers' unions, FIOM-CGIL, FIM-CISL and UILM, on 12 December organised a successful three-hour strike. The unions were protesting against social injustice and attacks on workers' rights, and demanded an effective industrial policy to safeguard jobs. The metalworkers' strike was the kick-off to a week of mobilisation called by the CGIL, CISL and UIL union confederations against the new government's economic manoeuvres. Graphical workers went on strike on 13 December, public transport workers on 15 and 16 December, banking and insurance sector employees on 16 December, the civil service on 19 December, and telecom workers on 22 December.

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

### **Public sector unions pleased by support for joint strike action**

*December 21, 2011*

The public sector union federations FP-CGIL, CISL-FP, UIL-FPA and UIL-PA organized a joint strike action on 19 December in protest at the latest austerity measures. The federations were very

pleased at the level of support, taking account of the fact that they had only one week to organize the action. They are calling for negotiations with the unions over national and decentralized bargaining as well as over issues such as the threat to privatize local services.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/451>

Italian:

<http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/20732> [http://www.fp.cisl.it/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2640...](http://www.fp.cisl.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2640...)

### **Fiat and most unions sign one-year agreement**

*December 13, 2011*

Fiat SpA has signed a one-year collective agreement with most metalworkers' unions representing its 86,000-strong Italian workforce, but not with FIOM-CGIL. The agreement will go into effect in January 2012. The unions signing the deal agreed to increased shifts and shorter breaks in exchange for a € 20 million investment plan. The UILM union said that workers will get an increase in their base salary and receive 10% more pay for overtime work, and will also receive a €600 production bonus in 2012. FIOM-CGIL, the largest union at Fiat, has claimed the deal curtails worker rights. Its about 10,000 members will nonetheless fall under the agreement (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 4 January, October and November 2011).

English: <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2011-12-13/fiat-signs-one-year-labor...> via [http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show\\_news.pl?country=Italy](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Italy)

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## **Netherlands**

### **Renewed strike action of cleaners**

*January 6, 2012*

Less than two years after their major strike, on Monday 2 January cleaners, supported by the FNV Bondgenoten union, started a national campaign with strikes on ten railway stations. In the next days, major principals like banks, universities and casinos were targeted. Negotiations over a new collective agreement for 150,000 cleaners stalled in December, and by 1 January the former agreement expired. The union asks for a 5% pay increase, employers' paying for the first days of illness, more training facilities, and less work pressure. The employers' association offered a 2% pay hike and 1% contribution for training and pension goals. FNV Bondgenoten in particular demands more respect from employers and principals, and compliance with the training paragraph in the former agreement. Instead of the planned 30,000 cleaners, only 3,000 have received training, according to Bondgenoten negotiator Ron Meyer. On 5 January, 2,500 cleaners demonstrated in front of Philips' headquarters in Amsterdam (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 February, March and April 2010).

English: <http://www.rnw.nl/english/bulletin/dutch-cleaners-take-national-strike-action>

Dutch: *De Volkskrant*, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 January 2011;

[http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/nieuws/acties\\_en\\_campagnes/gewoon\\_goed...](http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/nieuws/acties_en_campagnes/gewoon_goed...)

### **Employers' organisations want flexible collective agreements**

*December 29, 2011*

For the upcoming collective bargaining round, concerning the renewal of about 200 of all 700 collective agreements, the main three employers' associations have planned a tough stand on a number of issues. According to confidential recommendations of the VNO-NCW employers' organisation to its members, supported by AUVN and MKB, they want minimal wage increases, and if any, these should not count for building pension rights: a major breach with existing practice. The employers also want larger possibilities for flexible staffing and wage hikes adapted to economic conditions, with for example hikes only payable at the end of the agreed period depending on company performance. Both the largest union confederation, FNV, and the MHP union confederation have reacted negatively, arguing that the employers' position will undermine

purchasing power and will only aggravate the economic crisis.

