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collective bargaining

Issue 1/2012 January

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

Difficult negotiations in health and social services

January 25, 2012

The vida and GPA-DJP trade unions face challenging negotiations with private and non-profit employers in health and social services. In the main private health agreement, BAGS-KV covering around 90,000 workers, the employers have offered between 2.95% and 3.05% while inflation is at 3.2%. There was also a disappointing offer, ranging from 1.89% to 2.5% from the private hospital employers where the agreement covers some 15,000 workers. Finally, in the non-profit sector the Caritas organisation, employing over 12,000 workers, has also made an offer that is below the rate of inflation. The unions are mobilising members and organising works council meetings in the lead up to the next round of negotiations (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 December 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/456>

German: <http://www.vida.at ... 1326382220490>; <http://www.vida.at ... 1326382220271>;
<http://www.gpa-djp.at ... 1326214823552>

Unions reject latest employer offer in energy sector

January 25, 2012

The unions have broken off negotiations in the energy sector following unsatisfactory pay offers from the employers. The employers had wanted to follow developments in the public sector which would have included a pay increase of 2.65% plus €11.10 a month. A revised offer from the employers made hardly any difference and would have meant pay increases of between 2.9% and 3.25%, still below inflation.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/456>

German: <http://www.gpa-djp.at ... 1326952812466>

Belgium

National strike grips country when EU leaders meet

January 30, 2012

A united trade union front, including the FGTB-ABVV, CSC-ACV and ACLVB confederations, staged a nationwide general strike against austerity measures and in favour of protecting jobs on Monday 30 January, not accidentally the day EU leaders met in Brussels. In the light of European austerity policies and a disappointing economic growth policy, the union front fears that in Belgium working people and people receiving social security benefits will be the target of further austerity measures in addition to those already decided by the government. In spite of polls saying that only a minority of Belgians supported the strike, it was widespread and clearly the largest in two decades. The railway network closed, buses and trams sat in depots, schools and shops shut and production stopped at the factories of many companies including carmakers Audi and Volvo, Coca Cola, and imaging group Agfa-Gevaert. High-speed international trains, such as the Eurostar to/from London and Thalys to/from Paris, were not running into or out of the country as of late on Sunday. At Europe's second busiest port, Antwerp, all container and some bulk cargo terminals were shut (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 November and December 2011).

English:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/30/uk-belgium-strike ...>;

<http://www.euronews.net/2012/01/30/unions-want-to-reverse-austerity ...>

Dutch: <http://www.dealternatieven.be/>

French: <http://www.csc-en-ligne.be/>

Dock workers strike to protect professional status

January 27, 2012

A particular role in the Belgian national strike was played by the dock workers. They had a walk-out for 24 hours not only in protest of the austerity policies but also in defense of their professional status. At Europe's second busiest port, Antwerp, all container and some bulk cargo terminals were shut, with shipping traffic suffering delays due to suspended port services. Under Belgian law only workers who are registered can carry out dockers' work but plans have now been announced to "modernise" the organisation of labour in ports. When pressed, the government has failed to define exactly what is meant by this and unions are concerned that the status of dockers and the legal protection of their jobs could be undermined. In addition, there is widespread feeling amongst union reps that meetings with employers over the terms of collective agreements for dock workers have not resulted in satisfactory outcomes.

English: [http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/30/uk-belgium ...](http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/30/uk-belgium...);
<http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/6959>

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Bulgaria

Week-long coal strike called off

January 23, 2012

On 17 January, after a marathon 15-hour bargaining session, agreement has been reached between the state-owned Maritsa East Mines (BEH-EAD) on the one hand and the Federation of Independent Miners' Unions (KNSB/CITUB) and the Podkrepa's Miners' Federation on the other. The settlement ended a seven-day coalminers' strike in the Stara Zagora province. It produced a partial payment of a bonus that was promised the 7,000 miners in July 2011, but more importantly, calls for improved working conditions, an increase in investment at the three open-cast mines, and a commitment not to consider privatisation. The settlement outlines guidelines to improve health and safety at Bulgaria's largest mining complex, a key point raised in an intervention of the ICEM (International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions). The two unions won assurances that the state company will make BGN 20 million (€10.2 million) available for safety. On the fifth day of the strike, management made an effort to have the Court declare the strike illegal, but the magistrates dismissed the case.

