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Issue 9/2012 | October

This newsletter presents up-to-date information on collective bargaining developments across Europe since February 2008. It aims to facilitate information exchange between trade unions and to support the work of the ETUC's collective bargaining committee.



AMSTERDAM INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED LABOUR STUDIES
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European sources

Nordics top the World Economic Forum 2012 Global Gender Gap report

October 25, 2012

Northern European countries are doing well in the recently published Global Gender Gap Report 2012 by the World Economic Forum. The top five is made up exclusively by Nordic countries: Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark. But even these countries have not fully closed economic and participation gaps—in particular, the gaps in senior positions, wages and leadership levels still persist. The Global Gender Gap Report is published annually and links gender equality to economic competitiveness. In the report, overviews are compiled on economic, political, education and health-based gender gaps in 111 countries. The report's overall conclusion is one of very slow progress in closing the gender gap in all world regions.

English: <http://www.weforum.org/issues/global-gender-gap>

European trade union alliance to coordinate strategy against HP dismissals

October 19, 2012

Uni Global and IndustriALL have started a European alliance to coordinate the trade union representation of Hewlett Packard (HP) workers in ten different countries. Earlier this year, HP announced it would be reducing its global workforce by 29000 jobs, 8000 of which would have to come from Europe. HP has made a number of national announcements about layoffs, but failed to provide clarity about how many jobs would be shed in which countries.

English: [http://www.uniglobalunion.org/Apps/uni.nsf/pages/homepageEn?OpenDocument&ex ...](http://www.uniglobalunion.org/Apps/uni.nsf/pages/homepageEn?OpenDocument&ex...)

ITUC frontlines report tells the tale of workers in the economic crisis

October 3, 2012

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has published its 2012 frontlines report. The report focuses on deteriorating working conditions in the crisis. In Europe, special attention is paid to the Greek and Bulgarian cases. Despite a recent increase, the Bulgarian minimum wage is still around or significantly less than half the minimum wage applying in Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Latvia and Estonia and around one-fifth of that in Slovenia. Average wages in Bulgaria are a mere fraction of those prevailing in the advanced countries of Europe. Bulgarian workers also earn less than workers in the other EU-12 countries. For example the average wage in Poland is nearly two and a half times that in Bulgaria. A key objective of the Troika policy since 2008 has been a dramatic reduction in Greek labour costs. For example, a key condition for the last loan was a 22% reduction in the nominal value of the national minimum wage which came into effect in February 2012. Today the minimum wage in Greece is only slightly more than a third of the Irish minimum wage.

English: http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/new_frontline_forum_2012_en.pdf

Unions against the exploitation of agency labour

October 2, 2012

In the report The Triangular Trap that was released as part of a global campaign to stop precarious work the trade union IndustriALL signals that agency workers are often unable to join bargain collectively. The defining characteristic of agency labour is a triangular relationship between the user undertaking, the agency and the worker, isolating the worker from the enterprise that effectively controls their work, their pay and their conditions so that the worker has no say in any of them and has no mechanism to negotiate improvements. On 7 October, the World Day for Decent Work, affiliates will be mobilising their members to take action against the spread of agency work and other forms of precarious employment.

English: [http://www.industriall-union.org/unions-fight-back-against-the-explosion-of](http://www.industriall-union.org/unions-fight-back-against-the-explosion-of-....)

A Nordic view on minimum wages

Summer 2012

On commission of Norwegian, Danish, Swedish and Finnish trade unions, the Fafo foundation produced a report on minimum wages from a Nordic point of view. The report gives an overview of the minimum wage structures across Europe and explains why Nordic unions have been opposed to the introduction of statutory minimum wages in their countries. The report is now available in English, German and Norwegian.

English: <http://www.fafo.no/pub/rapp/20243/index.html>

Austria

New agreement in machinery and metal goods

October 22, 2012

A new collective agreement has been closed in the machinery and metal goods subsector, including pay increases across the board. In the 12 month lasting collective agreement (for over 120,000 workers) unions and employers agreed on a 3.3% increase of wages, a 3.4% increase of the sector's minimum wage (now up to €1636.35) and a 3.4% increase of apprenticeship remunerations. Employer demands for performance pay, more decentralised bargaining and a 52-hour working week were retracted in the last negotiation round.

English: [http://www.eucoban.eu/EMF/Reports/Austria-Agreement-for-machinery-and ...](http://www.eucoban.eu/EMF/Reports/Austria-Agreement-for-machinery-and-...)

Car rental service has to pay apprentices

October 3, 2012

The youth officers of trade union GPA-djp have criticised for months the poor training conditions for apprentices and the assigned work that had no relation with their vocational training combined with irregular payments in the car rental company Charterline. The union went to court and has reached a compensation payment of €86,000 for the youngsters. Other young workers in training schemes are recommended to check the regularity of their working conditions.

German: [http://www.jugend.gpa-djp.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=A01/Page ...](http://www.jugend.gpa-djp.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=A01/Page-...)

Belgium

Ford announces closure Genk plant

October 31, 2012

Despite promises made in 2010 to keep its Genk plant open in exchange for pay cuts and public subsidies, Ford has announced that it will close the plant in 2014. The closure will affect over 4000 workers and an additional 5000 workers at the plant's suppliers. The production of the S-max, Galaxy

and Mondeo that were earmarked for Genk will be moved to Valencia. Genk's mayor and Belgian prime minister Di Rupo have called the closure a disaster for the regional economy. The Flemish prime minister has agreed with Belgian banks on a scheme that will relieve the financial burden on those Ford Genk workers that are paying off big loans.

English: [http://business.financialpost.com/2012/10/24/black-day-for-belgium-as-ford ...](http://business.financialpost.com/2012/10/24/black-day-for-belgium-as-ford-...)
<http://www.flanderstoday.eu/content/%E2%80%9Cso-unjust%E2%80%9D> <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/9b4104aa-1dbe-11e2-901e-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2AxlVnie> [http://internationalpoliticalforum.com/over-capacity-or-what-does-the-closing-of-ford- ...](http://internationalpoliticalforum.com/over-capacity-or-what-does-the-closing-of-ford-...)