Dutch: *De Volkskrant*, 28 and 29 December 2011; *NRC-Handelsblad*, 28 December 2011

### **Local government negotiations reopened**

*December 23, 2011*

On Wednesday 21 December, negotiations on a collective agreement covering local government have restarted. Earlier, informal talks of the FNV Abvakabo and CNV Publieke Zaak public service unions with VNG, the employers' organisation in the municipal sector, suggested some openings for fruitful bargaining. The last collective agreement expired in June 2011 and the unions have been organizing protest actions over several months to keep the pressure on the employers. The central issues for the unions are maintaining purchasing power, job security and quality of work (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 March, May and November 2011).

Dutch: [http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/nieuws/nieuws/onderhandelingen-cao ...](http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/nieuws/nieuws/onderhandelingen-cao...)

### **Unions continue to support workers in sheltered employment**

*December 21, 2011*

Over 6,500 people took part in a major event in Den Bosch on 10 December that brought together trade unionists, political activists, unemployed, and workers in the sheltered employment sector. The anti-austerity event focused in particular on the government plans to cut 70,000 of the 100,000 jobs in the sheltered employment sector. If the government plans are approved by parliament this would mean many disabled workers being employed on rates below the statutory minimum wage (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 May and November 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/451>

Dutch: [http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/nieuws/archief/281576/385409/armoede ...](http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/nieuws/archief/281576/385409/armoede...)

## **Norway**

### **Solid wage increase for engineers**

*January 2, 2012*

NITO, the Norwegian Society of Engineers and Technologists, has for 2011 secured a major wage increase for those of its approximately 66,000 members who figured in the list of members in both 2011 and 2010. Its members only negotiate locally. In 2011, the average wage increase was 5.1% in the private sector, while wages for NITO members rose by 6.1%. In comparison, the Norwegian inflation forecast for 2011 is 1.5%. This solid increase of real wages is partly a consequence of the country's shortage of engineers.

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

## **Portugal**

### **Further protest action planned by public service union**

*December 21, 2011*

The STAL public service union is planning to maintain its protest and campaign activities into the new year following the general strike against austerity measures on 24 November 2011. In particular, the union wants to organize a month of protest in February in opposition to public sector cuts and attacks on public sector workers pay and conditions and trade union rights (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 November 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/451>

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

## **Union confederation launches protest week**

*December 12, 2011*

On Monday 12 December, the major union confederation CGTP launched a week of protest against the consequences of the government's austerity policies. The decision by Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho's conservative government to lengthen the legal working hours by half an hour daily was "a declaration of war to workers", CGTP leader Manuel Carvalho da Silva said. "We want to send a strong signal to the government," he added. A growing number of critics say that the austerity programme undermines economic growth and increases poverty.

English: <http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/business/news/article...>

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## Romania

### **President passes wage and pension freeze bill**

*December 18, 2011*

On Saturday 17 December president Traian Basescu promulgated a law that provides that public sector wages and pensions will be frozen in 2012, according to a news agency. In the week before, the Constitutional Court rejected a complaint filed by the opposition against the law. The law was passed by Parliament (Chamber of Deputies) on 8 November and soon after, President Basescu said in an interview that regardless of what the Constitutional Court would decide on the project, pensions and salaries would not be increased anyway, because "there is no money." However, the president of the National Union for Romania Progress (UNPR), a member of the ruling coalition, hinted that salaries and pensions could still be increased in 2012 (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 November 2011).

English: <http://www.nineoclock.ro/president-passes-pension-salary-freeze-bill/>

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## Slovakia

### **Doctors keep strike alert in place**

*December 17, 2011*

On Monday 12 December, the government passed the measures prepared by the parliamentary health committee concerning doctors' salaries and the amendments the Labour Code. LOZ, the doctors' trade union, rejected the changes prepared by the government as incomplete and again declared a strike alert. On 15 December, LOZ vice-chair Peter Visolajský said that it was premature to talk about calling off the strike alert, as the legislation passed in parliament had not yet come into effect. LOZ representatives on Thursday again called on President Ivan Gašparovič and Prime Minister Iveta Radičová to dismiss Health Minister Ivan Uhliarík. The reason, according to Visolajský, were some of Uhliarík's recent statements, which he called "nonsensical" (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 October and November 2011).

