

collective bargaining

Issue 3/2014 March

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



AMSTERDAM INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED LABOUR STUDIES
UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM



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European sources

Benchmarking report: austerity policy fails to deliver

March 24, 2014

The *Benchmarking Working Europe 2014* report published by the ETUC and the ETUI concludes that nearly five years into the Europe 2020 strategy, the EU's focus on austerity and deregulation is failing to deliver. Growth remains fragile, unemployment has surged to record heights, poverty has risen to unacceptable levels, inequality has grown and social rights are being undermined. The report looks at the most important statistics in eight key areas: the EU's macroeconomic situation, labour market developments, inequality and poverty, deregulation of labour law, wages and collective bargaining, health and safety at work, worker participation rights and the impact of austerity on the green agenda.

English: <http://www.etui.org/News/Benchmarking-Working-Europe-2014> ...

Austerity pushes people under the poverty line

March 20, 2014

Ahead of the EU leaders Spring summit that is traditionally dedicated to economic issues, the ETUC has stated that austerity has aggravated the crisis. Wages have fallen by up to 23% across the EU, poverty has surged, and workers are overtaxed, said trade union leaders, calling on citizens to vote for a 'social Europe' in the May elections for the European Parliament. Austerity measures, Troika-led or not, have hit all European countries and the strongest blow was taken by real wages. According to ETUC figures, only 10 countries out of 28 have not seen a decrease in real wages, and therefore citizens' purchasing power.

English: <http://www.euractiv.com/socialeurope/austerity-aggravated-crisis-euro> ...

Why the European Social Model is still relevant

March 19, 2014

The European Social Model (ESM) played a key role in shaping European societies in the post-war years. The importance of this comprehensive set of social policies to promote inclusive economic growth, high living standards and decent working conditions was clearly illustrated in the first phase of the crisis, when elements like social protection helped cushion the impact in terms of growth, unemployment and poverty. After the adoption of fiscal consolidation policies during the financial and economic crisis the model came under pressure. But, according to the ILO the model is still key to overcome the crisis. The organisation published the country presentations of a Brussels conference dedicated to this theme.

English: <http://www.ilo.org/brussels/meetings-and-events> ...

<http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/comment-analysis> ...

<http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/who-we-are/ilo-director-general/news-and-press> ...

Pay in Europe in the 21st century

March 6, 2014

The Eurofound report *Pay in Europe in the 21st century* provides comparative time series on wage-bargaining outcomes across the EU Member States and Norway and investigates the different systems and levels of minimum wages in Europe at present, evaluating the implications of a hypothetical scenario of a minimum wage set at 60% of the median national wage. Collectively agreed pay remains an important driver of actual pay in many countries. In a majority of EU Member States, minimum wages are set by government regulation. Germany together with Austria, Denmark, Finland, Italy and Sweden are the exceptions, where minimum wages are set by collective bargaining agreements and do not cover all workers.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications> ...

Austria

Labour market trends – increase of unemployment

March 20, 2014

According to the Labour Force Survey of Statistics Austria, the year 2013 was characterised by a small decrease in the number of employed persons (4,175 million; -8,600 compared to 2012) together with a substantial rise of unemployed (215,200; +26,100). The number of self-employed was approximately as high as in 2012 (2013: 555,000), while the number of employees dropped slightly by 7,100 after a rise of 53,000 in 2012 and 41,400 in 2011 (from 2008 to 2010 the number had not changed significantly).

English: http://www.statistik.at/web_en/press ...

German: http://www.statistik.at/web_de/presse ...

Belgium

Poverty yearbook published

March 20, 2014

The figures published in the 4th Federal Poverty Year Book make clear that 15.3% of the citizens in Belgium were living in poverty in 2011. Meanwhile, more than one in five households said that they had trouble making ends meet. Certain groups such as one-parent families and the self-employed are represented in increasing numbers in the figures. Furthermore, poverty no longer appears to be a mainly urban problem, but is also present in rural areas where a large numbers of elderly people and one parent families live.

English: http://www.deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/Economy/140320_Poverty_report

French: [http://www.acco.be/download/nl/313527676/samplechapter/pauvret__en_belgique ...](http://www.acco.be/download/nl/313527676/samplechapter/pauvret__en_belgique...)

Dutch: <http://www.politics.be/persmededelingen/38221/>

Aldi workers stop Sunday opening

March 5, 2014

Workers at Aldi managed to stop plans to open the supermarket's coastal stores on Sundays and public holidays during the tourist season and school holidays. Aldi management announced its intention to open the stores on Sundays in the beginning of February. The supermarket offered higher wages for work on Sundays as well as stating that no employee would be forced to take Sunday shifts. A trade union survey indicated that 99% of the staff did not want to work on Sundays. In subsequent negotiations trade union representatives positioned themselves fervently against Sunday openings and the proposal was withdrawn.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/belgian-aldi-workers-victory-against-work-sundays>

Bulgaria

Power plant workers on strike

March 27, 2014

All 316 employees of a thermal power station in the city of Varna are on strike, demanding an end to the uncertainty related to the future of the plant. The plant has been off for 10 days, and trade-union representatives suggest it could be long before it re-opens. It even could face a potential shutdown if investments are not made by the end of the year.

English: <http://www.novinite.com/articles/159311/>

Irrigation systems workers protest over unpaid wages

March 18, 2014

Workers at Irrigation Systems have started national protests, including a hunger strike, to demand their unpaid wages. Irrigation Systems has major financial difficulties and has been unable to pay its workers' wages for over four months. The company has large outstanding debts to several power distribution companies, who are now threatening to cut off electricity. While criminal procedures are underway against the former chief of Irrigation Systems, no solution has been found regarding the unpaid wages.