Joint trade union action at Otis

October 18, 2012

A unified trade union front has initiated actions at the Otis plant in Groot-Bijgaarden. The aim is to reduce work pressure and to force the management to the negotiation table. The management has relocated people in recent months without any consultation. Key issue in the dispute is the plan to reduce the introduction period of new technicians during which mentorship is guaranteed from 6 months to 4 weeks.

Dutch:

http://www.standaard.be/artikel/detail.aspx?artikelid=DMF20111018_022 <http://www.demorgen.be/dm/nl/996/Economie/article/detail/1510338/2012/10/...>

Protests for temporary workers' rights

October 11, 2012

Trade union FGTB has instated a 'day of temporary workers' rights', during which it organised several demonstrations and actions calling for better working conditions. The specific focus of this year's temporary workers rights day was the practice of one-day contracts.

English: <http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/content/view/full/71802>

Bulgaria

Social partners consider differentiated minimum wage

October 8, 2012

The Ministry of Finance announced that it will put forward a proposal to differentiate the minimum wage by region. The proposal will be discussed in the tripartite Three-Way Council. One of the considerations is to lower the minimum wage in regions with higher unemployment rates. Employers have welcomed the proposals, whereas trade unions condemned it as absolutely unacceptable. Critics warn the proposals may infringe European law.

English:

http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=143869 http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=143938

Collective agreement said to be a step forward

October 5, 2012

Parliamentarian Manolova criticised the fact that there was no increase of the gross salary after the collective labour contract signature. According to the Minister of Health the increase of the night shifts' payment in the healthcare sector is a step in the right direction. After the signing of the collective agreement in August an increase of the basic pay of BGN 0.50 per hour (€ 0.25) was introduced.

English: <http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=n289148>

Croatia

Workers should not be seen as a commodity

October 14, 2012

Talking about the bleak demographic future of the country Labour and Pension System Minister Mrcic called for the creation of a socially responsible society in which the worker would not be perceived as a good and which would promote the know-how, work and social solidarity.

English: [http://dalje.com/en-croatia/labour-minister-warns-about-bleak-demographic ...](http://dalje.com/en-croatia/labour-minister-warns-about-bleak-demographic...)

Cyprus

Enough money to pay state wages

October 27, 2012

Responding to concerns that the government will not have enough liquidity to meet its wage obligations in November, a government spokesman assured that there is 'no such possibility'. Officials in Nicosia are finalising a strategy in light of the scheduled arrival of the troika. A definitive date has not yet been set, with troika negotiations and contacts continuing, aimed at the prospect of a deal as soon as possible.

English: [http://famagusta-gazette.com/cyprus-will-be-able-to-pay-state-wages-next ...](http://famagusta-gazette.com/cyprus-will-be-able-to-pay-state-wages-next...)

Unions criticise harsh policy of the troika

October 6, 2012

Trade unions have called the new government measures to counter the troika proposals painful and unbearable. The public sector union slammed its employers for not even bothering to consult the unions. According to the unions the salary reductions would reach 30 per cent if the current proposals – a slew of pay cuts and taxes - were added to the cuts public servants have already endured since the crisis started.

English: <http://www.cyprus-mail.com/cyprus/slaughtering-workers/20121006>

Czech Republic

Campaign calls for attention for working conditions domestic cleaners

October 18, 2012

The association for integration and migration has launched a campaign calling attention to the vulnerable working conditions of foreign domestic workers in Czech households. The campaign 'Do you know who cleans your house?' focuses on the lack of fundamental and workers' rights that migrants with poor language skills in informal workplaces often experience. The campaign spots targets families employing domestic helps and encourages to treat them with dignity and reflect on the working conditions they are offered.

English: <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/panorama/do-you-know-who-cleans-your-house-1>

Unions demand wage rise to equal inflation

October 4, 2012

The national trade union confederation CMKOS has made known that it will be seeking wage increases to at least equal the rise in inflation next year. CMKOS said it will demand higher wage increases from companies that are doing well, but that the inflation increase will serve as the lower limit for collective bargaining. Central bank and government estimates indicate inflation is expected to be just over 2% but will be largely dependent on a possible increase in VAT rates.

English: [http://praguemonitor.com/2012/10/04/trade-unions-want-wage-growth-copy ...](http://praguemonitor.com/2012/10/04/trade-unions-want-wage-growth-copy...)

To work less for a lager

October 3, 2012

The Economist had already the wage comparison with a Big Mac Index and now there is the beer index. In a comparison compiled by analysts at the Swiss bank UBS it takes workers in Prague on average only 7 minutes to earn enough to buy a *pivo*. The figures, compiled by The Economist magazine, show roughly how long workers have to work, in a handful of countries, to be able to buy a half-litre of local beer.

English: <http://www.praguepost.com/business/14458-is-czech-thirst-hard-earned.html> [http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2012/09/daily-chart-13?fsrc=scn/fb/wl ...](http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2012/09/daily-chart-13?fsrc=scn/fb/wl...)

Denmark

Pension system rated the world's best

October 17, 2012

The global pension rater, Melbourne Mercer Global Pension Index, has awarded the Danish's pension scheme an overall index value score of 82.9, leapfrogging the Dutch at 78.9. It became the first system ever to be classified as an 'A-grade' system. The annual analysis looked at the pension systems of 18 countries. The top placing is largely the result of some competent decisions in the political arena and there has been a disposition to save up in the correct, long-term manner.

English: <http://cphpost.dk/news/national/danish-pension-system-rated-worlds-best>

More layoffs in 2013 predicted

October 1, 2012

According to a new survey by FTF, seven out of every ten local councils will be laying off employees during 2013. Some 54 of the country's 98 mayors have already, or are on the cusp of, approved budgets for 2013, and 42 out of those 54, about 78%, said that there will be less funds in their municipal coffers than in 2012. Nearly 70% of the surveyed mayors predicted that the shrinking budgets will translate directly into fewer workers.

English: <http://cphpost.dk/news/national/councils-predict-more-layoffs-2013>

Estonia

Doctors and nurses' strike continues as conflict goes to state arbitrator

October 22, 2012

A conflict about wages, working conditions and general healthcare sphere management between the doctors' and nurses' unions on one side and hospitals and the health insurance fund on the other side entered its fourth week, continuing on rotational basis, meaning that the specialties and clinics that were on strike alternated. Hospital personnel have been demanding changes to improve patient care and prevent medical personnel from emigrating. The conflict went into arbitration after the unions

rejected the employers' final wage offer. The health insurance fund made an offer on 12 October, which was refused by workers. Union representatives stated that the offer addressed only workload reduction in outpatient care, doing nothing for inpatient care. Secondly, wage demands were not met. The unions demanded a 23% raise for caregivers, 17.5 % for nurses and 11% for doctors to take immediate effect. The Health Insurance Fund offered 15 % for caregivers, 10% for nurses and 6% for doctors, which would take place over the course of two years.

