

collective bargaining

Issue 2/2015 February

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

Slight growth of minimum wage

February 27, 2015

The Dublin based European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound) updated its EurWORK Observatory of Working Life. The article looks at developments in the minimum wage across Europe's Member States. While minimum wages have often been frozen or seen only moderate increases during the years of crisis, the past two years have witnessed a cautious return in most Member States to growth in the minimum wage. The lower level of inflation (or even deflation) means that the value of the statutory minimum wage increased in real terms as of 1 January 2015.

English: [http://eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/articles/working-conditions ...](http://eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/articles/working-conditions...)

Tax avoidance at McDonalds

February 24, 2015

A report of the European trade union federations EPSU and EFFAT along with a coalition of European and American trade unions reveals that McDonald's deliberately has avoided over €1 billion in corporate taxes in Europe over the five year period 2009-2013. The tax avoidance strategy essentially consisted of moving the European headquarters from the UK to Switzerland as well as using intra-group royalty payments and channelling them into a Luxembourg based subsidiary with a Swiss branch. The report criticises that while transnational corporations like McDonald's are avoiding taxes in Europe, public sector workers are having their wages slashed, and nurses and social carers are facing layoffs. In fact, more than 56,000 tax inspectors have been cut throughout the EU at precisely the moment they are most needed to investigate companies like McDonald's.

English: <http://www.notaxfraud.eu/sites/default/files ...>

ECJ: binding collective agreements apply for posted workers

February 12, 2015

The European Court of Justice has confirmed that, as regards minimum rates of pay, the terms and conditions of employment guaranteed to posted workers are to be defined by the law of the host Member State and/or, in the construction industry, by collective agreements which have been declared 'universally applicable' in the host Member State. ESA, a Polish company, concluded employment contracts, under Polish law, with 186 workers before posting those workers to its Finnish branch to carry out electrical installation work at the site of the nuclear power station at Olkiluoto in the municipality of Eurajoki. The workers concerned claimed that ESA had not paid them the minimum remuneration due to them under the universally applicable Finnish collective agreements for the electricity sector and the building technology sector. The ECJ gave them right. The ECJ also stated that compensation for living costs and accommodation does not form part of the minimum wage.

English: <http://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload ...>

Austria

OECD report pleads for lowering wage tax

February 10, 2015

In an OECD-report it was noted that the country needs to take a range of measures to ensure long-term growth - in particular by reducing effective marginal income tax rates. Labour taxes include personal income tax and employee plus employer social security contributions. The report notes that taxation is particularly high for low income earners, with the average childless taxpayer paying almost 20% more tax than the OECD average. Such high tax rates, especially at low income levels, undermine work incentives the report says. The report also recommends eliminating any subsidised avenues to early retirement.

English: <http://www.thelocal.at/20150210/oecd-says-austria-can-do-more-to-boost-growth>

Shadow economy increases

February 4, 2015

According to a recent report rising unemployment and high tax and social insurance contributions are causing an increasing number of people to abandon formal employment and work in 'shadow economies'. The author, economist Friedrich Schneider, has argued in the past that rather than trying to deter the shadow economy governments should embrace the entrepreneurship it spawns and lower taxes. Despite a projected increase of 4.5% the country's shadow economy is still smaller than in most other EU countries, such as Germany (12.2%) or the UK (9.4%). Of the OECD countries, only Switzerland, the US, and New Zealand have a lower rate of unreported employment.

English: <http://www.thelocal.at/20150204/austrias-shadow-economy-grows>

Belgium

Government prepares bill for wage restraints

February 27, 2015

The government has approved draft legislation to automatic wage indexation. Under this law wages and benefits that are linked to the retail price index will not be topped up by 2% as usually automatically happens when prices rise by 2%. The government also set the scope for wage rises. In 2015 the wage bill isn't being allowed to rise at all. Next year a 0.3% rise is allowed without employers being penalised. The trade unions remain opposed to the measures that they call unbalanced.