English: [http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/44819/10/doctors\\_declare\\_strike\\_alert...](http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/44819/10/doctors_declare_strike_alert...)  
[http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/44851/10/doctors\\_keep\\_strike\\_alert\\_in\\_place...](http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/44851/10/doctors_keep_strike_alert_in_place...)

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## Spain

### **Public sector unions criticize further pay freeze**

*January 6, 2012*

The FSC-CCOO and FSP-UGT public service federations have criticised the centre-right government for imposing a further pay freeze in the public sector in 2012. The previous socialist government had imposed an average 5% cut in 2010 followed by a pay freeze in 2011. Unions estimate that the combined effect of these measures is that public sector workers will have seen the purchasing power

of their salaries fall by 13% in real terms over three years. They have also criticised the freeze on recruitment, particularly at a time of such high unemployment and above all huge unemployment among younger people.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/453>

Spanish: <http://www.fsc.ccoo.es/webfsc/menu.do?Inicio:292440>

[http://www.fspugt.es/FSPUGT rechaza las medidas de recorte que ...](http://www.fspugt.es/FSPUGT_rechaza_las_medidas_de_recorte_que...)

### **Freeze of minimum wage announced**

*December 29, 2011*

The new Partido Popular government has written the union confederations announcing that it will freeze the yearly statutory minimum wage to 14 monthly payments of €641.40, according to the El Pais newspaper. It will be the first time that the minimum salary will not rise in a year since its inception in 1980. Angry union leaders emphasize that the Spanish minimum wage is already set relatively low.

English: <http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=n267398>

### **Unions organise regional anti-austerity demonstrations**

*December 21, 2011*

National and regional trade union federations have joined to protest against cuts to services and public sector jobs at regional level. Thousands took part in a demonstration in Barcelona where the regional government is planning cuts to pay and changes to working conditions. A major protest in Pamplona highlighted the threat to public services and where 1,130 jobs have already been cut or are being cut with more under threat.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/451>

Spanish: [http://www.fspugt.es/Miles de manifestantes salen a la calle ...](http://www.fspugt.es/Miles_de_manifestantes_salen_a_la_calle...)

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## **Sweden**

### **Local government union signs agreement covering technical workers**

*January 6, 2012*

The Kommunal local government union has signed a new collective agreement with the EIO employers' organisation. The agreement will cover workers employed by EIO companies that provide technical and property services to local and regional authorities. The agreement provides for adult rates of pay at the age of 18 with a minimum pay rate of SEK 16,600 (€1,875) a month, rising to SEK 18,000 (€2,030) in the second year plus any negotiated increase. The agreement includes details on skills development, linking skill levels to pay.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/453>

Swedish: [http://www.kommunal.se/Kommunal/Nyheter/2012/Nytt ...](http://www.kommunal.se/Kommunal/Nyheter/2012/Nytt...)

### **White-collar unions submit claims for 2012**

*January 6, 2011*

The Vision white-collar union has submitted its pay and conditions claim to the KFS employers' organisation. The claim covers Vision's 7,400 members who work for private companies providing services in local government, energy and water. As well as a general pay increase the union is calling for temporary workers to get permanent contracts if they have been on temporary contracts for two years. It also wants employees to have more control over their working time as well as additional leave for those with only 25 days' leave. Earlier, Vision and the SSR white-collar and graduates trade union set out their demands for the forthcoming negotiations covering 140,000 workers in local and regional government. The unions are looking for increases in real wages for all members with a minimum outcome of 3.6%; measures to address the structural differences in pay between female

and male-dominated occupations; better conditions and greater security for temporary workers; and improved conditions for young academics, including more holidays for all aged under 40 years.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/453>; <http://www.epsu.org/cob/451>

Swedish: [http://vision.se/Opinion/Pressmeddelande/2011/Battre-villkor-for ...](http://vision.se/Opinion/Pressmeddelande/2011/Battre-villkor-for...)

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## Switzerland

### Strike action of two groups brings improvements

*December 21, 2011*

Laboratory workers and cleaners have both managed to secure improved pay following separate strike action against their employer, the Geneva University Hospital (HUG). Both groups of workers felt that they had lost out when pay structures had been introduced or revised in the past and both will now have better opportunities to move up the pay structure. A joint committee will also look at staffing and career development issues for both groups of workers. Employers have also withdrawn their threats of disciplinary action against striking activists (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 November 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/451>

German: [http://www.vpod.ch/aktuell/nachrichten/ansicht/article/genfer-unispital ...](http://www.vpod.ch/aktuell/nachrichten/ansicht/article/genfer-unispital...)