English: <http://www.novinite.com/articles/158884/>

[http://www.focus-fen.net/news/2014/03/18/330263/three-workers-at-irrigation-systems ...](http://www.focus-fen.net/news/2014/03/18/330263/three-workers-at-irrigation-systems...)

Interns to receive contract and minimum pay

March 13, 2014

Parliament approved amendments to the labour code that will require interns to receive a written labour contract and to be paid. In the new code, internships are defined as supervised work, must be paid at no less than the minimum wage and should be agreed in a written contract of no less than 6 months and no more than a year. The new legislation also obliges employers to pay insurance for the interns working in their offices. While trade unions have welcomed the changes in legislation, employer and business representatives have warned the new rules will mean that internships will disappear.

English: <http://www.novinite.com/articles/158902/>

Youth unemployment increases

March 1, 2014

Data from Eurostat indicated that the unemployment rate of non-studying Bulgarians under 25 years of age has risen sharply in 2013. Rising by about 63,000 people, the youth unemployment rate was 30% in January

2014. The overall unemployment rate was 12.5% for women and 13.4% for men.

English: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php ...

Croatia

Dispute on pay at Adriadiesel

March 24, 2014

Workers (over 200) from the Adriadiesel factory in the town of Karlovac are protesting against issues over wages. They travelled to Zagreb to protest in front of the building of the Economy Ministry and were previously striking for over two weeks with the aim of getting two delayed monthly wages. It was reported that the workers are additionally worried because of the political situation in Ukraine.

English: http://www.croatiantimes.com/news/General_News/2014-03-24 ...

Protesters: new labour bill detrimental to women workers

March 8, 2014

Activists, who organised a march on International Women's Day, said the new labour bill will have devastating effects on women's working conditions. The protesters demanded a working week of up to 40 hours and eight hours overtime, fixed-time employment contracts for no longer than two years, limiting the number of fixed-term employment contracts per company and reinstatement of women in the same job after maternity leave. The activists also protested against the government's intentions to cut back on educational spending, pointing out that this will disproportionately affect women.

English: <http://dalje.com/en-croatia/activists-march-through-central-zagreb ...>

Cyprus

Wage decrease continues

March 28, 2014

According to preliminary estimations of the Statistical Service, the average gross monthly earnings of employees during the fourth quarter of 2013 amounted to €2.243 (males €2.425 and females €2.037). In comparison with the fourth quarter of 2012, a decrease of 2.6% was recorded in the average monthly earnings of employees (males -3.1% and females -1.8%). In comparison with the third quarter of 2013 (seasonally adjusted data) there was a decrease of 0.8% (males -0.9% and females -0.6%).

English: <http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf ...>

Port workers back to the negotiation table

March 7, 2014

Port workers have called off a strike in favour of further negotiations with the Cyprus Port Authority (CPA). The workers and CPA entered a conflict when they authority announced it would abolish overtime payments in line with the rest of the public sector. Port workers have argued that they constitute a special case, because their overtime is not voluntary, as ships must be offloaded whenever they arrive and in whichever weather conditions. While the port workers have been implementing overtime bans and warning strikes over the last weeks, an all-out strike was averted as the CPA tabled new proposals. Trade unions have confirmed that industrial actions will be suspended as the parties return to the negotiation table.

English: <http://cyprus-mail.com/2014/03/07/port-to-operate-as-normal-this-weekend ...>

Bus drivers may strike as pay cuts loom

March 6, 2014

Bus drivers unions have warned a new round of strikes may set off soon if threats of pay cuts are realised. After recent industrial conflicts ending in bus drivers accepting a 15 percent decrease in salaries, the workers may be faced with more cuts as management has argued the heavily subsidised transport services should be

considered as being part of the public sector.

English: <http://cyprus-mail.com/2014/03/06/more-trouble-at-bus-companies/>

Czech Republic

Serious gender pay gap

March 25, 2014

Women earn on average less than men, not only in the private sector where the pay gap is on average 23%, but also in the civil and public services where the difference is 17% on average. The difference is lowest when people start to work and at the end of their economically productive age. The biggest difference in the public sector is in the age category between 40 and 50 years; in that category the pay gap is 25%. Wage inequality between men and women in the private sector is the highest in the category between 35 and 44 years (43%).

English: <http://praguemonitor.com/2014/03/25/women-public-sector-earn-17-less-men>

Costs of temporary reduction of working hours published

March 18, 2014

A report on active employment policies provides information on the 0.55 million euro subsidies to firms in a difficult situation. The state has funded the temporary shortening of working hours over the past 16 months. Social partners had advocating this for a long time; it was included in the set of proposals for the economic recovery on which a national tripartite agreement was concluded in 2010. Under the scheme, firms could get money for the training of employees who lack work over falling demand as well as wage contributions. Forty-one employers signed contracts from September 2012 until the end of 2013. The active employment policy tools were aimed at people seeking a job for more than five months, disabled people, graduates, people with small children and those aged above 55 years.

English: [http://praguemonitor.com/2014/03/18/czech-state-spends-czk-15m-kurzarbeit ...](http://praguemonitor.com/2014/03/18/czech-state-spends-czk-15m-kurzarbeit...)

