

# collective bargaining

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This newsletter presents up-to-date information on collective bargaining developments across Europe since February 2008. It aims to facilitate information exchange between trade unions and to support the work of the ETUC's collective bargaining committee.



AMSTERDAM INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED LABOUR STUDIES  
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## **Austria**

### **Union hopes legislation will bring equality further**

*March 6, 2011*

The VIDA services union thinks that the equal treatment law that took effect on 1 March will help progress towards pay equality. The law requires employers to provide details of men's and women's pay, including various additions and allowances. The law initially applies to employers with over 1,000 employees but will be extended to smaller employers over the next three years. The equality report will be confidential within the company and either provided to the works council or, where there is no works council, to the whole workforce.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/409>

German: [http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=S03 ...](http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=S03...)

## **Belgium**

### **20,000 support European trade union protest in Brussels**

*March 6, 2011*

At the occasion of the European Summit of 24/25 March focusing on economic governance in the EU, on Tuesday 24 March trade union demonstrations and rallies took place in Brussels, as part of ETUC's European Day of Action. The Belgian union confederations, FGTB/ABVV and CSC/ACV, contributed 20,000 militants that made the trade union opposition to the European economic governance proposal which was to be examined during the Summit, clearly visible and loudly heard. Supported by their executives, members of FGTB/ABVV unions blocked the main motorways leading into the Belgian capital.

English: <http://www.etuc.org/a/8505>; <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en> .

Dutch: [http://www.abvv.be/web/guest/news-nl/-/article/184540/&p\\_1\\_id=10187](http://www.abvv.be/web/guest/news-nl/-/article/184540/&p_1_id=10187)

French: [http://www.abvv.be/web/guest/news-fr/-/article/184493/&p\\_1\\_id=10624](http://www.abvv.be/web/guest/news-fr/-/article/184493/&p_1_id=10624)

### **Unions secure additional agreement in health sector**

*March 6, 2011*

Despite lengthy opposition of some employers' federations, the trade unions representing workers in the federal health sector have negotiated a "mini-agreement" that provides ?50 million of extra

funding for 2011. This will go towards creating 400 jobs and improving pay and conditions. The jobs will ensure that vacant posts are filled and will be targeted at parts of the sector that did not benefit from the employment measures in the 2005-2010 agreement. The extra funds will also ensure that more workers will get supplementary payments for working after 19.00 as well as going towards the second pillar pension scheme. In due course, the agreement will be integrated in the sectoral collective agreement.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/409>

Dutch: [http://www.bbtik.org/nieuws/Pages/gezondheidszorgsocialeakkoord ...](http://www.bbtik.org/nieuws/Pages/gezondheidszorgsocialeakkoord...)

French: [http://www.setca.org/News/Pages/secteurfederauxsanteminiaccordsocial ...](http://www.setca.org/News/Pages/secteurfederauxsanteminiaccordsocial...)

### **Two confederations organize national day of action**

*March 5, 2011*

The two union confederations that did not sign the 2011-2012 national framework agreement for the private sector, the socialist FGTB/ABVV and the liberal CGSLB/ACLVB, both organised a day of action on 4 March. FGTB/ABVV chairman Rudy de Leeuw on his blog reiterated earlier arguments for his confederation's refusal. He emphasized that the efforts towards a new European stability pact and the Merkel initiatives in that direction did not help either to accept the IPA (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 3 December 2010 and Year 4 January and February 2011).

Dutch: [http://www.abvv.be/web/guest/files-nl/-/file/162499/&p\\_1\\_id=10184](http://www.abvv.be/web/guest/files-nl/-/file/162499/&p_1_id=10184)

Bulgaria

### **Agreement reached, railway strike called off**

*March 11, 2011*

The Bulgarian state rail company (BDZ) strike announced for 10 and 11 March has been called off after unions and managers from BDZ and the National Railway Infrastructure Company (NRIC) signed an agreement late on 10 March. It was agreed that no redundancies will be made among the current operative staff. Also, any staff trimming would be carried out only through collective agreement, implying union consent. Additionally, any redundancies in the administration would be subject to further negotiation. Shedding 30% of the 6,000 railway staff was one of the conditions of a loan by the IMF and the European Union to the Bulgarian government. Earlier, a number of meetings between union representatives, BDZ management and government officials did not lead to a solution (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 3 December 2010; Year 4 January and February 2011).

English: [http://www.sofiaecho.com/2011/03/11/1057656\\_bdz-train-strike ...](http://www.sofiaecho.com/2011/03/11/1057656_bdz-train-strike...)