French: [http://www.ssp-vpod.ch/actualites/nouvelles/ansicht/article/fin-des ...](http://www.ssp-vpod.ch/actualites/nouvelles/ansicht/article/fin-des...)

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## United Kingdom

### Living wage campaign boosts workers' pay

*January 6, 2012*

A report by Queen Mary College, University of London estimates that low paid workers have seen their pay increase by UKP 33 million (€40 million ) since 2010 as a result of a successful campaign to get employers sign up to a living wage. A number of major private and public sector employers in London have agreed to apply a UKP8.30 (€10.00) an hour minimum wage instead of the current UKP6.08 (€7.40) National Minimum Wage rate for adults. The researchers claim that a growing number of employers is recognising the benefits of this in terms of increased productivity and lower turnover rates. Nevertheless, employers' association CBI sticks to the viewpoint that a widespread living wage policy in an economic downturn would be irresponsible.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/453>

[http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/the-penny-finally-drops ...](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/the-penny-finally-drops...)

### Two unions agree on further talks on local government pensions

*January 6, 2012*

The main municipal workers' unions, UNISON and GMB, have agreed to undertake negotiations on changes to the local government pension scheme following commitments from the local government employers and the government. This follows the public sector-wide strike action on pensions on 30 November 2011 and confusion over the government position just before Christmas. The two unions now think there is a reasonable framework for negotiations and that the feared significant short-term increase in employee contribution rates will not now take place. The Unite trade union has rejected proposals on the health sector (NHS) pension scheme. Earlier the main civil service union, PCS, had also rejected the latest government offer which it says will mean higher contributions, less protection against inflation and a retirement age rising to 68. Also, NASUWT and NUT, the two largest teachers' unions, have demanded further talks with the government after refusing to sign up to pension reforms (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 April, May, June, July-August, September, October and November 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/451>; <http://www.epsu.org/cob/453>

[http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease\\_view.asp?id=2559](http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=2559)



[http://www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/latest\\_news/local\\_government\\_pensions ...](http://www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/latest_news/local_government_pensions...)  
[http://www.unitetheunion.org/news\\_events/latest\\_news/unite\\_unanimously ...](http://www.unitetheunion.org/news_events/latest_news/unite_unanimously...)  
[http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/jan/06/teaching-unions-refuse-sign ...](http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/jan/06/teaching-unions-refuse-sign...)

## **Strike paralyses London underground system**

*December 26, 2012*

On Monday 26 December, London's underground train service was virtually halted by a strike over pay, disrupting the start of the post-Christmas sales and some scheduled football matches. Most lines were shut or operating a vastly reduced service, but shoppers used cars, buses and taxis to reach retail outlets. Members of the London Underground train drivers' union ASLEF voted overwhelmingly to hold a 24-hour strike on 26 December, a public holiday in the UK known as Boxing Day, and on three more dates in the coming weeks. The union demanded additional pay and leave for staff who were due to work on Boxing Day.

English: [http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM ...](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM...)

## **Bargaining remains under pressure**

*December 22, 2012*

According to the Unite Bargaining Brief of December 2011, the signs for collective bargaining remain gloomy. One is starting to see the anticipated reduction in inflation rates, but this will likely be a slow process. Bargaining in the public sector is again under political attack both through salary capping and the prospect of decentralising pay structures. The Brief refers to some very positive bargaining results in the automotive sector over the last couple of months. Indeed, new agreements at Jaguar and Land Rover, valid from 1 November 2011, saw standard pay increases of 6.1%, whereas according to Incomes Data Services (IDS) inflation in the fourth quarter (RPI index) stood at an annual rate of 5.3%, with the prospect of falling to 3.2% in the fourth quarter of 2012.

English: Unite Bargaining Brief, via EUCOBAN network of EMF / EFFAT / ETUF-TCL / EMCEF

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