Mothers find it difficult to return to the labour market

March 10, 2014

Recent statistics reveal that women encounter major difficulties in returning to the labour market after maternity leave. Only 50% of women who take up maternity leave return to their old work places and the country has one of the highest unemployment rates of young mothers in Europe. Researchers note that women spend twice as long on maternity leave now, compared to the 1980s. Researchers have blamed the poor re-integration on a lack of part-time jobs and the ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has instated employer incentives for firms that employ women who have been on maternity leave.

English: [http://www.radio.cz/en/section/business/many-czech-mums-have-serious-problem ...](http://www.radio.cz/en/section/business/many-czech-mums-have-serious-problem...)

Denmark

Labour migrants use welfare less than other citizens

March 28, 2014

Eastern Europeans workers are not using the welfare system as much as Danes and people with other nationality backgrounds, according to an analysis from the employers' organisation Dansk Arbejdsgiverforening. Residents from the new EU countries in eastern Europe are only paid an average of 4,550 euro a year in welfare benefits, such as unemployment support, state education grants (SU), housing assistance and child benefits. This is 1,600 euro less than the average for a Danish citizen. In general, a smaller proportion of newly immigrated foreigners are on social support.

English: [http://cphpost.dk/news/new-eu-citizens-use-welfare-less-than-others ...](http://cphpost.dk/news/new-eu-citizens-use-welfare-less-than-others...)

General agreement concluded

March 18, 2014

The Confederation of Danish Employers DA and the trade union confederation LO concluded a deal that ends the bargaining round started in January 2014. The draft agreement for renewing more than 500

collective agreements in the private sector covers almost 600,000 employees. The current agreements, which were signed in 2012, expired on 1 March 2014. Usually, the negotiations in the industry sector mark the beginning of the new round of talks. These industry sector talks take place between the negotiation cartel, the Central Organisation of Industrial Employees (CO-industri) and the largest employer organisation, the Confederation of Danish Industry (DI). The outcome of the so-called Industry Agreement, covering 240,000 employees, sets the template for other groups in the private labour market under the domain of LO and DA.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2014/01/articles ...>

Estonia

High wages and poor performance in asset management

March 26, 2014

In a published pay earning top list for the banking sector asset management companies are at leading positions. With employees at four funds, salaries exceed even law firms. Average salary at the number one, Danske Capital, is five times the country's average, and thrice the average of financial sector. However, the pension funds managed by these companies face criticism due to poor results. According to an OECD report the pension funds are the most expensive and the worst in European Union. The Financial Supervision Authority has also criticised pension funds for their excessive salaries.

English: <http://news.postimees.ee/2740948/pension-funds-staff-at-wage-list-top>

Finland

Modification of alternation system criticized

March 26, 2014

The public sector trade union JHL sees the compromise reached during tripartite negotiations between trade union confederations, the employers' federation and the government concerning the alternation leave system as a bad decision as it sets 'unreasonable limits on or to becoming a substitute'. Job alternation leave is an arrangement whereby an employee and employer can come to an agreement allowing the employee to take leave for an agreed time of between 90 and 359 days. The employee gets an allowance that is 70-80% of his/her estimated unemployment benefit. The employer undertakes to hire a registered unemployed jobseeker for the duration of the employee's absence. To be entitled to the allowance the employee must have worked for at least 10 years. Under the new rules this will be 17 years.

English: <http://www.jhl.fi/portal/en ...>

Normal working conditions for berry pickers recommended

March 24, 2014

In a report commissioned by the government the advice is formulated to employ seasonal wild berry pickers properly. The rapporteur, Markku Wallin, examined the situation and the working conditions of thousands of wild berry pickers coming to the country every year. He proposes that the berry pickers should get employment contracts from the companies buying their berries. Their work should be regulated as any other work in the country. The alternative to create separate legislation sees the rapporteur as the least favourable option. The trade unions have welcomed the report and proposals for proper employment contracts.

English: <http://heikkijokinen.info/en/trade-union-news-from-finland/476-thai-berry-pickers ...>

France

Court rules Florange Act disproportional

March 27, 2014

The Constitutional Court ruled the so-called Florange-Act, a law adopted by the parliament earlier in 2014 (see the February Newsletter) that was meant to introduce tough penalties on firms who shut down without looking for a buyer, as being contrary to the freedom to conduct business and to the right to property. In its

constitutional review, the Council does not discredit the obligation to look for a buyer and also the responsibility of the lawmaker for defining rules in this regard is not touched upon. The Court has problems with the impact to the company's economic choices and the proportionality of the sanctions. The employers' power and freedom of assessment have to be respected. This forces the legislator to redraft the act.

English: [http://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/french-constitutional-court-rules ...](http://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/french-constitutional-court-rules-...)

French: [http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/francais/les-decisions ...](http://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/conseil-constitutionnel/francais/les-decisions-...)

Focus on the Act: [http://hsfnotes.com/employment/2014/03/04/france-loi-florange ...](http://hsfnotes.com/employment/2014/03/04/france-loi-florange-...)

Occupation of the Paris opera

March 20, 2014

Trade unions members occupied the Opera Garnier in a protest over proposed changes to labour rules for theatre workers. Members of the coordinating body of the workers stated on their website that they occupied the building to demand the government and employers pay more heed to union proposals as they negotiate new labour rules for workers in the performing sector. Employers' organisation Medef had proposed abolishing special unemployment benefits that the workers currently enjoy as seasonal employees.

English: <http://www.therepublic.com/w/EU--France-Opera-Protest>

Temporary workers occupy recruitment offices

March 3, 2014

Over a 100 agency workers have occupied recruitment offices in Nantes, Lyon and Paris to protest against changes that would reduce their rights to unemployment insurance after the completion of assignments. Amongst others, offices of Synergy, Randstad, Adecco and Derichebourg were occupied. Trade union officials noted that agency workers are already in a precarious position, which would be further deteriorated if their access to unemployment benefits is reduced.