Cyprus

### **Migration major challenge for unions**

*March 8, 2011*

The trade union movement is taking up growing migration as a major problem and a big challenge. Currently, 30% of the workforce consists of migrants, of which large numbers have entered the island illegally; 55% of the coast line is not controlled by the legal, internationally recognised government of the Republic of Cyprus. Heavy employer exploitation of migrants is going on, and the extremely low wages of migrants drive many Cypriots into unemployment - currently up to 7% as against 3% three years ago. Moreover, uncontrolled migration may well give rise to xenophobic and in some extreme cases racist attitudes.

English: Tasos Kakoullis, union correspondent

Czech Republic

### **Unions plan campaign against government reforms**

*March 21, 2011*

The umbrella trade union confederation (CMKOS) plans a campaign against the centre-right government's reforms, but it would not release details yet, CMKOS chairman Jaroslav Zavadil told reporters. He added that the unions would decide on possible more radical steps after a tripartite meeting of representatives of the government, trade unions and employers to be held on 21 April and to discuss the draft pension, health care and tax reforms as well as changes in the Labour Code. One day earlier, Independent Unions Association (ASO) head Bohumir Dufek mentioned the possibility of a general strike in protest against the tax reform proposed by the Finance Ministry. English: <http://praguemonitor.com/2011/03/22/unions-plan-campaign-against-govt-reforms>

### **Doctors win substantial pay increase**

*March 6, 2011*

Doctors are to get pay rises worth between CZK 5,000 (? 206) and CZK 8,000 (? 330) monthly as part of a deal that will increase their salaries to around 1.5 times the national average salary by 2013. A major national campaign had seen around 3,800 hospital doctors threaten to resign on 1 March 2011 if the government did not make concessions on pay. The increase is about 11-16% of the current doctor's gross monthly pay including pay for overtime and extra shifts (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 4 February 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/409>

[http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/czech-govt-approves-higher-base-pay ...](http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/czech-govt-approves-higher-base-pay...)

Denmark

### **Two-year agreement in municipal and regional government**

*March 6, 2011*

After some difficult bargaining the negotiations covering workers in municipal and regional government have ended and union members now have the chance to vote on the deals. Similar to the state sector agreement agreed one month earlier, there will be no pay increase in 2011 (this relates to links with private sector pay developments) but the pay rise in 2012 will be 2.65%. One disappointment for the unions was not getting any job security provisions at a time when hospitals are cutting jobs. However, there are some pay equity elements in the municipal deal along with increases targeted at the lower paid and funds for skills development. Yet, the FOA union has put progress in equal pay into perspective by concluding that progress could take over 500 years if future agreements follow the one just negotiated. The union argues that parliament needs to contribute to the process and pass legislation and agree funding that would ensure equal pay for work of equal value across the public sector (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 4 February 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/409>; <http://www.epsu.org/cob/411>

Danish: [http://www.foa.dk/Forbund/Presse?newsid={74 ...](http://www.foa.dk/Forbund/Presse?newsid={74...)

[http://www.foa.dk/Forbund/Presse?newsid={11B539A6-E622-4701-AB83-BC3A10C9E5DE} }](http://www.foa.dk/Forbund/Presse?newsid={11B539A6-E622-4701-AB83-BC3A10C9E5DE})

Estonia

### **Power plant workers to form strike committee**

*March 22, 2011*

The workers in the two power plants of the national power company Eesti Energia in the Northeastern town of Narva, organised in the Narva Energia Union, have taken further steps as to realize set a 25% pay rise goal, as it seems that management will not give in. In their 18 March meeting, they decided to form a strike committee. The committee will draw up a plan by April 15 for a full-scale strike. The union chairman, Vladimir Aleksejev, argued: "According to our information, even the most highly skilled workers at the plant such as energy unit operators earn less

than a janitor in Finland. This is not acceptable. The company is making huge profits and doesn't want to share them with its employees" (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 February 2011).

English: <http://news.err.ee/economy/43c1ab77-3101-4388-9584-8d9a18bdd6f0>;  
<http://www.epsu.org/cob/411>

Finland

### **Paper sector wage bargaining diverts between unions**

*March 29, 2011*

Second-year salary adjustments for some 20,000 white- and blue-collar pulp and paper workers ran separate courses over the past 12 days, with the Pro union (representing 4,000 salaried professionals) issuing a strike notice on 23 March against one company. A two-week strike will begin on 6 April at all UPM operations if official government mediation beginning today fails. Meanwhile, Paperiliitto, representing 16,000 workers at some 60 paper operations, agreed to terms with the Finnish Forest Industries Federation (FFIF) on 16 March. Workers will receive a guaranteed 2.5%, or ?0.41-per-hour increase. The union also granted other adjustments in the collective agreement. Pro gave the strike warning because FFIF refused to put forward a similar national pay offer as the one given to and accepted by Paperiliitto.

