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collective bargaining

Issue 8/2011 | September

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

Railway strikes not ruled out

September 30, 2011

On 29 September, Wilhelm Haberzettl, chairman of the works council of the federal railways company (ÖBB), said he considered recent statements of ÖBB boss Christian Kern as a “declaration of war”. According to Kern, contracts stating that employees must not be sacked under any circumstances should be abolished. Kern explained his plan was to reduce ÖBB’s workforce by 4,000 to 40,000 by 2015. He also spoke about the opportunity to outsource certain departments of ÖBB, with privatisations as another possibility – an option that the ÖBB leader had ruled out until then. Haberzettl warned ÖBB staff may down tools if the company’s executive board would introduce a change of work contract agreements.

English: [http://austrianindependent.com/news/Business/2011-09-30 ...](http://austrianindependent.com/news/Business/2011-09-30...)

Unions support extra effort to reduce gender pay gap

September 14, 2011

The GPA-DJP and VIDA trade unions have expressed support for the idea of having a special round of collective bargaining to address the persistently large gender pay gap in Austria. Figures from 2009 show that female salaried workers had annual gross earnings of €17,639, 40% less than the €29,181 average for male salaried staff. The GPA-DJP says that special negotiations could take place perhaps three times over a 10-year period, where employers and trade unions discuss detailed pay figures for their sector and come up with concrete measures to reduce pay inequality between men and women.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/437>

German: [http://www.gpa-djp.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GPA/Page ...](http://www.gpa-djp.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GPA/Page...) [http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=So3/Page/Index&n=So3 ...](http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=So3/Page/Index&n=So3...)

Belgium

Agreement signed in insurance sector

September 26, 2011

After long negotiations with the Assuralia employers’ association, a basic agreement for the insurance industry covering 2011 and 2012 was signed, that was agreed on 26 September by the sectoral committee for insurances. As the current law limits wage increases to 0.3% in 2011, the BBTK/SETCA union has focussed on improving the position of the lowest paid, in various ways. Before the end of 2011, all employees will receive an Ecocheque worth €150; as of 1 January 2012 salaries will be lifted by €16 gross per month or an Ecocheque of €190 will be paid, latest 31 March 2012. Parties have agreed on extra funding for continuous training, improvement of outplacement procedures and improvement of the position of those with limited contracts. Somewhat earlier, on 30 August, the sectoral agreement for banking has been signed. Both agreements are still subject to membership vote.

Dutch: <http://www.bbtk.org/nieuws/Pages/verzekeringssectorontwerpakkoord.aspx>

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

Bulgaria

Last effort to avert railway strike

September 29, 2011

The trade union organisations in the Bulgarian State Railways (BDZ), backed by the union confederations, have given the government one last chance to avoid a mass railway strike in October, which they announced two weeks earlier in September. The railway unions are set to meet with Prime Minister Boyko Borisov and Transport Minister Ivaylo Moskovski on Monday 3 October in order to find common ground to clarify the situation in the railway sector, announced Plamen Dimitrov, President of KNSB (Confederation of Independent Bulgarian Unions). The unions are firmly opposed to the government's intention, under opressure of a memorandum with the World

Bank, to privatize BDZ Freight Services, the freight section of the state-owned operator, traditionally more profitable than the troubled passenger section. All unions involved have complained about the lack of contact with BDZ management and the Transport Ministry.

English: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=132176
http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=132533

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Czech Republic

Union confederation joins demonstration against reforms

September 26, 2011

On 26 September, the Confederation of Bohemian and Moravian Trade Unions (CMKOS) agreed on long-term cooperation with the ProAlt civic group coalition that is opposed to the country's centre-right cabinet, according to the CMKOS head Jaroslav Zahradil and Jan Majicek, from the ProAlt group. The union confederation has decided to support the demonstration against the reforms of pensions, health care, taxes and the welfare system proposed by the government, called by ProAlt for 22 October in the centre of Prague.

