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Issue 3/2012 March

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

Wage agreement for the Red Cross

March 23, 2012

In a fourth round of negotiations the trade unions vida and GPA-djp reached an agreement with the Red Cross in Vienna (ÖRK). The agreed wage increase (with retrospective effect from 1 February 2012) is 3.3%. For all Austrian Red Cross workers (6,000 workers) an improvement of the parental and sickness leave (retrospective as from 1 January 2012) has been concluded.

German: <http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=SO3/Page/Index&n ...>

1450 Euro minimum wage demand in the tourism sector

March 23, 2012

With the Austrian tourism sector still performing relatively well the trade unions fight in the ongoing bargaining sessions against the phenomenon of ‘working poor’. Tourism scores second worst after agriculture in the statistics of gross annual income of workers. The unions vida and GPA-djp (membership: 174,000 workers and 27,000 staff by February 2012) therefore demand an increase of the minimum wage from €1208 to €1450. The next negotiation round is planned for 12 April.

German: <http://www.oegb.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=OEGBZ/Page/OEGBZ ...>

Building workers pay rises with 4.2%

March 15, 2012

The trade union Gewerkschaft Bau-Holz (GBH) negotiated with the aim to keep the purchasing

power upright. The results of the talks, necessary after the expiring of a 3 years agreement, lead to new increases of pay with a basic rise of 3.3% for the building industry (plus an extra bonus of 0.9 %) and the finishing sector (with a extra bonus of 0.85 %). As a consequence the pay rise is 4.2 to 4.15% for approximately 130,000 workers.

German: [http://www.bau-holz.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=Do1/Page/ ...](http://www.bau-holz.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=Do1/Page/...)

Guide for effective company bargaining on restructuring

March 9, 2012

Vida and AK Vienna have published a guide for workers representatives in the hospital sector that deals with negotiations on outsourcing. The guide provides information on outsourcing processes and experiences of workers representatives in this part of the care sector. Also included are tips and a checklist with important do's and don'ts.

German: [http://www.vida.at/servlet/BlobServer?blobcol=urldokument& ...](http://www.vida.at/servlet/BlobServer?blobcol=urldokument&...)

Collective agreement for the graphical branches concluded

March 1, 2012

From 1 April 2012 wages for offset and affiliate trade workers will increase with 3.63%. Given the difficult economic outlook there will be no payment of overtime bonuses in the sector between 18.00 and 19.00 hours. The agreement includes a payment of annual increases related to the inflation rate and has a duration till 31 December 2016. Workers in the newspaper branch receive from 1 April 2012 a 3,63% wage increase.

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

Belgium

First part of a social plan concluded at Bekaert

March 16, 2012

The announced restructuring at four Bekaert plants has led to intensive negotiations on a social plan. In the fifth round a first agreement was reached on the demand to include voluntary job-leavers in the social plan provisions and to reduce these leavers from the planned dismissals (announced were 609 workers at Aalter, Deerlijk, Ingelmunster and Zwevegem). The planning is to end the talks around 30 April 2012, with management having agreed not to dismiss before that date. Different instruments (part time leave, early retirement and retraining) are considered.

Dutch: [http://www.abvvmetaal.be/index.php?option=com_content&view=article& ...](http://www.abvvmetaal.be/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&...)

Unions condemn private militia action against workers at Meister Sprimont

March 8, 2012

Belgian unions ACV-CSC Metea and MWB-FGTB, together with German union IG Metall, have strongly condemned the violent anti-trade union action at the German company Meister in Sprimont (Belgium) on February 26. After a week of protest action by the workforce against the decision to relocate to the Czech Republic, employees were faced with a terrifying raid by well-armed German "security agents" to remove equipment and material from the Belgian subsidiary. In the meantime the situation has calmed down and talks with the new management have started.

English: <http://www.imfmetal.org/index.cfm?c=29221&l=2>

Dutch: http://acv-csc-metea.acv-online.be/actua/detail/20120308_meister.asp

French: [http://acv-csc-metea.csc-en-ligne.be/actualite_nouveaunom/detail ...](http://acv-csc-metea.csc-en-ligne.be/actualite_nouveaunom/detail...)

Bulgaria

Trade unions call for an emergency meeting on long-delayed pay

March 28, 2012

Metal workers of the Lead and Zinc Complex in Kardzhali have blocked the main road into the mining town after a visit of Prime Minister Borisov to the company management failed to deliver a solution for the long overdue payment of wages. Workers from the Madan metal mines received their wages last week after the exploitation rights for the mine were transferred to a new company, but the Kardzhali complex is not subject to a state-granted concession and no solution is in sight for these workers. The Prime Minister announced his intention of speaking to the company's other creditors while unions warned that the actions would continue.