English: <http://estonianfreepress.com/2012/10/doctors-wont-give-up-and-the-strike-goes-on/> http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/markets_and_companies/?doc=64725 <http://news.err.ee/health/coeca57f-ea8b-4ec1-9f20-89f1bd4ea64e> <http://news.err.ee/health/af8143c0-3979-4cc0-a2a1-afb87e16621e> <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/31976/>

Finland

Unions condemn employer proposal for youth minimum wage

October 23, 2012

Trade union confederations SAK, STTK and Akava and the trade union solidarity centre SASK have strongly condemned an employer proposal to pay young people lower minimum wages. The unions state that pay already depends on experience and young people are therefore already relatively cheap to hire. Apprenticeship schemes also exist in Finland, which allow for lower pay when work is combined with training. The unions state that a lower minimum wage for young people is both unfair and inhibits young workers' independence.

English: <http://www.artto.kaapeli.fi/unions/T2012/p41>

Kemira Oulo plant taken offline as workers strike

October 8, 2012

The Kemira chemical plants in Oulo had to be taken offline as 120 workers went on strike over expected layoffs. Kemira announced in July that it would lay off 600 workers due to financial difficulties. Union representatives stated that the workers will remain on strike until the firm starts meaningful negotiations over the intended layoffs.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/08/finland-kemira-idUSL6E8L8B7R...>

Economic policy coordination bypasses negotiation autonomy

October 3, 2012

According to the acting Director of the FinUnions (the Finnish trade union representation to the EU) many decisions are actually being made in the name of economic policy coordination that will have a bigger impact on wage and salary formation and labour market reforms than the existing mechanism of working life directives. The European Commission, through its coordination role, is seeking to circumvent power traditionally held by the labour market organisations, the European Parliament and Council who, together, normally impose working life directives.

English: <http://www.artto.kaapeli.fi/unions/T2012/p38>

France

Air France ground staff to strike

October 27, 2012

Trade union CGT, representing Air France ground staff, organised a walk-out on 26 October. The

workers are protesting against the cut backs through which Air France aims to reach 5000 voluntary redundancies (10% of the workforce), as reported in the June newsletter. While around 30% of the staff went on strike, no flight cancellations were reported; a number of protesters clashed with Parisian police forces. Air France made known earlier that if negotiations with trade unions fail, it will consider resorting to involuntary redundancies. The airline aims to reduce its costs by 2 billion euro whilst increasing productivity by 20%.

English: <http://www.dw.de/labor-union-calls-strike-on-air-france/a-16311223> [http://www.english.rfi.fr/visiting-france/20121026-no-flight-cancellations-reported ...](http://www.english.rfi.fr/visiting-france/20121026-no-flight-cancellations-reported...) [http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204598504578082431123787570 ...](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204598504578082431123787570...)

Energy workers strike against site closures

October 8, 2012

Trade union CGT has announced a one-day strike in the energy sector, which the union announced would completely shut down production at thermal power stations and greatly reduce production at nuclear power plants. The workers protest against a number of announced site closures across the energy sector. President François Hollande recently said the government would close the country's oldest nuclear power plant (Fessenheim) and E.On said it intends to close seven coal plants.

English: <http://www.iii.co.uk/news-opinion/reuters/news/56570>

Agreement signed at Brittany Ferries

October 1, 2012

A 10-day strike at Brittany Ferries (see last month Newsletter) ended after a positive vote in a phone poll paved the way for a deal. Nearly 1,300 crew members staged several wildcat strikes over proposals to withdraw allowances and change working hours. The deal from the firm which has lost money for the last three years was accepted by 56.68% of the workforce. The company was seeking an agreement which achieves cost savings and productivity improvements. It includes an extra 11 hours a year working time, more multi-tasking and an end to free meals when staff is not on duty.

English: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-19784014>

Germany

Fair Mobility project assists exploited workers from East Europe

October 29, 2012

In the recent past trade union officers reported that some companies systematically abuse foreign labourers to reduce wages and downgrade working conditions. The promise of a better life and hard cash attracts workers from Romania, Bulgaria, Poland or Lithuania – but more often than not they are surprised by what they find: backbreaking work and degrading conditions with bad or even no pay. The trade union federation (DGB) is therefore opening information centres in the big cities in the frame of the Fair Mobility project, which aims at assisting exploited workers from East Europe.

English: <http://www.dw.de/german-unions-back-exploited-migrant-laborers/a-16338601>

Siemens temp workers may see pay reduced under new collective agreement

October 22, 2012

As a side effect of a new collective agreement in the metal and electrical industry, due to come into force by 1 November, agency workers at Siemens may face a pay cut. The collective agreement actually raises temp workers' wages in the industry as a whole, but it may also annul a previous company-level agreement in Siemens. Since 2009, Siemens has had a company agreement which guarantees that agency workers who have worked for the company for over a year will earn 75% of the base salary paid to direct hires; after 16 months they have the right to equal wages and after 18 months the right to direct employment. Management and the Siemens works council are currently in negotiations.

English: <http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/content/view/full/72118>

Greece

Vote on reform despite coalition split

October 28, 2012

Plans to put labour reforms demanded by foreign lenders to a parliamentary vote will take place despite a junior coalition partner's refusal to back them, according to the finance minister. The government will present the 2013 budget law - which contains the bulk of new austerity measures demanded by lenders - in parliament, and a separate bill with reforms including the contested labour measures.

English: [http://news.yahoo.com/greece-vote-labor-reform-despite-coalition-split ...](http://news.yahoo.com/greece-vote-labor-reform-despite-coalition-split...)

New general strike in grim atmosphere

October 18, 2012

On 18 October the second general strike within two weeks took place in protest against a new round of austerity cuts aimed to unlock another instalment of financial aid. The strike mobilised over 70,000 people; public services, schools, hospitals and shops were closed and flights were grounded. While the number of injuries remained limited, the atmosphere of the general strikes is turning grimmer at each demonstration. Protesters threw petrol bombs, rocks and bottles, police responded with teargas and stun grenades. The protestors got some support from the Council of Europe, who ruled in a non-binding judgement that it considers some of the reforms illegal, as these violate workers' rights.