English: [http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/czech-trade-unions-form-alliance ...](http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/czech-trade-unions-form-alliance...) via
http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Czech+Republic

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Denmark

Workers lack basic knowledge on model

September 22, 2011

In an issue of Danish Labour News that is dedicated to the upcoming 37th National Congress of the LO union confederation, in October, the outcomes of a recent representative survey among 2,325 employees, carried out by the Gallup Institute, are presented. They show, according to LO, that workers lack basic knowledge on the Danish model. It is said to be quite telling in this respect that seven in ten workers responded that there is a statutory minimum wage in Denmark. However, a minimum wage exists only in collective agreements. LO argues that it is vital to know this, in particular as a minimum wage is only secured for those covered by collective agreement and, above all, as it means that "the individual worker can influence and share responsibility for setting the pay and working conditions."

English: LO, Danish Labour News, September 2011

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Finland

Union negotiators leave technology industry talks

September 30, 2011

On the evening of Thursday 29 September, negotiations aimed at a collective agreement in the technology industry broke off as the negotiators of the three unions involved –representing some 250,000 wage and salary earners- left the meeting. The gap between employers' offer and the joined union demands was quite large. Employers offered a 1% overall pay hike for the coming autumn, in addition to an inflation index boost of 0.3% in June 2012 as well as an additional 0.6% at company level – amounting to 1.9% increase for one year and a half. The union side demanded 4% in autumn 2011 and an additional 2% in summer 2012. An angry Metalworkers' Union chairman Riku Aalto commented: "The employers had no intention of achieving a contract. There was just a competition of who could be first to make as cheap an offer as possible". Antti Rinne, chairman of the Trade Union Pro, the largest union representing white-collar employees, reacted in the same vein: "The offer is inconceivably low for the present situation. Negotiations cannot continue on this basis." The unions are still considering further steps.

English: [http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Union+negotiators+walk+out+of+technology ...](http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Union+negotiators+walk+out+of+technology...)

<http://www.imfmetal.org/index.cfm?c=27539&l=2>

Unions oppose cuts to job alternation leave compensation

September 28, 2011

All three Finnish union confederations, Akava, SAK and STTK, oppose the government's plan to cut compensation to employees who opt for job alternation leave. The government intends to cut the alternation leave compensation by 10 to 20% from its present level. Currently, employees on job alternation leave are entitled to compensation between 70 and 80% of unemployment benefit. The system of job alternation leave was established in 1996. To date thousands of employees have availed of the scheme; in 2010 over 17,000 took the opportunity. The confederations strenuously insist that the planned cuts run counter to the generally approved goal of extending working careers, a goal emphasized in the government programme. Moreover, due to the requirement that the employer must hire an unemployed jobseeker to replace the employee on job alternation leave, the system has created job opportunities for many unemployed, and the unions are afraid that the planned cuts would make it difficult, especially for employees in low-pay jobs, to make use of the system.

English: <http://www.artto.kaapeli.fi/unions/T2011/037>

Employers want export sector to be leading

September 14, 2011

Trade union confederations have criticized the employers' organisation, the Confederation of Finnish Industries EK, that has been calling for the next pay settlement in the export industry sector to set the framework for pay developments in other sectors. Union confederations were quick to turn down this proposal. Akava confederation President Sture Fjäder pointed out that EK is not in a position to dictate or impose public sector solutions, as it is not even one of the organizations that participate in public sector bargaining. SAK's President Lauri Lyly also rejected EK's proposal by saying: "We are offered the role of a pay police, not the one of a negotiator". And STTK's President Mikko Mäenpää joined the chorus by criticising EK for ignoring the basic goals of the trade union movement. All this is part of a wider debate about collective bargaining in Finland where there is still support within the union movement for cross-sectoral bargaining to set a framework for sectoral negotiations that last took place in 2007 (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 July-August 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/437>; <http://www.artto.kaapeli.fi/unions/T2011/032>
<http://www.nordiclabourjournal.org/nyheter/news-2011-1/article.2011-09-06.0625913792>

