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collective bargaining

Issue 7/2012 July/August

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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Trade unions establish permanent platform for actions against cuts

Protests and violent clashes after government announces salary cuts and VAT increase

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United Kingdom

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Disabled workers occupy Remploy head quarters

Job centre call handlers on strike over oppressive targets

Railway day of action

London tube cleaners strike for living wage

Housing association staff to be fired and re-hired for 2/3 for former wages

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Private sector bus drivers' reach last-minute Olympic bonus pay deal

New Economics Foundation calculates regional pay will cost £10bn and 110,000 jobs

European sources

Bargaining patterns and the coverage of collective agreements

August 2, 2012

A new Employment Outlook of the OECD provides figures on the bargaining pattern (central, sectoral, local) and the coverage of collective agreements. The report includes updated Tables and Graphs on the structure of collective bargaining systems, changes in the labour share and in income inequality. In one chapter workers' bargaining power and the evolution of collective bargaining institutions is treated. Countries with widespread multi-employer bargaining and/or legal extension mechanisms, such as Austria, Belgium, France, Finland, Germany, Italy and Spain, all have relatively high collective bargaining coverage rates which are significantly higher than their union density rates.

English: [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/oecd-employment-outlook-2012 ...](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/oecd-employment-outlook-2012...)

French: [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/perspectives-de-l-emploi ...](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/perspectives-de-l-emploi...)

Bi-annual publication on minimum wages

August 1, 2012

Data on minimum wages referring to monthly national minimum wages are published by Eurostat bi-annually. The statistics reflect the situation on 1 January and 1 July of each year respectively. In a guiding article it is illustrated how minimum wage levels (gross amounts, before deduction of income tax and social security contributions) – established by legislation or by collective agreement – vary considerably among EU Member States. The report is available in all languages.

English: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained ...](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained...)

German: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained ...](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained...)

French: [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained ...](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained...)

Wages and working conditions in the crisis

July 25, 2012

This report is based on the input of the national Eurofound correspondents. According to the authors many concessions seem to have been made by the trade unions in favour of employment guarantees in the harsh economic climate during 2008, running into 2009 and 2010. But, industrial relations systems are deeply entrenched in national traditions, and there continues to be great diversity in the outcome of collective bargaining and in the number of workers covered by collective agreements. Some countries, having a major deficit, were limited in their capability to 'grease' social bargaining outcomes with extra financial means (for example, the Anglo-Saxon or southern European countries). Others have invested a considerable amount of public funding in an upswing of their socioeconomic constellation.

English: [http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/ewco/studies ...](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/ewco/studies...)

Austria

Pole position in the coverage of collective agreements

August 23, 2012

In the Employment Outlook 2012 of the OECD Austria leads the ranking with a collective bargaining coverage rate that is nearly 100%, followed by Belgium, Sweden and Finland. The report states that thanks to a form of coordination called pattern bargaining the wage negotiations in the exporting sectors have set the rules for the rest of the economy, whilst in several other countries this coordination of

collective bargaining was not developed enough for wages to adjust in face of high inflation, external deficits or high unemployment. Although a decline in trade union density was experienced over the period since 1990 the coverage has stabilised, according to the Austrian unions due to innovative bargaining activities in new branches, as for instance the IT-sector, the health sector, call centres and the temporary agency sector.

German: [http://www.oegb.at/servlet/Content ...](http://www.oegb.at/servlet/Content...)

Threat of split in autumn metal bargaining

August 13, 2012

The largest employers' organisation in the metal sector (FMFI) has announced the intention to negotiate separately. To FMFI 742 (mainly large) companies are affiliated with almost 116,000 workers. Up till now the employer's side in the metal sector consisted of six organisations (with in total 175,000 workers). The trade union PRO-GE and GPA-dpj have declared that this is a clear breach of the existing social partnership. Negotiations are primarily conducted at the sectoral level between the unions on the one side and the chambers of commerce on the other. These chambers are legal bodies representing employers in almost all industries, to which all employers must belong by law. The metal sector usually sets the negotiation pace.

German: <http://www.tt.com/Nachrichten/5245976-2/tauziehen-um-metallerrunde.csp> [http://www.oegb.at/servlet/Content ...](http://www.oegb.at/servlet/Content...)

English: [http://www.industrialunion.org/long-standing-social-partnership-at-risk ...](http://www.industrialunion.org/long-standing-social-partnership-at-risk...)

Focus on the Austrian collective bargaining model:

[http://www.worker-participation.eu/National-Industrial-Relations/Countries/Austria ...](http://www.worker-participation.eu/National-Industrial-Relations/Countries/Austria...)

Flexible working increased only marginally in the last three years

August 8, 2012

According to a report of Statistics Austria flexible working increased only marginally in the last three years and in 2011 those in 'non-standard employment', including temporary staffing, made up 31% of the total labour force. Half of the temporary agency workers in the country are aged under 35. The latest figures by the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (BMAK) showed that the temporary staffing industry has been suffering from declining activities for months. This continued into the month of July where unemployment among temporary staff was up by +16.8%.

English: [http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/Research-Publications/Daily-News/Austria ...](http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/Research-Publications/Daily-News/Austria...)

German: [http://www.bmask.gv.at/site/Startseite/Topnews/Hundstorfer zu Juli ...](http://www.bmask.gv.at/site/Startseite/Topnews/Hundstorfer_zu_Juli...) http://www.statistik.at/web_de/dynamic/statistiken/arbeitsmarkt/066117

Belgium

Understaffing at Charleroi airport solved

July 25, 2012

The immigration policemen at the Charleroi airport responsible for security and border controls have been distributing leaflets to passengers at the airport explaining their work-to-rule action. From mid-July on they carried out strict checks on passengers. A representative of the police union NSPV stated that the number of passengers at the airport has more or less doubled in recent years and that it needed 77 officers and not the 61 currently doing the job. The delegates' demands were met by the responsible ministry and a strike announced for 31 August was cancelled.

English:

<http://www.deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/news/1.1370724> <http://www.xpats.com/en/features/to>

[days-top-stories-july-24-2012](#)

French: http://www.dhnet.be/dhjournal/archives_det.phtml?id=1277560

Average wage €3,100 in 2010

July 12, 2012

Detailed figures over the period 1999-2010 published by the Economy Ministry (in French and Dutch) show that the average Belgian employee earned €3,100 before tax a month in 2010. The statistics include gender, education, sector and skills related data. On average wages rose in 2010 by 2.51% (2.8% for women, 2.48% for men). The earnings of highly educated workers rose more quickly than those of the low-skilled. The highest wages are paid in the financial sector and by utilities like water, gas and electricity whilst the lowest wages occur in the hospitality industry, in pubs, restaurants, hotels and cafes.

English: <http://www.deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/news...>

French: <http://statbel.fgov.be/fr/statistiques/chiffres/travail/salaires/mensuels/>

Dutch: http://statbel.fgov.be/nl/statistieken/cijfers/arbeid_leven/lonen/maandloon/

Fixed term workers laid off at Caterpillar

July 9, 2012

[Heavy machinery manufacturer Caterpillar has announced it intends to not renew the contracts of 200 employees at the Gosselies facility. Caterpillar states the discontinuation of the contracts is due to a crisis-related drop in orders for the rest of the year and beginning of the next. Trade unions point at 13% increase in the quarterly dividend approved by the board of directors in June and call on the company to find different solutions. The unions have proposed to resort to other measures commonly used to prevent lay-offs such as early retirement for permanent staff and short-time working.](#)

English: <http://www.industrialunion.org/belgian-unions-spearhead-proposals...>

Bulgaria

Railways workers positive on measures

August 7, 2012

The trade union of the Bulgarian railway workers affiliated to the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CITUB) has commented in a positive sense on the most recent decision of the Transport Ministry. The union wants to keep the number of the trains and the number of the workers upright. The national privatization agency announced it is cancelling the current privatization procedure of national BDZ state railways company freight unit in order to re-launch it on lower criteria. The agency's action is a reaction to receiving only one bid in the current privatization round. BDZ national railways has long been making losses and gone through several rounds of dismissals, as reported in previous issues of our newsletter.

English: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=141568

<http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=n282732>

<http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=n284695>

Judges rally after critical judge is fired

July 27, 2012

In reaction to a Supreme Judicial Council (VSS) decision to fire critical judge Miroslava Todorova, chair of the Bulgarian Judges Association and judge at the Sofia City Court, over a hundred judges and several NGOs gathered in front of the VSS headquarters to protest. Todorova, a well-known critic of the Supreme Judicial Council, was fired on 12 July for unreasonable delay of proceedings without being heard by the

VSS. Several groups of judges, NGOs and parliamentarians have made statements in support of the ousted judge. The dismissal of Todorova is rumoured to be a consequence of a longstanding conflict between her and the internal affairs minister, whom she recently sued for falsely accusing her of incompetence and patronizing organised crime. Both the minister and prime minister have spoken out against the dismissal. Todorova appealed her dismissal at the Supreme Administrative Court, which so far refused to put the dismissal on hold temporarily but has not yet judged on the case itself. Several groups and associations of judges have repeatedly called for the resignation of the members of the Supreme Judicial Council.