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

Germany

Amazon dispute continues

March 31, 2014

Hundreds of workers at online retailer Amazon went on strike, a new stoppage in a pay dispute that has dragged on for months. Trade union Ver.di stated that about 500 of around 1,200 workers at Amazon's distribution centre in Leipzig were expected to strike. Ver.di wants Amazon to raise pay for workers at its distribution centres in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement for the mail order and retail industry. Amazon has rejected this demand, arguing that it regards warehouse staff as logistics workers.

English: [http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/sns-rt-us-amazon-strikes ...](http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/sns-rt-us-amazon-strikes-...)

Public sector strike hits airports and services

March 26, 2014

Thousands of public service workers resumed strike action across the country after negotiations over pay rises broke down. Strike action disrupted numerous airports, with the national carrier Lufthansa cancelling 600 flights. Public sector trade union Ver.di focused on major hubs such as Frankfurt, Munich and Dusseldorf. The strikes stem from a large dispute over a pay raise of 3.5%, plus a 100 euro one-off payment, for 2.1 million federal and municipal workers. Talks aimed at settling the dispute are due to resume by the end of March.

English: [http://www.thelocal.de/20140324/public-sector-strikes-to-sweep-germany ...](http://www.thelocal.de/20140324/public-sector-strikes-to-sweep-germany-...)

[http://www.dw.de/lufthansa-cancels-600-flights-as-strike-hits-german-airports ...](http://www.dw.de/lufthansa-cancels-600-flights-as-strike-hits-german-airports-...)

Investigative journalist uncovers exploitation chambermaids in luxury hotels

March 13, 2014

A team of investigative journalists working with the private television channel RTL uncovered the gross exploitation of foreign chambermaids in Berlin hotels Kempinski and Waldorf Astoria. The journalists, who worked as chambermaids undercover for 8 months and used hidden cameras to report their story, were confronted with blatant social abuse. The journalists found that the hotels comply with the minimum wage

in name only. While the hourly minimum wage they award is legal, the hotels require maids to clean two to three rooms per hour. All those who do not manage to do so, which according to the workers comes down to everybody, had to work unpaid overtime. Taking into account real hours instead of contract hours, the maids received only half the minimum wage. Additionally, room deductions and €20 deductions were used as punishments by management for any mistake made by the chambermaids.

English: [http://www.iuf.org/w/sites/default/files/3222_Kempinski_and_Waldorf_Astoria ...](http://www.iuf.org/w/sites/default/files/3222_Kempinski_and_Waldorf_Astoria...)

Greece

Private sector agreement signed

March 26, 2014

The employers' organisations in the private sector and the trade union federation GSEE have agreed on a national collective agreement (EGSEE), retrospective from 1 January 2014 and ending 31 December 2014. Social partners did not discuss the issue of minimum wage, which is set by law. Nevertheless, a special clause was introduced according to which, if this legislation changed while the current agreement is in effect, then direct negotiations would start regarding the wage levels of the national collective agreement. Thus, the negotiations were limited to the renewal of existing rights. However, a new arrangement of parental leave was introduced.

English: [http://greece.greekreporter.com/2014/03/26/social-partners-sign-new-collective ...](http://greece.greekreporter.com/2014/03/26/social-partners-sign-new-collective...)

Troika seeks to reduce trade union power

March 17, 2014

The international lenders operating under the flag of the so-called troika have said that the country's state-financed trade unions are too powerful. They want their powers reduced, including the right to strike. The troika wants to stop the practice of time off for trade union work and another measure that is being considered is making strikes illegal unless they have been approved by at least 50% of each union's registered members. Employers will also regain the right to stage lockouts, which they lost in 1982.

English: [http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/politics/2014/03/17/Crisis ...](http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/politics/2014/03/17/Crisis...)

Pharmacists strike over liberalisation drug market

March 10, 2014

Pharmacists around the country have gone on strike over government plans to allow supermarkets to sell non-prescription drugs. The plans, which would increase competition for already struggling pharmacists, are inspired by requests from the country's donors and meant to bring down prices.

English: [http://www.aljazeera.com/video/europe/2014/03/greek-pharmacists-strike ...](http://www.aljazeera.com/video/europe/2014/03/greek-pharmacists-strike...)

Education workers' protest met with police violence

March 28, 2014

A demonstration by education workers on 28 February was violently dispersed by police forces. The protesters, who mobilised while the Greek government was in meetings with Troika negotiators, are objected to plans to dismiss 12,500 education workers by 22 March. More demonstrations and protests have been announced for March.

English: <http://www.world-psi.org/en/greece-adedy-organises-protest-strikes-against-draft-law>
<http://etuce.homestead.com/index.html>

H

ungary

Trade unions and women

March 25, 2014

In an interview the story is sketched out of women activists in the country's trade unions history. Women

entered the workforce in large numbers after World War II. Many countries had been devastated by war, and many able-bodied men had died as soldiers and forced labourers. Another reason was ideology. Communism emphasised full employment. Women in the region would eventually participate in the labour market in rates higher than any other developed part of the world.

English: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-feffer/working-women-in-hungary ...](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-feffer/working-women-in-hungary...)