English: [http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4342-Finnish-Paper-Sector ...](http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4342-Finnish-Paper-Sector...)

### **Union reports slow progress on equal pay**

*March 22, 2011*

A review of progress by the JHL public and welfare sector union towards closing the gender pay gap reveals that reforming pay structures has had some impact in this respect but mainly for higher paid workers. Progress towards the common goal of government and social partners set, as to bring down the gender pay gap from 19.1% in 2006 to 15% in 2015, is stagnating as the pay gap in 2009 was still 18.2%. The union review points to the heavily gendered segmentation of the Finnish labour market. It also shows that equality plans have been positive in terms of work-life balance and issues like discrimination and harassment, but have not made much difference in terms of pay. The key challenge set by the union is to be able to compare pay across different collective agreements.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/411>

<http://www.jhl.fi/portal/en/news/archive/?bid=931>

### **Strike in construction sector averted**

*March 10, 2011*

Strike action scheduled to start in the construction sector on Thursday 10 March was cancelled after parties to the dispute approved a compromise proposal of the National Conciliator Essi Lonka. Part of the deal is aimed at battling the grey economy in the building trade. The deal will now go for final approval by the boards of the Finnish Construction Trade Union and the Confederation of Finnish Construction Industries RT. The agreement put forward by the National Conciliator calls for an immediate 2.55% wage rise. An overtime ban in the sector has also been called off. The Construction Trade Union had initially demanded a 3.5% wage rise, whereas the employers' first offer was 1.6%. Union leader Matti Harjuniemi told a press agency that he believes the new contract will be approved.

English: [http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/news/2011/03/strike\\_averted\\_in\\_construction ...](http://www.yle.fi/uutiset/news/2011/03/strike_averted_in_construction...)

France

### **One-day strike likely at Carrefour stores**

*March 29, 2011*

Carrefour's French stores will likely be hit by a one-day strike on 9 April when workers are due to

stage a protest on salary levels, job cuts and working conditions. Within the framework of statutory annual collective bargaining, Carrefour has offered a 1% wage increase in salaries this month and a second 1% rise in October 2011. The French retailer, world's second largest, has invited unions to sign a draft agreement on its proposals by 31 March but they have already made it clear that it falls well short of their demands. The CGT union has walked away from the negotiations while a ballot held by Force Ouvrière, the union accounting for almost 50% of Carrefour's unionised staff, revealed overwhelming support for the call to industrial action on 9 April, according to a union spokesman.

English: [http://www.just-food.com/news/carrefour-workers-back-strike\\_id114751.aspx](http://www.just-food.com/news/carrefour-workers-back-strike_id114751.aspx)

### **Unions plan further action on social services workers' pay**

*March 22, 2011*

Nine trade union organisations are working together to improve pay and conditions of the predominantly female workforce in a range of social service occupations. The unions believe that demonstrations held on 16 March were crucial in getting the CSFPT committee responsible for local and regional government to withdraw plans to maintain a range of social service occupations in the B pay grade. Unions are calling for proper recognition of workers' qualifications in the sector and for jobs to be moved up to the A salary grade. A further day of action is planned for 7 April.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/411>

French: <http://www.cfdt.fr/rewrite/article/32736/secteur-professionnel> .

<http://www.spterritoriaux.cgt.fr/spip.php?article4631>

<http://www.fo-publics-sante.org/home>

### **Strike leads to improved wage settlement at SmurfitKappa**

*February 28, 2011*

Major strike activity put effective pressure on European paper and packaging giant SmurfitKappa to move up on a 2011 wage offer for 2,500 corrugated packaging workers. On 23 February, the CGT-FILPAC union successfully staged a one-day strike in 18 SmurfitKappa plants all over France. The agreement subsequently reached by the end of February calls for a 2.35% wage increase spread across 2011. SmurfitKappa had offered only 1.4% prior to the strike, with half of that - 0.7% -- first due on 1 April. CGT-FILPAC won a one percent on 1 March, with the remainder due sooner this year than the company's now discarded proposal dates. The union also won an added increase for lower-salaried workers, effective 1 October 2011, and posted an increase in holiday pay as well.

English: <http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4270-24-Hour-Paper-Strike> .

Germany

### **Train drivers strike again**

*March 28, 2011*

On Monday 28 March the GDL train drivers' trade union launched another warning strike on the train network run by six regional and privately-owned companies (Abellio, Arriva, Benex, Keolis, Veolia and Hessische Landesbahn), demanding that all rail workers be paid equally. Earlier GDL-led strikes took place on 22 February and in mid-March. This strike hit traffic in Berlin and in the eastern federal states Brandenburg and Saxony. While negotiations with national rail provider Deutsche Bahn were said to be making progress over the weekend, the union has been unhappy with efforts by private rail companies (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 January 2011).