English:

http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=141225 http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=141711

Pension age the same for women and men after 2020

July 12, 2012

As part of the new and controversial pension package, the retirement age for women will be increased to the same level as men's after 2020. The current retirement age is 63 for men and 60 for women. The male retirement age will be raised to 65 by 2017, the female age to 63 by 2020 and 65 thereafter. As part of the pension reform, the retirement age will be raised by 4 months on 1 January of every year until the targets are reached. Bulgaria has the largest ageing population in the European Union and no solution in sight.

English: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=141185

Troubled military plant now for sale

July 5, 2012

The ministry of energy and economy has announced that the privatisation process of the troubled VMZ Sopot military plant will start this summer. The increasingly debt-ridden company was set to be privatised after a vote in Parliament in 2011 but no actions had been taken. According to the minister there will be interested private partners. 1 million BGN has been set aside to pay part of the delayed wages for the 3,700 workers at the plant. As reported in last month's newsletter, workers of the VMZ Sopot military plant have threatened industrial action unless they receive their delayed salaries. The workers state that payment of salaries was repeatedly delayed for the last 1.5 year and that wages for January, April and May are currently due. VMZ Sopot is the largest military plant in the country and produces both military and civil products.

English: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=140985
<http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=n282133>

Cyprus

Dispute in the cement sector

August 1, 2012

In a protest against the company's arbitrary actions that do not comply with the signed collective agreements workers have walked out of their jobs at the Vassilikos cement factory. The trade union SEK accused the company of taking advantage of its effective monopoly on the island. On 20 March 2012 workers had returned to work after labour minister Sotiroulla Charalambous mediated between them and the management.

English: [http://www.cyprus-mail.com/vassilikos/cement-employees-strike-over ...](http://www.cyprus-mail.com/vassilikos/cement-employees-strike-over-...)

Strike at Kofinou slaughterhouse

July 5, 2012

Workers at the loss suffering Kofinou slaughterhouse have gone on strike to draw attention to their unpaid salaries and benefits. The workers have not yet received their 13th month salaries, 29 employees that were laid off earlier have not received their compensation payments and retired workers report not getting their pensions. The minister of commerce has gotten involved in the conflict and promised the redundant workers will be compensation and to do their best for the 13th month salaries.

English: <http://www.cyprus-mail.com/kofinou/kofinou-strike/20120705>

Czech Republic

Bills on tax hikes and pension reform vetoed

August 16, 2012

The upper house of parliament has vetoed several proposals of the centre-right cabinet. The pension reform bill was a technical measure allowing the government to push ahead with a plan to allow Czechs to send part of their social insurance payments into private retirement funds instead of to the government which redistributes the money immediately to current pensioners.

English: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2012/08/16/uk-czech-taxes...>

ILO convention on domestic work not taken serious

August 13, 2012

Organisations working with migrant workers have criticised the government for not having recommended ratifying the ILO convention that aims to improve the conditions of people working in households. Whilst activists and experts say domestic work is increasing and workers often work in unsuitable conditions the government has stated that the issue is not significant.

English: <http://praguemonitor.com/2012/08/13/ngos-govt-belittles-foreign...>

Denmark

Carlsberg signs an agreement on sexual abuse

August 27, 2012

The Carlsberg group has signed a co-operation agreement with the trade union confederation LO that will help to provide its women sales promoters in Cambodia with decent, dignified and safe employment. The company and the trade union will also work to erode the negative stigma attached to beer promoters and encourage freedom of association and collective bargaining.

English: <http://www.lo.dk/English%20version/News/cambodia.aspx>

Another round of dismissal at Vestas

August 22, 2012

In a recent half year report the wind energy company has announced to cut another 1,400 jobs. In January the company already announced the cutting of 2,335 employees in the course of 2012. Although the company revealed that most of the layoffs will happen in Europe the management declined to say how many Danish jobs will be hit.

English: <http://cphpost.dk/business/yet-another-round-layoffs-vestas>
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2012/aug/22/vestas-job-cuts-quarterly-loss>

Investment in training only way out

August 7, 2012

Large scale outsourcing and the relocation of production has initiated a discussion about the future of the Danish labour market model. Liberal business daily Børsen was sympathetic to the complaints of the furniture giant Fritz Hansen, who announced to move the production out of the country because of high Danish salaries and taxes. But Politiken newspaper branded Børsen's idea a "losing strategy" and instead advocated better training for Danish workers as a way to help them clinch highly-skilled positions and to allow the manufacturing industry to specialise in high-quality products.

English: <http://cphpost.dk/business/retraining-workers-only-way-out-manufacturing>

Focus on the Danish bargaining model:

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2012/04/articles/dk1204019i.htm>

Wage growth lags behind inflation

July 19, 2012

Public sector trade union organisation OAO published a report analysing wage developments in public and private sectors in the first quarter of 2012. The OAO concludes that wage development has been modest and lagged behind inflation in all sectors. As a part of a two-year agreement in the public sector, civil servants' wages even fell by 0.6%.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/r/169>

Danish: <http://www.oao.dk/index.php ...>

Estonia

Ministers push for public sector salary increase

August 17, 2012

With negotiations for next year's state budget scheduled to begin on 6 September pay raises have been suggested by the ministers of education, defence, interior, justice and social affairs. The finance minister said his colleagues were focusing on being re-elected and dubbed them "big spender ministers".

English: <http://news.err.ee/politics/coo66 ...>

Work abroad most often motivated by higher wages

July 23, 2012

A survey by trade union STTK found that about 40% of Estonians are willing to work abroad, in three out of four cases in order to earn higher wages. Finland is mentioned as the best country to work in, followed by Germany and Sweden. Half of Estonians willing to work abroad expect they will earn over €2000 per month in other countries.

English: <http://www.artto.kaapeli.fi/unions/T2012/p28>

Finland

Framework agreement under discussion

August 25, 2012

The two strongest employer organizations (the Confederation of Finnish Industries EK and the Federation of Finnish Technology Industries) made proposals to renegotiate the existing framework agreement. According to the Trade Union News, the web publication that began its 16th year this August, they argued the need for the terms of the agreement to be renegotiated on account of worsened economic conditions. All public sector employees and over 90% of the private sector employees are covered by industry-specific collective agreements that apply the framework agreement that was negotiated and signed last autumn by the labour market central organizations. The trade unions reiterated that the framework agreement can only be terminated or suspended if the parties who signed it agree to do so jointly.

English: <http://www.artto.kaapeli.fi/unions/T2012/p33>

Wages and salaries sum grew by 4.8% from April to June

August 13, 2012

Statistics Finland has published updated figures on the year-on-year change in wages and salaries. The wages and salaries sum of the whole economy was 4.8% greater in the 2012 April to June period than in the corresponding period twelve months earlier. In June alone, the wages and salaries sum of the whole economy grew by 6.5% year-on-year. In the April to June period one year ago, the wages and salaries sum grew by 5.2%. Growth was fastest in construction (9.6%) and health and social work (8.6%). Most moderate growth was in private educational services (2.6%). As part of the framework agreement concluded by central labour market organisations at the end of 2011, wage and salary earners of the sectors bound by the agreement are paid a one-off item of €150 together with the first wage payment of 2012 or in connection with the first wage payment of the later starting agreement period.

English: [http://www.stat.fi/til/ktps/2012/06/ktps ...](http://www.stat.fi/til/ktps/2012/06/ktps...)

Job security guarantee for municipal workers

July 4, 2012

The government coalition has granted the request of public service trade unions to give a job security guarantee for employees of municipalities for the duration of the upcoming municipal reform. The municipalities are facing a grand overhaul and unions have argued the job security guarantee will get municipal workers behind the reform. The unions furthermore claim the job security guarantee is needed to prepare the municipalities for an upcoming retirement wave: 150,000 of the 430,000 municipal employees will reach the pension age in the next eight years.

English: <http://www.jhl.fi/portal/en/news/archive/?bid=2107>

France

Unions consulted early for educational reform

August 27, 2012

Trade unions have put forward their demands and suggestions in a large scale consultation process regarding educational reform. The union demands focus on continuous training of teachers and the reform of the staff evaluation process to be geared more towards improving teacher quality. The teachers' unions also identified a need to work together better between teachers, management, support staff and parents.

English: http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/news_details/2270
French: <http://download.ei-ie.org/Docs/WebDepot/SNUIPP...>

Strikes annulled after deal with Easyjet management

August 17, 2012

A planned 3 days strike of 250 pilots has been cancelled after the first day. The pilots asked for a wage increase beyond inflation, a change of the variable part of the remuneration and an extra payment because of the good results of the company. The trade union SNPL reached an agreement with the company that was good enough to cancel the action. Easyjet employs around 800 people at five French airports.