Iceland

Educators strike after failure of bargaining

March 18, 2014

A failure of the negotiations on a new collective agreement for secondary school teachers led to a strike call by the Kennarasamband Islands (KI). The previous agreement for secondary school teachers expired on 31 January 2014, and, after 30 bargaining meetings without reaching an agreement, the strike was called for and started in the morning of 17 March. The trade union for upper secondary teachers, including vocational education teachers, employed by the state, underlined that the collective agreement is not only about improving teachers' wages, but also enhancing education and school environments for the good of society.

English: [http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news ...](http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news...)

Ireland

Wages have stagnated

March 28, 2014

The cost of employing workers has barely increased at all since 2008, whereas throughout Europe wage costs are up 10% since the recession kicked in. Eurostat figures show that Ireland is now close to the Eurozone average for labour costs and behind high-wage countries such as Denmark, Belgium and France.

English: [http://www.independent.ie/business/small-business/now-our-wages-are-no-higher ...](http://www.independent.ie/business/small-business/now-our-wages-are-no-higher...)

High Court blocks airport strike

March 12, 2014

The High Court has granted injunctions by the Dublin Airport Authority (DAA) and Ryanair, blocking a SIPTU aviation strike to take place on 14 March. As previously reported in this newsletter, the aviation workers, DAA, Ryanair and Aerlingus have been in an industrial conflict over a deficit in the aviation pension schemes. When new negotiations failed, SIPTU balloted its members and announced more industrial actions. The DAA and Ryanair then sought injunctions on the basis of an expert panel currently studying the case and the strike being disproportional because of its having been scheduled for one of the busiest weekends in the year. The court ruled that there are questions about the validity of the ballot and strike action because it was not restricted to members of the pension fund and moved to block the strike. Following the ruling, SIPTU confirmed it would cancel the strike action. The DAA and Ryanair have welcomed the decision, but Aerlingus said that damages had already been incurred and that it would sue SIPTU for compensation.

English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2014/0314/602264-aer-lingus-sues-siptu-for-damages/>
<http://www.rte.ie/news/2014/0312/601718-siptu-ruling/>
[http://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/courts/daa-and-ryanair-seek-injunctions ...](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/courts/daa-and-ryanair-seek-injunctions...)

Italy

Top salaries capped in public sector

March 29, 2014

Government-controlled companies will have top salaries capped at the same level as the head of the top court as part of the government's promise to cut back spending without further hurting the economy. Chief executives at companies, including the Motorway agency ANAS and RAI state television, will see their pay capped at €311,000 a year, when the decree comes into force on 1 April. However, public companies floated on the stock exchange or that raise debt through bonds, will be exempt from the rule, leaving out major

groups like oil giant ENI, transport group Finmeccanica and the national post office.

English: <http://www.thelocal.it/20140329/italy-to-cap-top-salaries-at-public-companies>

Data released on the effects of the crisis

March 26, 2014

Data released from the economy ministry revealed that 350,000 citizens lost their jobs during the country's double-dip recession, while more people became self-employed. Three quarters of the job losses were claimed in 2008, as the first recession got underway, with most of the rest being lost during the second and longest post-war recession that began in the last quarter of 2011. The details were part of the ministry's report into tax declarations between 2008 and 2012. As the recession took hold, more people set up their own ventures, with the number of self-employed growing by 128,000 during the same period, while there were 198,000 fewer people drawing retirement income. The country's jobless rate hit a record 12.9% in January 2014.

English: <http://www.thelocal.it/20140326/italys-recession-claimed-350000-jobs>

The index of contractual wages

March 21, 2014

The index of wages according to collective labour agreements measures the evolution of wages and salaries (per employee or per hour). During the period January-February 2014 the wage index rose by 1.4% compared to the same period of the previous year. At the end of February 2014 the coverage rate (share of national collective agreements in force for the wage setting aspects) was 38.0% in terms of employees and 37.2% in terms of the total amount of wages.

English: <http://www.istat.it/en/archive/116195>

Latvia

Growth in labour costs documented

March 17, 2014

Updated figures of the statistical office show that, compared to the 4th quarter of 2012, hourly labour costs in the country in the 4th quarter of 2013 grew by 34 cents or by 5.9%, reaching 6.18 euro per hour. The most notable increase in hourly labour costs during 2013 was recorded in mining and quarrying (19.9%), in arts, entertainment and recreation (15.6%), in public administration and trade (8.7%), in construction (7.7%) and in real estate activities (7.1%). Labour costs in public administration and trade have increased more rapidly due to the rise in both regular wages and irregular premiums (irregular bonuses also include compensation for unused vacation, vacation allowance).

English: [http://www.csb.gov.lv/en/notikumi/increase-34-cents-hourly-labour-costs ...](http://www.csb.gov.lv/en/notikumi/increase-34-cents-hourly-labour-costs...)

Liechtenstein

Statistical office publishes 2013 employment figures

March 27, 2014

The Office of Statistics published provisional employment figures for the year 2013. Although the total employment increased the job growth was lower than in 2012.

German: http://www.llv.li/pdf-llv-as-beschaefigungsstatistik_2013_vorlaeufige_ergebnisse

Lithuania

High ranking on undeclared labour

March 25, 2014

Eurobarometer survey data revealed that 8% of Lithuanian respondents admitted undeclared paid activities,

apart from regular employment, in 2013. The country was also among the group of states where respondents are more likely to be on a variable salary, with a substantial part based on results.