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

No to unregulated taxis

February 20, 2015

Trade union BTB has taken action in its ongoing efforts to confront app-based taxi system Uber over protecting standards for drivers and passengers. Although currently prohibited, Uber has been operating in Brussels and there have been calls for a lift in restrictions. According to the trade union Uber is a money-making machine that is the least interested in the taxi driver or customer. Uber doesn't take any responsibility for the screening and training of their drivers, insurance and maintenance of the vehicles.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/en/news-events/news/2015/february/keep-unregulated-taxis-out ...>

In-depth analysis of Flemish labour market

February 11, 2015

Research conducted by an office specialised in employment and the social Economy, the 'Leuvense Steunpunt Werk en Sociale Economie', reveals that the retirement age of Flemish blue and white collar workers had increased to 59.6 years, coming from 58.3 years on average. The chapter on a-typical work concludes that several forms of a-typical work have not expanded in a similar way as in some other EU countries. In general employment growth ended at the start of the crisis; however, the labour market participation stays at a level far beyond the EU-15 average.

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

Dutch: <http://www.steunpuntwse.be/node/3239>

Bulgaria

Prison workers' pay still disputed

February 22, 2015

The prison workers' pay has not been resolved (see our January Newsletter). The trade union for prison workers stated that it is ready to stage protests, after criticizing the insufficient budget allocated for the prisons. After some announcements on the part of the Ministry of Justice the union cancelled planned protest actions. However, not everything depends on the Ministry of Justice and if no progress is made the union will decide on other actions.

English: <http://www.focus-fen.net/news/2015/02/22/363997/bulgaria-prison-officers-ready ...>

Fire services lack workers

February 5, 2015

The trade union of fire-workers has strongly criticized the planned job cuts at this service. Many positions are already vacant and people work with 1 or 2 fire-fighters at some places. The union reacted to the Minister of Interior's announced intention to cut 292 payroll positions.

English: <http://www.focus-fen.net/news/2015/02/05/362358/lack-of-people ...>

Croatia

Layoffs expected at OTP bank

February 19, 2015

Hungarian media report that the Hungarian owned OTP bank will lay off 134 employees in Croatia. The layoffs are linked to a merger between the OTP bank and the Banco Popolare, which OTP acquired in 2014.

Redundancies are expected to centre on the administrative staff of the OTP bank.

English: <http://dalje.com/en-croatia/otp-bank-to-lay-off-134-employees-in-croatia ...>

Cyprus

Economic outlook fragile

February 12, 2015

The Economics Research Centre of the University of Cyprus publishes regular economic reports. The latest report, based on business and consumers surveys reveals that the economic outlook still is fragile. The elevated unemployment rate, reaching a peak in November 2014 (of 16.8%), negatively affects the outlook; high unemployment may undermine a sustained recovery.

English: https://www.ucy.ac.cy/erc/documents/EconomicOutlook_Jan15.pdf

Compensation for Cyprus Airways workers

February 3, 2015

The government has decided to grant over €10 million to Cyprus Airways (CY) workers in a provident fund. The airline closed (see our January Newsletter) after the EU ordered it to return millions in illegal state aid. It was also decided to pay €2.7 million in compensation to those laid off between December 2012 and December 2014 so that they were treated the same way as those who lost their job when the airline shut down last month. The demand of the trade unions that CY workers be employed in other parts of the public sector was rejected with the argument that there were many legal and financial constraints.

English: <http://cyprus-mail.com/2015/02/03/government-to-cover-cy-cash-shortfalls/>

Czech Republic

Gender gap in pensions

February 21, 2015

Data released by the Social Security Administration (ČSSZ) reveal that the gap between the old-age pensions of men and women does not show any tendency towards a reduction and the pensions of women remain about 20% lower than those of men. The level of pensions reflects the number of years the recipients worked and their pay from which they paid contributions to the state pay-as-you-go pension system. Women's pay is almost 25% lower than men's, as a result of which their contributions to the pension system are also lower.

