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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
UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM



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Austria

No outcome in public sector negotiations

November 28, 2011

In October, the public sector unions GÖD and GDG-KMSFB had initially submitted a 4.65% pay claim for 2012. The amount is based on compensation for inflation (2.95%) plus half the overall rate of economic growth (3.45%). The unions say they are determined to secure an increase in purchasing power for all public sector workers. In the third negotiation round on 25 November, the government delegation offered a 2.5% increase, which was rejected by the unions as being totally insufficient. Nevertheless, on 28 November the unions moderated their claim to 3.9%.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/446>

German: [http://www.gdg-kmsfb.at/servlet ...](http://www.gdg-kmsfb.at/servlet...)

Belgium

Union confederations dissatisfied with budget accord

November 28, 2011

Although there has been reached, after 1.5 year of talks, a budget accord between the six potential coalition partners at federal political level, the three major union confederations are dissatisfied with the outcomes. Both president Marc Leemans of ACV/CSC and his colleague Rudy de Leeuw of ABVV/FGTB state that the package is not oriented at all towards growth, that the taxation burden for the common people will go up drastically and that the division of the burden is anyway quite unequal. Both chairpersons emphasize that unemployment benefits, possibilities for early retreat and bridge pension arrangements will be heavily hit. Jointly with the third confederation, ACLVB/CGSLB, they have planned a major demonstration on 2 December in Brussels. Adaptation of the accord towards union demands will be a central demand.

Dutch: <http://www.demorgen.be/dm/nl/5036/Wetstraat/article/detail/1354091/2011/11/27...>

... http://www.abvv.be/web/guest/actions-nl/-/action/467385/&p_1_id=10188

http://www.acv-online.be/Images/Pamflet%20betoging%202-12-NL_tcm9-258558.pdf

French: http://www.csc-en-ligne.be/Images/Pamflet%20betoging%202-12-FR_tcm22-258533.pdf

Federal bargaining in non-profit sector focuses on jobs and purchasing power

November 11, 2011

Unions in the non-profit sector, covering a range of health and social services, are starting negotiations over a new federal agreement with their main focus on protecting purchasing power and increasing employment. There has been a review of occupations in the sector at federal level and on the basis of these changes in job descriptions, unions are looking for a new pay structure and arrangements that will provide progression over a career and will take account of length of service. In order to tackle the increase in workload and stress, particularly in health sector jobs, the unions are looking for an increase in employment that will also allow employees to adjust their hours and secure a better work-life balance.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/446>

Dutch: <http://www.bbtik.org/nieuws/Pages/SocialProfitnutijdvoorfederaaleakkoorden.aspx>

French: <http://www.setca.org/News/Pages/Non-Marchandaccordsfederauxlemomentestvenu.aspx>

Bulgaria

Strike disrupts train traffic

November 27, 2011

From 24 November on, services of the Bulgaria State Railways (BDZ) are disrupted by a strike, that was already announced by the unions in September. High-level negotiations to avert the strike failed. The BDZ management stuck to its plan to lay off 2,000 workers and stop some 150 trains

from operating as part of austerity measures, and the government refused to sign a new collective agreement with the railway unions. By 27 November, there was no sign of a solution in sight. BDZ management said that a total of about 800 of the railways' 27,000 employees were on strike, but had to admit that on 26 November over 60% of the scheduled trains had been halted. The BTA news agency stated that on that day not a single passenger train left the major train stations, including that of Sofia. Petar Bunev, chairman of the Trade Union of Bulgarian Railway Workers, confirmed that all employees of the National Rail Infrastructure Company and of BDZ at Sofia Central Railway Station were on strike (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 September 2011).

English: http://www.sofiaecho.com/2011/11/26/1213255_bulgarian-railway-strike-heads-into-fourth-day;
http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=134293

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Cyprus

Finance minister aims at public sector wage freeze

November 24, 2011

Cyprus will almost certainly need a bailout from its eurozone partners if tougher spending cuts and tax hikes are not taken right now, the country's Finance Minister warned on Friday 18 November. Kikis Kazamias says his ministry is looking to freeze government workers' salaries for two years and save a total €355 million as part of an approach to prevent the country from joining Greece, Ireland and Portugal in seeking a bailout. He also wants to introduce a scaled surtax on private sector salaries above €2,500 monthly and an additional levy of 0.5% on domestic company turnover. The newly proposed measures are on top of a €840 million austerity package.