English: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=137948

Croatia

Warning strike at Croatia Airlines

March 9, 2012

A daylong strike by three trade unions active in Croatia Airlines, which started at 6am on Thursday 8 March, forced the national carrier to cancel 51% of flights, according to a company spokesperson. Aircrafts were flying according to a special schedule. The management had refused to accept the trade unions demands during talks on a new collective agreement, even though the unions had presented minimum demands to keep upright the existing agreements that expire 31 March 2012.

English: <http://www.emg.rs/en/news/region/176019.html>

Croatian workers union criticises budget cuts

March 6, 2012

At a Social Council meeting in late February, Mladen Novosel, the president of the Croatian Workers Union, challenged the government representatives who announced savings of around 260m euros with public sector cuts, by reducing employee benefits, and layoffs of about 5,000 freelance workers.

English: [http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features ...](http://www.setimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/en_GB/features/setimes/features...)
<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/croatia-to-dismiss-five-thousand-public-servants>

Cyprus

Air traffic controllers call off strike - pay dispute in air traffic continues

March 10, 2012

A strike action announced by small categorial trade union of traffic controllers (ATC) has led to a controversy among the Cyprus trade unions. A bill, which sets a minimum level of work coverage for an essential service, was met with tacit yet cautious approval by the country's bigger unions, who stressed the bill only applied to air traffic control and not other services. ATC was accused of bad handling the matter by refusing to negotiate with the government and allowing the state to step in and regulate.

English: <http://news.ph.msn.com/business/article.aspx?cp-documentid=5970151> ;
<http://www.stockhouse.com/News/FinancialNewsDetailFeeds.aspx?n=14830699&src=cp> ;
<http://www.cyprus-mail.com/air-traffic-controllers/traffic-controllers-call-strikes/20120310>

Czech Republic

Demonstration against the government's austerity measures announced

March 19, 2012

The Czech umbrella union CMKOS has announced a demonstration in an effort to have the government either to halt the planned austerity steps or resign. CMKOS rejects the government-proposed measures such as a VAT increase, slower indexation of pensions and dismissals of civil servants. The education workers' union went already on strike alert on Friday 16 March. A coordination committee is established to address leaders of the second largest umbrella union, the Independent Unions' Association (ASO), and activists from other groups opposed to the government. The negotiations are to result in a joint rally in the Wenceslas Square on April 21.

English: [http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/czech-umbrella-union-calls ...](http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/czech-umbrella-union-calls...)

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Denmark

Building sector agreement renewed

March 9, 2012

Danish Building (Dansk Byggeri) and HK Privat settled a new 2-year agreement for 2,000 workers in parts of the building sector. The apprentice pay will increase with 2.25%. Further improvements are better parental leave, pensions contributions starting from the age of 18 years and improved seniority provisions.

Danish: [http://www.hk.dk/privat/nyheder/nyheder/marts_2012/fri_juleaften_for_hkere ...](http://www.hk.dk/privat/nyheder/nyheder/marts_2012/fri_juleaften_for_hkere...)

Office and storage branch has a new agreement

March 5, 2012

The Danish Employers Association Dansk Erhverv Arbejdsgiver and the trade unions HK Handel and HK Privat conclude a new agreement for 25,000 workers in the offices and storages branches. Included are improvements in training, a strengthening of the role of union representatives and better parental leave.

Danish: [http://www.hk.dk/privat/nyheder/nyheder/marts_2012/ny_overenskomst_paa ...](http://www.hk.dk/privat/nyheder/nyheder/marts_2012/ny_overenskomst_paa...)

New collective agreement in IT streamlines the minimum wage

March 5, 2012

The Dansk Erhverv Arbejdsgiver employers' organisation and the HK Privat union signed, on 5 March, an agreement renewing the IT collective agreement (IT overenskomst). The duration is two years and the agreement is valid from 1 March 2012. Wages will increase as of 1 March 2012 and 2013 with 2.25%. The age to enter into the pension system will be lowered from 20 to 18 years. The system of two existing minimum wages rates (for professionals and for skilled work) will end and as of 1 March 2013 young workers will receive the same minimum wage (of 9,782 DK or €1315), regardless of the nature of their work.