English: <http://www.thelocal.de/national/20110328-34005.html>

### **Deal agreed for regional government workers**

*March 22, 2011*

A new collective agreement covering 585,000 employees in regional government has been approved

by collective bargaining committee of the ver.di services union. The union negotiators were backed by warning strikes at the end of February and the beginning of March in Düsseldorf, Saarbrücken and Frankfurt, in which around 15,000 regional government employees were involved. There will be a lump sum payment of ?360 (?120 for trainees) plus a pay increase of 1.5% from 1 April this year. Ver.di estimates this to be worth around 2.3% overall. There will be a further pay increase on 1 January 2012, consisting of 1.9% plus ?17 (?6 for trainees) that ver.di calculates as an overall increase of 2.55%. The union also believes that a new pay structure, coming into effect from 1 January 2012, will mean that workers moving more rapidly to the next grade and that around two-thirds of employees should benefit directly from that change. Ver.di President Frank Bsirske called the result "quite acceptable, because as it stands now the real wages can be ensured". Yet, Bsirske regretted that the federal states are sticking to their refusal of integrating improvements negotiated for teachers in the collective scales. Teachers, organized in the Education and Science Workers' Union (GEW), took a quite active part in the warning strikes (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 3 December 2010 and Year 4 January 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/411>; <http://www.epsu.org/cob/409>

<http://www.thelocal.de/money/20110311-33653.html>

[http://www.ei-ie.org/news/news\\_details/1690](http://www.ei-ie.org/news/news_details/1690)

German: [http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id= ...](http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id=...)

### **Court backs right to strike against church employers again**

*March 22, 2011*

The regional labour court in Hamburg has rejected the claim by the church-run Agaplesion hospital that strike action by its employees was illegal. It was about six strikes including 120 employees. This is the second time that a regional labour court has ruled in favour of ver.di union members who have taken strike action over pay and conditions. Ver.di is now calling on church employers to recognize that they are in a normal employment relationship with their workers and so should negotiate collective agreements with the union (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 3 February, April and June 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/411>

German: [http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id= ...](http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id=...)

### **Warning strikes organized at health company**

*March 22, 2011*

On 10 and 11 March, the ver.di services union organized warning strikes in 12 clinics belonging to the Helios group. The aim of the strikes was to show the strength of feeling of workers in the lead up to the third round of bargaining with the company, which has 17,000 employees across Germany and is part of the Fresenius health conglomerate. Ver.di had become frustrated by the employer's failure to come up with a pay offer and is demanding a range of measures in a package worth around 7%. This includes increases in pay, including payments to trainees, along with higher rates for on-call and night work.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/411>

German: [http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id= ...](http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id=...)

Greece

### **Strikes continue in various sectors**

*March 25, 2011*

After the large national strike and demonstration, strike in protest over the austerity measures taken and planned by the current government have continued in various sectors. For instance, on Thursday 17 March journalists and public transport workers embarked on a 24-hour strike. The strike led to a news blackout and extensive traffic disruptions. Television channels aired pre-recorded material,

radio stations played back-to-back music and newspapers were not published on the next Friday (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 September, October, November and December 2010; Year 4 January and February 2011).

English: [http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/business/news/article\\_16 ...](http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/business/news/article_16 ...)

Hungary

### **Warning strike at Malév**

*March 29, 2011*

On 23 March, pilots and flight attendants of the Hungarian airline company Malév staged a two-hour warning strike to put pressure on an agreement on more favourable rest hours. Tamás Óvári, president of the Hungarian Airline Pilots' Association (Hunalpa), reiterated that the strike was not about higher wages, but only to reach an agreement on rest hours. The union demand is that the minimum time of rest for the crew be extended by two hours relative to the minimum under European Union rules (after 12 hours of work).

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent;

[http://www.caboodle.hu/nc/news/news\\_archive/single\\_page/article/11 ...](http://www.caboodle.hu/nc/news/news_archive/single_page/article/11 ...)

### **Hankook Tyre averts strike with pay rise**

*March 29, 2011*

The formation of a strike committee by the Federation of Chemical, Energy, and General Workers' Unions (VDSZ) at Hankook Tyre Magyarország Kft. prompted the Korean-based company to increase wage rates by an average 8%. The threat was because management had failed to raise salaries to compensate for tax changes that went into effect 1 January 2011. Some 1,700 workers at the 1,800 workforce will receive an average 8% pay hike retroactive to 1 January 2011. In addition, workers will receive HUF 20,000 (€73.40) yearly in non-wage benefits. Earlier, the National Interest Conciliation Council had recommended 4-6% increases to offset the tax change.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent;

[http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news\\_and\\_events/news\\_centre/index.cfm/id/27 ...](http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/index.cfm/id/27 ...)