English: <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2011/nov/24/eu-cyprus-financial-crisis/> via
http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Cyprus

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Czech Republic

Government asked to fulfill commitments

November 14, 2011

Several trade unions have asked the government to fulfill its commitments towards wages for health professionals and to keep the promise made after the doctors' mobilization of last year, as to raise wages for medical staff across the board by 10%. The unions conclude that the government is back tracking, but say they will not accept anything less than 10%. The Czech Trade Union of Health Sector and Social Care of the Czech Republic (OSZSP), part of the Z3 coalition, asks for the raise to be part of the annual budget decree, but concerning the health sector that has not been published yet. The Z3 coalition has announced to continue its campaign with the slogan: "WE STAY - we want promises completed!" (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 October 2011).

English: <http://epsu.org/a/8140>

Czech: http://epsu.org/IMG/pdf/PR_2011_11_14_health_Czech_Z3_tiskova_zprava.pdf

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Denmark

Union challenges bonus scheme

November 11, 2011

The FOA public services union is critical of an initiative to reduce sickness absence by the Billund local authority in the Southern Denmark region. The council is paying an attendance bonus and this may be taken up by other municipalities. FOA argues that if sickness absence seems too high, then this may raise questions about management responses and about understanding the causes of absence. The union makes the point that employees should not be forced to go to work if they are ill, particularly when they are working with the young, the sick and the elderly who would be more

vulnerable to any contagious illnesses.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/446>

Czech: <http://www.foa.dk/Forbund/Presse?newsid={64E0509C-F9C9-402D-B47D-4C356270CBA7}>

Estonia

First real wage growth in 2.5 years

November 25, 2011

Having declined for 11 straight quarters, real wages finally began showing growth in the third quarter 2011, even though the average monthly salary decreased compared to the previous quarter. Real wages grew by a modest 1.2% in the third quarter compared to the same period in 2010, according to Statistics Estonia. Most analysts had predicted a rise in purchasing power, but pay adjusted for inflation was still at a 1% decline in the second quarter. Hourly wages not adjusted for inflation increased by 4.7% compared to 6.6% for the average monthly salary since last year.

English: <http://www.news.err.ee/economy/996fa495-262f-4785-9b5c-ed764b4e1e0f>

Finland

Final agreements in pulp and paper industry

November 29, 2011

The papermakers' unions, Paperiliitto and Ammattiliitto Pro, have agreed on new 25-month collective industry-wide agreements with the Finnish Forest Industries Federation (FFIF) that take effect in March 2012. That was assured on Monday 28 November, after the employers' association in the transport, ports, and shipping industry signed an accord with AKT, the Transport Drivers' and Port Workers' Union. Even though the FFIF came to terms with the two papermakers' unions separately on Wednesday 23 November, the FFIF was unwilling to sign the agreement until they had a guarantee that strikes would not occur in the transportation and export of pulp and paper products. The pulp and paper sector agreement follows the national framework agreement as signed by the union confederations on 13 October. 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. Essentially, this new salary structure was recognized by employers through strike actions in April/May 2011 by Ammattiliitto Pro, representing about 4,000 white collar staff at some 50 paper enterprises. 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 (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 May 2011).