English: <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2012/10/12/greeces-labor-unions-call-oct-18-strike/>
<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/greece-20th-general-strike-in-two-1386143> [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/19/world/europe/greek-workers-hold-national-strike ...](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/19/world/europe/greek-workers-hold-national-strike...)
<http://www.cnbc.com/id/49472444>

Hungary

Government, unions and employers begin talks on minimum wage

October 17, 2012

Talks started on increasing next year's minimum wage between the government, employers and unions, the Economy Ministry told Hungarian Press Agency (MTI). Although spokespersons refused to disclose further details media report the government put forward a proposal for a 4.3% increase of the minimum wage and the minimum wage for skilled workers, in line with its 4.3% inflation projection for 2013 with the possibility of a higher increase left on the table as well. The minimum wages are currently 93,000 forints (EUR 334) and 108,000 forints per month, respectively. Employers have stated they doubt whether the minimum wage should be increased at all, while unions said 4.3% is not enough.

English: [http://www.realdeal.hu/20121017/government-unions-employers-begin-talks ...](http://www.realdeal.hu/20121017/government-unions-employers-begin-talks...)

Announcement of mass layoffs

October 9, 2012

Two of Hungary's biggest companies announced mass layoffs for this year and 2013. Communications giant Magyar Telekom (MT) will release 500 of its 7,500 employees. The firm has reached an agreement with trade unions on the dismissals and other cost-efficiency measures. According to the agreement, the majority of released workers are expected to leave by the end of 2012, but the announced figure does not include the employment termination of executives and retiring employees. In addition, organisational restructuring will take place as of 1 January 2013 and the employer

contribution to the postponed pension fund will be reduced by 25%, as well. Oil corporate MOL announced that it plans to dismiss 700 of its more than 10,000 workers, representing 6-7 per cent of MOL's workforce, but the exact number depends on union consultations, which are set to begin mid-October.

English: <http://www.budapesttimes.hu/2012/10/09/mt-mol-laying-off/>
[http://www.freehungary.hu/component/content/article/1-friss-hirek/1410-hungary](http://www.freehungary.hu/component/content/article/1-friss-hirek/1410-hungary....)

Iceland

Plan of action of disabled persons

October 1, 2012

The Ministry of Welfare (that includes Labour since 2011) has published an action plan related to the position of disabled with important sections on employment and participation on the labour market. Projects aimed at making workplaces more accessible, supporting disabled persons on the labour market and increasing their access to the private sector labour market should be undertaken in order to raise their quality of life.

English: <http://eng.velferdarraduneyti.is/departments/disabled-persons/nr/33510>

Ireland

Breakdown of talks at DAA

October 27, 2012

Following the strike notice to Dublin airport, reported in last month's newsletter, the Dublin Airport Authority (DAA) made a new offer in the long lasting dispute over a €748 million deficit in the Irish Airlines (General Employees) Superannuation Scheme (IASS) pension scheme. The new offer aimed at realising pensions at 78% of the final salary and raising the extra contribution from the DAA from 32 million euro in the previous bid, to 55 million euro in the current. However, talks at the Labour Relations Commission (LRC) aimed at resolving the dispute at Aer Lingus and the DAA collapsed. A SIPTU spokesman said that the company made generous pension contributions for a small number of elite staff which were ten times greater than those made for employees at lower grades. Industrial action is almost inevitable.

English: http://www.siptu.ie/media/pressreleases2012/mainnews/fullstory_16676_en.html <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/frontpage/2012/1017/1224325341362.html>
<http://www.independent.ie/national-news/aer-lingus-staff-to-strike-next-month-over...>

Partial deal with health consultants collapses

October 12, 2012

The deal between the health care service executive (HSE) and hospital consultants that was reported closed in last month's newsletter has collapsed. The deal reached last month was only a partial deal, leaving several issues open to be referred to labour courts and the Croke Park committee. Following the deal, a conflict arose over the implementation of the deal, as the HSE moved to start without waiting for the courts to settle the unresolved issues. Unions argued that the deal could only come into effect once all issues were resolved. With the collapse of the agreement, all issues are now likely to be referred to the court.

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2012/1012/1224325187934.html>

Meat processor Olhausen to stop production

October 10, 2012

Meat processing company Olhausen has confirmed to trade unions that it will cease production at all of its three plants in Dublin and Monaghan, dismissing 160 workers. The company has agreed to pay outstanding wages as well as statutory redundancy pay. Trade unions are speaking to the ministry to find a new buyer for the company.

English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2012/1010/olhausen-job-losses-dublin-monaghan.html>

Luas drivers vote to strike

October 8, 2012

A majority of 93% of Luas tram drivers in Dublin voted in favour of two 48-hours strikes to be held in November. The drivers are in conflict with Luas management over work rosters and rest days. A SIPTU representative stated the Luas drivers have already made a considerable sacrifice in agreeing to forego any wage claims until 2015 and are only asking for a total number of rest days that amount to weekends plus 23 days. The drivers also want to reduce their 9 hour shifts to 8 hour shifts.

English: [http://www.herald.ie/news/travel-chaos-looming-as-luas-drivers-vote-to-strike ...](http://www.herald.ie/news/travel-chaos-looming-as-luas-drivers-vote-to-strike...)

Public service to shed 8000 jobs

October 7, 2012

The Minister for jobs, enterprises and innovation confirmed to the media that the civil service will have to reduce its numbers further in order to become efficient. The ministry confirmed previous rumours that around 8000 redundancies will be sought. Prime minister Kenny stated that public service payroll costs need to be reduced faster in order to reach the budget targets and confirmed the government would seek to up the pace of the reforms.

English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2012/1007/bruton-defends-reilly-on-care-centres.html>
[http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/kenny-public-sector-numbers-need-to-fall-faster ...](http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/kenny-public-sector-numbers-need-to-fall-faster...)