English: <http://www.english.rfi.fr/economy/20120817-french-easyjet-strike...>
French: <http://www.liberation.fr/economie/2012/08/17/easyjet-la-greve...>

Newspapers stir as journalists protest and printers strike

July 26 11, 2012

After newspaper *La Tribune*, daily *France Soir* has announced its end of business and several regional titles of the Hersant media group are rumoured to follow suit. Journalists' unions SNJ and SNJ-CGT have issued statements conveying their concern with the hundreds of media and journalists jobs on the line as well as the reduced pluralism in French media. The actions by SNJ and SNJ-CGT come after a nationwide strike of printers on 5 July forced many newspapers to publish their daily editions on-line. The printers are protesting against accumulating lay-offs as printed media increasingly go digital. According to a report on the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers website, Hersant publishing house has fired 670 people, while Presstails press distribution company dismissed around 1000 employees.

English: <http://europe.ifj.org/en/articles/closure-of-french-daily-threatens-pluralism...>
<http://rt.com/art-and-culture/news/typographers-strike-leaves-newspapers-510/>

PSE Peugeot Citroën to cut 8000 jobs

July 15, 2012

Car maker PSA Peugeot Citroën announced it is cutting 8,000 jobs. Its Aulney plant (3,000 jobs) is to be closed, 1400 redundancies will come from the plant in Rennes and the remaining 3,600 jobs will be cut across the corporate structure. PSA is losing €200 million per month and its debt rating was degraded to junk status by all major credit ranking agencies. President François Hollande has reacted that the job losses are unacceptable. Hollande said the numbers must be renegotiated, that the company must be assessed by an independent expert and that the government will soon unveil a plan to help the troubled French car industry, including incentives to buy French cars.

English: <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/business/2012/07/12...>
<http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/news/content/view/full/121462> <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/business/hollande-slams-peugeot-cutbacks...>

Tripartite conference sets off in new spirit cooperation but fails to deliver on issues

July 11, 2012

On 9 and 10 July, a major tripartite conference took place on the initiative of the new government in order to discuss social issues and break with the politics of the previous government. During the conference, a range of issues was discussed that will be put on the agenda later this year. Trade unions welcomed the conference but expressed their disappointment with the lack of concrete issues. The trade union wish to cancel the public sector pay freeze was not met by the government.

French: <http://www.spterritoriaux.cgt.fr/spip.php?article5658>

<http://www.fo-fonctionnaires.fr/>
[http://www.cfdt.fr/rewrite/article/41595/les-actualites/emploi ...](http://www.cfdt.fr/rewrite/article/41595/les-actualites/emploi...)

HP to cut 520 jobs in France as it restructures its European activities

July 5, 2012

In May Hewlett-Packard has announced it is cutting its work force by 27,000 worldwide, of which 8,000 jobs in Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA). HP has now announced 520 of those jobs will come from France, representing around 10% of its employees in the country. In a statement, HP said the redundancies are expected to be arranged by voluntary departures through an early retirement scheme. Unions are angered by the lay-offs in an otherwise healthy company and have announced mobilisation of their members across Europe. Especially painful, unions report, is the simultaneous announcement that 210 young people will be hired in the next three years; the same period 520 older people will be let go.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/Apps/uni.nsf>
... [http://www.uniglobalunion.org/Apps/uni.nsf/pages ...](http://www.uniglobalunion.org/Apps/uni.nsf/pages...)

Germany

New strikes announced at Lufthansa

August 29, 2012

New strikes are planned for Lufthansa cabin crews after wage talks broke down. Unions report they are prepared to go on indefinite strike as well as brief walkouts and that actions would affect all German airports. The workers are asking for a 5% wage increase after three years of wage moderation and object to the carrier's plan to employ more temporary staff on its cabin crews in order to cut costs. The announced strikes come as Lufthansa posted a net loss of 168 million euro over the first two quarters of 2012.

English: <http://www.dw.de/dw/article/0,,16198060,00.html>
<http://news.ph.msn.com/business/lufthansa-union-calls-for-strikes-after-wage-talks-fail-1>
[http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20120829/world/lufthansa-cabin-crew ...](http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20120829/world/lufthansa-cabin-crew...)
German: [http://www.fr-online.de/wirtschaft/flugbegleiter-streiken-fruehestens ...](http://www.fr-online.de/wirtschaft/flugbegleiter-streiken-fruehestens...)

Commitment to CSR in Europe and union busting elsewhere?

August 28, 2012

This summer Siemens signed an international framework agreement on the principles of corporate responsibility with trade union IG Metall and global industrial union IndustriAll. In the agreement Siemens committed to fundamental employee rights, including equality of opportunity, the right to collective bargaining and the freedom of association. According to the company the agreement underscored the relationship of trust between the company, the works council and the unions. Shortly after a serious dispute has risen in a Pittsburgh plant that put the agreement to an early test. All workers received a letter from the operational director stating that 'Siemens does not believe a union is in the best interests of our employees'. The company also hired an anti-union consultant.

English: <http://www.industrialunion.org/siemens-gfa-put-to-early-test-in-the-us>
[http://finchchannel.com/Main_News/Tech/113599 Siemens reaffirms commitment ...](http://finchchannel.com/Main_News/Tech/113599_Siemens_reaffirms_commitment...)

Audi to shed hundreds of agency workers

July 29, 2012

Car maker Audi announced it is laying-off hundreds of temporary agency workers at its plant in Neckarsulm. Audi will gradually reduce its now 1400 agency staff over the rest of the year. Many of the temporary workers were hired for the manufacturing of the Audi A7, whose production process has now

moved to a next stage.

English: <http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/Research-Publications/Daily-News ...>

Deal on the use of temporary agency workers

July 20, 2012

Carmaker BMW has concrete plans to hire 3,000 contingent workers on a permanent basis. After unions and work councils massively criticised the BMW's HR policy which has heavily relied on temporary staffing lengthy negotiations followed between workers representatives and the management. The trade union IG Metall confirmed that the new deal was ready to be signed, which will oblige BMW to take over 3,000 new workers, mainly temporaries, by the end of 2013. The union claims that this will drastically cut the number of agency personnel from up to 20% down to 13%.

English: <http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/Research-Publications/Daily-News ...>

German: <http://www.igmetall-bmw.de/>

Talks with Neckermann cannot avoid business closure

July 18, 2012

Despite efforts of the trade unions the pan-European mail order retailer Neckermann has begun insolvency proceedings after its backers rejected turnaround plans. The company had announced in April 2012 that it was phasing out its catalogue business and planned to cut 1,380 of its roughly 2,400 jobs in Germany in order to secure financing for the future. By mid-July, it agreed with employee and union representatives on a compromise that would have seen 'limited' payoffs and other aid for laid-off employees. But private investment firm Sun Capital Partners that owns 100% of Neckermann decided the result wasn't sustainable and refused to provide further financing.

English: <http://www.wect.com/story/19053873/german-mail-order-firm>
... <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2012/jul2012/neck-jo9.shtml>

German: <http://www.fr-online.de/frankfurt/neckermann-insolvenz-alles-aus ...>

RWE plans giant layoffs

July 17, 2012.

RWE is in 'talks with the labour representatives' over plans to reduce its workforce to cut costs, but has so far not provided concrete figures. A spokesman of the trade union Verdi said the company had revealed 'another 2,000-5,000 jobs are to be cut', adding that this number is on top of plans to axe 8,000 staff, revealed by a source in December 2011. According to Verdi, the cuts would mean about 18% of RWE's total workforce, which stood at just over 72,000 at the end of March 2012.

English: <http://af.reuters.com/article/energyOilNews/idAFL6E8IH4KJ20120717>

German: <http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/wirtschaft/sparkurs-des-energieversorgers ...>

Bremen region established minimum wage for public sector and contractors

July 11, 2012

As the first region in the country, Bremen established a regional minimum wage that will apply to the whole public sector and all companies delivering services or receiving funds from the state. The minimum wage, which is set at €8.50, will come into force by 1 September and will be revised every two years. The minimum wage threshold is set at the level the legislator considers a living wage.

German: <http://www.dgb.de/themen/++co++f1e5339a-cc14-11e1-7ca1-00188b4dc422>

Collective agreement reached at Damp hospitals

July 4, 2012

A collective agreement has been reached at Damp hospitals, part of the Fresenius/Helios group. The agreement came after an intense conflict between trade union Ver.di and the management, reported in last month's newsletter, in which a 1000 workers were dismissed for going on strike. The dismissals have been annulled and the new collective agreement includes a 3.5% wage increase starting from 1 May 2012 and another 1.4% from 1 January and 1 August 2013. Further agreements include a raise in the Christmas bonus.