English: <http://praguepost.com/economy/44860-gender-gap-persists-in-pensions>

Overnight wage cuts of 40%

February 1, 2015

In the January Newsletter we reported already on the difficult negotiations at Czech Airlines. The national carrier has lowered their staff's salaries by around 40%, introducing new cost-saving measures. According to the trade unions, the drop in wages is higher than it was previously agreed. The airline in October agreed on a wage cut of around a third and 180 redundancies. The trade unions representing the company's pilots and stewards filed a complaint over the new collective agreement and consider the option to strike.

English: <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/news/czech-airlines-introduce-wage-cut ...>

Denmark

Strike of SAS luggage handlers and cabin personnel

February 27, 2015

In a third strike in eight months, SAS baggage workers walked off the job at Copenhagen Airport. The conflicts are a result of SAS's decision last year to lay off 900 baggage handlers in order to force new negotiations on a local level. Cabin crew workers also started their protest over the airline's plan to move

employees to a more cost-effective collective bargaining agreement after its takeover of Cimber airlines. SAS plans to move around 140 cabin personnel to the Cimber brand, which would also entail putting the employees under a cheaper bargaining agreement.

English: <http://www.thelocal.dk/20150224/sas-strike-delays-flights-out-of-copenhagen>
<http://www.thelocal.dk/20150227/new-sas-strike-cancels-copenhagen-flights>

Unions take Ryanair to court

February 4, 2015

The looming conflict with Ryanair (see our January Newsletter) enters a new phase as the trade unions have decided to file a case in the Danish Labour Court (Arbejdsretten) to determine whether Ryanair should operate under Irish or Danish rules when it begins flying out of its new Copenhagen base. The trade union confederation LO has stated that if the so-called 'recognition proceedings' determine that Ryanair must follow Danish rules, the decision will clear the way for a blockade. Ryanair already lost similar cases in France, Norway and Belgium. A blockade would mean that members of trade unions including 3F, Dansk Metal and HK would be barred from doing work from Ryanair, which would make it nearly impossible for the airline to handle baggage or receive fuel deliveries.

English: <http://www.thelocal.dk/20150204/danish-unions-to-drag-ryanair-into-labour-court>

Estonia

Average gross wage beyond 1000 euro

February 24, 2015

According to Statistics Estonia the average monthly gross wages and salaries, in the 4th quarter of 2014, were 1,039 euro, an increase by 5.3% compared to the 4th quarter of 2013. Real wages, which take into account the influence of the change in the consumer price index, increased 5.8% in the 4th quarter of 2014 compared to the 4th quarter of 2013.

English: [http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/analytics ...](http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/analytics...)

Finland

Strike of icebreaker crew frozen

February 26, 2015

A state labour mediator decreed that a walkout had to be postponed for a couple of weeks to allow more time for contract talks. However, the seafarers union is furious at this move that will block a threatened strike by ship crews. The collective agreement runs out at the end of the month. Meanwhile, the employers have stated that they are ready to resume contract negotiations soon.

English: [http://yle.fi/uutiset/union_anger_as_icebreaker_crews_strike_put_on_ice ...](http://yle.fi/uutiset/union_anger_as_icebreaker_crews_strike_put_on_ice...)

Aviation ground services provider Aviator to lay off 100 workers

February 23, 2015

Aviation services company Aviator, which provides passenger and baggage handling services to airlines, has announced it will be laying off 100 employees. The job cuts follow news that Aviator's largest client, low-cost airline Norwegian, will be switching to services provider Airpro at Helsinki-Vantaa airport. Aviator currently employs 370 workers in Finland. Aviation Services Union IAU has reacted with great concern, pointing out that Airpro's collective agreement is far inferior to the one applied by Aviator.

English: [http://yle.fi/uutiset/aviation_services_company_to_slash_100_jobs_at_helsinki_airport ...](http://yle.fi/uutiset/aviation_services_company_to_slash_100_jobs_at_helsinki_airport...)