Danish: [http://www.danskerhverv.dk/OmDanskErhverv/Nyhedsbreve/Documents/ ...](http://www.danskerhverv.dk/OmDanskErhverv/Nyhedsbreve/Documents/...)

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Estonia

Concessions after protests against parliamentary amendment collective bargaining act

March 15, 2012

In reaction to an amendment to the collective bargaining act, adopted by one of the parliamentary committees without consultation of the social partners, several unions have organised actions. Unions argue that the amendment, which allows employers to unilaterally pull out of collective agreements half a year after their expiration, fundamentally infringes on workers' rights and will weaken employees in wage re-negotiations. Amongst others the mining and transport unions, supported by the Nordic transport workers union, organised the largest actions in decades. The

unions also expressed support for the teachers' strike.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/7177>;
<http://news.err.ee/society/f505d95c-d8ac-478f-9abb-70a69205fa0c> ;
<http://news.err.ee/economy/aa46ac4b-f28a-4981-9d80-56eff7dbf3e5>

Broad (international) support for teachers' strike

March 8, 2012

On the 7th of March 16,000 teachers started on a three-day strike demanding a 20% pay rise. The teachers unions rejected the earlier offer from the education minister to raise the wages by 15%, from €608 to €700 from 2013 onwards as insufficient and too late. Both school and kindergarten teachers went on strike, receiving support, amongst others, from the state-owned Narva power plant workers and the transport unions.

English: <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/30767/> ;
<http://news.err.ee/education/05c28560-ea5a-47aa-a5f2-fb6f936d2033>;
<http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/energy/?doc=54339>

Finland

Unions turn down European Commission proposal to limit the right to strike

March 28, 2012

Trade union confederations SAK, STTK and Akava have issued a joint statement rejecting the European Commission proposal concerning the right to strike. The proposed Monti II regulation aims to define the relation between the right to take industrial action and the freedom of establishment and freedom to provide services. SAK, STTK and Akava warn that any conditionality on the right to strike is an infringement of fundamental freedoms.

English: <http://www.artto.kaapeli.fi/unions/T2012/p13>

Older workers are pushed out of the labour market

March 14, 2012

According to research published by salaries employees' trade union Pro older workers were more likely to be laid off during the crisis than younger workers. The union warns that the weak position in the labour market for older workers is at odds with the country's policies to extend the working age.

English: <http://www.artto.kaapeli.fi/unions/T2012/p10>

Urgent need for equality plans to reduce gender pay gap

March 8, 2012

On the occasion of international women's day, the public and welfare sectors union JHL released a statement urging all social partners to invest in the elimination of the 18% gender pay gap that persists in Finland. JHL states that women's working conditions and wages should be specifically addressed in collective bargaining and furthermore calls for the implementation of the 1995 legislation obliging all companies of 30 employees or more to create and update equality plans.

English: <http://www.jhl.fi/portal/en/news/archive/?bid=1829>

France

When spies call for labour protest

March 14, 2012

The union representing French domestic intelligence officers, those charged with counter-espionage and anti-terror investigations, called Wednesday 14 March on its members to stage a protest against the human resource management of the agency (with some 4,000 officers). The head of the SNOP union, which represents senior police officers and is the main labour body for members of the DCRI security agency, announced that his members had planned a "gathering" at the Paris headquarters on Friday 16 March. However, the union rejects any attempt to agency outsiders to make political capital out of the internal dispute.

English: [http://www.canada.com/news/French+spies+stage+labour+protest/6301582/ ...](http://www.canada.com/news/French+spies+stage+labour+protest/6301582/)

Germany

Latest news: Breakthrough after all-night negotiations in the public sector

March 31, 2012

German interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich, who led the talks with the public service union Verdi, announced in Potsdam shortly before 7 a.m. on Saturday 31 March that the negotiators had reached an agreement. Verdi, representing 2 million public-sector workers, had been seeking a 6.5% rise for one year after years of accepting modest pay deals and had rejected an earlier offer of 3.3%. If the deal is approved by the union membership (members have a final say in a consultation between 11 and 25 April) public-sector workers will receive a 3.5% pay rise retroactive to March 1. They will receive a further 1.4% in January 2013 and another 1.4% pay rise in August 2013. The position of apprentices has been strengthened; after their qualification and a successful first year of service they will receive a permanent contract. Apprentices pay increases on 1 March 2012 with €50 and on 1 August 2013 with €40. The collective bargaining committee of the union approved the deal later on that Saturday.