Ireland

### **Court session delivers arguments for maintaining ERO's**

*March 24, 2011*

The conditions which led some 60 years ago to the establishment of a system for setting minimum pay and conditions for 190,000 vulnerable low-paid workers still exist, an industrial relations expert has told the Commercial Court. Dr Michelle O'Sullivan of the University of Limerick said only 6% of workers in the catering sector are unionized and the joint labour committee (JLC) system provided a negotiating forum for workers who would otherwise not have one. Workers in the catering sector have the lowest average earnings of any sector, she added. She had concluded from a study of the JLC system that it benefited not only vulnerable workers but also employers as it created a level playing field and guarded against undercutting of wages among employers and erosion of standards in areas such as the security industry. The system also provided for minimum working conditions tailored to particular industries and not available in other legislation, she said. She agreed aspects of the system required modernisation. Dr O'Sullivan was giving evidence in the action by fast-food operators challenging the constitutionality of the laws under which minimum pay and conditions are set under employment regulation orders (ERO's) proposed by JLCs for approval by the Labour Court. Unions are concerned about drastic economic measures that could include abolition of ERO's. They are currently under review but if abolished for example cleaners may see their minimum hourly rate cut from €9.50 to €7.65 -- the new, lowered statutory minimum wage rate (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 4 January and February 2011).

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2011/0324> .  
<http://www.siptu.ie/PressRoom/NewsReleases/2011/Name,12141,en.html>  
<http://www.epsu.org/cob/409>

### **Finance Minister rules out revision of odd pay cut**

*March 24, 2011*

Minister for Finance Michael Noonan has ruled out reversing a 5% pay cut for around 17,000 low-paid school secretaries and non-teaching staff imposed at the beginning of 2011. Around 500 secretaries belonging to the IMPACT trade union have already voted to take industrial action over the pay cut. They point out that their pay is being cut despite the fact that they do not enjoy any of the benefits of public servants, including pensions - and that many are earning little more than the minimum wage. The row arose after the Department of Education and Skills instructed all schools and VECs to impose pay cuts of 5% on up to 17,000 low-paid non-teaching staff, to match last year's public service pay cuts. However, an anomaly arose for school secretaries hired after 1990 - as they are employed by individual schools and VECs, and are paid out of a grant to school boards. English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2011/0324/secretaries.html>

Italy

### **Strike at EON Italy results in government commitments**

*March 26, 2011*

On 25 March, the three main union federations organised a four-hour national stoppage in the EON energy company. The strike was in protest at the company's failure to discuss its long-term strategy and ensure, what the unions argue, would be adequate investments to protect employment in the company. According to union information about 80% of the workforce took part in the stoppage. On the same day as the strike, a union delegation met with representatives of the Ministry of Economic Development, and won two important commitments: first, there will be a ministerial forum set up to deal with the current dispute, and secondly, the government will establish a permanent forum for consultation on the entire electricity sector to monitor and find solutions to the problems facing Italy, giving effect to the joint notice clauses included in recently signed new contracts.

Italian: [http://www.filctemcgil.it/index.php?option=com\\_flexi ...](http://www.filctemcgil.it/index.php?option=com_flexi...)

### **Public service unions follow different tracks**

*March 22, 2011*

The FP-CGIL public service federation has called a public sector-wide strike for 25 March calling for renegotiation of collective agreements and measures to tackle precarious employment. This is in response to the government's decision to freeze agreements for three years. The FP-CISL and UIL federations are not taking part in the strike as they have signed an agreement with the government which they argue protects pay and conditions. Earlier in March, on Friday 11, a nationwide walkout of public servants brought large parts of the countries to a standstill. The strike included workers in mass transit, airports, utilities, universities, local and provincial governments, social services, tax offices, clinics, ferries and even in Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's office, it was reported. Only schools were exempt.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/409>

[http://www.upi.com/Top\\_News/World-News/2011/03/12/Public-worker-strike ...](http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2011/03/12/Public-worker-strike...)