German: [http://www.verdi.de/themen/geld-tarif/brennpunkt-damp ...](http://www.verdi.de/themen/geld-tarif/brennpunkt-damp...)

Greece

Steel workers strike ends in tear gas

August 1, 2012

Following violent clashes with the police, steel workers have decided to end their nine month strike at Halyvourgia steel plant in Aspropyrgos, western Attica. The conflict started when the company used newly enacted austerity legislation to lower salaries to €500 per month and lay off a number of workers. Whilst the strike was ruled illegal by court order weeks ago, workers continued the strike and occupied the plant. After a new court order, Prime Minister Samaras ordered the riot police to end the strike, which resulted in a violent clash in which the police used tear gas to drive the strikers out. Following the clashes, 107 out of 150 union members voted to end the strike and returned to work. Meanwhile, management fired another 50 workers and it is rumoured production will be moved from Aspropyrgos to another plant in Volos.

English: [http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi](http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi...)
... <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/world/304830/greek-steel-workers-end>
... <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article>
... [http://www.steelguru.com/international_news/Steel workers prevented from ...](http://www.steelguru.com/international_news/Steel_workers_prevented_from...)

Bank union holds warning strike

July 30, 2012

Bank workers have held a 24-hour warning strike demanding recapitalisation of the banks to avoid job losses. The unions fear that international creditors will drive the government into making decisions that will result in major job losses in the banking sector. The union spokesperson said banks should be recapitalised and jobs guaranteed. The Hellenic Financial Stability fund has said the banks need mergers to reduce costs and make them attractive to investors.

English: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-07-27/greek-bank-union-calls-strike>
... [http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/ w articles wsite2 1 27/07/2012 454201](http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/w_articles_wsite2_1_27/07/2012_454201)

Hungary

Teachers demand to be consulted in reform that will increase working hours

August 23, 2012

Teachers unions have demanded to be consulted in an upcoming education reform that will greatly increase teaching hours and working hours. In total, the reform aims for a 65% increase in teacher working hours. The new law also includes a requirement to spend all working hours on the school

premises.

English: http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/news_details/2266

Remy factory to be closed

July 20, 2012

American-based Remy Group has told its employees that the Mezőkövesd plant will be closed this year. The company's collective staff dismissal announcement to the Employment Centre of the Government Office of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County is said to still be pending. Management stated the necessity to cut production cost as the primary motive for the plant's closure. The factory will finish production by the end of the year; the production will be relocated to plants in Mexico, China and South Korea. The majority of the over 200 workers at the Mezőkövesd plant will be dismissed. An estimated 50 people will be able to continue their work at the group's Miskolc plant.

Source: Maté Komiljovics

English: <http://www.autopro.hu/news-in-english/Remy-s-Mezokovesd-factory...>

Prime minister signs strategic partnership with Coca-Cola

July 20, 2012

Prime Minister Orban signed a strategic partnership agreement with Coca-Cola HBC Magyarország at the soft drink producer's base near the capital. The government is building a new economic model, and Coca-Cola will be among its beneficiaries, Mr Orban said. After signing the agreement, Orban inaugurated Hungary's highest-capacity canned drink production line. Coca-Cola's unit will supply the domestic market as well as markets in 20 other European countries. Mr Orban said Coca-Cola had spent more than HUF 100bn on investments and provided for the livelihood of 1,250 families. The unit's exports came to HUF 8bn last year. The HUF 2bn production line could double the company's export revenue. According to Coca-Cola managing director Jozsef Tarsoly the new line brings the plant's capacity to 350,000 units per hour.

Source: Maté Komiljovics

English: <http://www.agribusiness.hu/article/682>

Collective agreement renewed at Spar Hungary

July 17, 2012

The Spar Magyarország Kereskedelmi Kft. has signed a renewed collective agreement with its own meat plant, the TANN Magyarország Kft., and with the trade union of the commercial employees (KASZ). In its communication, Spar Magyarország notes that the renewal of the collective agreement was necessary after the new Labour Code entered into force on 1 July. The company also notes that during the preparation of the signatories, the company's most important intention was to provide the formerly acquired rights of the employees, to avoid the loss of earnings, and to keep the wage compensation system intact.

Source: Maté Komiljovics

English: <http://www.trademagazin.hu/en/ceg-es-szemelyi-hirek/megujitottak...>

Ireland

Home helps demonstrate in Wicklow town

August 23, 2012

About 200 people attended a demonstration in Wicklow town by home helps employed by Wicklow Community and Family Services (WCFS). Without consulting the unions, WCFS has cut wages by 5%

twice, eliminated premium pay rates and put staff on zero hour contracts. The WCFS also refused to discuss the matter in front of the Labour Relations Commission.

English: <http://www.siptu.ie/media/pressreleases2012/mainnews/fullstory>
... <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dUgqymVEAwI>

Resistance to pay cuts at Football Association Ireland

August 21, 2012

Union members voted against a proposal by the Football Association Ireland (FAI) that would cut wages by 10%, freeze pension scheme contributions and layoff seven employees. The issue was referred to the Labour Relations Commission for resolution while SIPTU prepared for industrial actions. FAI chief executive John Delaney demanded unions to accept the 10% pay cut and said that otherwise bigger job losses will follow. Most FAI staff are administrative and coaching workers earning annual salaries between €30,000 and €40,000, which have already been reduced by 6 to 10% in previous pay cuts. Chief executive Delaney, even after reducing his salary to 360,000, continues to earn considerably more than his European counterparts.

English: <http://www.siptu.ie/media/pressreleases2012/mainnews/fullstory.16344.en.html>
[http://www.independent.ie/national-news/john-delaney-tells-fai-staff-take-pay-cut-or ...](http://www.independent.ie/national-news/john-delaney-tells-fai-staff-take-pay-cut-or-...)

Strikes over pensions at Aer Lingus

August 17, 2012

Trade unions SIPTU, Mandate, Unite, Impact, TEEU and UCATT has started balloting their members over industrial actions to force Aer Lingus to close the pension scheme funding hole of 700 million euro. In a reaction, Aer Lingus said that they are obliged to pay the employer contributions to the scheme, but no more than that. Trade unions have announced strikes unless significant progress is made by 20 September.

English: <http://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/pm/articles/2012/08/aer-lingus-staff>
... <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2012/0817/1224322325059.html>

HSE in conflict with hospital consultants, home helps and staff

August 14, 2012

Unions have reacted outraged at proposals by the Health Service Executive (HSE) to increase working time by two hours per week and pay over hours at flat pay rates in order to address the health service's deficit. Trade union SIPTU stated that the proposals violate the Croke Park agreement and that it will begin to ballot its members for industrial action. Earlier this month, the Croke Park implementation body denied a request from the hospital consultants' association for an extended time frame for negotiations with the HSE. The HSE said earlier that if the issues failed to be resolved between the two parties shortly, it will refer the conflict to the Labour Court. The HSE wishes to address a lower entry pay and the elimination of the so-called historic leave, under which several hundred consultants are entitled to a final year off as a compensation for past over time. Also home helps are in conflict with the HSE, whom they accuse of not implementing a 2009 agreement.

English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2012/0724/ihca-bid-to-extend-time-frame>
... <http://www.rte.ie/news/2012/0726/hse-health.html>
<http://www.rte.ie/news/2012/0813/home-help-hse.html>

Focus on the Croke Park agreement: <http://www.impact.ie/Croke-Park-Agreement.htm>

Two per cent pay hike to staff at Tesco fruit supplier Keeling

July 24, 2012

The labour court has recommended workers at Keeling Distribution, a Tesco supplier, to accept the

company's wage offer of 2% increase. Keeling offered the pay increase to match the hike accepted by workers at Tesco, but trade unions at Keeling asked for a 6% increase because the 300 staff accepted a nine-point cost reduction plan two years ago. Union members will now be balloted to accept or reject the 2% increase.

English: [http://www.independent.ie/national-news/300-staff-at-fruit-firm-get ...](http://www.independent.ie/national-news/300-staff-at-fruit-firm-get-...)

Permanent TSB to cut 250 jobs and close 16 branches

July 24, 2012

The state-owned Permanent TSB bank has announced it is closing 16 branches and cutting 250 jobs. The job losses are foreseen to be voluntarily and under an improved redundancy package of three weeks per year of employment, plus statutory entitlements. Permanent TSB made known it will reorganise into a small bank.

English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2012/0724/permanent-tsb.html>

Lagan Brick redundancy dispute continues after non-binding recommendation court

July 24, 2012

After the independent mediation process over redundancy payments at Lagan Brick failed last month, as reported in the June newsletter, a non-binding recommendation of the labour court appears to have no more effect. Twenty-five former employees of closed down Lagan Brick plant in Kingscourt have been seeking redundancy payments in a conflict that has gone into its seventh month. The labour court, ruling in the absence of the employer who refused to attend, recommended the workers be paid an improved redundancy package. The recommendation outlines a package of the statutory three weeks per year of service, instead of the statutory two. The court ruled that the statutory part as well as half of the improved package should be paid to the workers immediately, whereas the second half should be paid when the remaining stock of brick has been removed or the company changes hands. Lagan Brick has not commented on the recommendation.