English: [http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4848-Week-Long-Coal-Strike ...](http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4848-Week-Long-Coal-Strike...);
http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=135905

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Cyprus

Efforts ongoing to avoid wider strike action

January 31, 2012

By the end of January, Labour Minister Sotiroulla Charalambous had intensive meetings with both the unions and the employers' federation in an effort to avert widespread strikes. Her initiative was conducted amid an ongoing 24-hour strike by porters and dock workers at the Limassol and Larnaca ports. Construction workers and employees of soft drink companies have also announced 24-hour warning strikes for early February. The suggestion of the OEV employers' federation for a unilateral two-year wage freeze and other cutbacks in the private sector was met by staunch disapproval of the unions. The minister, a former union official herself, is expected to play a key role in mediating a deal between the two sides.

English: [http://www.cyprus-mail.com/strikes/looming-threat-wider-strike-action ...](http://www.cyprus-mail.com/strikes/looming-threat-wider-strike-action...);
<http://www.cyprus-mail.com/cyprus/ports-be-paralysed-new-strike/20120125>

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Denmark

Union challenges government on impact of pay cuts

January 25, 2012

The FOA public services union has highlighted the findings of a recent opinion poll in which 84% of people said that the level of employment is important in delivering public services. The union says this challenges the claims of both the present and previous governments that the level and quality of public services can be maintained despite the fact there are 25,000 fewer public sector workers in post than a year ago. FOA says that this is also putting pressure on the smaller number of workers who continue to provide key services such as child and eldercare and the risk that the situation will deteriorate as a large proportion of public sector workers comes up for retirement.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/456>

Danish: <http://www.foa.dk/Forbund/Presse?newsid={DA ...>

Estonia

Teachers' union members back February strike

January 17, 2012

Sven Rondik, president of the Education Personnel Union has said that his union is going ahead with preparations for a teachers' strike in February now that a poll has shown that 70% of its members support the idea. In a radio interview Rondik noted that the law still requires that the union meet with the Public Conciliator to ask for permission to strike. Until that authorization is given, the union has the right to plan the strike, but not set a date, he said (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 December 2011).

English: <http://news.err.ee/education/b6941d26-98a0-44a2-9f41-6186c1920898>

Finland

Important legal victory on fixed-term contracts

January 31, 2012

The JHL public services union has won a landmark ruling on the use of fixed-term contracts. The worker concerned had had eight consecutive fixed-term contracts over a period of six years and the employer had tried to argue that this was permissible because the job was related to dealing with annual applications to the European Union's structural funds. On 24 January, the High Court rejected the employers' argument and awarded compensation to the employee. The Court ruled that if there is not a motivated and objective reason for a job being temporary, it is permanent. The fact that a work agency client company assignment is time-limited is not a sufficient reason. The High Court decision clearly improves the status of agency labour, says Katarina Murto, a bargaining expert at the union confederation SAK.

English: <http://www.imfmetal.org/index.cfm?c=28676&l=2>; <http://www.epsu.org/cob/456>;
<http://www.artto.kaapeli.fi/unions/T2012/po5>

Minster warns about outsourcing

January 25, 2012

The Minister for Public Administration and Local Government, Henna Virkkunen, has told the magazine of the JHL public sector union that with one third of the municipal workforce due to retire by 2020 and with additional demands on many services, there will be plenty of job opportunities in the sector in coming years. This was also to reassure workers over the likely impact of a radial reorganisation of the local government sector, which could see the number of municipalities reduced from 336 to 100 or less. The Minister also warned of the negative impact of outsourcing.

Outsourcing is not a good alternative in sectors where there is no competition, she said.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/456>; <http://www.jhl.fi/portal/en/news/archive/?bid=1709>

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France

Efforts underway to save Petroplus plants

January 15, 2012

At government level, in various European countries negotiations are continuing to save the Swiss-based Petroplus refinery group and its facilities. Petroplus lenders have frozen all of the group's credit lines, but the company said negotiations continued to try to restore the funds it needs to keep its five European refineries running. In France, workers and union officials were met France's energy minister in an effort to save the Petit Couronne refinery. Clearly, the Sarkozy government is trying to avoid a number of high-profile industrial shutdowns and mass layoffs less than four months from a presidential election, though no specific outcomes have been mentioned. In Belgium, similar efforts have been underway concerning the Antwerp Petroplus refinery.