No further damage to domestic demand

October 2, 2012

In the Autumn 2012 Quarterly Economic Observer of the Nevin Economic Research Institute the focus is on the details of how fiscal policy in the Republic of Ireland needs to be adapted for 2013 in such a manner as to avoid causing further damage to domestic demand and to ensure greater social and economic equality. The context for this is the continuing unemployment crisis linked to evidence of rising income inequality over times. Loss of income, jobs and continuing erosion of purchasing power is depressing demand.

English: http://www.nerinstitute.net/download/pdf/qeo_pdf_final_autumn_2012.pdf

Italy

Rally against job cuts and factory closures

October 22, 2012

Thousands of people gathered in Rome on 20 October to call on the Monti government to take action against the increasing number of job cuts and factory closures threatening the already weak labour market in the country. Workers from all sectors of industry gathered in the square outside St John's Basilica, a traditional rallying point for left-wing protests, holding red balloons and banners with slogans.

English: [http://news.yahoo.com/italian-workers-rally-against-job-losses-plant-closures ...](http://news.yahoo.com/italian-workers-rally-against-job-losses-plant-closures...)
<http://www.equaltimes.org/news/austerity-isnt-working-say-protestors-in-london-and-rome>

Jobs guarantees for workers of closed Indesit plant

October 16, 2012

Some 406 employees of the None plant of white goods producer Indesit have been guaranteed work, despite the plant's dishwasher production moving to Poland. After half a year of negotiations, Indesit agreed to maintain its None site research and development centre, part of its marketing activities and invest in the construction of a logistics and service centre. About a 100 workers will remain directly employed, the rest will receive alternative work guarantees. Indesit also promised to uphold employment in the rest of its Italian activities, employing a total of 4568 people.

English: <http://www.industrialunion.org/unions-secure-employment-at-indesit-in-italy>

Urban transportation blocked for 1 day strike

October 2, 2012

Both public and private urban transport in cities across the country was blocked during a one-day strike on 2 October. Trade unions Filt-Cgil, Fit-Cisl, Uiltrasporti, Ugltrasporti and Faisa-Cisal protested against the unwillingness of employers to negotiate a new collective agreement to replace the old one that expired in 2007. Participation in the strike was high (between 75% and 90%) but unions respected the legal minimum service requirements. Union representatives warned that unless employers come back to the negotiation table fast, the next strike will be all-encompassing.

English: <http://libcom.org/blog/transport-workers-24-hour-strike-08102012>

Latvia

Probation service employees demand higher wages and threaten strike

October 24, 2012

Members of the State Probation Service Employees' Union have served a petition to the probation service demanding their net monthly wages to be raised to 400 Lats (€ 569) by 1 January 2013. The union announced it is ready to resort to industrial action if the demands are not met.

English: <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/32036/>

Gradual wage increase

October 24, 2012

In a report of the SEB Bank it is said that wages have started to gradually increase in Latvia and Estonia while in Lithuania, real wages still decrease. In Latvia the average gross and real wage has since the economic fall bottomed out increased by 11 and 2.5% respectively. However, in the second quarter of 2012, the real wage was by 10.3% lower than at the same time in 2008.

English: <http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/analytics/?doc=64873>

Lithuania

Effort to reach consensus on new national agreement

October 12, 2012

The national agreement, which was signed between the government and social partners in October 2009, expired at the end of 2010. Attempts to initiate the signing of a new agreement in 2011 were unsuccessful. In July 2012, a new version of the agreement was prepared and presented at the sitting of the Tripartite Council. However, the trade unions were of the opinion that it was only of benefit to businesses. The unions presented their own draft version with the addition to its long-term objectives of, among other things, the creation of a social welfare state.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2012/07/articles/lt1207029i.htm>

Luxembourg

Minimum wage to rise by 1.5%

October 26, 2012

The government announced that the minimum wage will be increased by 1.5% from € 1,846.51 to € 1,874.19 per month. The rise will be confirmed in January 2013 and follows from an earlier agreed policy to keep the minimum wage in line with the median wage rise in the country.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/view/minimum-wage-to-rise-1-5-508ab919e4b02927...>

ArcelorMittal to close steel site Schiffflange

October 22, 2012

Management of the ArcelorMittal has announced it is closing down its Schiffflange steel site. The 47 workers will be reassigned to other plants, as will running orders. Unions have said they are afraid hundreds of jobs will go if the site is abandoned and plan to present a report on the viability of the site during a steel tripartite meeting on 26 October 2012.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/view/schiffflange-steel-site-to-stop-production-indefinitely...>

Unions furious after Cargolux repudiates collective agreement

October 22, 2012

Air freight carrier Cargolux has announced it is unilaterally repudiating the collective agreement that was planned to be in force until the end of 2012. Unions have reacted furiously, stating that the repudiation of existing collective agreements undermines the entire collective bargaining system. Cargolux has been suffering from large financial losses, as reported in the September newsletter, and wants to negotiate an agreement that corresponds to its current difficulties. Cargolux denied earlier rumours that it is outsourcing 450 jobs to Qatar. A meeting between Cargolux and the government failed to deliver any guarantees against outsourcing or for job security. Subsequently, unions have announced a protest for 15 November.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/view/unions-in-uproar-after-cargolux-repudiates...>
<http://www.wort.lu/en/view/cargolux-president-calls-outsourcing-rumours-nonsense...>
<http://www.wort.lu/en/view/cargolux-staff-to-protest-on-november-13-50857a6ae4b...>

Luxguard workers vote against pay cut

October 10, 2012

Eight in ten employees at the Dudelange plant of glass manufacturer Luxguard voted against a pay cut offered to avoid the plant's closure. Employees were asked to support an 18% wage cut and a waiver of their production bonus. Trade union OGBL stated it advised against pay cuts as long as Luxguard refused to guarantee the continuation of employment. Luxguard previously said it would be forced to close the plant in the absence of a wage cut, but in reaction to the rejection of the offer announced it would be referring the case to central management.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/view/luxguard-employees-reject-wage-cut-propositions...>

Malta

Workers at HSBC bank on strike over restructuring

October 24, 2012

Workers of the wealth management section of HSBC Malta bank went on strike over the bank's announced restructuring. Two meetings between the bank and trade union MUBE failed to resolve the conflict. HSBC stated it has now requested the ministry to appoint an industrial tribunal to resolve the conflict. The conflict escalated further when HSBC suspended an official and locked out a number of other workers. HSBC representatives, speaking in the court case started by MUBE to get an injunction guaranteeing no employees are fired due to union activities, said they warned the employees they'd be dismissed if they followed union directives.