English: <http://www.lithuaniantribune.com/65724/lithuania-third-in-undeclared-work ...>

Luxembourg

Social plan concluded

March 28, 2014

A social plan has been signed for the planned dismissal of 150 workers at the Banque LBLux SA. In a joint press statement the trade unions revealed that negotiations for the social plan had been ongoing since March 13. They concluded with the signing of a social plan, which includes a variety of social and financial measures to help the staff affected. Among the measures, will be a budget for training and placements and compensation related to employees' age and seniority within the bank.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/view/150-luxembourg-staff-laid-off-at-banque-lblux-sa ...>

LCBG-ESFS asks for increase of lunch voucher value

March 13, 2014

Trade union LCBG-ESFS has asked the minister of finance to adapt the law so that the value of the lunch vouchers many employees receive can be raised to €12.00. The value of the lunch vouchers is currently €8.40, which the union argues is not enough to buy a meal and a drink in any restaurant. The value of the vouchers has not been adjusted to the price index since the introduction of the euro.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/view/union-wants-luxembourg-lunch-voucher-value-increase ...>

Malta

Industrial dispute in dental services

March 26, 2014

The trade union for dental surgery assistants has ordered Mater Dei Hospital's staff not to make use of any communication devices related to work, including telephones and e-mails in a dispute that follows a meeting held earlier on between the union and the management. According to the union the management is not open to discuss the union's proposals.

English: <http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2014-03-26/news/dental-surgery-assistants ...>

Nurses on strike over Sunday allowance

March 9, 2014

Nurses serving dermatology outpatients of Boffa hospital have announced a strike over Sunday shifts. The nurses will report to their shift manager, but will refuse to offer any services to outpatients. Nurses' union MUMN said the hospital's strategic management section had made the decision to no longer serve outpatients on Sundays without consulting the trade union. The nurses say that ending Sunday services will affect the quality of the care. The loss of the Sunday shift also has consequences on nurses' salaries due to the loss of the Sunday allowance.

English: http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/lifestyle/health/36636/nurses_union_announces ...

Netherlands

Freight handlers on strike

March 21, 2013

Some 200 freight handlers at Schiphol airport went on strike over deteriorating working conditions. Workers at Aviapartner Cargo (APC) are facing longer hours and have little control over their schedule. Workers say they can end up having just one day's rest per week, between a day and a night shift. Workers

have also called for improved conditions for their temporary colleagues, and a 3% pay rise.

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

Public sector strikes prepared

March 18, 2013

Due to the lack of progress in negotiations to finalise a new collective agreement public sector workers are planning a series of strikes in June which will affect daily life over a one-week period. National, regional and local civil servants and workers in regional security teams, social work centres and parts of the healthcare sector will take it in turns to down tools for a day.

English: http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2014/03/public_sector_workers_plan ...

Norway

Industrial workers consider strike

March 29, 2014

The trade unions announced that 9,000 industrial workers, including some at key oil services companies, could go on strike on April 2 if government mediation over wages and pensions fails. Initial mediation has broken down and the parties have started forced mediation in the first set of major wage talks that will later be followed by oil workers and public sector employees. Trade unions and employers hold wage negotiations every second year and oil workers went on a two week strike in 2012, shutting part of the country's vital offshore sector until the government broke up the dispute.

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/28/norway-strike ...>

North sea divers demand higher compensation

March 14, 2014

North sea pioneer divers have demanded higher compensation for physical and psychological damages incurred in the course of their work. In a conflict that has been taken to the European Court of Justice, north sea divers have demanded compensation from the state of Norway for failure to inform the divers of the possible health risks. The divers, involved in oil extraction operations, worked at a depth of 300 metres for extended periods of time. The divers say the work has had lasting physical and psychological effects, as many as 23 out of 400 divers having committed suicide after returning from their assignments. While the state of Norway initially said it could not be held liable for the occupational health and safety of workers that are not employed by the state, the divers and their representatives have argued the state incurred an obligation as it profited from the activities. In the end of 2013, the European Court of Justice ruled the divers were entitled to compensation payments of up to €8.000 per person. The divers have now announced they will be seeking higher compensation.

English: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-12-05/north-sea-divers ...>

<http://www.aftenbladet.no/energi/aenergy/Government-wants-to-meet-North-Sea-Divers ...>

<http://www.aftenbladet.no/energi/aenergy/article ...>

Poland

Strike threat at airport

March 31, 2014

As mass redundancies loom the trade unions have announced a strike for 7 May. The action follows an announcement that several hundred employees are due to be laid off as part of a restructuring programme. The unionists have slammed the fact that an agreement concerning job security is due to expire on 10 June.

English: <http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/166876,Trade-unions-threaten-strike ...>

Highest wages earned in Warsaw

March 1, 2014

The latest statistics on wage released by Sedlak&Sedlak show that the highest average wages in Poland are

earned in Warsaw. The average wage in Warsaw was PLN 6,000 (€1416). Wages in the capital are followed by Gdansk and Wroclaw (€1109) and Poznan (€1062).

English: [http://www.newpolandexpress.pl/polish_news_story-6371-warsaw_tops ...](http://www.newpolandexpress.pl/polish_news_story-6371-warsaw_tops...)

Portugal

Figures on emigrant remittances

March 25, 2014

Emigrant remittances advanced 9.6% in 2013 and came in at just over €3 billion for the first time ever according to statistics published by the Bank of Portugal. The central bank reported that France remained the leading source and accounting for €894 million of the total, up annually 5.7%, and remaining well ahead of Switzerland that saw a similar level of increase to take total annual remittances to €738 million.

English: [http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/emigrant-remittances-surge-past-3-billion ...](http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/emigrant-remittances-surge-past-3-billion...)