German: <http://www.verdi.de/themen/geld-tarif/tarifrunde-oed-2012/++co ...> ;
<http://www.wallstreet-online.de/nachricht/4895901-verdi-stimmt-einigungsvorschlag ...>

English: <http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/03/31/germany-wages-idINDEE82 ...>

Deutsche Telekom workers out on warn strikes

March 29, 2012

Verdi organised a strike on Thursday 29 March with more than 10,000 workers engaged across Germany as the wage talks failed to reach an agreement. The management so far has not come up with acceptable proposals according to the union. The union demands wage increases of 6.5% for the workforce (of around 85,000 workers). Further demands aim to improve the situation of the lowest wage earners (including for apprentices a monthly increase of €70).

English: <http://www.telecompaper.com/news/verdi-calls-deutsche-telekom-workers ...>

German: <http://tk-it.bayern.verdi.de/tarifverhandlungen-2012/deutsche-telekom> ;
<http://hannover.verdi.de/aktuelles/archiv/archiv-2012-01-quartal/pm-2012-03-29>

Public service and airport strikes as an upbeat to next round of negotiations

March 28, 2012

The third round of collective bargaining for the working conditions of 2 million workers at national and regional level started on Wednesday 28 March after weeks of warn strikes and other alert actions. The public services union Verdi mobilised around 215,000 workers. On 27 March the main airports in Frankfurt, Cologne/Bonn, Düsseldorf, Munich and Stuttgart were paralysed as the employees of the different airport services joint the strikes.

German: [http://www.verdi.de/themen/geld-tarif/tarifrunde-oed-2012/ ...](http://www.verdi.de/themen/geld-tarif/tarifrunde-oed-2012/) ;
[http://www.verdi.de/themen/geld-tarif/tarifrunde-oed-2012/ ...](http://www.verdi.de/themen/geld-tarif/tarifrunde-oed-2012/)

English: <http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20120326-710973.html> ;
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/26/lufthansa-strikes-idUSL6E8EQ77I20120326>

Annual collective bargaining report 2011 is out

March 23, 2012

The favourable economic situation that prevailed in Germany in 2011 allowed trade unions to adopt a much more assertive bargaining strategy in that year's negotiating round. This led to pay settlements considerably above those in the previous year. However, consumer price inflation, at 2.3 per cent, was almost twice as high as in 2010. This and other valuable information can be read in the annual report produced by the German Hans Böckler Foundation.

English: http://www.boeckler.de/pdf/p_ta_jb_2011_english.pdf

Pressure on DHL to guarantee workforce rights

March 7, 2012

A coalition of global union organisations is challenging DHL to prove its respect for the workforce that helped generate the solid profits that were announced at the Frankfurt home based transnational company. As part of the challenge to guarantee the same basic rights to all its workers and to recognise and respect labour rights the ITUC, UNI and ITF will be unveiling **Respect at DHL**, a new campaign website.

English: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/as-profits-announced-unions.html?lang=en> ;
<http://www.itfglobal.org/press-area/index.cfm/pressdetail/7116>

Worries about the influence of small unions

March 7, 2012

Following controversial strikes, a fundamental dispute over the much-cherished principle of collective bargaining in Germany has come to a head. Small unions are gaining a disproportionate amount of influence as the unionisation in some sectors is splintering, although the courts have often ruled that the splinters have to end their strikes. This development can be seen as a direct consequence of 2010 Federal Labour Court rulings that have put an end to the principle of *Tarifeinheit* (Bargaining unity) that had existed over 60 years. The rulings gave more rights to small unions to contest the basis system with only one agreement for a given company. The DGB unions are worried that professional groups that stand to benefit the most from strikes could abandon the principle of solidarity. Employers, for their part, fear that companies will face permanent turmoil in the future, because individual collective bargaining agreements will constantly be expiring.

English: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,819710,00.html>

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Greece

Seamen strikes called off after two days

March 20, 2012

The Panhellenic Seamen's Union (PNO) started a strike on the 19th of March that lasted 48 hours. The seamen protested against pension cuts, changes to collective labour contracts and the absorption of their social security funds into a new national organisation. PNO announced after the second day that it would call off further strikes following a meeting with Development and Maritime Affairs Minister Anna Diamantopoulou, and Labour Minister Giorgos Koutroumanis, who offered them written responses to complaints regarding cuts to pensions and salaries.