English: [http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/09/france-petroplus-idU ...](http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/09/france-petroplus-idU...)

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Germany

Union reaches 3.5% pay increase at Lufthansa

January 26, 2012

The ver.di services union has reached a negotiation result at Lufthansa for about 33,000 employed, after the employer improved its offer. The union's bargaining committee has agreed with the outcomes. The agreement includes a pay hike of 3.5%, starting 1 Januari 2012 and expiring 31 January 2013, for ground services, Lufthansa Systems, Lufthansa Technik and Lufthansa Cargo. At Lufthansa Service Gesellschaft (LSG) an employment guarantee and a lump-sum payment of €250 was agreed, with at least €100 for part-time workers. A number of additional payments have also been increased with 5%. Ver.di board member Christine Behle regarded the result as positive, also as the time schedules for the various agreements in the company are harmonised.

German: [http://www.verdi.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/++co++ba4 ...](http://www.verdi.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/++co++ba4...)

Doctors' union negotiates pay increase

January 25, 2012

The Marburger Bund doctors' trade union has agreed a pay increase of 2.9% for 50,000 doctors in 600 municipal hospitals with the VKA employers' organisation. The agreement runs from 1 January to 31 December 2012 and in addition there is a lump sum payment of €440 to cover the period from September to December 2011, effectively after the previous agreement expired until the new one comes into effect. There are also changes to the pay scale with additional steps in three of the pay bands. The union had built up pressure before the last negotiation round. After negotiations broke off in December 2011, 93% of the Bund members voted in favour of a strike.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/456> ; <http://www.thelocal.de/society/20120110-40021.html>

German: [http://www.marburger-bund.de/tarifpolitik/vka/Tarifrunde ...](http://www.marburger-bund.de/tarifpolitik/vka/Tarifrunde...)

Higher negotiated wage increases in 2011

January 20, 2012

Nominally, the collectively negotiated wage increases were higher in 2011 than in the years before. Overall, including longer-term collective agreements, the average wage increase was 2.0%, according to the Collective Agreements Archive (Tarifarchiv) of the Social and Economic Research Institute (WSI). Dr Reinhard Bispinck, leader of the Archive, adds that the unexpectedly strong increase of consumer prices has led to a negative real bargained wage for many workers: on average 0.3%, as

inflation was 2.3%. Yet, due to additional payments, longer working hours and the reduction of short-time arrangements ("Kurzarbeit"), real wage incomes rose by 1.1%, and on an hourly base by 0.5%. In 2011, unions affiliated with the DGB negotiated collective agreements for about 9.2 million employees, with an average duration of 22.8 months.

German: http://www.boeckler.de/14_38704.htm;
http://www.boeckler.de/pdf/pm_ta_2012_01_20.pdf

Metal union denies concessions at Opel

January 12, 2012

The head of the IG Metall district Frankfurt, Armin Schild, said in emailed comments to a press agency he was not in talks with General Motors (GM) over offering wage concessions from German workers at Opel in order to save jobs, as the loss-making European carmaker struggles to return to profitability. Earlier, the same news agency cited sources suggesting that under new union leadership at Opel IG Metall was prepared to work together hand in hand with the Detroit headquarters to cut costs.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/12/gm-opel-union-idU...>; <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/12/us-gm-opel-idUSTRE80A1T920120112>

Greece

Unions and employers both resist further wage reduction

January 31, 2012

Both employers and trade unions seem unified in their resistance to the pressure of the Papademos government for a further reduction of private sector wages. In their talks of Wednesday 25 January, both parties agreed that the current minimum wage of €751 monthly and the two extra monthly salaries that many private sector workers receive each year should not be reduced or scrapped. Yiannis Panagopoulos, president of the private sector union confederation GSEE, criticized the government for suggesting that it might force a law through Parliament that adjusts salaries if it is not happy with the outcome of union and employer talks. Meanwhile, in a press interview Poul Thomsen, head of the delegation to Greece of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), indicated that the 13th and 14th salaries need not be cut if authorities would lower the minimum wage and move ahead with closing down state-backed entities, leading to job cuts in the broader civil service (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 February, March, April, May, June, September, October, November and December 2011).