English: [http://www.rte.ie/news/2012/0724/lrc-rules-on-lagan-brick-redundancy ...](http://www.rte.ie/news/2012/0724/lrc-rules-on-lagan-brick-redundancy-...)

Industrial action at women's refuge

July 19, 2012

Employees of the women's refuge centre in Kilkenny have voted in favour of industrial action, including strikes, in order to contest announced lay-offs. The women's refuge centre announced this month it will be layoff all its shift attendants. Union representatives said that while they understand the need for cut backs in the face of reduced funding, they are forced to resort to industrial action since management refuses to negotiate or even consult the union representatives. The unions have been denied access to the consultant hired by the centre to oversee the reorganisation until after the date for the shift assistants to be fired.

English: [http://www.thejournal.ie/amber-womens-refuge-kilkenny-industrial ...](http://www.thejournal.ie/amber-womens-refuge-kilkenny-industrial-...) [http://www.kilkennypeople.ie/news/local/siptu-members-vote-for ...](http://www.kilkennypeople.ie/news/local/siptu-members-vote-for-...)

Special needs assistants win court case over job security

July 12, 2012

The Labour Court has recommended that special needs assistants should not be made redundant but, rather, placed on a redeployment panel. Special needs assistants do not have the same job security as other civil servants and have until now been made redundant whenever their position disappeared. The redeployment panel should function in order to place special needs assistants into new jobs according to seniority. The education department has said it is studying the recommendation by the court. As the judgement is nonbinding, the department is under no obligation to implement the recommendation.

English: <http://www.impact.ie/12/07/11/SNAs-win-redeployment-breakthrough.htm>

Water service workers warn of strikes

July 10, 2012

Trade union SIPTU has confirmed that 90% of its members voted in favour of industrial action in case the Department of Environment proceeds with the transition of assets and workers' duties to Bord Gáis and private sub-contractor companies. The ministry intends to privatise water services. Trade unions have demanded to be consulted and stated it is unacceptable that there are no guarantees regarding working conditions for the employees of the water authority.

English: [http://www.siptu.ie/media/pressreleases2012/featurednews ...](http://www.siptu.ie/media/pressreleases2012/featurednews...)

Public service pension overhaul looms

July 9, 2012

While most actors in the public sector have considered current civil servants' pensions secure by the Croke Park agreement, the public expenditure minister has recently suggested this might not be so. The agreement does effectively protect pensions until 2014, yet a brief clause allows for pension overhauls after that date, which would not only apply to newly hired personnel, but also to current employees. The minister suggested that the pension schemes might be changed to receive increases based on the cost of living rather than any future pay rises. Meanwhile, a bill on public service pensions is discussed in parliament, which will average out pensions over the entire career rather than last earnings. Members of parliament complained at lack of information, particularly at not receiving a complete list of schemes and allowances affected by the reform.

English: [http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/public-pension-increases-to-be-based ...](http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/public-pension-increases-to-be-based...) <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2012/0712/1224319862153.html>

Trade union congress calls on troika to slow down austerity

July 9, 2012

The trade union congress has called on the troika to alleviate the pace of austerity measures and turn to investments in growth. The congress stated that the lack of growth and 26% drop in domestic demand indicate further austerity will only collapse the economy further. The trade union congress also presented a plan *Delivering Growth & Jobs* that contains an investment plan the unions say will not significantly increase the country's sovereign debt.

English: <http://www.ictu.ie/press/2012/07/09/congress-tells-troika-do-no-further-harm/>

Italy

Coal mine occupied

August 27, 2012

Workers who are occupying a coal mine are asking a revitalization plan for the mine to start. The miners want the mine to be diversified into a combined mining and carbon capture site – a process of storing polluting emissions underground to help prevent global warming.

English: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-19391468>
[http://www.ibtimes.com/articles/377811/20120827/sardinia-coal-miners-occupy ...](http://www.ibtimes.com/articles/377811/20120827/sardinia-coal-miners-occupy...)

One of Europe's biggest steel plants closed?

August 15, 2012

A court in Taranto has triggered a political dispute with three contradictory rulings in less than a month on the fate of the Ilva steel plant, prompting impassioned pleas to spare the factory and save jobs. The dispute hinges on studies suggesting that up to 386 people have died of cancer over the past 13 years, that mortality rates have risen, and that people living downwind of fumes from the plant have suffered adverse health effects. According to the local trade unions FIOM and FIM the company is to be blamed for long-term neglect. However, closure would be a catastrophe for workers and the whole territory. Ilva now has to prove within 40 days that it can respect the applicable limit values.

English: <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms ...>

Italian: <http://www.ilsussidiario.net/News/Lavoro/2012/8/21 ...>

Nestlé seeks to cut costs by employing younger workers

August 9, 2012

Nestlé has proposed to its employees the reduction of their working hours by 25% and in exchange Nestlé will hire in their children. Unions have reacted to the proposal as an attack on workers' rights and added that the company has already lost most of its older employees through early retirement schemes with the effect that their workers' children are mainly underage.

English: <http://cms.iuf.org/?q=node/1858>

Unicredit employees on strike over collective premium

July 27, 2012

An estimated 85% of the 55,000 Unicredit employees went on strike on 27 July, leading to the closing of around 90% of the branches. The employees protest against the unwillingness of management to discuss collective premiums demanded by the unions, whilst management are receiving bonuses and stock options.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/Apps/uni.nsf ...>

Strike action against lay-offs at Gruppo Monte Paschi di Siena

July 25, 2012

Unions have organised strike actions at the Gruppo Monte Paschi di Siena (MPS) to protest against massive lay-offs as the company struggles in the financial crisis. The MPS management announced in April that it foresees 4,600 redundancies, cuts on supplementary contract, the outsourcing of back office services and the closure of 400 branches. Trade unions have condemned the lack of dialogue and willingness to find a better solution.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/Apps/uni.nsf ...>

Latvia

Report on the evolution of minimum wages

July 24, 2012

A detailed EUROMOD country report (2007-2011) comes up with figures on minimum wages, social benefits and guaranteed minimum income benefits (GMI). In order to be eligible for GMI benefit income per family member must not exceed 50% of the minimum wage. The minimum monthly wage is set every year by the Cabinet of Ministers. The minimum wage rule covers employees in all sectors and is not differentiated between the types of employees. The level of minimum wage was 120 LVL in 2007, 160 LVL

in 2008, and 180 LVL in 2009 and 2010, and 200 LVL (€290) in 2011.

English: <https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/files/euromod/country-reports ...>

Liechtenstein

Leader of economic chamber sees difficult negotiations ahead

August 24, 2012

Temporary reduction of working time has served as a good instrument to bridge the crisis in many sectors, to avoid large dismissals and to keep the purchase power upright. However, companies need the time to adapt to new market circumstances. The leader of the Economic Chamber stated that the chamber will suggest to the social partners to negotiate a 2 years agreement. Negotiations will be dominated by the wish to survive of companies and by job security for workers. For employees a decrease in purchase power is predicted.

German: <http://www.wirtschaftskammer.li/news/2012/08/24/news ...>

Lithuania

Pension reform pending

August 2, 2012

A long-pending pension reform legislation that aims to define the compensation of reduced pensions and the further development of private pensions is expected to be launched by the government. According to the government the pension compensation would not start immediately after the adoption of the legislation. In July a website was opened that provides information on what is called the pension accumulation system.

English: <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/31745/>
<http://www.pensijusistema.lt/index.php?-1539787636>

Luxembourg

OGBL takes on supermarkets over opening hours violations

August 7, 2012

Trade union OGBL put out a statement that several supermarkets do not comply with new opening hours legislation that came into force on 1 August. The new law states that supermarkets have to close by 19:00 (an hour earlier than before) on Saturdays and the evenings before bank holidays. The union has called on the ministry of the middle classes to take action and requested the labour minister to have all collective contracts for wrongful extensions of opening hours.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/view/ogbl-claims-shops-do-not-adhere ...>

Layoffs without social plan

July 18, 2012

After conciliation failed Lombard International Assurance has informed 84 employees (out of a total of 406) the termination of their contract, 30 of them with immediate effect. The company, founded in 1991,

that registered record profits in 2011 was unable to reach an agreement on a social plan with staff representatives and unions within the agreed 15-day time-frame. The insurance branch of the trade union OGB-L expressed its disappointment with what it calls the “inflexibility” for employees who find employment before the fixed dates of their redundancies, forcing them to resign.

English: [http://www.wort.lu/en/view/lombard-lays-off-84-employees-without-social-plan ...](http://www.wort.lu/en/view/lombard-lays-off-84-employees-without-social-plan-...)