English: [http://greece.greekreporter.com/2012/03/16/seamen-to-hold-48-hour-strike ...](http://greece.greekreporter.com/2012/03/16/seamen-to-hold-48-hour-strike-...) and:

ILO report outlines effects of austerity on social dialogue and collective bargaining

End of February 2012

In a series of national studies on collective bargaining and effective responses to the crisis 'Supporting collective bargaining and sound industrial relations', the ILO has published a report on the case of Greece. The report addresses the role of collective bargaining in a context of extreme budget cuts.

English: [http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---dialogue/ ...](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---dialogue/)

Hungary

Budapest Airport temporarily closes Terminal 1- agreement concluded on layoff

March 27, 2012

Terminal 1 at the Liszt Ferenc International Airport will be closed down following the grounding of national carrier MALEV Hungarian Airlines. Airport operator said its terminal 2 alone would be able to handle all traffic, which has declined since Hungarian flag carrier Malev declared bankruptcy in early February. As a result of the bankruptcy of MALEV, the airport has to layoff as much as 198 employees, 20 % of the manpower. Furthermore investments worth €50-60 million will be suspended this year too. An agreement had been concluded by two of the trade unions on dismissal that started 1 month ago.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent

New jobs in the transport sector

March 27, 2012

Hungarian road haulage company Waberer's wants to offer jobs to 360 jobseekers in northeast Hungary - an area with high unemployment - if they complete a truck-driving course. Waberer's chairman-CEO György Waberer said at a press conference in Vásárosnamény that the truck-driving course for 120 potential employees would start in weeks. State secretary for employment affairs Sándor Czomba said the instruction would take place with the involvement of job centers and be supported with state funding. He added that Waberer's new drivers could start working as early as the summer. Waberer's is the road haulage leader in Central and Eastern Europe. It has 2,500 lorries and employs 4,000 people.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent

Layoffs at universities

March 27, 2012

The austerity measures and layoffs had reached the Hungarian universities as well. Recently the University of Miskolc told to dismiss as much as 70-80 employees, including 15-20 teachers too. Gyula Patkó, rector of the university said if the school managed to decrease its costs while increasing the own revenues, the number of layoffs would be less. Other universities like University of Debrecen and Pécs earlier decided to layoff, because of the decreased support from the state.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent

Ireland

Union members reject pay cuts

March 27, 2012

Members of the National Union of Journalists have rejected a 5% pay cut proposed by the Irish Examiner, part of Thomas Crosbie Holdings, to keep the company competitive in an internal poll. NUJ's general secretary states that the staff has already made significant sacrifice and says the new cuts would go too far. The Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union (SIPTU) and Unite are also believed to have organised polls.

English: [http://www.independent.ie/business/irish/nuj-vote-rejects-5pc-pay-cut ...](http://www.independent.ie/business/irish/nuj-vote-rejects-5pc-pay-cut...)

Pay cuts in return for fewer layoffs

March 9, 2012

Ireland's largest insurance firm stated that, contrary to earlier estimates, it will need to cut back by much less than 950 jobs but said that the remaining staff might suffer pay deductions. The company announced it is committed to the Irish market but intends to thoroughly restructure its activities in the countries and is in negotiations with unions.

English: [http://www.independent.ie/business/irish/aviva-changes-tack-with-pay-cuts ...](http://www.independent.ie/business/irish/aviva-changes-tack-with-pay-cuts...)

Cutting of Allied Irish Banks workforce by 2,500

March 8, 2012

Allied Irish Banks announced that it is cutting its workforce by 19%, foreseeing 2500 jobs losses, half of which are planned before the end of the year. The Irish Bank Officials Association (IBOA) announced it will fight any compulsory redundancies and has started negotiating the redundancy package. The Irish parliament and government have confirmed they are watching the developments closely and have promised support for affected workers.

English: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-17299258> ;
[http://www.newstalk.ie/2012/news/union-says-it-will-fight-any-compulsory-aib ...](http://www.newstalk.ie/2012/news/union-says-it-will-fight-any-compulsory-aib...)

Italy

Eight-hours nationwide strike

March 9, 2012

Italian metal workers union Fiom held an eight-hour nationwide strike on March 9 with ten of thousands workers marching in the streets of Rome against the government's plans to relax rules that give workers sweeping job security. The strike was also a protest against automaker Fiat's introduction of more flexible labour practices for its 86,000 Italian workers in a Dec. 13 contract.