English: http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_ws1e1_1_25/01/2012_424189;
http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_ws1e1_16344_31/01/2012_425373

Hungary

Public transport unions plan demonstration

January 30, 2012

Unions at Budapest public transport company BKV have announced that on 7 February they will hold a demonstration in front of the company's headquarters. The demonstration is intended to call attention to the management's failure to consult employees on collective contracts and wages, the organisers said. Attila Gulyas, chairman of the local union said it was detestable that the central and municipal governments were keeping BKV on the brink of bankruptcy, which means that the standard of services is going down.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent

Malev union forms strike committee

January 30, 2012

Talks between management and the Air Transport Association Union (LESZ) at Malev Ground Handling (a unit of national carrier Malev Hungarian Airlines) on a collective contract have been broken off and the union has formed a strike committee, said LESZ chairman Attila Csorba. The contract ended 31 December 2011, but the union wants to extend it with some changes for another three years, according to Csorba. He said the union's demands would not raise payroll costs. According to Malev the only issue concerning the collective contract was the length of time for which it should be extended. LESZ is demanding a 10% pay increase and a 5% rise in headcount, the airline said. The first round of strike talks is to take place soon, parties expected.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent

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Ireland

Coalition split over public sector wage increases

January 31, 2012

In the government coalition there is a clear split visible over the issue of €1,000-a-year pay increases for public sector workers, notably aimed for teachers, nurses and guards and most civil servants. Health Minister and Fine Gael deputy leader, James Reilly, told a newspaper that the government must seriously consider getting rid of the pay hikes - days after Public Spending Minister, Labour Party's Brendan Howlin, defended them in parliament. Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) Eamon Gilmore has consistently said increments are part of the Croke Park deal.

English: [http://www.independent.ie/national-news/coalition-split-over-payment ...](http://www.independent.ie/national-news/coalition-split-over-payment-...)

Union protects in-house cleaning at hospitals

January 25, 2012

The SIPTU general union has prevented the outsourcing of cleaning at two hospitals following the threat of industrial action. The union had challenged the plans of the Health Service (HSE) management to privatise the cleaning without consultation. The Croke Park national agreement on public sector pay and restructuring requires consultation with trade unions over any planned outsourcing. The unions have proposed an alternative that involves extra hours of work for home helps. SIPTU Health Division Organiser, Paul Bell, said: "This is a very important agreement for health service staff and ends an attempt by HSE management to breach the terms of the Croke Park Agreement."

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/456> ;
<http://www.siptu.ie/media/pressreleases2012/othernews/fullstory.15397.en.html>

Construction unions not to accept further pay cuts

January 18, 2012

Construction unions have said not to accept any further wage reduction in the industry, in spite of a demand by employers for a 20% cut in the legal pay rates governing the sector. The employers' association, Construction Industry Federation, is expected to soon ask the Labour Court to cut the rates under the construction industry registered employment agreement (REA) by 20%. Those rates apply to 50,000 site-based workers. Fergus Whelan of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) said: "After very difficult negotiations with the CIF last year, we agreed a pay cut of 7.5%. That didn't result in the creation of one job in the industry. So it is very unlikely that we will be agreeing to any more pay cuts. They are not the way to get the industry out of the mess it is in. In fact, pay cuts will only make it worse."

English: [http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/we-wont-take-another-pay-cut ...](http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/we-wont-take-another-pay-cut-...)

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Italy

Further strikes envisaged against planned reforms

January 28, 2012

On Tuesday 24 January, nationwide strike action and traffic blocks of truck drivers, among which many self-employed, have disrupted traffic and industrial supply. Five Fiat car factories had to close temporarily. The truckers' actions are opposing a new government tax that has increased fuel prices. Their organisations have announced further strikes in February, as have done doctors, lawyers, pharmacists and other professional groups in protest of various aspects of the reforms planned by the Monti government. The main union confederations obviously take a cautious stand regarding the social unrest. Raffaele Bonanni, leader of the CISL confederation, said, concerning the truckers: "There needs to be a solution that gives hope to the workers. They do an exhausting job and they are undercut by truck drivers from other countries."