France

Union does not expand strike in chemical industry

September 30, 2011

On Friday 30 September, workers at LyondellBasell's Berre L'Etang plant near Marseille voted to prolong their 3-day strike until Monday 3 October lunchtime, in protest of the planned closure of their plant. They have also blocked access and exit of products at the company's Fos-sur-Mer Caban chemical plant. Yet, representatives of the CGT union covering nearby plants, including Total's La Mede, Exxon Mobil's Fos-sur-Mer and Ineos's Lavera refineries, have decided not to join the strike for the time being. CGT official Marc Sarde said his union wants to avoid a situation like in October 2010, when a month-long strike paralyzed French refineries.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/30/oil-france-refineries>
... <http://www.platts.com/RSSFeedDetailedNews/RSSFeed/Petrochemicals/8406400>

Public and private education unions on strike

September 27, 2011

Public and private education unions organised a nationwide strike on Tuesday 27 September, to

protest job cuts and what the unions involved call the degradation of education. After a total of 50,000 education posts have been cut since 2007, 16,000 posts will likely be cut in the school year 2011-2012, and another 14,000 in 2012. According to the Ministry for the Interior, 110,000 teachers went on strike, but a first estimate of the FSU and UNSA-Education unions came at 165,000, of which 45,000 on strike in Paris, or about half of the potential strikers. The unions point at the remarkable support of pupils and parents for the strike.

French: <http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2011/09/26/mardi-une-greve...>

Union criticizes bonus payments in public sector

September 14, 2011

The CGT-UGFF civil service federation is heavily critical of a new system of incentive payments introduced into the public sector. The union is not convinced that such payments, mirroring the profit-linked “prime d'intéressement” in the private sector, can really reflect performance in the public sector which depends on very different criteria. The CGT-UGFF also believes that no extra money will be available for the payments which will effectively be funded by job cuts.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/437>

French: <http://www.ugff.cgt.fr/spip.php?article1876>

Germany

Growing pressure on Airbus

September 29, 2011

On Saturday 24 September, negotiations between Airbus and the IG Metall union on a collective agreement for 16,000 employees in Germany broke down. “After nearly 12 hours, the employers ended the negotiations. They remain inflexible on raising the productivity rate to 8% a year. We can’t demand that of our colleagues,” two of the IG Metall negotiators, Daniel Friedrich and Johann Dahnken, said in a statement. The failure to reach an agreement came as a surprise after a year and a half of efforts appeared to be about to come to fruition. The prospective agreement would cover a range of issues from an employment guarantee in the coming years to a ceiling on hiring temporary workers. In the new situation, the bargaining committee of IG Metall has decided to start warning strikes, covering the Airbus locations Hamburg, Bremen, Buxtehude and Stade.

English: <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeq...>

German: <http://www.igmetall.de/cps/rde/xchg/SID-1018C2B6...>

Doctors on series of two-hour strikes

September 26, 2011

On Monday 26 September, hundreds of doctors at university medical clinics across the country began a series of two-hour strikes, ahead of negotiations starting on Thursday 29 September with the wage commission of the federal states (TdL) in Berlin. Doctors at the Heart Centre Munich and the Hannover Medical University started the action in support of the doctors’ union Marburger Bund (MB) in an ongoing dispute over pay and conditions. MB demands for about 20,000 doctors a 5% wage increase, a modern pay structure and better pay for night shifts, jointly 6.3% wage rise. Another concern for the MB is the growing number of vacancies at the university clinics as qualified doctors seek better options elsewhere. This trend will increase if working conditions and salary prospects do not improve, according to MB wage expert Lutz Hammerschlag.