English: [http://www.demotix.com/news/1097030/fiom-cgil-metalworkers-trade-union ...](http://www.demotix.com/news/1097030/fiom-cgil-metalworkers-trade-union...)

Italian: <http://www.cgil.it/DettaglioDocumento.aspx?ID=18625>

Agreement at TNT Post introduces bank of hours to improve parental leave

March 7, 2012

Promoting parenthood is the key novelty in the agreement signed on February 21 by TNT Post Italia, the SLP-Cisl, SLC-CGIL, UIL-Poste and UIL-Trasporti union federations and the Unitary Trade Union Representation Bodies (RSUs). It extends to all mail and package delivery centers (except the one in Modena) the decrease of the workweek from 6 down to 5 days, which was first introduced in centers, affected by the termination of the contract with Poste Italiane. When the 6th workday is required, the employees will be able to put the hours worked on a bank of hours, which will be used to improve parental leave.

English: <http://www.planetlabor.com/Articles/plonearticle.2012-03-07.5347743483/>

Lithuania

Government to re-classify Carlsberg breweries as an 'essential' service

March 8, 2012

In an attempt to keep its workers from striking, Carlsberg has convinced the Lithuanian government to re-classify its activity as 'essential services'. Workers in essential services, previously limited to activities like emergency services and water, are banned from striking by law.

English: [http://libcom.org/blog/carlsberg-re-classified-%E2%80%98essential-service ...](http://libcom.org/blog/carlsberg-re-classified-%E2%80%98essential-service...)

Malta

Doctors and nurses unions dispute over overcrowded hospitals

March 27, 2012

In a dispute over overcrowding and work pressure in hospitals, the doctors and nurses unions have come to opposite positions. In the end of February, an agreement with the Medical Association of Malta, representing doctors, to add beds to hospital wards to accommodate the increased number of patients requiring intensive care was overturned by an agreement with the nurses and midwives association MUMN, who protested that nurses were already overworked. MUMN has also drawn attention to the understaffing among nurses in operating theatres, whose numbers have not increased despite a 10% increase in operations through consultants.

English: [http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20120229/local/hospital ...](http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20120229/local/hospital...) ;
<http://www.di-ve.com/Default.aspx?ID=72&Action=1&NewsId=90560&cache=false>

Netherlands

15,000 protest against cuts in sheltered workplace provision

March 22, 2012

Around 15,000 people protested against announced cuts in the provision of sheltered workplaces. The government intends to cut the 100,000 subsidised work places to 30,000. Trade unions have condemned the plan to have those who do not qualify for the leftover places work for less than the minimum wage.

English: [http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2012/03/some_15000_demonstrate ...](http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2012/03/some_15000_demonstrate...)

Actions at Schiphol in line up to 22 march public service workers strike

March 13, 2012

Customs officers at Amsterdam airport Schiphol organised actions in protest to the lagging renegotiations of the collective agreement for civil servants. The unions continue to press for protection of purchasing power, training for workers threatened with redundancy and better career prospects for young workers. The "punctuality actions", in which customs officers check the papers of all passengers, potentially leading to delays, were a solidarity action in the line up to the 22nd of March protest against cuts in sheltered workplaces.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/r/186>

Dutch: [http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/nieuws/nieuws/stiptheid-acties-douane ...](http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/nieuws/nieuws/stiptheid-acties-douane...) ;
<http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/nieuws/nieuws/bonden-peilen-minister-spies-sector-rijk>

Teachers strike against budget cuts special needs education

March 6, 2012

On the 6th of March, around 2000 schools were closed due to a teachers' protest against the

announced budget cuts in education. The cuts include 300 million on special needs education.

English: [http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2012/03/teachers_strike_over_budget ...](http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2012/03/teachers_strike_over_budget...)

Norway

Trade unionist sacked by DHL wins court case

March 6, 2012

Monica Ocpe, a shop steward and local branch secretary for the Oslo Transport Workers' Union, was dismissed on 6th May 2011 by DHL local management at the Ulven terminal in Oslo for "unexplained absences". She has maintained throughout that the real reason for her dismissal was her trade union activities. The court has upheld this in a binding verdict in her favour.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/press-area/index.cfm/pressdetail/7111>

Poland

Airport strike Warsaw airport

March 19, 2012

LOT national airlines announced that the strike of 30 to 50 per cent of its employees did not affect passengers in any way. The mechanics workers of LOT aircraft maintenance services went on strike on the 19th of March protesting low pay and working conditions. Union officers have stated that staff is over-burdened by work; the protest among mechanics at the airport will last "until further notice" says the trade union.