English: <http://www.icem.org/en/19-Pulp-Paper/4794-Finnish-Pulp-Paper-Unions-Make-Gains...>

New agreements for municipal and state sectors

November 23, 2011

After the national framework agreement was signed by the union confederations on 13 October, on Wednesday 23 November negotiations both for municipal and for state employees were completed. The agreement for 350,000 employees in the municipal sector takes effect on 1 January 2012 and expires on 28 February 2014. On 1 January 2012 all municipal employees will get a pay rise of 1.7%; the remaining 0.7% will be used for financing the qualitative changes agreed, including, among other things, six days of paid paternity leave and the scrapping of regulations that have discriminated against temporary employees with regard to their annual leave rights. A €150 lump sum will be paid in January 2012. The latter 13 months provides all employees with a pay rise of 1.46% on 1 February 2013, whereas further pay rise which will average 0.6% is to be negotiated at local level. The agreement for the state employees also follows the pattern outlined in the framework agreement. The agreement takes effect on 1 March 2012 and expires on 31 March 2014. Wages and salaries of all

employees covered by this second agreement will be raised on 1 March 2012 by 1.9%, with a minimum of € 39.50 per month. A €150 lump sum will be paid in March 2012. A further pay rise of 1.4% kicks in on 1 April 2013. On 1 March 2012 and on 1 March 2013 wages and salaries will be raised by on average 0.5% on the basis of the outcome of local negotiations (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 July-August, September and October 2011).

English: <http://www.jhl.fi/portal/en/news/archive/?bid=1581&y=2011>
<http://www.jhl.fi/portal/en/news/archive/?bid=1577&y=2011>
<http://www.jhl.fi/portal/en/news/archive/?bid=1492&y=2011>

Last agreement reached in technology industry

November 6, 2011

On 1 November, 10,000 members of YTN, the Federation of Professional and Managerial Staff, went on strike in 40 metal and electronics companies, with the threat of expansion on 7 November to 25,000 members in 40 additional companies, including Nokia, if no agreement would be reached before that date. On 6 November YTN accepted the proposal of the State Negotiator, ending the strike. The agreement between YTN and the technology industry employers is similar to the one obtained earlier by the Metalworkers' Union and Pro. Wages will be raised retroactively from the beginning of October by 1,6%, plus a local share of 0,8%, paid to all if no other agreement is reached locally. At the beginning of 2012 a lump sum of € 150 will be paid, and in November 2012 there will be a general rise of 1,3% with a 0,6% local share increase (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 September and October 2011).

English: message on EUCOBAN network of EMF / EFFAT / ETUF-TCL / EMCEF;
<http://www.imfmetal.org/index.cfm?c=28083&l=2>

France

Strike in energy sector

November 17, 2011

For Thursday 17 November, the CGT energy union called for a one-day strike in gas and electricity production and distribution, including facilities of the major energy companies EDF and GDF SUEZ. Thus, the union continues its campaign for wage increases in the energy sector that it started up in September 2011.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/11/14/idUSL5E7ME1MC20111114> via
http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=France
French: <http://www.daily-bourse.fr/salaires-la-cgt-energie-annonce-un-preavis-de-grev...>

Water workers make gains after strike

November 11, 2011

By the end of October, a seven-days' strike action of members of the CGT, UNSA and FO trade unions to support their claim for a €250 monthly bonus for all sewage workers in the Paris region (working for the SIAAP regional body) resulted in gains. During the strike, the SIAAP management resorted to intimidation and sent letters directly to all strikers giving them an ultimatum to end the strike and withdraw pickets, or face legal action and arrest. The unions decided to return to work having accepted a monthly bonus of €75 for those mainly involved in maintaining sewage works and systems (€50 or €25 for other technicians). The unions remain united and will discuss further action to secure their €250 target.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/446>
French: http://www.spterritoriaux.cgt.fr/IMG/pdf/UNE_LUTTE_EXEMPLAIRE_AU_SIAAP.pdf

Germany

Agreement in steel industry after warning strikes

November 22, 2011

A number of warning strikes as part of the IG Metall union campaign for a new collective agreement for 75,000 employed in the steel industry in two bargaining regions, North Rhine-Westphalia and Lower Saxony and Bremen, resulted in a bargaining result that has been called satisfactorily by union officers. From 10 to 15 November, about 20,000 steel workers stopped production temporarily at ThyssenKrupp Nirosta, ArcelorMittal, Vallourec & Mannesmann, Europipe and the Foundry of Friedrich-Wilhelm. The outcome is a wage increase of 3.8%, also for apprentices, as of 1 December 2011, in a collective agreement valid from 1 November 2011 to 28 February 2013, thus 16 months. Agreed is also the guarantee of unlimited employment for apprentices after completion of their apprenticeships. The agreement on part-time arrangements for elderly workers will be continued (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 October 2011).