English: <http://www.thelocal.de/society/20110926-37837.html>

Care home workers maintain their strike

September 14, 2011

While visiting the strikers, ver.di union general secretary Frank Bsirske gave his support to care

workers in Berlin as they showed their determination to continue their strike for a collective agreement despite intimidation from their employer. As reported earlier, the ver.di collective bargaining committee has demanded a framework agreement covering working time, shifts, shift pay and annual leave. Workers in other Alpenland homes outside Berlin are on better pay and conditions (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 July-August 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/437>

German: [http://www.verdi.de/themen/nachrichten/++co ...](http://www.verdi.de/themen/nachrichten/++co...)

First agreement in solar energy industry

September 12, 2011

On 1 September, a collective agreement took effect between IG Metall and three subsidiaries of Bosch in the state of Thuringia, making it the first accord in Germany's solar power industry. The three-year agreement covers 2,500 workers at factories of Bosch Solar Energy AC, Bosch Solar Wafers GmbH, and Bosch Solar Thin Film in the cities of Erfurt and Arnstadt. It is the union's hope that the accord will spur a national collective agreement in the solar manufacturing industry, a sector now encompassing 130,000 workers. Based on the union's metal sector agreement, this first contract contains quite some benefits. Although it contains no set wage increases, workers will see their pay increase with regular bonuses, performance-based bonuses, and additional compensation for holiday and night-shift work. The working week will be reduced with full pay from 40 to 38 hours in increments over the three-year term, and overtime work will either be paid in full or employees have the option to convert overtime in paid time off.

English: [http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4641-IG-Metall-Breaks-New-Ground ...](http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4641-IG-Metall-Breaks-New-Ground...)

Greece

High-level ILO mission to Greece

September 27, 2011

On 27 September, an ILO High Level Mission to Greece finished a full week of extensive meetings with all relevant actors of the country's labour market. The mandate of the mission arose from complaints concerning the application of international conventions ratified by Greece in the area of freedom of association, collective bargaining, wages, social security, employment policy, labour inspection and non-discrimination. The mission was led by Guy Ryder, Executive Director for Standards and Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, following a request by ILO supervisory bodies, in particular the independent Committee of Experts and the tripartite Committee on the Application of Standards. A full report of the mission will be delivered to the Greek government and its social partners once meetings scheduled with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the EU also have taken place.

English: [http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/press-and-media-centre/news/WCMS ...](http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/press-and-media-centre/news/WCMS...)

Unions continue actions against austerity measures

September 14, 2011

The ADEDY civil service confederation along with other trade unions has been maintaining its protest and strike actions against the austerity measures being imposed on Greece by the European Commission, European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Further measures were announced in mid-September that could lead to 20,000 public sector workers losing their job or being transferred to a labour pool on lower pay. They may also face early retirement or part-time work. ADEDY members were on strike on 13 September, including workers in customs and tax offices. Later in September, the actions maintained momentum, with on 28 September strikes of bus, train, metro, trolley-bus, tram and suburban railway workers, in opposition to government plans to place employees in a reserve labour pool at 60% of their wage for a year (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 February, March, April, May and June 2011).

English:

<http://www.epsu.org/cob/437> <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204138204576598213444234444.html>
http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/ w_articles_wsite1_3_13/09/2011_406190

Hungary

Union demonstrations at Parliament

September 20, 2011

On 12 September (the first day of the autumn session of Parliament), four trade union confederations started a “live chain” demonstration around the Parliament building in Budapest in protest against government measures already affecting employees as well as against the planned new Labour Code. The unions, demanding “fair social dialogue”, argued the planned code would increase the vulnerability of employees. The presidents of the confederations, the Alliance of Autonomous Trade Unions (ASZSZ), the Trade Union Federation of Professionals (ESZT), the Federation of Hungarian Trade Unions (MSZOSZ) and the Cooperation Forum of Trade Unions (SZEFE), told a press agency that employees representing all of their 130 unions had joined the rally. A new, multi-day protest meeting “in defense of democracy” started with a sit-in on Clark Ádám Square in Buda, organized by various trade unions, on Thursday 29 September, planned to last till Sunday 2 October. On 2 September, ETUC general secretary Bernadette Ségal and the presidents of all six Hungarian union confederations met with EU Employment Commissioner László Andor to express their serious concerns about the proposals to change the Labour Code. The ETUC pointed out that such changes clearly conflict with EU standards for social dialogue and the provisions of the fundamental charter of social rights (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 April, May and July-August 2011).