English: [http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/93669,Warsaw-airport-ground-workers ...](http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/93669,Warsaw-airport-ground-workers...)

Unions warn of nation-wide protests over unilateral increase in pension age

March 13, 2012

Government announcements that the pension age will be raised to 67 for men by 2020 and for women by 2040 have sparked trade union protest throughout the country. Trade unions have announced to continue with actions and have demanded a national referendum on the issue. Meanwhile, speculation rises as the junior coalition partner in the Polish government has pronounced doubts over the increase of the pension age.

English: <http://www.warsawvoice.pl/WVpage/pages/article.php/20152/news>;
<http://www.warsawvoice.pl/WVpage/pages/article.php/20318/news>

Portugal

General strike cripples big cities

March 23, 2012

The 23rd of March general strike organised by the General Confederation of Portuguese Workers (CGTP) hit especially hard in Lisbon and Oporto, where public transport, garbage collection and harbours were affected. The CGTP called for the general strike in protest of another austerity package to be implemented in exchange for an international bailout, imposed by the troika of European Commission, European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF). The National Federation of Doctors also announced its support for the strike, accusing the centre right government of having launched "an offensive against the national health service". Portugal's second biggest union, UGT, did not endorse the strike and Euronews reports that while protests were intensive, the numbers of protesters were not numerous.

English: [http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/portuguese-cities-hit-by-general-strike ...](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/portuguese-cities-hit-by-general-strike...)

; <http://www.euronews.com/2012/03/23/portugal-strike-fails-to-rouse-workers/>; <http://www.theportugalnews.com/cgi-bin/article.pl?id=1155-22>

Romania

General strike at Arcelor Mittal

March 29, 2012

Workers at ArcelorMittal Tubular Products Galati, who work on steel platform, have entered into an indefinite general strike, demanding increase of wages and of the two annual bonuses. Employees are dissatisfied with the wage offer and triggered the protest after Monday 26th entered into a two-hour warning strike, which was followed by further discussions between management and employees, but without result. Employees require the increase by up to RON 200 (€45) of wages and by RON 50 (€11) to the two annual Easter and Christmas primes that are now RON 400 (€90) each.

English: <http://www.thediplomat.ro/articol.php?id=2983>

Slovak Republic

Industrial action suspended after improvement of safety

March 8, 2012

Air traffic controllers' union, ATCA SR, and the Slovakian Ministry of Transport, Post and Telecommunications reached an agreement in the first week of March over improving safety in air services. The ministry guaranteed that it would meet all the union's safety demands and implement these within the timeframe requested. This included an agreement that serious consequences would ensue if national and international inspections revealed inadequacies on the part of management.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/1206>

Spain

Massive general strike on 29 March

March 29, 2012

The general strike called by the country's main trade union confederations UGT and CCOO for the 29th of March has affected the country's road, rail and air transport. Unions announce large numbers of factory workers joined the strike and a number of regional television stations went off-air. Production in the car and metal industries has stalled. Unions indicate the size of the protest pointing at a 20% fall in electricity demand nationally by 8 o'clock in the morning. Employer's organisation CEOE states that participation is unequally spread through the country and focused on big enterprises. The unions protest against an announced labour law reform which amongst others reduces severance pay, allows company-level collective agreements to undercut branch-level agreements and gives employers more scope to impose changes unilaterally, as reported in the February edition of this newsletter.

English: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17545174> ;
http://elpais.com/elpais/2012/03/29/inenglish/1333009639_471744.html

Spanish: [http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2012/03/28/actualidad/1332958776 ...](http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2012/03/28/actualidad/1332958776...)

Pilots to strike from April to July

March 27, 2012

Talks between pilots union SEPLA and air carrier IBERIA broke down after IBERIA announced it will divert 40 of its planes to a newly launched low-budget carrier IBERIA Express. SEPLA claims the restructuring will cost approximately 8000 jobs. IBERIA says the low cost airline is the only way

to make the company profitable.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/27/iberia-idUSL6E8ER6Z920120327> ;
<http://www.travelweekly.co.uk/Articles/2012/03/28/40012/iberia+pilots+call+for+30> ...

Protests against plans to force unemployed to work for free

March 13, 2012

The FSP-UGT public service federation has criticised the announced government reforms to make unemployed workers perform voluntary work in exchange for benefits. The unions are very concerned that the cut backs in public expenditure will combine the replacement of civil servants and social professionals by volunteers.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/r/193>

Spanish: http://www.fspugt.es/UGT_alerta_del_peligro_de_sustituir_funcionarios_por...