English: [http://www.di-ve.com/business-money/mube-orders-industrial-action-against ...](http://www.di-ve.com/business-money/mube-orders-industrial-action-against-...) [http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20121009/local/hsbc-wealth-management ...](http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20121009/local/hsbc-wealth-management-...) <http://www.di-ve.com/news/mube-vs-hsbc-escalation-dispute>

New collective agreement for civil servants

October 15, 2012

Two years after the previous collective agreement expired, civil servants have a new agreement. The collective agreement will last for 6 years and affect 30,000 civil servants. The agreement includes an annual pay increase of 2.5%. Furthermore, the agreement includes a number of family friendly measures, such as teleworking, flexi-time and reduced hours. The number of civil servants benefiting from the family friendly measures is expected to double.

English: [http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20121015/local/civil-servants-to ...](http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20121015/local/civil-servants-to-...) [http://www.di-ve.com/news/30000-goverment-employees-benefit-%E2%82%AC190 ...](http://www.di-ve.com/news/30000-goverment-employees-benefit-%E2%82%AC190-...)

Netherlands

Worries about childcare

October 23, 2012

Trade union confederation FNV is worried about the future of child care and has written to parliament asking for the new round of cuts in the sector due in 2013 to be stopped. Crèches and after-school clubs have already been hit by cuts and the FNV says this is having an adverse effect on young working mothers and their position on the labour market. A spokeswoman for the social affairs ministry told next year's cut in child care will be €200m. The FNV says this will lead to the collapse of the system.

English: [http://www.expatica.com/nl/news/dutch-news/Trade-unions-want-new-child ...](http://www.expatica.com/nl/news/dutch-news/Trade-unions-want-new-child-...)

Agreement on working conditions temp workers in metal industry

October 11, 2012

Staffing firm Randstad and the metal industry employers' organisation (KMU) have closed an agreement to bring temp workers' employment conditions up to the same level as that of direct hires. The core of the agreement is the fixing of equal remuneration for payroll and direct hire employees. It is the first time that a sector wide agreement is signed between a staffing agency and an employers' organisation.

English: <http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/content/view/full/71803>

Anti-union attitudes criticised

October 2, 2012

U.S. and Dutch unions are strengthening ties in a campaign to reverse the trend of stiffening anti-union attitudes. The campaign targets Royal Ahold NV, an Amsterdam-based corporation that owns supermarket chains in the United States and Europe. Ahold's growth strategy seems aimed at undermining unions, if not eliminating them entirely, according to members of a delegation of Dutch trade unionists visiting the United States. A similar pattern is evident in Europe, says the trade union FNV's special liaison to Ahold. A recent expansion of Ahold into Belgium saw the company employ legal loopholes to prevent unionisation of the new workers even though Belgium's labour law is

otherwise friendly to unions.

English: http://www.inthesetimes.com/working/entry/13936/european-style_union...

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Norway

Utility workers strike

October 3, 2012

Utility workers went on strike after mediation broke down. The bargaining parties did not agree on minimum wage rates, travel rules and payment of working outside normal working hours. But it is said to be crucial to the breakdown that the employers required changes to the workers' pension plan shortly before the arbitration deadline expired. If a planned mobilisation takes place, 1,000 of 2,500 utility workers in the municipal sector will be on strike.

English: <http://www.world-psi.org/en/norway-utility-workers-strike>

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Poland

Coal miners organise 24 hour strike

October 25, 2012

Coking and steam coal miners at JSW SA went on a 24-hour strike after talks failed to resolve a conflict between management and workers. The recently privatised coal producer has unilaterally introduced a number of unfavourable measures for new workers that the unions demand be retracted. The management intends to impose contracts violating the national labour law as well as the previous agreement with the trade unions. Unions are also asking for a 3.8% wage increase.

English: <http://www.industriall-union.org/polish-miners-went-on-24-hour-strike>

Nurses and midwives protest against commercialisation of health care

October 5, 2012

Thousands of nurses and midwives dressed in white uniforms have staged a protest in Warsaw against the health care reforms announced by the ministry. The nurses and midwives object to the proposed public-private partnership schemes, which they say will cost jobs and fail to improve the quality of health care. Recent reports have indicated that the quality of health care is deteriorating, but many hospitals have reported they lack the liquidity to make the investments needed for improvements.

English: <http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/114328.Nurses-protest-in-Warsaw>

Remittances 1.5% of GDP

September 30, 2012

European research network CASE published a report analysing the effects of remittances on the economy. Remittances are money streams that are associated with emigrants sending money to family back home. Poland is the 17th largest recipient of remittances in the world, remittances constituting up to 1.5% of its GDP in 2011. Remittances were highest in 2006-2007, but fell again as the economic crisis hit countries of destination. Remittances contributed to Poland's economic growth and, the authors claim, limited income inequality because remittances went to less developed regions.

English: http://www.case-research.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2012-12_Barbone.pdf

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Portugal

Pan-Iberian anti austerity strike in November

October 19, 2012

The general strike against Madrid's austerity program in November will coincide with a similar strike in neighbouring Portugal to make it the first concerted Iberian labour action. However, the country's second largest trade union UGT has decided not to join the strike.

English: <http://www.dw.de/november-sees-first-pan-iberian-anti-austerity-strike/a-16319599> <http://www.algarveresident.com/o-49451/algarve/iberian-peninsula-calls-general-strike>

90,000 signatures in three weeks to keep pharmacies open

October 11, 2012

A petition demanding more investment in pharmacies has gathered over 90,000 signatures in three weeks. The 'grieving pharmacies' petition states that austerity cuts have brought revenues of pharmacists down below the threshold needed to stay in business. Allegedly, 600 pharmacies are threatened with closure and 98% of pharmacists state they have problems buying medicines from suppliers at least a few times per week. Next to the National Pharmacies Association, the petition is being promoted by students associations. The students fear that in the face of 600 pharmacies closing, apprenticeships will dry up and the 700 pharmacy students ready to enter the labour market will not find jobs.

English: [http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/students-join-fight-for-portugals ...](http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/students-join-fight-for-portugals-...)