Malta

Paramedics intensify industrial action

August 7, 2012

The industrial actions initiated by paramedics' trade union UHM in June after 18 months of unsuccessful talks over working conditions (reported in last month's newsletter) might even escalate. Radiographers, audiologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, medical laboratory scientists, dental technologists, dental hygienists, speech language pathologists, neurophysiology technologists and other workers follow specific directives of tasks they shall not perform for the duration of the strike. UHM accuses the health authority of unreasonable delay in tabling their proposals and have registered an industrial conflict. Proposals the authority tabled in February were withdrawn just before an agreement was found and recently received new proposals are significantly below the previous offer. UHM has announced the actions will continue until an agreement is found.

English: <http://www.independent.com.mt/news.asp?newsitemid=146951> .
<http://di-ve.com/news/paramedics-industrial-actions-might-escalate>
<http://di-ve.com/news/uhm-orders-health-inspectorate-workers-take-industrial-action>

Netherlands

Collective agreement concluded for hotel, restaurant and pubs

August 29, 2012

In an effort to make the sector more attractive for youngsters a substantial increase of wages was agreed in collective agreement that was negotiated between the trade unions and the employers' organisation in hotels, restaurant and pubs (KHN). For starting employees the increase is 6.4%. All wages increase as of 1 October 2012 and 1 July 2013 with 0.75%. Hotel workers receive a night work bonus of 10% per 1 April 2013. The agreement, applicable to 300,000 workers, has a duration from 1 August 2012 till 31 December 2013.

Dutch: <http://www.kenniscentrumhoreca.nl/artikel/nieuwe-cao-en-hogere-lonen>
... <http://www.fnvhoreca.nl/949/laatste-nieuws.html>

500 collective agreement violations by temp agencies

July 27, 2012

Social partner-led monitoring agency SNCU published a report in which it identifies 500 suspected collective agreement violations in the temp agency sector in the first half of 2012. Rogue agencies have been a hotly debated topic in the Netherlands since the start of the regulation of the branch in the beginning of the 2000s and are one of the ministry's priorities.

English: [http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/Research-Publications/Daily-News ...](http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/Research-Publications/Daily-News-...)

Pay rates self-employed without personnel fall by 15%

July 25, 2012

Hourly pay rates of self-employed without personnel have fallen by 15% over the last year and by 42% when compared to 2010 rates. People working in marketing, copywriting and website administration were among the group most affected. Self-employed secretaries and personal assistants increased their pay rates.

English: <http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/Research-Publications/Daily-News ...>

New collective agreement for temporary agency work

July 20, 2012

The trade unions and the employers' organisation Algemene Bond Uitzendondernemingen (ABU) have renegotiated the universally binding Collective Labour Agreement for Temporary Agency Workers. The agreement which will affect 600,000 agency workers is set to increase pay rates for contingent staff and continue the battle against rogue agencies. Monitoring of staffing firms will be increased through the SNCU (Stichting Naleving CAO voor Uitzendkrachten), the compliance office of recruitment companies with collective agreements for temporary workers. The five-year agreement will provide better training opportunities for low-skilled agency workers. It is set to come into force on 5 November 2012 and will see better working conditions for agency staff.

English: <http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/Research-Publications/Daily-News ...>

New collective agreement for water authority

July 11, 2012

After lengthy negotiations, the water authority and trade unions CNV, FNV and the Unie signed a new collective agreement that will apply from 1 January 2012 until 31 December 2013. The agreement includes a 1% pay increase in 2012 and 3% in 2013 through the so-called 'individual choice budget'. In this budget, employees can choose the programmes for which they want to save, like additional pension or extra paid leave. The initial agreement included a 1% pay increase in 2012 and a 1% increase in the individual choice budget in 2012, but the former was renegotiated at the request of the employers. Agreements were also reached with regard to more flexible working hours and reimbursement of costs of commuting.

Dutch: <http://www.mijnvakbond.nl/Stemmen-CAO-Waterschappen?referrer=693>
<http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao%27s/Alle-Cao%27s/waterschappen ...>

Dutch and English dockers team up

July 5, 2012

After Unite recently backed Dutch FNV dockers in a pension campaign, the unions have now joined forces to protect jobs. Increasingly, the unions report, staff who are not trained dockers are employed for lashing because they are cheaper. FNV and Unite have announced the start of a joined campaign to reserve lashing activities for professional dockers.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online ...>

Norway

Oil sector conflict forced into obligatory arbitration but far from over

August 24, 2012

As reported in last month's newsletter, Norwegian off-shore oil and gas workers launched a limited strike

on Sunday 24 June, demanding higher wages, the right to early retirement and to 14 days paternity leave. Just half an hour before the start of a sector wide lock-out by off-shore workers that would stall all production, the government forced the conflict between the unions and the Norwegian Oil Industry Association (OLF) into obligatory arbitration. On-shore workers, however, who were still negotiating their collective agreement and tabled similar demands as the off-shore workers', have broken off talks. The on-shore industrial conflict will now move into mediation, a necessary step before another strike can be called.

English: <http://www.industrialunion.org/norwegian-government-enforces>
... <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/16/norway-oil-idUSL6E8IC5MK20120716> <http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/08/24/norway-strike-idINL6E8JODZS20120824>

Poland

Increase in rogue employment agencies

July 27, 2012

The Federation of Staffing Firms Polish HR Forum has warned that an increasing number of rogue employment agencies are active on online job-sites. The agencies are not registered with the labour inspectorate and advertise vacancies that turn out to be illegal labour. The rogue agencies also try to charge jobseekers for temporary and permanent vacancies and primarily offer work abroad.

English: <http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/Research-Publications/Daily-News> ...

Strike and lock-out at LG supplier Chung Hong Electronics

July 23, 2012

Workers at the Chinese LG supplier Chung Hong Electronics factory, operating out of a Special Economic Zone near Wroclaw, have entered into an industrial conflict. The workers started collective labour negotiations demanding a wage increase, the restoration of the social fund, the reduction of the annual overtime limit and the restoration of free transport for workers, which the company refused. The workers voted to strike in the end of June, after which one employee was fired. In reaction to the dismissal 40 more employees went on a two-week strike, 24 of which were then dismissed for disciplinary reasons. While workers laid-off for disciplinary reasons are not entitled to unemployment benefits, the strike continues and unions accuse Chung Hong Electronics of violating core trade union rights. The workers have instated a solidarity fund for the dismissed workers, asking the public for contributions.

English: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jul/23/sackings-poland> ...

Portugal

Less than half of unemployed receive benefits

August 9, 2012

The national institute of statistics (INE) has released a report showing that only 43.5% of the country's unemployed received benefits in June. The average amount of benefits was €531.35 per month. Men were more likely than women to receive benefits.

English: <http://theportugalnews.com/news/more-than-half-of-jobless-get-no> ...

Strike in Navegadores hotel

August 9, 2012

Workers at the Navegadores hotel in Monte Gordo have gone on strike to protest against unpaid overtime and premium pay. The Algarve Hotels Union also presented the strike as a protest against revised labour legislation, which facilitates easy hiring and firing, eliminates public holidays, reduces paid holidays and deregulates worker's timetables by annulling or suspending the agreements made during collective hiring.

English: [http://theportugalnews.com/news/hotel-staff-strike-against-overtime-and ...](http://theportugalnews.com/news/hotel-staff-strike-against-overtime-and-...)

Building union helps workers get jobs in Canada

July 23, 2012

The builders' union has announced it will help its members apply for an announced 400 job openings in the Canadian building industry. After Canada announced it is recruiting hundreds of Portuguese for construction work in Toronto, the union was flooded with enquiries from members about the procedure. 22% of the 700.000 construction workers in Portugal are currently unemployed. A union representative explains the union is getting involved in order to avoid illegal practices. The job offers in Canada, where a constructor earns €5500 per month, is very attractive to Portuguese workers who can expect to earn €545 per month at home.

English: [http://theportugalnews.com/news/builders-union-pledge-full-legal-support-for ...](http://theportugalnews.com/news/builders-union-pledge-full-legal-support-for-...)

Health workers hold two-day strike

July 11, 2012

Doctors and other health workers held a 48-hour strike against announced €800 million cuts in health care forced by a new EU-IMF package. The strike caused the cancellation of nearly 400.000 doctor's appointments and 4500 operations. The health workers say quality of services is endangered and the poor are being barred from health care services. Amongst the measures is a €20 charge for services in emergency rooms. The health care workers also protest against increasing privatisation.

English: [http://www.insidebayarea.com/news/ci_21050505/portuguese-doctors-strike ...](http://www.insidebayarea.com/news/ci_21050505/portuguese-doctors-strike-...) <http://news.msn.co.nz/worldnews/8497765/portugal-health-workers-strike-over-cuts> [http://www.economywatch.com/in-the-news/portugal-healthcare-strike-to-affect ...](http://www.economywatch.com/in-the-news/portugal-healthcare-strike-to-affect-...)