English : message of IG Metall for EUCOBAN network of EMF / EFFAT / ETUF-TCL / EMCEF;

<http://www.imfmetal.org/index.cfm?c=28143&l=2>

German: <http://www.igmetall-kueste.de/www/news.php?id=736&portalid=1>

Parliamentary majority in favour of legal minimum wage

November 14, 2011

On 14 November, at the annual congress of the governing Christian Democrat (CDU) party in Leipzig Chancellor Angela Merkel has got an overwhelming vote in favour of a binding minimum wage in sectors which do not have such a wage determined by collective bargaining. Nearly 1,000 delegates voted in favour of the proposal, and only four were against. However, the orientation on a level of €7 per hour, that the “social wing” of the CDU had planned earlier, was not made explicit. Coalition partner FDP remains vehemently opposed against a general minimum wage. In an interview CDU Minister for Labour and Social Affairs, Ursula von der Leyen, promised to take initiatives towards the implementation of the general minimum directly after the party congress, including talks with the FDP. Anyway, with the progressive parties in favour it is clear that the general minimum wage is backed by a large majority in the Bundestag, the federal parliament (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 October 2011).

German: <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/o.1518.797776.00.html>

<http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/o.1518.797240.00.html>

Church employees demonstrate over right to strike

November 11, 2011

Over 1,500 church workers joined a demonstration in Magdeburg on 4 November organized by services union ver.di over the right to strike. Church organisations are major employers in the country's health and social services sector but are opposed to granting normal employment rights to their workers. The synod (parliament) of the Evangelical Church met that day and reaffirmed its rule banning employees from taking strike action. The ver.di union regretted the decision and said that it would only serve to sharpen the conflict between the union and church employers.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/446>

German: <http://www.streikrecht-ist-grundrecht.de/node/195>

Ten days of action at EON

November 11, 2011

Between 27 October and 7 November workers at the EON energy company were involved in a range of actions – demonstrations and workplace meetings – in protest at the company's restructuring plans. On 7 November, over 4,000 EON employees demonstrated in Hannover. As many as 11,000 jobs worldwide, including 6,500 in Germany, could be cut and the company is not ruling out

compulsory redundancies. The ver.di services union is not only critical of the plans but also of the failure of the company to provide any detail of the job cuts and where they will fall (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 October 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/446>

German: <https://www.verdi.de/themen/arbeit/++co++fcfc45a2-09f5-11e1-58ac-0019b9e321cd>

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Greece

General strike to suspend public services

November 30, 2011

On Thursday 1 December, public services are to be paralyzed as thousands of workers will walk off the job to protest the ongoing austerity drive, in the seventh general strike in 2011. Tax offices, courts and schools will shut down, hospitals will operate on emergency staff and customs officials will walk off the job. The national rail network will suspend operations all day as will the Proastiakos suburban railway service. Ferries too will remain moored in port as seamen join the 24-hour walkout. The main demonstration, in the centre of Athens, is organized by the General Confederation of Greek Labor (GSEE) and theADEDY civil servants' union (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 February, March, April, May, June, September and October 2011).

English: http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/w_articles_wsite1_8513_29/11/2011_416987

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Hungary

Unions present ILO criticism of draft labour code

November 29, 2011

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has criticised several points of the government's draft labour code, leaders of the six Hungarian trade union confederations which had requested ILO's position told a press conference in Budapest. The ILO has also suggested in a memorandum that the government should start a constructive dialogue on the reform of the country's labour law, the unionists stated. Following a review of the draft as it stood on 26 September, the ILO expressed criticism of the planned restriction of the freedom of expression and assembly, and suggested that protection against dismissal should be extended for at least three months after child birth leave, according to the unions. The labour organisation also criticised the draft for failing to include the principle of granting the same remuneration for the same job, MSZOSZ head Peter Pataky said at the press conference. Earlier in November, unions in the LIGA confederation staged roadblock demonstrations at around hundred locations across the country in protest of the draft labour code. LIGA head Istvan Gasko at a press conference repeatedly voiced the unions' protest against what they call the elimination of the labour code and of the National Interest Co-ordination Council.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent

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Ireland

Thousands rally against austerity plans

November 28, 2011

On Sunday 27 November, thousands took part in rally in Dublin city centre against government austerity plans. Organisers called on the government to reverse its policy of austerity ahead of what is expected to be another tough Budget next month. Addressing the rally, ICTU union confederation president Eugene McGlone said the government could make the necessary budget adjustments through taxes on high-earners, property, capital and corporate income, without the need for more spending cuts and attacks on social welfare. The march was backed by the ICTU, SIPTU, UNITE and Mandate (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 April, June, July-August and September 2011).

English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2011/1126/demonstration.html>

VAT increase is to hit poor hardest, union says

November 20, 2011

An imminent VAT hike will hit poorer people three times as hard as the better paid, Unite, one of the country's largest trade unions, has warned. Unite has demanded Finance Minister Michael Noonan to reconsider his position over the planned increase to 23%. Jimmy Kelly, Unite regional secretary, dismissed claims by the minister that the 2% jump would not hurt the less well off as much as others. "This is purely and simply wrong," he said, pointing to research by the leading think tank ESRI which showed the impact of a 23% VAT rate. The union leader said the VAT hike would further stem consumer spending next year and lead to more business cutbacks, closures and job losses.

English: [http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/republic-of-ireland/vat-hike ...](http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/local-national/republic-of-ireland/vat-hike...)
via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Ireland

Italy

Tensions grow at Fiat

November 23, 2011

Tensions between the FIOM-CGIL metalworkers' union and the management of Fiat Auto have gone up again. On Monday 21 November, Fiat sent a letter to the unions involved, stating it would scrap all labour contracts at factories in Italy after December 31. In turn, FIOM is determined to take action against Fiat's plans to extend to all its plants the employment deals enacted earlier at Pomigliano d'Arco. FIOM's secretary general Maurizio Landini said that "FIAT has already been found guilty in court of enacting anti-union policies and we plan to take the legal route on this issue. We will also implement action, leveraging nationwide solidarity." The union called for a two-hour stoppage to protest plans by Fiat to scrap its existing labour contracts and could call a wider general strike, the union's secretary general added (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 3 July-August, September and December 2010; Year 4 January and October 2011).

English: <http://www.inautonews.com/fiom-union-threatens-fiat-with-general-strike>

Unions consider strike action over safety and job insecurity

November 11, 2011

The four main trade unions in the private waste sector, including FP-CGIL, are planning strike action over a new agreement as well as over safety issues in the industry. There has been a week of action from 6 to 13 November that involved an overtime ban and other action, while a day of strike action will be followed by two more if there is no response to the unions' demands for measures to deal with safety and job insecurity in the sector. Safety is a major concern following deaths of workers in recent months.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/446>

Italian: <http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/20060>

Netherlands

Unions demand improved offer at Delta Lloyd

November 29, 2011

Until recently, the Delta Lloyd insurance company had a rather good reputation with the unions, and its current economic position is strong. However, recently the Delta Lloyd management only proposed worsening pay and conditions for the new collective agreement, thus infuriating employees and their unions. According to FNV Bondgenoten union negotiator Bob Bolte working conditions deteriorated after the firm got a Stock Exchange listing two years ago. After a number of savings

rounds, work pressure has been lifted to often unacceptable levels, employees say. On 24 November, the three unions involved (besides Bondgenoten also the CNV Dienstenbond and De Unie) have sent a letter to the Delta Lloyd management, asking them to come up with an improved offer.

Dutch:

http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/mijnbranche/bedrijven/delta_lloyd/nieuws/425475_woede_onbegrip...