400 workers laid off after fire burn retail park to the ground

October 4, 2012

Seven megastores making up the Retail Park de Portimão (Decathlon, AKI, Staples, Rádio Popular, DeBorla, Moviflor and Continente) were burnt to the ground in a fire at the end of September. The commerce, office and services workers union (CESP) has reported that employees of the retail park have started receiving letters of dismissal. The union expects the number of layoffs to rise to 400 workers.

English: [http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/destroyed-retail-park-workers-given ...](http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/destroyed-retail-park-workers-given-...)

Transport strike

October 4, 2012

Trade unions vowed to step up their fight against the government's latest batch of austerity measures. The main opposition Socialist Party, the Confederation of Portuguese Industry, the country's two trade union confederations, and many newspaper headlines Thursday used the same word to describe the tax hikes planned by the government: 'brutal'. Rail services were at a virtual standstill due to a strike by engineers. The Lisbon subway closed during the morning rush-hour due to a walkout, while suburban bus services were also disrupted. Further increases in income taxes are also expected.

English: [http://www.kswo.com/story/19732249/transport-strikes-in-portugal-herald ...](http://www.kswo.com/story/19732249/transport-strikes-in-portugal-herald-...)

Romania

Retailers interested in expansion

October , 2012

In spite of the drop in consumption over the last three years, retailers have been active in the development process, buying new land and opening new locations. The change came this year, when the National Statistics Institute announced a consumption increase of 4% in the first six months of

2012, after three years of decreases. International retailers see the country as a market with an increased potential. In a long article the planned expansion of all important global players is cited. However, the employment impact is unclear.

English: <http://www.thediplomat.ro/articol.php?id=3797>

Serbia

New law on strike prepared

October 22, 2012

A new law on strike will envisage that an employee can only be fired if a court determines that he went on strike illegally. The law will give a greater role to the Agency for Peaceful Settlement of Labour Disputes, and another novelty is that every strike committee will have to report to the agency its decision to launch a strike 10 days before its beginning.

English: <http://www.b92.net/eng/news/business-article.php?yyyy=2012&mm=10&dd...>

Slovakia

Cooperation agreement in health care signed

October 23, 2012

Trade unions of doctors and nurses signed an agreement of cooperation. The common goal is to initiate systematic solutions in health care by respecting the memorandum - a document signed by the doctors' trade union and the former government on preventing Slovak doctors from handing in their notice en masse last year. Doctors, meanwhile, support nurses in their fight for higher salaries, which has already been taken to the Constitutional Court. Both doctors and nurses criticise the lack of financial means provided to health-care facilities by health-insurance companies.

English: http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/47983/10/doctors_and_nurses_trade...

Human chain for decent work

October 5, 2012

Workers and trade unionists will form a human chain from Štúrovo (Nitra Region) via the Mária Valéria bridge to Esztergom, Hungary. The event is set to take place as part of the World Day for Decent Work 2012, announced by the UN's International Labour Organization (ILO). The goal of the day is to support people's right to decent work and a decent life.

English: http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/47785/10/slovak_and_hungarian...

Slovenia

Reforms approved

October 24, 2012

On 17 October the government approved three draft acts which are to serve as the basis for structural reforms that Slovenia will implement in order to overcome the crisis. One crucial part of the reform is the raising and equalising of the retirement age of men and women. Both men and women should be 65 years old in order to qualify for an old-age pension. The proposed retirement age for early retirement for both genders is 60 years with 40 years of employment. In the meantime the parliamentary committee on Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Disabled examined the proposal for the budgets for the coming two years. It is planned to allocate more funds for the active employment

policy, while new cuts in social transfers are not planned.

English: [http://www.mddsz.gov.si/en/newsroom/news/article/1939/6992 ...](http://www.mddsz.gov.si/en/newsroom/news/article/1939/6992...)
<http://www.sta.si/en/vest.php?s=a&id=1813410>

Evolution of the minimum wage described

October 19, 2012

The creation of a minimum wage in Slovenia can be traced back to 1995, when a broad tripartite agreement set down a pay policy for companies and organisations. It was not long before demands to legally determine the minimum wage were introduced, and since then workers have seen regular rises. In 2010, unions forced the government to look again at how minimum wage rates were set and negotiated a substantial increase.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2012/09/articles/si1209011i.htm>

Spain

Police officers protest in streets of Madrid

October 28, 2012

Some 3000 to 6000 off-duty police officers demonstrated in Madrid against the loss of their Christmas bonuses while on duty police officers were sent in to control the crowd. Police officers, like other public employees, have lost large parts of their salaries in the austerity cuts. The protesters were members of the Confederación Española de Policía (CEP), the Unión Federal de Policía (UFP) and the Sindicato Profesional de Policía (SPP).

English: [http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/world/spain-police-protest-loss-of ...](http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/world/spain-police-protest-loss-of...)
<http://www.digitaljournal.com/article/335638>

Fixed-term workers earn 32% less than national average

October 24, 2012

In its wage structure survey 2010, published this month, the national institute for statistics (INE) reports that workers on fixed term contracts earn wages that are 32% below the national average. The average gross annual wage in 2010 was €22,790.20. The energy sector was the best paid (at more than twice the average wage) and accommodation the worst. Wages in the public sector were 30% higher than average. The report comes in the same month that the country's unemployment rate surpassed the 25% mark, hitting a new record high.

English: http://www.ine.es/en/prensa/np741_en.pdf [http://money.cnn.com/2012/10/26/news/economy/spain-unemployment-rate ...](http://money.cnn.com/2012/10/26/news/economy/spain-unemployment-rate...)

Public education deteriorated

October 5, 2012

On the occasion of the World Teachers' Day on 5 October, the affiliates of the global trade union Education International in Spain, FECCOO, FETE-UGT, STEs and CSI-CSIF, issued a joint statement in which they expressed their indignation at the central government's attack on the teaching profession in particular and on public education in general. The cuts imposed on education and professionals for the last two years are endangering the future of the country. At the present time, investments of more than €4.4 billion in education have been discontinued throughout the country.

English: http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/news_details/2312

Sweden

Wage increase for teachers

October 22, 2012

After 252 days of negotiations, the teacher unions and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions have agreed on the terms of a new collective agreement. The collective agreement includes a 4.2% wage increase for the current year and will cover over 200,000 teachers in 290 municipalities.