Romania

US companies continue to invest

July, 2012

Several US companies (IT, food, energy, infrastructure, financial services) have increased their investment in a country with a market that they still expect to emerge. Managers of involved companies pinpoint many strategic advantages, such as growing service areas, adaptability, human intelligence and ability to innovate continuously.

English: <http://www.thediplomat.ro/articol.php?id=3668>

Serbia

Union busting at Kronospan plant

August 9, 2012

The management at a Kronospan factory (belonging to the Austria-based manufacturer) has made a range of attempts to reduce the trade union influence. The IER Nezavisnost union has been protesting unfair labour practices like unhealthy working conditions, low wages of union members, long working hours, non-payment for sick leave and overtime, pressure and humiliation of union members. Late June the company dismissed ten union members with unjustified reasons.

English: <http://www.industrial-union.org/ier-nezavisnost-of-serbia-fight-back-at-kronospan>

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Slovakia

Teachers plan one-day strike

August 28, 2012

Teachers unions have announced a one-day strike for September 13. Unions fear that the €7.85 million cuts in the state budget for education will lead to a cut in salaries for all categories of employees in the education sector. The trade unions are demanding that salaries of teaching personnel amount to 1.2-2 times the current average salary. The education ministry has reaction that decent salaries are one of its priorities and that the budget will effectively be increased when additional European funds are counted in.

English: [http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/47423/10/teachers_unions_planning ...](http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/47423/10/teachers_unions_planning_...)

Workers win pay rise

July 25, 2012

US Steele Košice has agreed a deal which will see workers' pay increase by 4% in return for a two-hour increase in the working week and a 12% reduction in the workforce. The compromise comes after four months of negotiations and paves the way for the company to cut 1,650 jobs by 2015. The trade unions have accepted a voluntary redundancy scheme to reduce jobs, and have agreed that workers who leave will not be replaced – several hundred workers leave the company each year when they reach retirement age. The company has guaranteed that there will be no compulsory redundancies.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2012/06/articles/sk1206019i.htm>

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Slovenia

Unionists call for more social dialogue

August 28, 2012

Unionists have called for a social agreement to get the country out of the crisis and avoid tensions. The head of the ZSSS trade union confederation says politicians underestimate the value of a tripartite agreement and are frightened of talking to trade unionists ahead of a pension and labour law reform. ZSSS stated that a social pact would address the now rising tensions in the country and send out a good signal of stability that would benefit the recovery and financial stability. The unions recently expressed concerns over both the pension reform and the abolition of the paid lunch break contained in the labour law reform. The unionist also warned that in the absence of a social dialogue, actions can be expected this autumn.

English: [http://www.sloveniatimes.com/unionists-fear-rising-of-tensions-in-autumn ...](http://www.sloveniatimes.com/unionists-fear-rising-of-tensions-in-autumn_...)

Pension reform coming soon

August 21, 2012

In a 2011 referendum a pension reform plan was rejected. However, based on the same plan the Ministry of Labour, the Family and Social affairs plans a proposal that involves tightening rules on early retirement in a five-year transitional period, followed by the raising of the retirement age. Early retirement will be severely limited and the reform will also include supplementary pension insurance. Issues that caused conflict with the social partners will be 'excluded'.

English: <http://www.sloveniatimes.com/new-pension-reform-proposal-expected-soon>

Real average pay down by 3% compared to 2011

August 16, 2012

The bureau of statistics published a report showing that in June 2012, the average monthly pay in real terms was 2.9% lower than the year before. The biggest pay cuts were recorded in education (down by 4.4%), research and technological activity (3.2%) and construction (3.1%). Average monthly pay for the first six months of 2012 was at €1,523.94 gross or €990.08 net.

English: [http://www.sloveniatimes.com/average-monthly-pay-down ...](http://www.sloveniatimes.com/average-monthly-pay-down-...)

Spain

Coal miners' reach Madrid and clash with police

August 4, 2012

The *March Negra* (Black march) of the miners' protests reached Madrid on 11 July, after a journey on foot of over 400 kilometres that they set off on 22 June. Hundreds of thousands attended the UGT and CCOO rally against the closure of the mines on Madrid's Plaza de Colón. The miners from the country's northern provinces have been on strike for over a month, as reported in previous newsletters, protesting against the large scale retraction of public subsidies for the mining sector that has already lost over 40,000 jobs in the last 20 years. As supporters joined the protest and the government announced yet more austerity measures, clashes occurred between the protesters and riot police. The police shot with rubber bullets at the protesters, who threw rocks at the police. Although talks between the Industry Ministry and the unions have not yielded any results, unions sent their members back to work whilst they contemplate further actions.

English: <http://www.industrialunion.org/spanish-miners-marcha-negra-arrives-in-madrid>
... <http://www.platts.com/RSSFeedDetailedNews/RSSFeed/Coal/8594705>

Railway strikes cripple public transport

August 3, 2012

Public railway employees held a one-day strike against privatisation plans. The government plans to sell off part of the railways in order to slash the public deficit. Unions have announced more strikes for September. The workers also protest against new minimum service requirements that do not only cover passenger transport but also freight trains.

English: <http://www.euronews.com/2012/08/03/spain-anti-privatisation-rail-strike>
... <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/7698>

Trade unions establish permanent platform for actions against cuts

July 19, 2012

Trade union confederations CCOO, UGT, FEP-USO, CGT, SL, STAJ, GESTHA, SATSE, CESM, USAE,

ANPE, STEs-I, UFP , SUP, UnionGC:, FETE-UGT, FSP-UGT, FSC-CC.OO, CSI-F have established a common platform for action, that will coordinate a sustained campaign against austerity. The latest austerity measures include cuts in public sector employees' Christmas bonuses, amounting to up to 7% of their salaries. The platform announced it cannot rule out further general strikes, but will do so only after balloting its members.

Spanish: [http://www.fspugt.es/Los sindicatos de empleados pblicos constituyen...](http://www.fspugt.es/Los_sindicatos_de_empleados_publicos_constituyen...)

Protests and violent clashes after government announces salary cuts and VAT increase

July 19, 2012

Over 80 demonstrations in various cities were called by unions as tensions between police and protesters rise. Virtually all public sector unions had called for new demonstrations as the government announced a further 65 billion cuts to prepare for a European stimulus package, whilst also announcing increases in VAT rates. Among the cuts is the Christmas bonus, a real pay cut of up to 7% for some workers. When various demonstrations came together at Madrid's Puerta del Sol and news arrived that the riot police had been ordered to disperse the demonstration, protesters barricaded surrounding streets by setting on fire plastic bins. Violent clashes followed with the police shooting rubber bullets and protesters throwing rocks and bottles; at least six protesters were injured.

English: [http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/afp/police-fire-rubber-bullets](http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/afp/police-fire-rubber-bullets...)
... <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/Apps/uni.nsf...>

Sweden

Working in Sweden

August 22, 2012

The trade union Kommunal that represents agricultural and horticultural workers has for years been assisting migrant workers. Kommunal produced a brochure explaining the working system and giving information about minimum wage levels, working time and health and safety regulations (now available in several languages).

English: <http://cms.iuf.org/?q=node/1878> <http://cms.iuf.org/sites/cms.iuf.org/files/2012%20Working%20in%20Sweden-e.pdf>

Fair trade certification for berry picking?

August 4, 2012

Wild blueberries are much sought after by the health-food industry: four-fifths of Sweden's delicious blueberries are exported. However, the confederation of Swedish trade unions (LO) has called berry picking "modern slavery". LO complains that Sweden has "lost control over workplace conditions as global labour has become a cheap commodity". When berries are scarce, pickers often cannot cover the costs of plane tickets, food and lodging. Polarica, a big company for frozen berries, has suggested "fair trade" certification, so that consumers can choose berries picked only by workers who have been treated and paid well.

English: <http://www.economist.com/node/21559956>

National mediation institute to prioritise equal pay

July 18, 2012

National media report that a parliamentary majority exists to broaden the mandate of the National Mediation Institute to close the gender pay gap. The mediation institute is traditionally responsible to coordinate wage growth across sectors, taking the export sector wages as a base line to ensure an equitable development in other sectors. The institute is now expected to receive a further mandate to measure and track wage differences between female and male dominated sectors, and to take action to correct it.