Italian: <http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/16770>

[http://www.fp.cisl.it/fp\\_nuovo/](http://www.fp.cisl.it/fp_nuovo/)

Lithuania

### **Unions join in protest over austerity measures**

*March 22, 2011*

The four main Lithuanian trade union centres - the Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation, the Lithuanian Labour Federation, the Lithuanian Trade Union "Solidarumas" and the Lithuanian Journalists' Union - organized a national demonstration in Vilnius on 19 March calling for a higher minimum wage, more progressive taxes, and increases to pensions. In the meeting union leaders encouraged the government to increase the monthly minimum wage up to LTL 1,000 (about ? 290), referring to the higher statutory minimum wage in Latvia; the current minimum wage in Lithuania is LTL 800 (about ? 232). Over 2,500 people joined the march including a delegation of 50 from the Lithuanian Energy Workers' Trade Union Federation.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/411>; <http://www.ldf.lt/index.php?cid=3499>

Netherlands

### **Supermarket negotiations still lingering on**

*March 29, 2011*

After the third bargaining round, negotiations on a new supermarket collective agreement for the supermarkets (240,000 employed) are still lingering on. According to unionists, the employer delegation refused to discuss age discrimination and the future of the youth subminimum wage and also refused to talk about non-compliance with the current agreement, two issues that remain crucial for the unions.

Dutch: [http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/nieuws/331677\\_enquete\\_supermarkt\\_cao/](http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/nieuws/331677_enquete_supermarkt_cao/)

### **Further conflict possible in municipal sector**

*March 23, 2011*

Local government unions FNV Abvakabo and CNV Publieke Zaak are concerned that municipal employers will go back on their agreement (covering 180,000 public servants) to pay a 1% salary increase in 2011. The rise was dependent on union commitments to negotiate on delivering efficiency savings, reducing bureaucracy and modernizing the collective agreement. The unions are putting forward a range of measures and argue that the employers should take a longer term view rather than just focusing on the need to ensure that short-term efficiency savings justify the 1% pay increase. Despite the tensions, in the 22 March bargaining round both parties decided to continue negotiations.

English : <http://www.epsu.org/cob/411>

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

[http://www.mijnvakbond.nl/Overleg-modernisering-CAO-Gemeenten ...](http://www.mijnvakbond.nl/Overleg-modernisering-CAO-Gemeenten...)

### **Dockers at lashing firms on strike**

*February 14, 2011*

Dockers in the port of Rotterdam have been taking industrial action over pay and conditions, following an employer decision to cancel collective bargaining negotiations. Led by the FNV Bondgenoten union the workers who lash and secure cargo have been on strike since 8 March. On 12, 13 and 14 March, they held meetings in front of the port's Delta terminal and Uniport, where they distributed leaflets to workers employed in Hutchison Port Holdings' ECT terminal and the APM terminal owned by the AP Moller-Maersk Group. These companies are customers of lashing and securing service companies ILS and Matrans Group. The workers on strike are in particular protesting over Matrans Group's plans to pay lashers employed after 2006 less than colleagues who were employed earlier; meanwhile, ILS is requesting lashers to work more flexibly.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/5783>

Dutch: [http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/nieuws/nieuwsarchief/2011/maart ...](http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/nieuws/nieuwsarchief/2011/maart...)

Norway

### **New agreement on municipal services**

*March 22, 2011*

The municipal workers' unions Fagforbundet, YS Kommune and Delta have signed a new agreement that focuses on working with the employers to improve local services. The agreement, a follow-up to the initiative on quality municipal services run from 2005, includes several elements including action on sickness absence, recruitment and competence, providing full-time work and improving the image of local government. The agreement comes shortly after scandals of low pay and poor working conditions in the care and waste sectors have been exposed, with temporary agency workers being exploited rather than services provided by directly employed workers on decent pay and conditions.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/411>

Norwegian: <http://www.fagbladet.no/nyheter/article5527239.ece>

<http://www.ys.no/kunder/ys/cms.nsf/%28> ; <http://www.delta.no/Nyheter/9356.cms>

### **National wage negotiations begin**

*March 21, 2011*

The annual round of pay-related negotiations between the LO union confederation and NHO, the national employers' organization, has begun, with both sides hoping to reach a negotiated agreement before the 1 April deadline (Afterwards, the state arbitrators would be required to intervene).

Norwegian media have predicted a relatively calm negotiation period, although there are still issues that could lead to the involvement of state arbitration. This year's negotiations are midway the 2010-2012 period, meaning that only the issue of wages is officially on the table. LO President Roar Flåthen has expressed that the unions' priorities during the negotiations would be the low-paid and the issue of equal wages - meaning a particular focus on low-paid women. Regarding temporary agency work, following revelations about questionable working practices of temp agency Adecco, Flåthen stated that permanent employment should remain the norm and the use of temp work the exception.

English: <http://www.newsinenglish.no/2011/03/21/national-wage-negotiations> .