English: http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/news_details/2334

New collective agreement for agency workers

October 18, 2012

Employers in the staffing industry and trade union LO have closed a new collective agreement that will affect 60,000 workers and last until April 2015. The agreement includes a guaranteed hourly wage for temporary workers who are not placed but are working or in training. Under the new tariff skilled workers are paid SEK 108 (approximately €12.56 per hour) and unskilled workers SEK 100 per hour (approximately €11.63 per hour).

English: <http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/content/view/full/72028>

Switzerland

Liability in the subcontracting chain

October 22, 2012

A draft law that introduces several liability in a chain of subcontracting has been approved by the parliamentary committee on economics. Trade union Unia has welcomed the proposal that introduces a mandatory social responsibility for the main contractor. It is an essential instrument for the social partners to improve contract compliance and can be seen as a crucial flanking policy measure for the free movement of workers and services.

German: [http://www.blick.ch/news/schweiz/nationalratskommission-fuer-solidarhaftung ...](http://www.blick.ch/news/schweiz/nationalratskommission-fuer-solidarhaftung...)
<http://www.parlament.ch/d/mm/2012/seiten/mm-wak-s-2012-08-29.aspx>

French: [http://www.unia.ch/news_aktion_fr.9.0.html?&L=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=7941&tx ...](http://www.unia.ch/news_aktion_fr.9.0.html?&L=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=7941&tx...)
<http://www.parlament.ch/e/mm/2012/Pages/mm-wak-s-2012-08-29.aspx>

Turkey

ITUC and ETUC call for rejection of Collective Labour Relations Act

October 26, 2012

Turkish and international trade unions have organised protests against the draft collective labour relations act that was adopted in parliament this month. Union representatives, backed by the ILO, have stated the law violates basic trade union rights, such as the right to organise and to collective bargaining. Trade union protests were barred from reaching the parliament building in Ankara by police blockades. After the declaration was read by organisers, the police used teargas and pressurised water to disperse the protesters. Upside to the new law is that the strike ban in aviation that caused international uproar in May (see May newsletter) is cancelled through the collective bargaining act.

English: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/turkey-new-trade-union-law.html?lang=en>
[http://www.industrialunion.org/turkish-parliament-debates-union-legislation-without ...](http://www.industrialunion.org/turkish-parliament-debates-union-legislation-without...)

<http://www.itfglobal.org/press-area/index.cfm/pressdetail/8047>

Picket line for Esprit supplier

October 4, 2012

For over eight months, workers have protested in Istanbul in front of the Li&Fung, Hey Tekstil and other places. Hong Kong based Li&Fung, one of the world's largest garment trading companies, was sourcing almost all of the production at Hey Tekstil for one brand: Esprit. Over 2,000 workers have been fired over the last months. Collectively they are owed at least €4.7 million in unpaid salaries, legally-mandated severance and notification payments. Esprit and Li&Fung both have codes of conduct that state wages and benefits should be paid in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. However, wage violations at Hey Tekstil had been going on for many months prior to closure, and both companies clearly failed in their due diligence and in their obligation to mediate.

English: <http://www.cleanclothes.org/urgent-actions/heytekstil-esprit>

United Kingdom

Paid less than minimum wage

October 29, 2012

One in five workers in the UK is paid less than required for a basic standard of living, a KPMG research report suggests. The proportion is much higher among waiters and bar staff, at up to 90% of workers. The report states that nearly five million people failed to command the living wage - a pay packet that enabled a basic standard of living.

English: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-20104177> [http://www.kpmg.com/UK/en/IssuesAndInsights/ArticlesPublications/NewsReleases ...](http://www.kpmg.com/UK/en/IssuesAndInsights/ArticlesPublications/NewsReleases...)

Women win equal pay claim against Birmingham City Council and Abdulla Group

October 25, 2012

174 women who brought a breach of equal pay law to the high court in 2010 have won their case. The women, working in female dominated professions, were denied bonuses that were granted to colleagues in male dominated professions. The judgement is considered ground breaking because it was accepted despite the women having left the employment of the council and the Abdulla group 2 to 6 years before the start of the case. Most equal pay cases are brought before the employment tribunal, which only accepts complaints that are filed less than six months after leaving employment. The high court accepts cases up to six years after employment but has not accepted equal pay cases before. The ruling opens up legal redress for many more British women.

English: <http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/content/view/full/72281>

Anti-austerity rally mobilizes 150,000 people

October 20, 2012

The latest anti-austerity rally drew a record-number of over a 150,000 people to London. The organising Trade Union Congress told media that the cut backs are leading to lower wages and worse working conditions, whilst failing to improve the economic condition of the country. Rallies were also organised in Belfast and Glasgow.

English: [http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/europe/united-kingdom ...](http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/europe/united-kingdom...)

Unions warn reform in auto-enrolment pension schemes will hurt lowest paid workers

October 12, 2012

The Trade Union Confederation (TUC) has reacted critically to government plans to raise the earnings

trigger for people to be auto-enrolled into workplace pensions. The new scheme would imply that companies are no longer obliged to pay employer pension contributions to workers earning less than £9,205 annually. The TUC warned this measure will negatively affect 585,000 workers, 80% of whom are women. The old trigger (£8,105) already relieved employers from paying contributions for over 3.5 million people. Next to the annual earning trigger, the measure also decreases the income over which contributions need to be paid (from the part of earnings exceeding £5564 to that part above £5720).

English: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-21515-fo.cfm>

Lay-offs at Thomas Cook

October 9, 2012

Trade unions are entering negotiations with holiday company Thomas Cook, which announced this month that 430 of its 2700 jobs are to disappear. It remains unclear where exactly jobs are to disappear as the company reduces its fleet from 35 to 31 planes, but the restructuring will affect operational staff, cabin crew, engineers and office-based employees.

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

10% - 20% pay raise for craft workers in Sheffield

October 5, 2012

GMB, Unite and UCCATT have closed a wage agreement for craft workers employed by Amey, a company contracted to maintain roads and street lighting in Sheffield. The wage conflict arose in 2010, when the craft workers were still employed by the Sheffield municipality and the craft workers were denied a pay rise offered to other labourers employed by the municipality. One month after the workers were transferred from the municipality to Amey, the conflict was resolved. The pay deal offers a minimum raise of 10%, up to 20% for the lowest paid workers.

English: http://www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/latest_news/pay_raise_for_sheffield_craft...

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