Sweden

Settlement reached with low costs carrier

March 12, 2012

The ITF-affiliated Unionen reached an agreement with Norwegian Air Shuttle during arbitration which began on 2 March and ended 40 hours before a strike action scheduled for 9 March was due to start. The airline has agreed to sign up to the new collective agreement for cabin crew based in Sweden and to planned duty time regulations set out in the deal

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/7179>

Switzerland

New collective agreement for the building trades

March 10, 2012

The 'parliament' for the building section of the trade union UNIA has voted in favour of a new agreement that was concluded on 9 March 2012. Minimum wages will increase with 1%. There was much criticism as the building sector is doing still relatively well.

German: [http://www.unia.ch/news_aktionen.9.0.html?&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=7420&tx...](http://www.unia.ch/news_aktionen.9.0.html?&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=7420&tx...)

French: [http://www.unia.ch/news_aktion_fr.9.0.html?&L=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=7421&tx...](http://www.unia.ch/news_aktion_fr.9.0.html?&L=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=7421&tx...)

Turkey

ILO office occupied

March 8, 2012

Members of DISK have organised a press declaration in front of the Ministry of Labour. In their statement the Turkish government is criticised for what is called a two-fold attack against workers. According to DISK a new draft bill is against ILO Conventions No: 87 and 98, the European Social Charter, the UN Economical, Social and Cultural Rights Convention and the 90th Amendment of the Constitution of the Republic Of Turkey. The planned *National Employment Strategy Document* will destroy severance pay, turn workers into rental slaves by introducing Private Work Agencies, lower minimum wage and generalise precarious work. A few days before the ILO office in Ankara had been occupied as part of the action.

English: <http://occupyilo.wordpress.com/> ; <http://occupyilo.wordpress.com/2012/03/08/19/>

United Kingdom

Potential strike of fire brigade over pension row

March 14, 2012

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) is consulting members whether to go on strike against a reform that would increase employee pension contributions as well as rise the pension age from 50 to 60. Unions have branded the age increase as unrealistic, arguing 60 year olds cannot work as frontline fire crews.

English: [http://www.birminghampost.net/news/west-midlands-news/2012/03/13/ ...](http://www.birminghampost.net/news/west-midlands-news/2012/03/13/)

Cameron government labelled “most female unfriendly in living memory”

March 8, 2012

UK unions have condemned government policies, particularly the reforms to the working tax credit, as female unfriendly. Trade unions claim women are hit hardest both by public sector cut backs, unemployment, child benefit and tax credit reform.

English: [http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/coalition-is-most-female-unfriendly ...](http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/coalition-is-most-female-unfriendly...) ;
http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=2623

Social plan in paper-packaging rejected

March 5, 2012

IMF and ICEM affiliated UK unions have rejected a social plan offered by the Vienna based paper-packaging company Mayr Melnhof for their UK plants. Industrial action started on the 10th of February and continued with sit-ins on the 18th after managers had attempted to lock workers out for removal of product. Talks in February and the 3rd of March broke down after the company proposed redundancy packages on lesser terms than offered in earlier meetings. Mayr Melnhof suggested a more limited package in exchange for fewer layoffs, however, it refused to guarantee the lower number of job losses.

English: <http://www.imfmetal.org/index.cfm?c=29169&l=2> ;
[http://www.icem.org/en/19-Pulp-Paper/4924-Mayr-Melnhof-Lockout-Continues-at-UK ...](http://www.icem.org/en/19-Pulp-Paper/4924-Mayr-Melnhof-Lockout-Continues-at-UK...)

Wage inequality at universities addressed

March 3, 2012

The National Union of Students (NUS) and UNISON have launched a national campaign, calling on higher education institutions to pay a living wage to all its employees. NUS and UNISON condemn the inequality between highly paid college principles and vice-chancellors on the one hand, and poverty wages to the lowest paid employees on the other.

English: http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=2620

Arbitration sought against pay freeze

February 29, 2012

Local government union representatives from UNISON, GMB and UNITE have announced their intention of seeking binding arbitration in response to local governments' refusal to negotiate on wages. Local government employees are entering the third year of pay freeze, while purchasing power deteriorates. Unions have expressed outrage at learning that even the lowest paid employees will not receive increases to compensate for loss of purchasing power.

English: http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=2617

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