English: <http://www.agi.it/english-version/business/elenco-notizie/20120128...>;
<http://news.ph.msn.com/business/article.aspx?cp-documentid=5801867>

Post-accident agreement for Costa Concordia crew

January 25, 2012

The inspectorate of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) in Italy has helped to secure an agreement that will help crew members who survived the tragic demise of the Costa Concordia in the immediate aftermath of the accident. The ITF team took on the task of liaising with ITF unions in crew members' home countries and acting as a link with the company. They also visited crew in hotels so that they could relay their needs to the company. Following the inspectorate's intervention, the entire multinational crew on board the Costa Concordia received a letter from the company agreeing to provide them with a number of benefits, such as: pocket money for initial expenditure; a consolidated salary payment up until the end of the period specified in their employment contract, with a minimum of two months' basic wages and cover of up to USD3,570 (€2,842) for the loss of personal effects.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/6937>

Massive support for private waste strike

January 25, 2012

The four trade unions organising in the private waste sector (FP-CGIL, FIT CISL, UILTRASPORTI and FIADDEL) have congratulated their members on the very high levels of support for the strike across the country. The unions estimate that nearly nine in 10 workers joined the action that took place on 16 and 17 January, mainly in protest at the employers' refusal to re-negotiate a sector-level agreement (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 November and December 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/456>

Italian: <http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/21021>

Steel plant on strike against closure

January 24, 2012

On Tuesday 24 January, unions reported that workers at Italian steelmaker Lucchini's iron and coke producing unit in Trieste went on a one-day strike to protest against plans to halt the plant. Lucchini Group, controlled by Alexei Mordashov, the majority stakeholder of Russian steel maker Severstal, has told the unions it could stop production at the Ferriera Servola plant from 1 February. Urging Lucchini to find a solution to keep the plant running, Servola workers decided to lay down tools on Tuesday, the FIM, FIOM, UILM and FAILMS unions said in a joint statement. Shutdown of the Trieste plant would hit the entire group, unions say.

English: <http://af.reuters.com/article/metalsNews/idAFL5E8CO1U020120124> via

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

Lithuania

Court decision backs Carlsberg in attacking labour rights

January 12, 2012

Brewery multinational Carlsberg has attacked trade union rights in Lithuania with the support of the country's legal system. On 10 June 2011, members of the Lithuanian Trade Union of Food Producers (LPMS) voted in favour of strike action at the local Carlsberg brewery in support of their demand for a decent company-level collective agreement. Management sought to stop the strike and applied to the court asking to declare the strike ballot procedure invalid and the strike illegal, arguing that no strike action was possible until the "high season" had passed. On 20 June, the Klaipeda district court suspended the start of the planned strike for 30 days based on the determination that the production of beer was recognized as "vitally essential" in Lithuania. By contrast, two weeks later the city district court ruled that the strike was legal. Carlsberg management appealed this decision, and on 5 August the Klaipeda regional court annulled the decision of the lower court, ruling that the strike was illegal. The union has appealed the regional court decision to a higher court, where the case is still pending. Meanwhile, Carlsberg Lithuania management has pressured union leaders and activists through disciplinary action. Furthermore the company initiated a police enquiry against workers who joined a picket line to protest the suspension of the strike.

English: <http://cms.iuf.org/?q=node/1343>

Malta

Most women feel discriminated against

January 16, 2012

According to a recent study, commissioned by the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, seven out of 10 working women claim that their employer does not have an equal opportunity policy at work to avoid discrimination and harassment. A majority of women interviewed said to feel discriminated at work. Results also showed that 63% of working women felt economically independent due to their job. The report focuses in particular on vulnerable workers (women and men), working in tourism, cleaning and language schools. Almost 70% of the 600 vulnerable workers interviewed were paid on an hourly rate, 15% were paid below the minimum wage, 19% were not paid government bonuses, and 40% were not allowed break time.

English: [http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20120116/local/most-women-feel ...](http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20120116/local/most-women-feel...)

Netherlands

Cleaners' actions continue

January 30, 2012

Backed by the FNV Bondgenoten union, thousands of cleaners continue their strike combined with actions in various Dutch cities. According to their spokespersons, employers and principals have yet not adequately responded on the issues that keep parties from reaching an agreement for 150,000 employed such as sick pay, enough time to do the job properly, and more respect and appreciation on the job. On 13 January, 2,500 cleaners took part in a "March for Respect" in The Hague. A temporary suspension of the actions and a lowering of pay demand from 5 to 2.5% did not result in any change in the position of the OSB employers' association. In reaction the cleaners and their union have decided to new actions, including marches in Utrecht and Groningen. Meanwhile, and though the OSB says this does not contribute to a solution of the conflict, some principals have announced to lower work pressure for cleaners, notably Dutch Railways (NS), the Rotterdam Polytechnic and the Rotterdam municipality (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 4

December 2011).