Minister rejects part-time unemployment scheme

November 29, 2011

The Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, Henk Kamp, has rejected the re-introduction of the state part-time unemployment scheme for the time being, as a means to avoid a steep rise of unemployment through topping up the wages of workers working reduced hours. The former part-time unemployment scheme was in operation for just over two years and faded out by July 2011. According to Kamp, the scheme is only relevant in a real crisis, which would not actually be the case in the Netherlands. Moreover, a spokeswoman of the minister suggested that other schemes might be more appropriate. In the course of November the minister has become under pressure of the two large employers' associations, a number of single employers, and the largest trade union confederation, FNV, all arguing in favour of the re-introduction of the scheme. FNV chairwoman Agnes Jongerius said that in particular in the metal and construction industries it is highly important to keep skilled and experienced workers on board, and pointed at the positive experience with the scheme during the 2009-2010 crisis.

Dutch : *De Volkskrant*, 24 and 29 November 2011;

<http://nos.nl/artikel/315954-kamp-nog-geen-deeltijdww.html>

Workers in sheltered employment demonstrate

November 11, 2011

Demonstrations in the cities of Tilburg and Arnhem have been organized on 8 and 10 November by workers in sheltered employment, in support of their claims for a new collective agreement but also in protest at the massive cutbacks across the sector. The local authority employers' federation, VNG, wants to freeze pay. Moreover, the current government coalition is planning to cut 70,000 of the 100,000 jobs currently available in sheltered workplaces, while allowing exemption for employers from paying the statutory minimum wage to those by then exposed to the 'regular' labour market (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 May 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/446>

Dutch: <http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/nieuws/archief/281576/379944/nog-2-acties-sw>

Unions organise action in support of local government claims

November 11, 2011

On 2 November, the FNV Abvakabo and CNV Publieke Zaak trade unions organized demonstrations in Rotterdam and The Hague in protest over the breakdown of collective bargaining in the local government sector. Negotiations have stalled for quite some time and in fact did not take place after May 2011, while the collective agreement for local government expired formally by June. In the The Hague meeting it was stressed that work in the sector was being "dehumanized" with money now being more important than the quality of work and the quality of services. Further actions were being planned in other cities, particularly Nijmegen, Eindhoven and Leidschendam (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 March and May 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/446>

Dutch: <http://www.mijnvakbond.nl/Startsein-acties-gemeenten?referrer=266>
<http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao's/Alle-Cao's/gemeenten1/>

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Norway

Average industrial wage target for bus drivers

November 11, 2011

The Fagforbundet public sector trade union has set a target for bus drivers' wages for next year's negotiations. The aim will be to get bus drivers' pay in line with the average wage in the manufacturing sector. Currently drivers are paid around NOK 25,000 (€3,200) yearly less than that target. The negotiations will also look at drivers' working hours and in particular weekend work, with a view to addressing issues around work-life balance.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/446>

Norwegian: http://www.fagforbundet.no/forsida/tariff/?article_id=68049

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Portugal

General strike brings country to standstill

November 26, 2011

The 24-hour national strike called jointly by the two main trade union confederations, CGTP and UGT, shut down public services, transport facilities and factories in many parts of the country on 24 November. Most flights in and out of the country were canceled. Hospitals provided emergency services only and garbage was not collected. Workers chanting "let the banks pay" marched against austerity measures imposed by the government as a condition of the EU/IMF bailout. Figures on the participation in the strike were not available, but according to union leaders it was a greater mobilization of citizens than the November 2010 general strike in which some 3 million took part. The union confederations have announced that "the struggle will continue."

English: http://www.upi.com/Business_News/2011/11/25/General-strike-shuts-down-Portugal
... <http://cms.iuf.org/?q=node/1245>

Union focuses on urgent staff shortages

November 11, 2011

The SINTAP public service trade union met with the Secretary of State for Social Security by the end of October as to discuss the major staff shortages affecting the department. A wide range of posts are currently unfilled. A report of the latest situation is due to be finished by the end of November and will be discussed with the union at the beginning of December. Despite the difficult circumstances the union believes there is scope for negotiation, highlighting in particular to address problems with the pay and career structure.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/446>

Portuguese: <http://www.sintap.pt/>

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Romania

Parliament decides to freeze public wages and pensions

November 9, 2011

Public wages and pensions will be frozen in 2012 at their December 2011 levels, under Ordinance 80/2010 passed by the Chamber of Deputies on Tuesday 8 November. This ordinance was initially designed to pass measures to reduce payment arrears and secure financing for the loans of the local public administrations. It passed 146 to 104 and four abstentions, with the opposition threatening to challenge the ordinance with the Constitutional Court of Romania (CCR). Under the draft law, the gross pay of public employees for 2012 is kept at the December 2011 levels.