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent; <http://www.etuc.org/a/8995>
[http://www.politics.hu/20110930/unions-begin-multi-day-protest-defense-of-democracy ...](http://www.politics.hu/20110930/unions-begin-multi-day-protest-defense-of-democracy...)

Ireland

Teachers' unions object new pension scheme

September 30, 2011

The Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) says a new pension scheme for future public servants is unjust and potentially unlawful. The INTO said it is considering a legal challenge to the scheme which is designed to save the state pension bill €1.8 billion per year (in 2050). Under the new scheme, future new entrants will have their pension calculated on a career-average basis, rather than on the basis of the final salary at the time of retirement. The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Brendan Howlin, insisted the new scheme would be fairer and more balanced than the current system. However, INTO General Secretary Sheila Nunan described the proposed scheme as unfair, unnecessary and “probably unlawful.” The secondary school teachers' union, ASTI, has also said considering to challenge the measures in the courts.

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/breaking/2011/0930/breaking7.html>
http://www.rte.ie/news/2011/0930/into_pensions.html
via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Ireland

Union leaders reject further pay cuts

September 13, 2011

Trade union leaders have rejected further pay cuts in particularly the public sector. On 12 September, Jack O'Connor, president of the country's largest union Siptu, said workers would not stand for further pay cuts and welfare reductions as proposed by outgoing European Central Bank (ECB) executive board member Jürgen Stark. The leader of the largest public service union raised his voice on the same issue. Impact general secretary Shay Cody said that further public service pay cuts, as suggested by mr Stark, were unlikely so long as the Croke Park agreement continued to meet

government targets, which had been agreed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Commission (EC) and ECB. Shay Cody added that IMF and EC had published positive reports about the State's progress regarding the financial bailout the week before. Slightly later also Tánaiste (vice Prime Minister) Eamon Gilmore dismissed Stark's call for stronger public sector pay cuts and a quicker austerity drive (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 April, June and July-August 2011).

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2011/0913/1224304027147.html>

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Italy

Union federation challenges pay statistics

September 14, 2011

Fabrizio Fratini, General Secretary of the FP-CGIL public services federation, has criticized the Istat statistics agency for releasing data showing that on average public sector pay is 11.6% higher than private sector pay. The union makes the point that the comparison does not take into account the different occupations in the public and private sector and the different levels of qualification and education, and that therefore it is not really a fair comparison.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/437>

Italian: <http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/19210>

Union federation campaigns around negotiations over savings

September 14, 2011

The CISL FP federation reports on its campaign to get involved with public authorities in measures to improve services and cut out waste. In the wake of the Parliamentary vote on the 2011-2014 budget law, that includes among other provisions the threat of another freeze of national collective agreements in the public sector until 2014, CISL FP has intensified actions in order to obtain a commitment from public authorities to involve workers and their representatives in a comprehensive process to tackle spending inefficiencies, optimize work organization to improve service management and delivery, and so retrieve money that can be redistributed to public workers through second-level bargaining.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/437>

Italian: <http://www.fp.cisl.it/>

General strike against unclear package

September 6, 2011

On Tuesday 6 September, thousands of workers took the streets in the main cities of Italy in a general strike, organised by the CGIL union confederation, to protest a package of ever-changing austerity measures as well as against proposed changes in the labour legislation. Observers signalled that the strike placed mounting pressure on the government of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi to act "swiftly and decisively" – as the country's President Giorgio Napolitano phrased it. Addressing an estimated 70,000 people in Rome, Susanna Camusso, CGIL's General Secretary, called the changes to the labour law "unjust" and threatened more strike actions if they were not removed.