English: [http://www.uniglobalunion.org/Apps/uni.nsf/pages/homepageEn?Opend ...](http://www.uniglobalunion.org/Apps/uni.nsf/pages/homepageEn?Opend...) ; <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/220846.html>

Dutch: *De Volkskrant*, 23 and 26 January 2011;

<http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/nieuws/nieuwsarchief/2012/januari...>

Teachers' strike widespread

January 28, 2012

Nearly 22,000 secondary school teachers joined in a successful strike called by the FNV-affiliated teachers' union, the Algemene Onderwijsbond (AOB), on 26 January. About 200 schools closed. This strike opposed the latest government Bill imposing new additional classroom hours for students, and curtailing teachers' holidays by one week. Basically, those on strike protested the growing workload of secondary school teachers, the continuous changes in legislation and regulation, and the lack of respect and recognition from the side of the authorities.

English: http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/news_details/2067

Dutch: *NRC-Handelsblad* 25, 26 and 27 January 2011

Negotiations with local authorities focus on job security

January 25, 2012

FNV Abvakabo and other public service unions will restart negotiations with local government employers on 1 February, with a main focus on job security. The unions want a good agreement to protect municipal employees affected by restructuring. They are also looking to protect purchasing power and decent work. The municipal agreement effectively expired eight months ago. The unions will be looking for some positive responses from the employers on 1 February, or more actions may follow (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 March, May, November and December 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/456>

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

Norway

Unions demonstrate against Agency Workers Directive

January 25, 2012

The Fagforbundet municipal workers union, EL&IT energy union and the large private sector union Fellesforbundet were among those supporting a day of action in protest at the proposed introduction of the European Agency Workers Directive into Norway. Over 150,000 workers came out on the streets on this behalf. Although not a member of the European Union, Norway does implement most EU directives, but on this occasion unions are concerned that the directive might provide a opening to create a two-tier system, with agency workers on inferior terms and conditions. While welcoming the part of the directive concerning equal treatment of temporary and permanent workers, the unions are particularly worried that implementation of the directive will remove several restrictions in collective agreements currently obliging employers to agree on any kinds of temporary contracts with the unions.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/456> ; <http://www.imfmetal.org/index.cfm?c=28637&l=2>

Norwegian: http://www.fagforbundet.no/forsida/?article_id=70743

Poland

Confederations withdraw from social dialogue

January 25, 2012

In an unprecedented move the three trade union confederations (Solidarnosc, NPZZ and Forum) have agreed to withdraw from tripartite social dialogue working groups and to challenge the Prime Minister on the government's failure to comply with legislation on social dialogue and convene regular meetings of the tripartite commission. The unions argue that the government has a constitutional duty to take part in the social dialogue and not just in the working groups that have no decision-making role.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/456>

Polish: <http://www.solidarnosc.org.pl/pl/aktualnosci/sielanka-sie-skonczyla.html>

International support for truckers' strike

January 13, 2012

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) has thrown its weight behind efforts to ensure that Polish truck drivers, who went on strike on 2 January, receive the wages and conditions they deserve. Some 350 drivers, represented by the Solidarnosc union and employed by trucking firm Norbert Dentressangle, walked out on strike in protest over the company's refusal to start negotiations with the union on a collective agreement. The company's Polish workers have seen no pay rise for four years. It has also been reported that they are enduring deplorable working conditions, such as poor sanitation and nutrition. When in July 2011 Solidarnosc insisted on collective bargaining, the company was reported to have intimidated workers, threatening them with dismissal.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/6885>

Portugal

Unions mobilise for 11 February demonstration

January 25, 2012

Jointly with other unions affiliates to the GCTP-IN confederation, the STAL public service union is mobilising support for a national demonstration called by the confederation on 11 February. The demonstration is in protest at the austerity measures being imposed by the troika of European Commission, European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Workers in the public sector have seen their pay cut while more broadly workers are facing longer hours and shorter holidays (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 November and December 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/456>

Portuguese: http://www.stal.pt/index.php?option=com_content...