English: [http://www.financiarul.ro/2011/11/09/chamber-of-deputies-vote-to-freeze ...](http://www.financiarul.ro/2011/11/09/chamber-of-deputies-vote-to-freeze-...)

Slovakia

Doctors stick to mass resignation

October 10, 2011

Over 2,400 of the country's 6,500 hospital doctors are taking part in the mass resignation protest, co-ordinated by the LOZ trade union, that could see them leave their posts as of 1 December. As reported, the union has a number of key demands including stopping the conversion of public hospitals into joint stock companies, the application of labour code rules on working time and working conditions, and pay increases for health staff. The Minister of Health has been touring hospitals to try to persuade doctors to withdraw their resignations, obviously with meagre results. On Wednesday 30 November, many of the protesting doctors failed to report to work, clearly in a coordinated way organised by the LOZ (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 October 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/446>
http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/44370/2/health_minister_will_tour_hospitals.html http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/44685/10/many_hospital_doctors_fail_to_report...

Spain

Protest over pay in Public Employment Services

November 11, 2011

Starting Wednesday 26 October, the FSP-UGT public services federation organised a protest action over the deterioration of pay and conditions in the Public Employment Services. The federation says that inadequate staffing has led to employees taking work home to try to maintain the level of service. FSP-UGT also says that there are problems in relation to pay levels and other working conditions, problems which were made more challenging following the merger with the wage guarantee fund FOGASA.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/446>

Spanish:

http://www.fspugt.es/La_FSPUGT_protesta_por_el_grave_deterioro_de_las_condiciones_laborales...

Sweden

More women than men stuck on temp contracts

November 14, 2011

Young female professionals in Sweden find it harder to secure permanent contracts than their male counterparts, according to a report from the TCO white collar union confederation. Currently almost 25% of female professionals aged between 20- and 34-years-old have temporary employment contracts, against 10% of men, the report states. "This is a serious warning about the conditions in working life," said Eva Nordmark, TCO chairperson. She argued that the lack of a permanent contract means that female workers have a weaker position in the labour market and added that this problem is getting worse.

English: <http://www.thelocal.se/37346/20111114/#>

Switzerland

Geneva hospital staff continues strike

November 25, 2011

On 24 November, the laboratory and cleaning staff at Geneva University Hospital (HUG) decided to

continue their strike, when on 23 November the government of the Geneva canton refused to hear the strikers after breaking off negotiations a week earlier. Support for the strike is widening; 83 doctors and laboratory leaders at HUG signed a petition in favour of the strikers, asking the cantonal government to return to the negotiation table. The strike started on 20 October, with employees demanding a reevaluation of their jobs, for which they were already waiting for 10 years. At the beginning of November they rejected an offer that would only have provided a salary upgrade for 430 of the 1,117 employed.

English: <http://www.epso.org/cob/446>

German: [http://www.vpod.ch/aktuell/nachrichten/ansicht/article/streik-am-genfer-unispital ...](http://www.vpod.ch/aktuell/nachrichten/ansicht/article/streik-am-genfer-unispital...)
[http://www.vpod.ch/aktuell/nachrichten/ansicht/article/streik-in-genf-laborantinnen-wehren-sich ...](http://www.vpod.ch/aktuell/nachrichten/ansicht/article/streik-in-genf-laborantinnen-wehren-sich...)