President vetoes higher social security contributions

March 14, 2014

The President of the Republic has vetoed a law that would increase workers' social security contributions from 2.5% to 3.5%. The President said that it was unclear that the country's budget deficit would be sufficiently reduced by the measure and that no such sacrifices could be demanded from workers unless their result was absolutely certain. The increase of workers' social security contributions was a measure the government introduced after the supreme court forbade it to cut civil servants' pensions.

English: [http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/president-vetoes-rise ...](http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/president-vetoes-rise...)

Romania

Workers' contracts at Rosia Montana suspended

March 4, 2014

The Rosia Montana Gold Corporation, seeking to start controversial mining operations that made news around the world last year, has suspended the contracts of 392 workers, sending them into structural unemployment. The corporation's management has said the suspension of the contract is done in reaction to repeated delays in the evaluation and permitting procedures of the operation. Management said the workers will be reinstated if permits are granted to start the mining operations, but that they will be laid off if no permits are received.

English: [http://www.balkans.com/open-news ...](http://www.balkans.com/open-news...)

Serbia

Serbian workers exploited in Sochi

March 2, 2014

Workers from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have massively fallen victim to job scams in Sochi. NGO Astra reports that an estimated 500 Serbians worked in Russia in the preparations for the Olympic Games, many of whom did so under dire circumstances. The NGO has received over twenty reports of workers who had not received the salaries they were promised or were even deported after work permits turned out to have been false.

English: [http://www.eurasiareview.com/02032014-russia-workers-fall-victim ...](http://www.eurasiareview.com/02032014-russia-workers-fall-victim...)

Slovakia

Strike alert at Volkswagen

March 22, 2014

Workers at Volkswagen Slovakia (VW SK) announced a strike alert over the lack of results in collective bargaining with the company's management. The trade unions are demanding a wage increase of some 6%, increase in the supplementary pension contributions and prolonging the paid leave. Earlier proposals from the management side were rejected. The company employs 9,400 workers at three plants.

English: [http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/53474/3/vw_on_strike_alert ...](http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/53474/3/vw_on_strike_alert...)

Trade union requests universal application collective agreement

March 17, 2014

For the first time since a new law made it possible in 2013, trade union OZ KOVO has requested the ministry to make the provisions of two collective agreements binding to all employers. Until last year, collective agreements could only apply to those employers that had signed the agreement. Since the change in the law, however, a possibility exists to make the agreement applies to all employers in the sector. The outcome of the OZ KOVO request will show the force and application of the new law in practice for the first time.

English: [http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/53307/3/unions_apply_to_extend_bargained ...](http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/53307/3/unions_apply_to_extend_bargained...)

Slovenia

Strike ended after written assurances

March 13, 2014

The miners of the Trbovlje Hrastnik mine suspended a strike after four days, having received firm assurances that their remaining demands will be met. Talks will continue at a negotiating table. The workers wanted clear answers on how the mine will operate in the coming two years. Their demands included assurance on how money will be secured for wages in the coming months and for severance pay for the 135 miners made redundant and the ones to be laid off next year.

English: <http://www.sloveniatimes.com/rth-miners-get-written-assurances-suspend-strike>

Spain

Actors strike delays broadcast of popular series

March 27, 2014

The latest episodes of several popular series are piling up in Spanish TV studios, as a strike by voiceover actors enters its third week. Most foreign shows are dubbed on television, and the strike by 250 actors has delayed the broadcast of new episodes, leaving major networks showing reruns. They have been working to secure a new collective agreement since labour reforms in 2012.

English: [http://news.gnom.es/news/spanish-voiceovers-strike ...](http://news.gnom.es/news/spanish-voiceovers-strike...)

Iberia comes to a deal

March 14, 2014

A bitter dispute over layoffs and cutbacks at Iberia was ended by striking a deal. Management of the International Airlines Group, the owner of British Airways and Iberia, and trade unions representing a majority of ground staff agreed on a seven% pay cut and a salary freeze until 2015, the management said in a statement. The agreement, yet to be formally approved by the workers, followed thousands of job cuts last year and deals with cabin crew and pilots who accepted a 14% pay cut.

English: [http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/iag-scales-down-job-cuts ...](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/iag-scales-down-job-cuts...)

Sweden

Labour costs lead the ranking

March 31, 2014

A Eurostat survey reveals that the country's average hourly labour costs are just over €40 per hour, high enough to land the country at the top of the EU28 charts. Eurostat looked at the average hourly labour costs of companies with ten or more employees across the whole European economy, excluding agriculture and public administration. It found the average cost to be €23.7 in the EU28, a rise of 10.2% since 2008. It also noted that the differences were significant across the continent.

English: <http://www.thelocal.se/20140331/sweden-tops-eus-hourly-labour-costs>

Switzerland

Polls predict a 'yes' for the minimum wage referendum

March 10, 2014

A narrow majority of the voters tends to approve an initiative to establish a minimum wage of 4,000 francs (3,280 euro) a month, according to the results of a survey. The poll found that 52% of respondents approved the minimum wage proposal, set to be decided in a May 18th referendum. Support for the minimum pay, equivalent to 18 euro an hour, was stronger (59%) in the French-speaking regions than in German-speaking regions. The trade union confederation SGB, which launched the minimum wage proposal, argues that 330,000 workers earn less than 4,000 francs a month, an amount judged to be insufficient to cope with the country's high cost of living. The proposal is opposed by the government and both houses of parliament.