Spain

Central agreement reached on wage moderation

January 25, 2012

On Wednesday 25 January, the two major trade union confederations, CCOO and UGT, agreed the so-called Second Agreement for Collective Use and Negotiation with the two employers' associations, CEOE and CEPYME. This central agreement comprises wage increases up to 0.5% for 2012, 0.6% for 2013 and between 0.6% and 1.5% for 2014, with updates. The agreement enlarges, in addition, internal flexibility for companies, extends assumptions on the conditions in which the company owners can claim not to abide by the agreement, and determines the structure of collective negotiations. Among the reasons that could allow derogations from the agreement is a company's persistent reduction of turnover, or the fact that the company's economic perspective can be negatively affected by its application. This pact is what Spain needs at the moment, Candido Mendez, UGT Secretary General, said in a press conference, recognizing that a wage reduction is

imminent.

English: http://www.plenglish.com/index.php?option=com_content...

Public sector unions mobilise against regional government attacks

January 25, 2012

While the national government has announced another year of pay freezes across the public sector, regional governments are planning their own range of cuts to pay and conditions and services. Public sector unions are planning a series of demonstrations and strikes in response to these attacks. In Valencia unions are planning legal action as well as demonstrations against the regional government's planned savings of more than €1 billion. In the Basque region unions have tried to negotiate but the government is insistent on imposing a range of measures that will reduce rights to partial and early retirement. In Castilla –La Mancha unions have united in a campaign against the cuts that will include local mobilisations around the time of the budget vote, a demonstration in Toledo on 11 February and a strike on 29 February.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/456>

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Sweden

Pay increase of 3% in manufacturing

January 11, 2012

At the end of December 2011, 170 IF Metall union reps from sites across the country agreed to a new 14 month contract with employers' associations, starting February 1, 2012, and running up to March 31, 2013. Salaries will be increased by 3%. Similar agreements have been approved by other unions, including Pappers, Unionen, the wood- and graphics workers' union GS, and Livs, the Swedish Food Workers' Union. In total, 540.000 industrial workers are covered by the new agreements, which are normative for the rest of the economy. In IF Metall, the agreements concern 171 000 members in technology, steel, mining and chemistry. The union and the employers will continue to negotiate about a system to retain jobs and invest in education during recessions, aiming at a final proposal by the end of February 2012. Unionen, representing 120,000 workers in many sectors, negotiated 0.2% on top of the 3% for professional development. The union represents white-collar, technical, engineering, administration, and other staff. Pappers took a major step closer to a June deadline in finalizing industry-wide language banning all social dumping concerning agency and precarious work. The other unions also made strides in limiting and regulating temporary and short-term work.

English: <http://www.imfmetal.org/index.cfm?c=28514&l=2;>
<http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4833-Sweden-s-Industrial...>

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Switzerland

Public service union backs minimum wage initiative

January 25, 2012

The VPÖD-SSP public services union has lent its support to the initiative by the SGB/USS confederation to submit a petition with 110,000 signatures to the government and regions (cantons) to introduce a national minimum wage. The target wage is 22 CHF (€18) an hour (or 4,000 CHF (€3300) per month based on a 42-hour week). An estimated 400,000 workers currently earn less than this and three quarters of them are women. Unions in the public sector have already secured 4,000 CHF as a minimum wage, although this is under threat from privatisation. Only action by VPÖD-SSP ensured that the minimum would be applied following privatisation of cleaning in Geneva where the employers had wanted to introduce a minimum of only 17 CHF (€14) an hour.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/456>

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

French: <http://www.ssp-vpod.ch/actualites/nouvelles/ansicht...>

Union action saves jobs at Novartis

January 23, 2012

The UNIA union celebrated a success in its campaign to save the 320 jobs at the pharmaceutical giant Novartis' production site at Prangis, near Nyon. On 17 January the decision to reverse a plant closure at the Prangin production site near Nyon was announced, following a spirited campaign of strikes, mass mobilisations and mass support from the local public and area politicians. Staff at the Prangins facility took the concession of increasing weekly work hours from 37.5 to 40 in negotiations. Novartis had planned to cut 2,000 jobs internationally, with 760 at its Basle headquarters and 320 in Nyon. Job cuts were greatly reduced at Basle as well, with only a third of the initially planned job cuts to now occur.