English: [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/07/world/europe/07italy ...](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/07/world/europe/07italy...)

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Malta

Inquiry into precarious conditions of healthcare workers

September 2, 2011

Criticism about the plight of precarious workers in Malta's state hospitals has led to the government setting up a board of inquiry into their pay and conditions. Earlier there were several attempts to

highlight the conditions of precarious workers; for example Toni Zarb, Secretary General of the General Workers' Union (GWU), has raised the issue several times. After the parliamentary opposition health spokesperson argued that conditions of work and pay of subcontracted care workers were in breach of the law, the government has set up a board of inquiry. GWU is hoping that the outcome may also help remove the fear of reprisals that currently deters workers from becoming union members.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2011/06/articles/mt1106019i.htm>

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Netherlands

Major unions reject pension accord

September 20, 2011

The two largest unions in the FNV union confederation have rejected a national deal on pensions. Late on 19 September, a large majority of the unions represented in the Federation Council of the FNV confederation voted in favour of the deal that FNV chair Agnes Jongerius earlier agreed with government and employers, including some extra concessions reached the week before in parliament. Yet, the Abvakabo FNV public service union and FNV Bondgenoten private sector union, representing a majority of FNV members but due to representation rules jointly lacking controlling voice in the Federation Council, continue to argue that the deal does not do enough to help low-paid workers who will lose out if they want to retire at 65 once the retirement age is increased to 66. They are concerned that the workers will be shouldering too much of the risk in terms of investment returns and there should be more of a commitment from employers to increase funding during economic downturns. Both unions have denounced their confidence in Agnes Jongerius, and will put forward their own pension demands in upcoming collective bargaining. A commission will be appointed to advise on the confederation's decision-making structure and culture. The CNV union confederation believes the pension accord is in the right direction but also has concerns over the impact on low-paid workers and those in difficult and stressful occupations (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 June and July-August 2011).

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

[http://www.cnv.nl/blog/blog-post/2011/09/13/bonden-en-minister-spreken ...](http://www.cnv.nl/blog/blog-post/2011/09/13/bonden-en-minister-spreken...)

English: <http://www.rnw.nl/english/bulletin/trade-unions-vote-raise-retirement-age>

[http://www.europeanpensions.net/ep/Small-majority-of-FNV-in-favour ...](http://www.europeanpensions.net/ep/Small-majority-of-FNV-in-favour...)

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Poland

Massive teacher layoffs questioned

September 30, 2011

At the beginning of the 2011/2012 school year, some districts were planning to lay off up to 30% of their teaching staff. A demographic slump has caused a significant fall in pupil numbers, and the local governments responsible for supervising and funding public education up to secondary level are in financial difficulties. According to ZNP, the Polish Teachers' Union, local governments use the demographic slump as a pretext for excessive cuts in teaching staff, which may cause a dramatic deterioration in the quality of teaching. Educational trade unions are also protesting that the current situation is used by central government and local authorities to try to bypass guaranteed working conditions and wages as set out in the Teachers' Charter.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2011/07/articles/pl1107019i.htm>

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Portugal

Public sector unions put forward wage claim

September 14, 2011

The Frente Comum group of public sector unions has set out its main demands for improvements in

pay and conditions for 2012. It is challenging the government and the recommendations of the troika of European Commission, European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF). The unions want the salary cuts of 2011 reversed and an increase in 2012 that reflects inflation with a minimum increase of €50. Among the range of other demands is a call for the government to tackle the spread of precarious work across the public sector. Meanwhile the SINTAP trade union has also attacked government plans to cut 10,000 more jobs in 2012, maintain the 5% pay cut and freeze pay until 2014. The union argues that the government has not done enough to tackle waste in public spending.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/437>

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

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Romania

Public sector pay raises conditional on growth

September 14, 2011

On 7 September, Prime Minister Emil Boc made it clear that public sector workers are unlikely to get any pay increase in 2012 unless the economy in that year will grow by at least 3.5%. Earlier cost-cutting measures effective in 2011 as to meet the demands of the €20 billion loan agreed in 2009 and to reduce public spending, included a 25% cut in public salaries, a pension reform, public sector layoffs and tax raises.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/437>; [http://www.romania-insider.com/romanian-pm ...](http://www.romania-insider.com/romanian-pm-...)