English: <http://www.thelocal.ch/20140316/voters-back-swiss-minimum-wage-initiative-poll>

Turkey

Health workers strike for better working conditions

March 14, 2014

Health workers went on strike for better working conditions. A spokesperson of the Doctors Union called on the Health Ministry to take the necessary measures to improve the working conditions of health workers and also to fight against violence targeting health workers. The doctors also demanded the abolishment of subcontractor practices.

English: [http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-health-workers-on-one-day-strike ...](http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-health-workers-on-one-day-strike-...)

Draft education bill foresees in dismissal of all school managers

March 3, 2014

A draft education bill that is being debated in Parliament foresees in large scale privatisation of education and the dismissal of all school managers in the country. The current school managers have been elected by school communities. Under the new bill, they would be dismissed and replaced by new school managers to be appointed by the provincial governors. Trade unions have organised protests and started strike actions against the reform.

English: http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/news_details/2901

United Kingdom

Wage inequality soaring across the country

March 28, 2014

According to a TUC analysis that coincides with the beginning of the TUC's first Fair Pay Fortnight wage inequality has soared across the country over the last 13 years. The figures are based on full-time earnings from the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE). It is shown that that between 2000 (when the data were first collected) and 2013 the pay gap between the top 10% and the bottom 10% of earners in London rose by 14%. This is far higher than the national average rise in the pay gap of 5% over the same period. A similar picture emerges in the South East and other regions.

English: <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/mar/24/tuc-living-wage-pay-inequality>
[http://www.tuc.org.uk/economic-issues/britain-needs-pay-rise/pay-inequality-has-soared ...](http://www.tuc.org.uk/economic-issues/britain-needs-pay-rise/pay-inequality-has-soared...)
Focus on the Fair Pay Fortnight: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/events/fair-pay-fortnight>

Combat for living wage at Amazon

March 27, 2014

Activists in the UK, France and Germany are joining forces to take on Amazon over workers' rights and the level of tax the internet giant is paying. Activists say that 90% of Amazon's staff is on temporary contracts whereby they work very long shifts and are paid below the living wage, a concept that calculates how much people need to earn in order to not live in poverty. In the UK an activist group that cooperates with the trade union GMB has collected over 59,000 signatures asking Amazon to raise its wages and improve worker rights, demanding breaks longer than 15 minutes, an end to compulsory overtime after 10 hour shifts and the monitoring and timing of toilet breaks during working time in the online superstores' giant warehouses.

English: [http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/protesters-fight-against-amazon-over-living-wage ...](http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/protesters-fight-against-amazon-over-living-wage...)

Privatisation stopped by coalition of staff, patients and local community

March 27, 2014

The George Eliot Hospital has been saved from the clutches of the privateers thanks to a coalition of staff, patients, Unite activists and local community campaigners pressing to keep the hospital under public control. A community campaign, in which trade union Unite played a significant part, led the boards of George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust and the NHS Trust Development Authority (TDA) to take the decision not to pursue the procurement process to identify a partner organisation.

English: <http://www.unitetheunion.org/news/victory-for-george-eliot-hospital-campaigners/>

Living wage findings in Northern Ireland

March 25, 2014

The Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI) published its latest Quarterly Economic Observer that examines the extent of low pay across Northern Ireland finding that 25% of workers earn less than the 'Living Wage'. The research found that young people, women and those in part-time work are most at risk of falling below a decent wage level. It also found that low pay is widespread in sectors such as accommodation, food, retail, residential and social care.

English: [http://www.siptu.ie/media/pressreleases2014/featurednews ...](http://www.siptu.ie/media/pressreleases2014/featurednews...)
<http://www.nerinstitute.net/research/quarterly-economic-observer-spring-2014/>

Symbolic wage offer for council employees

March 20, 2014

A symbolic wage offer of 1% for council employees in England, Wales and Northern Ireland who earn more than £14,880 has led to an outraged reaction from the trade union side. The offer could affect more than one million staff and follows a 1% rise last year, after a three-year wage freeze. Those on lower salaries will be offered a "slightly higher increase", the Local Government Association said. Trade union Unison stated that council employees had already endured a 'devastating three-year pay freeze and then a miserly 1% increase last year, representing a fall in pay in real terms back to the level of the 1990s'. The trade unions launched a joint petition for decent pay in local government.

English: [http://www.unison.org.uk/news/local-government-unions-launch-petition ...](http://www.unison.org.uk/news/local-government-unions-launch-petition...)
[http://www.bbc.com/news/uk ...](http://www.bbc.com/news/uk...)

Big drop in justice seeking

March 14, 2014

The number of employment tribunal cases has fallen by 79% since the government introduced fees. The Ministry of Justice has published tribunal quarterly statistics for the period September to December 2013, which show that employment tribunal cases have dropped to 9,801 from 45,710 for the same period in 2012. The TUC stated that the figures show that introducing fees for tribunal cases has stopped many people seeking justice. According to the trade union no one will believe that the workplaces have got fairer overnight. Too many bosses are getting away with treating staff badly, confident that the government is on their side.

English: [http://union-news.co.uk/2014/03/one-believes-britains-workplaces-got-fairer ...](http://union-news.co.uk/2014/03/one-believes-britains-workplaces-got-fairer...)
[https://www.gov.uk/government ...](https://www.gov.uk/government...)

For more information, please contact the editor Jan Cremers, Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies (AIAS) cbn-aias@uva.nl or the Head of communications at the ETUI, Willy De Backer wdebacker@etui.org. For previous full issues of the *Collective bargaining newsletter* please visit www.etui.org/E-Newsletters/Collective-bargaining-newsletter. Since June 2013 readers can consult our archive and search through all articles in our database at www.cbnarchive.eu.

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