United Kingdom

Massive participation in public sector pensions' strike

November 30, 2011

On Wednesday 30 November, tens of thousands of public sector workers all over the country have taken part in marches and rallies to protest against planned changes to pensions. Hundreds of events have been held as part of what the organizing unions have claimed is the biggest walkout in a generation. All strike ballots had been in favour of the strike, and the unions expected some 3 million public sector workers could be involved. In spite of the disruption caused, at many occasions the public showed sympathy for the strike (a few days earlier, an opinion poll commissioned by BBC News suggests over 60% of people believed public sector workers were justified in going on strike). In Manchester for example, an estimated 20,000 marchers had come into town with one message for the government – “Everyone deserves a decent pension”, as one Unison poster declared. In Scotland, with an estimated 300,000 went on strike, some 10,000 people took to the streets in Glasgow and an estimated 7,000 workers marched in Edinburgh. TUC confederation general secretary Brendan Barber told a rally at Birmingham's National Indoor Arena: “This is an unprecedented day - 30 unions have members taking action together.” Barber added: “The brutal truth is simply this - that the living standards of millions of low and medium-paid public service workers are being hammered in the name of reducing the deficit. The cuts are beginning to scythe through our public services, more and more jobs are under threat, and as the pay freeze bites - while inflation roars ahead - real wage cuts are making it harder than ever to make ends meet” (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 April, May, June, July-August, September and October 2011).

English: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-15971714>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-15954967>; <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-15910621>
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-15938970>

Public sector workers hit again by pay rise cap

November 29, 2011

Finance Minister George Osborne faces a bruising new clash with public sector workers after capping their pay rises at 1% from next year. On the eve of the biggest strike by state employees for decades the Chancellor said he accepted the ceiling was “tough” for workers but insisted it was fair for the taxpayer. It follows a two-year pay freeze. Osborne asked union leaders to call off the 30 November strike. Dave Prentis, general secretary of public sector union Unison, reacted: “It's time to drop the public sector pensions tax and take steps to put money back into people's pockets. This will boost growth and get Britain hiring - as it is, the private sector is in no position to dig the country out of trouble. Not only is austerity hitting growth - the way it is being applied means unfairness is growing.” TUC general secretary Brendan Barber responded, “Of course there were some welcome moves in the statement as the Chancellor tries to reinvent infrastructure spending, youth employment and regional assistance programmes. But the catch is that they are being paid for by freezing tax credits, holding back public sector pay and increasing public sector job losses to 710,000

by 2017. Those with the broadest backs who caused the crash have escaped once again. ”

English: <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/article-24015693-public-workers-hit-by-pay-rise...> <http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-20352-fo.cfm>

Unilever workers to strike over final-salary pension scheme

November 29, 2011

Workers at Unilever UK, employing 7,000, have voted to go on strike over the axing of their final-salary pension scheme. If they stop work it would be the first time a Stock Exchange-listed 100 company's workers have gone on strike over pensions and the largest industrial action Unilever has faced in its 80-year history. Some 85% of members of the Unite union at Unilever voted for strike action, likely to take place across 12 factories in December. Members of the GMB union voted three to one in favour of action. Unilever has proposed closing its final-salary pension scheme from April next year and moving all 5,000 members across to a career-average scheme.

English: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/newsbysector/retailandconsumer...>
via <http://www.labourstart.org.uk/>

Growing gap between rich and poor

November 23, 2011

Growing discontent about the gulf between rich and poor was underlined on Wednesday 23 November by official figures showing the gap between Britain's highest and lowest paid workers has widened dramatically over 2011. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) revealed that workers in the worst paid jobs – such as dinner ladies, hairdressers and waiters – have seen their pay fall sharply in real terms, fanning fears about families' ability to cope with soaring food and energy bills. The bottom tenth of earners saw their pay creep up just 0.1% between 2010 and 2011 while the top tenth saw their pay grow 18 times faster. The number of people being paid less than the national minimum wage of UKP 6.08 rose in 2010 and there was a big divergence in earnings between London and the rest of the country, according to the ONS annual survey of earnings. However, there was a slight narrowing in the gender pay gap. Overall pay growth for UK workers hit a record low. Pay was up just 0.4% on a year ago in terms of gross weekly earnings, meaning that incomes are tumbling in real terms given that inflation stands at 5%.

English: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/nov/23/pay-gap-rich-poor-widens>

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