Swedish: <http://www.kommunal.se/Kommunal/Nyheter/2012/Kvinnoloner...>

2.6% pay increase for postal and aviation workers

July 4, 2012

Services and communications union SEKO has signed a collective agreement with employers organisation Almega, covering roughly 20.000 workers in the postal and aviation sector. The new collective agreement includes a 2.6% pay raise and will apply from 1 June 2012 to the 31 May 2013. The collective agreement furthermore introduces a minimum wage of 15,984 SEK.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/Apps/uni.nsf...>

Switzerland

Creative campaigning leads to social plan

August 13, 2012

Merck Serono employees in Geneva accepted a Memorandum of Understanding that was reached in bargaining between worker representatives, trade union UNIA, and management of the pharmaceuticals giant, under the mediation of Geneva authorities. Workers had renewed strike action in early August as the company refused to improve the social plan, in one of the largest industrial action campaigns in recent history (see our June Newsletter). The decision to close the sites in Geneva and Coisins was not reversed, but gains were won enabling early retirement of older employees, on good terms. Minimum redundancy payments were increased. A special fund was created for compensation for temporary workers and subcontractors. Workers are released from work for one month to look for another job. Also achieved was the commitment from Merck Serono to support the creation of a biotechnology institute, under certain conditions.

English: <http://www.industrialunion.org/conflict-at-merck-serono-switzerland...>

French (detailed archive): <http://www.unia.ch/Meldungen.6267.o.html?&L=1>

German (detailed archive): <http://www.unia.ch/Meldungen.6267.o.html>

St. Gallen canton cuts wages to avoid raising taxes

July 5, 2012

The north-eastern cantonal government of Sankt Gallen has announced it intends to cut civil servants' wages by 1.5% in order to reach its retrenchment target. The regional government states that overall wage cuts are necessary to avoid redundancies. Public sector union vpod has announced it is fighting the decision and says the government strategy to cut wages for the sake of tax competition is unsustainable, suggesting incomes need to be increased rather than expenses cut.

German: <http://www.vpod.ch/aktuell/nachrichten/ansicht/article/sparen-in-sankt-gallen...>

Turkey

Action day for sacked workers

August 29, 2012

In a worldwide campaign trade unionists will show their support for 305 unfairly sacked Turkish Airline (THY) workers by targeting the company's offices in major world cities on 30 August. The workers who, in an extreme measure by Turkish Airlines, were dismissed by text, email and phone after protesting against imminent legislation that would effectively deprive them of the right to strike (earlier in this Newsletter).

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/press-area/index.cfm/pressdetail/7795>

Trade union activists sacked at Istanbul Bilgi University

August 25, 2012

Istanbul Bilgi University has fired 13 support staff, the number expected to rise to 40, motivating the dismissals as redundancies due to the closing of one of its campus buildings. Unions accuse the university of sacking those employees that are union members and activists. The unions stated that while one building closes, another one is opened on the same campus which means that the need to support staff is not reduced at all.

English: <http://bilgicalisanlari.com/?p=142>

DHL fires workers for organising

July 27, 2012

Trade union TUMTIS reports that DHL has fired 18 workers in warehouses in Kırac, Esenvur and Gebze for taking part in the union's organising efforts. The International Transport workers' Federation came out in support of TUMTIS over the layoffs at DHL.

English: [http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index ...](http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index...)

12,000 signatures to reinstate fired union members at Togo Footwear

July 26, 2012

Leather workers union Deri-Is, supported by Labour Start and IndustriALL, has collected 12,000 signatures and organised protests demanding the reinstatement of 35 colleagues that were fired at Togo Footwear, Ankara, for union organising activities. The Deri-Is members were attempting to initiate collective bargaining at the factory. So far, the ministry of labour has refused to issue collective bargaining authorization papers to the unionists.

English/French/Spanish: [http://www.industriall-union.org/demand-reinstatement ...](http://www.industriall-union.org/demand-reinstatement...)

United Kingdom

Blacklisting causes national scandal

August 28, 2012

Growing political concern has been voiced over blacklisting, a practice of mainly construction companies to place workers who have been active for unions on a blacklist of workers never to hire. A list of union activists was circulated by the Consulting Association (that also filed MP's and academics like Charles Woolfson) to firms who subscribed to it. The list, first revealed after a raid in 2009, contained 3000 names of 'troublesome workers'. In recent week, the Trade Union Congress passed a motion defining blacklisting as corporate bullying and demanding political action. A number of blacklisted workers, aided by the GMB, have launched a £600 million law suit for tort of illegal conspiracy against one of the biggest firms using the covert black list database, Sir Robert McAlpine. Opposition raised again as it became clear

that the director of one of the firms using blacklisting was awarded a seat on the board of the Health and Safety Executive.

English: <http://www.shponline.co.uk/news-content/full/pressure-builds-on-ico>
... <http://www.hazards.org/blacklistblog/2012/08/>
<http://www.manchestertuc.org/news/822-illegal-corporate-bullying>
... <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2012/mar/03/blacklist-files-oil-safety-academic>
Focus on the practice of blacklisting: <http://www.hazards.org/blacklistblog/>

Disabled workers occupy Remploy head quarters

August 23, 2012

Strikes to place on 19 and 26 July against the imminent closing of 27 of the 54 Remploy factories that provide jobs for disabled people to return to work. Over 1500 employees are expected to be laid off in the 27 closing factories, while the fate of the remaining Remploy factories is uncertain. Unions called the government decision to close the factories shameless and said that this will make life even harder for people who make tremendous efforts to work hard. Disabled workers have occupied Remploy HQ and unions have announced a four-day walkout at sites in Chesterfield and Springburn, Glasgow, from August 28.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/Apps/uni.nsf...>
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/disabled-workers-occupy...>

Job centre call handlers on strike over oppressive targets

August 18, 2012

Call centre workers from over 32 job centres went on strike to protest against oppressive working conditions and unrealistic targets. The handlers, who answer questions about benefits and job searching, say the targets set by the job centres do not allow them to properly help people dealing with the complicated problems they encounter. The industrial action is a repetition of similar industrial actions last year, after which targets became a little more flexible but also induced employees to keep conversations short.

English: http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events...

Railway day of action

August 14, 2012

Trade unions, passengers and environmentalist groups protest jointly in a TUC-backed *Action for Rail* campaign against fare rises and cuts to railway staff and services. Frances O'Grady, the TUC's deputy general secretary, said: "These fare rises will add even more pressure to passengers feeling a massive squeeze on their incomes. At the same time the government is asking the train operators to make cuts to staff on trains and stations and in ticket offices. Passengers are being asked to pay more to get less. We want cuts to rail fares, not rail staff." The increase in prices is 3% higher than the inflation rate.

English: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/aug/14/protests-herald-u-turn-rail-fare-rises>
<http://actionforrail.org/category/news/> http://www.aslef.org.uk/information/133557/union_joins_national_fares_protests/

London tube cleaners strike for living wage

August 14, 2012

London tube cleaners have gone on strike over low wages and lack of respect. In the midst of a multitude of small strikes and protests surrounding the Olympics, the cleaners' strike has grown to include a cyber-

picket and protest outside the Olympic metro stops.

English:

<http://www.rmtlondoncalling.org.uk/node/3334> <http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/wire?section=oly&id=8250351> <http://www.freshbusinessthinking.com/news.php...>

Housing association staff to be fired and re-hired for 2/3 for former wages

August 8, 2012

One Housing Group, managing 13,000 houses in London and the South East and employing 245 people, is attempting to fire its staff just to hire them again at two-thirds of their former wages. Unions have reacted outraged and warned that a significant fraction of the staff would not be able to pay rents and mortgages under the new wage.

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

Call centre fires employees to replace them with prison labour

August 4, 2012

Becoming Green, a roofing and environmental refitting company in Cardiff, has started hiring inmates for £3 per day to staff its call centre, from which regular employees have been fired. Becoming Green stated that under the law it is allowed to draw 20% of its workforce from prison labour and intends to do so.

English: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2012/aug/08/prisoners-call-centre...> http://www.unitetheunion.org/news_events/latest_news/unite_brands_cardiff...

Private sector bus drivers' reach last-minute Olympic bonus pay deal

July 20, 2012

Just before the start of the Olympic games in London, private sector bus drivers agreed to a bonus payment of £27 per shift, expected to amount to about £577 per worker for the entire period of the games. The bus drivers from 21 companies went on strike in June, as reported in last month's newsletter, when Transport for London refused to pay Olympic bonuses to the bus drivers that had been awarded to other transport workers. The drivers requested the bonus payments as a compensation for the enormous increase in work load and work pressure.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online...>

New Economics Foundation calculates regional pay will cost £10bn and 110,000 jobs

July 16, 2012

In a report commissioned by the Trade Union Confederation, the New Economics Foundation concludes that the government's plan to instate regional pay will cost the economy £10bn and an expected 110,000 job losses. The Cameron government has argued regional pay in the public sector will help poorer regions compete and result in more job opportunities. The NEF report concludes that, whereas London and the South East have higher living costs, there are no significant differences between other regions and lower wages would merely hurt purchasing power.

English: http://www.unison.org.uk/news/news_view.asp?did=7969

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further information on the ETUI at www.etui.org, and on the AIAS at www.uva-aias.net.

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