<http://theforeigner.no/pages/news/labour-inspectorate-scrutinizes-staffing-industry/>

Poland

### **Nurses in hunger strike in protest over contracts**

*March 24, 2011*

The nurses union in Poland (OZZPiP) has sent a letter to the civil rights ombudsman demanding intervention in a dispute where five nurses are on hunger strike and occupying the gallery in the parliament building in Warsaw. "A hunger strike and occupation of Parliament in going on in the middle of Europe and the Ombudsman will not speak on this issue," OZZPiP president Dorota Gardias told Polish Radio. The nurses are protesting a new draft law on medical services, which introduces labour contracts for staff instead of permanent forms of employment. The union is objecting to the contracts, which they say lead to exploitation of nurses who have fewer rights, longer working hours and less quality time for patients. Union president Gardias argued the government cannot introduce such basic changes to the country's health care system without prior dialogue with health professionals and patients.

English: [http://www.thenews.pl/national/artykul151911\\_hunger-striking-nurses](http://www.thenews.pl/national/artykul151911_hunger-striking-nurses) . via

[http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show\\_news.pl?country=Poland](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Poland)

### **Solidarity union prepares wave of strikes**

*March 17, 2011*

The Solidarity trade union has declared a state of strike readiness to signal its concern over fast increasing prices and the situation of Polish families, which the union says is deteriorating dramatically. One hundred union delegates from all over the country, who met in Lodz to discuss

the country's social and economic situation, adopted a resolution on staging demonstrations in provincial capitals most likely in May. A nationwide protest action is to be held in Warsaw. Solidarity claims that the government is not realising its constitutional duty to protect the poorest people sufficiently well. "We will begin the European presidency on 1 July. We want to show Europe that it is not as nice in Poland as Prime Minister Tusk suggests", says the union's National Committee leader Piotr Duda.

English: [http://www.thenews.pl/national/artykul151445\\_solidarity-trade-union-prepares ...](http://www.thenews.pl/national/artykul151445_solidarity-trade-union-prepares...) via [http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show\\_news.pl?country=Poland](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Poland)

Portugal

### **National demonstration against austerity measures**

*March 22, 2011*

Thousands of people joined the national protest on the Avenida da Liberdade in Lisbon on 19 March, organised by the CGTP-IN union confederation. The demonstration brought together trade unions from both public and private sectors. The unions will follow this up 1 April, National Youth Day, with action focusing in particular on youth unemployment, and 2 April, focusing on education.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/411>; <http://www.epsu.org/cob/409>

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

Romania

### **National protests against changes in Labour Code**

*March 22, 2011*

The main trade union confederations organized a demonstration in Bucharest on 16 March in protest at changes to the labour code prepared by the government, in consultation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the employers. The changes include: no collective agreements at national level, cross-sectoral or sectoral; greater possibilities to use temporary contracts; discretionary lay-offs, decided unilaterally by the employer, without prior notice; and pay and conditions set unilaterally by employers. The confederations are collecting signatures for a general strike that could be organized in April-May this year. They have also announced that they are going to send complaints to the European Commission and the European Court of Human Rights (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 February 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/411>

Romanian: <http://www.cartel-alfa.ro/default.asp?nod=20&info=47921>

Slovakia

### **Union campaign for seven-hour work day**

*March 14, 2011*

The 28 affiliates of the Confederation of Trade Unions of Slovakia (KOZ) have started creating an offensive answer to the efforts of the centre-right government coalition to impose draconic labour laws reforms. KOZ and its trade unions have launched a petition drive to change the eight-hour work day to one of seven and a 25-hour work week, with no reduction in salaries. The campaign already has the necessary 350,000 signatures needed to put an initiative up for vote under Slovakia's referendum law. But the unions will continue collecting signatures, in part, to galvanise support against Prime Minister Iveta Radicova's labour code revisions to cut worker protections.

English: <http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4317-Slovak-Trade-Unions> .

Slovenia

### **Union confederation protests new form of precarious work**

*March 18, 2011*

The Association of Free Trade Union of Slovenia (AFTUS) is protesting against the government's attempts to introduce a new form of precarious work, substantially reducing workers' rights, and calls internationally for protest letters in solidarity. The Slovenian government is proposing new legislation that would allow the unemployed, students and pensioners up to 60 hours per week and 720 hours per year of employment but with less rights, such as lower pay, no reimbursement of work-related costs (meals during work, travel to and from work, business trips), no remuneration for sick leave or parental leave, no holiday allowance, no severance pay and no annual holidays. The AFTUS comments, "We are certain that enforcement of this form of work will increase precarious work, decrease employment for indefinite time (which is the rule today) or fixed-term employment (which should be an exception but is becoming a rule), increase social exclusion and poverty, all in the name of better competitiveness."