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Slovakia

Teachers demonstrate for better funding and pay

September 19, 2011

More than 9,000 teachers from all over the country gathered in front of the Government Office on 13 September to express their discontent with what they call inadequate funding for schools. They demanded that the government systematically increase funding for the education sector so that its share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) becomes comparable with other EU countries by 2014. Trade unions representing teachers and other school employees stated that if the government fails to hear their demands and respond appropriately by the end of September, they will go on strike: "It will be announced either as a one-day warning strike or as an unlimited strike," said Jozef Lužák, chairman of the teachers' union. The unions are also asking that the salaries of teachers be increased to a level ranging from 1.2 to 1.6 times the country's average monthly salary, whereas this level is currently about the average. Education Minister Eugen Jurzyca has called this demand "unrealistic."

English: http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/43928/3/teachers_want_more_than_just_...

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Spain

Unions claim strong support for teachers' strike

September 21, 2011

After a march on Tuesday night 20 September, on Wednesday 21 September thousands of teachers stayed off the job in Madrid. According to UGT union official Virginia Fernandez in Madrid 80% of the government's teachers did not show up to work in classrooms. Teachers in schools for children aged 12 to 18 are furious with Madrid's conservative-led government for budget cuts up to €120 million that will reduce staff and force them to teach two hours more per week, giving them less time for tutoring and other educational tasks. Human chains made up of thousands of protesting teachers, parents and their children were formed around the ministries of education in the capital for the central government and for Madrid's regional government. At the same time in the northwest region of Galicia teachers at both the elementary and secondary level went on strike to protest increased classroom hours. Union leader Marcelino Brea said 75% of teachers honored the union

call.

English: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/markets/spanish-labor-unions...>

Regional governments tear up agreement on union officials

September 14, 2011

The regional government of Valencia has told the CCOO confederation that it will no longer honour an agreement to give trade union representatives full time off to carry out their duties. This will affect 197 trade union officials across the public services in the region – education, health, administration and justice. The regional authority claims this is a necessary cost-cutting measure while the CCOO argues that this is a direct attack on the trade union, aimed at undermining its ability to represent and negotiate for its members. A similar proposal will be put to the regional council for the Balearic Islands. The regional authority claims that its actions are within the law as the main legislation regulating relations with trade unions allows such measures in extreme economic circumstances.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/437>

Spanish: <http://www.fsc.ccoo.es/webfsc/menu.do?Actualidad:Federal...>
<http://www.publico.es/dinero/396171/baleares-elimina-los-liberados-institucionales...>

Sweden

Municipal union argues for stronger emphasis on equal pay

September 14, 2011

The Kommunal municipal union has declared to be disappointed by the decision of three other unions in the LO confederation not to support a larger element allocated to equal pay in forthcoming negotiations. The general aim is for a pay increase of 3.5% with a minimum increase of SEK 850 (€94) a month. Kommunal also wants an extra SEK 100 (€11) to go to workers where the average wage is less than SEK 22,400 (€2,434) a month. Kommunal argues that it is unfair for workers in social care to get on average SEK 2,600 (€282) less a month than workers in manufacturing, questioning why there is more value put on making a car than caring for old people.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/437>