English: [http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4859-UNIA-Jobs-Saved ...](http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4859-UNIA-Jobs-Saved...)

United Kingdom

Unilever workers in defense of pensions, also in Davos

January 25, 2012

Workers from Unilever's Port Sunlight UK site will be puncturing corporate power's party bubble when they turn up at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos to protest against their employer's grab on the their pensions. Unilever is planning changes that will see the UK workforce between 20 and 40% worse off following the decision by the company to cut their pensions. Thousands of workers across the multinational's twelve UK sites have been on strike since December 2011 in protest at these plans. Despite repeated appeals and the offer of talks at the conciliation service, ACAS, Unilever has steadfastly refused to meet with the unions to talk about a fairer settlement. The company's CEO, Paul Polman, is one of the co-chairs of this year's WEF.

English: http://www.unitetheunion.org/news_events/latest_news/unilever_workers...

Unions continue protest over local pay cuts

January 25, 2012

Over one year after their dispute began, the Unite and UNISON trade unions are maintaining their industrial action campaign in protest at pay cuts imposed by Southampton City Council. At a recent meeting the unions agreed to continue action short of a strike, to organise a lobby of the council on 15 February and to plan for a major demonstration and strike action in April (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 May, June, July-August, September and October 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/456> ;
http://www.unison.org.uk/news/news_view.asp?did=7539 ;
[http://www.unitetheunion.org/news_events/latest_news ...](http://www.unitetheunion.org/news_events/latest_news...)

Union signs agreement with local council on pay equality

January 25, 2012

The GMB general union has signed a collective agreement with the Dudley Council in the West Midlands region of England that addresses previous problems of gender pay inequality in the pay and grading structure, after GMB members voted to accept it. The negotiations were lengthy, but the agreement was necessary to bring pay in the Council in line with equality legislation.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/456> ;
http://www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/latest_news/dudley_council_new_agreement.aspx

Union wins major compensation for former Woolworths workers

January 20, 2012

The shopworkers' union Usdaw has won compensation worth up to a massive UKP 67.8 million (€ 81.6 million) for over 24,000 former employees of Woolworths made redundant when this retail firm collapsed at the end of 2008. By early January 2009 the administrators had closed all of its stores, offices and distribution centres, and made nearly 30,000 people redundant in the process. Usdaw made a claim on behalf of its members for a Protective Award after the administrators failed in their legal duty to consult with the union before making redundancies. In a judgement released on 20 January, the Employment Tribunal in London found that the administrators had failed in their legal obligations to consult with Usdaw and awarded its members compensation of 60 days pay, capped at UKP330 (€397) a week, the maximum payable in these circumstances. Nevertheless, union officials are disappointed that the compensation award excludes all former employees (about 3,000) who happened to work in smaller stores where fewer than 20 redundancies were made.

English: <http://www.usdaw.org.uk/newsevents/news/2012/jan/usdawwins...>

New charges will make tackling discrimination at work harder

January 19, 2012

Introducing fees to take claims to employment tribunals could have a huge impact on ensuring equality at work, TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber on 19 January warned a conference. Before Christmas the government published its plans for charging users of employment tribunals. Under the proposals an individual will have to pay a minimum of UKP600 (€722) and possibly as much as UKP1,750 (€2,105) to have a discrimination claim heard at a tribunal. If the plans come into law, the TUC confederation believes it will be even harder in future to get proper enforcement and compliance with the law as employers will know that they face little realistic prospect of being held to account.

English: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-20498-fo.cfm>

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For more information, please contact the editor Maarten van Klaveren, Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies (AIAS) M.vanKlaveren@uva.nl or the communications officer of the ETUI, Mariya Nikolova mnikolova@etui.org. For previous issues of the Collective bargaining newsletter please visit <http://www.etui.org/E-Newsletters/Collective-bargaining-newsletter>. You may find further information on the ETUI at www.etui.org, and on the AIAS at www.uva-aias.net. © ETUI aisbl, Brussels 2012. All rights reserved. We encourage the distribution of this newsletter and of the information it contains, for non-commercial purposes and provided the source is credited. The ETUI is not responsible for the content of external internet sites. The ETUI is financially supported by the European Union. The European Union is not responsible for any use made of the information contained in this publication.

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