English: <http://www.imfmetal.org/index.cfm?c=26005&l=2>

Spain

### **Airport workers call off major strike**

*March 26, 2011*

Airport workers have called off 22 days of strikes which threatened to cause major disruption over the Easter holidays and into the summer. Union members voted to cancel the strike after have received guarantees over job security and conditions. The strikes were called over concerns about the part-privatisation of national airport operator Aena. Union leaders said about 70% of their more than 10,000 members voted to call off the industrial action.

English: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-12868729>

### **Unions mobilise 50,000 in protest at regional cuts**

*March 6, 2011*

The FS-CCOO and FSP-UGT public service federations are continuing their fight against austerity policies around the country. On 1 March they organized a demonstration of 50,000 people in protest at the regional government's budget plans. The unions are refusing to sign an agreement with the regional government and are calling for the resignation of the president. They argue that the cuts will not just affect public employees but will also threaten local services.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/409>

Sweden

### **Union report reveals large gender pay gap**

*March 22, 2011*

The SKTF white-collar local government union has produced a new report demonstrating how workers doing the same job are on very different salaries, depending on whether they work in a sector dominated by women or men. Taking the example of an economist, the union shows that on average the monthly salary for this occupation is SEK 29,500 (? 3,310) in the municipal sector (dominated by women) but SEK 41,000 (? 4,600) in the private sector (dominated by men). The union argues that on a life-time basis massive differences result between female and male earnings. SKTF is calling for a major initiative, involving employers, trade unions and the government, to address the problem.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/411>

Swedish: [http://www.sktf.se/Templates/Page\\_\\_\\_\\_40592.aspx](http://www.sktf.se/Templates/Page____40592.aspx)

United Kingdom

### **In London, 500,000 protest public sector cuts**

*March 28, 2011*

Upwards of a half million people marched through London on Saturday 26 March in a turnout that the organizing trade unions said exceeded their highest predictions. The manifestation was called "The March for the Alternative: Cuts are not the Cure" and was direct push-back to the deep and rapid public sector cuts in the pipeline by the ruling Tory/Liberal Democrat coalition. The mass manifestation validated the resistance against the government agenda. At the rally, TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said: "We will fight these savage cuts and we will not let them destroy services, jobs, and lives." Unite the Union General Secretary Len McCluskey said there is "palpable anger in the country. If the government was brave enough, it would tackle the tax avoidance that robs the British taxpayer." Unison General Secretary Dave Prentis, whose public-sector union chartered 500 coaches to get people to London, told the assembled at Hyde Park that he wants the government "to feel the fear and anger of people who have come here today from every part of the UK to vent their frustration and to stand up for a fairer future." One week before the demonstration a survey by public service unions Unison and PCS revealed that thousands of public servants have already to tighten their belts. The unions surveyed over 10,000 public sector workers with over 70% saying they have already cut back on their food shopping while spending on a range of other items, including healthcare, has also been reduced.

English: [http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4335-500-000-Protest-Con-Dem ...](http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4335-500-000-Protest-Con-Dem...)

[http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease\\_view.asp?id=2236](http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=2236)

[http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease\\_view.asp?id=2229](http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=2229)

### **Civil servants vote on collective action as cuts spread**

*March 22, 2011*

PCS, the civil service union, reports that around a third of its members in different government departments are currently voting on industrial action in response to a range of threats to jobs and working conditions as pressure mounts from public sector spending cuts. The union may also ballot for national industrial action over cuts and proposed changes to public sector pensions. This could be co-ordinated with other public sector unions. About 80,000 PCS members are already being balloted, notably in the HM Revenue and Customs and the Home Office.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/411>

[http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news\\_and\\_events/news\\_centre/index.cfm/id ...](http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/index.cfm/id...)

### **Wage settlements fail to match price increases**

*March 3, 2011*

Pay settlement levels continued to rise in January 2011, almost entirely due to private sector deals, according to data from the Labour Research Department (LRD). Yet, with a three-monthly median (mid-point) for the November to January period at 3%, pay increases still did not match price inflation. This was 4.0% as measured by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI). Other pay analysts even came to lower pay increase estimates. Industrial Relations Services (IRS) concludes to a three-month median increase to end January 2011 of 2.0%, Incomes Data Services (IDS) to a three-month median to end December of 2.2%. According to LRD, recent deals at the 3% level include those for media workers at ITV, for administrative and headquarter staff at train operator Southern and at the Lincolnshire-based steel services provider Tube City IMS.

English: Labour Research Department, *Workplace Report*, No. 33, February 2011

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