Swedish: <http://www.kommunal.se/Kommunal/Nyheter/2011/September/Los...>

Switzerland

Public sector union sets out pay claim

September 14, 2011

The VPÖD/SSP public service union has said that it wants at least a 2%-3% pay increase for all public sector workers. It is also calling for an increase in public sector employment to ensure and improve the quality of service to citizens. VPÖD/SSP says that public sector employers should acknowledge the substantial savings have been delivered by public sector personnel along with higher productivity and these factors certainly justify an across-the-board increase. The union also emphasizes the fact that the public sector has retained a fairer pay system than in the private sector with better pay on the lower pay scales and without excessive increases for top management, in contrast to the massive pay increases awarded to the bosses of privatized companies.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/437>

German: <http://www.vpod.ch/aktuell/nachrichten/ansicht/article/lohnforderungen...>

United Kingdom

Public sector unions to ballot members over strike action

September 29, 2011

A public sector-wide strike over pensions could take place on 30 November as several major trade unions, including UNISON, Unite and PCS, have agreed to ballot their members over industrial action on that day. Government proposals to change several public sector schemes is meeting serious resistance as unions express their anger of the imposition of higher retirement ages and increases in employee contributions, despite evidence that such measures are not necessary to fund the schemes. The national executive committee of the PCS has already given formal backing for over 250,000 civil and public servants to join the strike (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 April, May, June and July-August 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/437>
http://www.unitetheunion.org/news_events/latest_news/unite_to_ballot
... http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/index.cfm/id/Bo8o
... http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/index.cfm/id/8E6o ...

Unions take on tough local authorities

September 21, 2011

The dispute with Southampton City Council is continuing although the Unite and UNISON unions were due to re-open negotiations with the Council on 13 September. The dispute is over the council's attempt to impose pay cuts and to sack over 4,000 employees and re-employ them on contracts with poorer pay and conditions. Meanwhile UNISON members are also taking action against Barnet Council in North East London. There the council is attempting to outsource most of its services and retain only a small number of staff who would commission services from other providers. And in Birmingham, UNISON members on 21 September used the Liberal Democrat conference for a rally to protest about new employment contracts being introduced by the City Council, which the union said removed various pay enhancements and introduced insecurity over employment (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 May, June and July-August 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/437>; <http://www.soton-unison-office.org.uk/latestnews.htm>
http://www.unison.org.uk/news/news_view.asp?did=7206
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-15001921>

Pay freeze and pressure hitting NHS workers hard

September 21, 2011

A coalition of 13 health unions has warned that a combination of increasing demand, shrinking resources and the current pay freeze, are putting staff under severe pressure. According to the unions the impact of the proposed pension changes and the massive programme of NHS reforms in the Health and Social Care Bill, are adding even more to the stress felt by staff. In their joint evidence to the NHS Pay Review Body, the unions, which represent staff including nurses, midwives, paramedics, therapists, porters, cooks and cleaners, highlight increasing concerns about how they can maintain the quality of patient care. Christina McAnea of UNISON, which submitted the evidence for the Review Body, said: "Stability is vital in any workforce - more so during a period of change. The current turmoil in the NHS is undermining staff morale and threatening the delivery of high quality patient care. On top of job cuts and ward closures, growing waiting lists and an attack on their pension, staff faces a reorganisation on an unprecedented scale" (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 July-August 2011).

English: http://www.unitetheunion.org/news_events/latest_news/pay_freeze_and_pressure
... <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/sep/20/unions-pay-rise-nhs-2013>

Public service union calls for minimum wage rise

September 19, 2011

UNISON, the country's largest public service union, is calling for the National Minimum Wage (NMW) to rise substantially in October 2012, to reflect the increased cost of living in recent years,

presently and expected in 2012. After 2012 the NMW should move in stages towards a living wage for all workers, currently in the region of UKP 8,00 (€ 9,24) an hour depending on family size. The union's detailed submission to the Low Pay Commission argues that the NMW should not be frozen, or cut, or the economy will fail to recover. UNISON argues that, despite the claims of self-interested business lobbyists, there is no evidence that the NMW has caused unemployment in the last decade.

English: http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=2445

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