France

Power play by the government over reforms

February 25, 2015

The government has decided to bypass the parliament as the government struggled to win a parliamentary majority over contested reforms. The highly divisive package of measures, including the extension of Sunday shopping, was passed by a clause known as '49-3' that allows the government to pass a bill, without a parliamentary vote. The bill is considered as having passed unless the parliament votes through a motion of no-confidence in the government, which analysts see as highly unlikely. The reform extends the number of Sundays that shops are allowed to open from a maximum of five per year to 12. In certain areas classed as 'international tourist zones' shops will be able to open every Sunday.

English: [http://www.thelocal.fr/20150217/macron-economyfrench-reforms ...](http://www.thelocal.fr/20150217/macron-economyfrench-reforms...)

Paris airport workers on strike over wage freeze

February 13, 2015

Workers at three Paris airports went on strike against the wage freeze imposed by their employer Aéroports de Paris, which runs the Charles de Gaulle, Orly and Le Bourget airports. The strike, which was intended to be a one-day strike but went into its second day on Friday 13 February, disrupted traffic at Charles de Gaulles airport, where about 20% of the flights were cancelled. The workers refuse to accept the proposed pay freeze in light of the €358 million profit that the company made in 2014. A trade union spokesperson said that shareholders receive all the benefits from the company's well-functioning operations, while its employees are asked to accept a wage freeze.

English: <http://www.thelocal.fr/20150213/paris-airport-strike-to-see-flights-hit>

Canal+ staff announce second strike in history

February 8, 2015

Workers at TV broadcaster Canal+ will walk off the job on 5 March, organising their second strike since the channel's establishment 30 years ago. The workers, supported by all but one union, are protesting against deteriorating working conditions. Canal+ has recently carried out a round of redundancies; workers say this has increased the pressure on employees to deliver the same results with fewer people.

English: [http://www.connexionfrance.com/canal-plus-strike-second-time-history ...](http://www.connexionfrance.com/canal-plus-strike-second-time-history...)

Germany

Metal workers reach agreement

February 25, 2015

Trade union IG Metall succeeded in securing a 3.4% pay rise in a deal with employers following warning strikes by more than 850,000 workers nationwide. The agreement, which affects 800,000 metal and electronics workers in the key German industrial region of Baden-Württemberg, was reached between IG Metall and the employers' groups. The deal provides the basis for bargaining agreements in other regions across the country covering a total 3.7 million workers. The pay rise is due to take effect in April. Workers also receive a one-time payment of 150 euros for January-March 2015.

English: <http://www.industrialunion.org/ig-metall-secures-34-per-cent-industry-pay-rise>

Germanwings pilots on strike again

February 13, 2015

Pilots union Vereinigung Cockpit staged another strike at Germanwings, the low cost branch of Lufthansa. As reported in previous newsletters, Lufthansa and its pilots have been engaged in a long term conflict over the age of retirement. Lufthansa wants to abolish the early retirement scheme that allows pilots to retire at 60% of pay from the age of 55. The latest strike, which took place on 12/13 February, grounded 474 flights.

English: [http://www.skynews.com.au/business/business/europe/2015/02/13/pilots--strike ...](http://www.skynews.com.au/business/business/europe/2015/02/13/pilots--strike...)

Security personnel strike paralyzes Hamburg airport

February 11, 2015

After a series of warning strikes, an agreement between trade union Ver.di and the employers association has ensured a 13% wage increase for security workers. A strike of airport security personnel called by trade

union Ver.di caused widespread disruptions affecting 40,000 passengers. Security personnel walked off the job in Hamburg, Stuttgart and Hanover. Hamburg airport was hit hardest and was by mid-day forced to call in police aid to close all entrances to both terminals, which had become severely overcrowded. The security workers are demanding pay rises between 70 cents and €2.50 per hour. Security guards at military bases and nuclear power facilities, who fall under the same collective agreement, walked off the job as well.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/union-victory-german-security-workers>
[http://www.dw.de/passenger-screening-personnel-strike-disrupts-hamburg-airport ...](http://www.dw.de/passenger-screening-personnel-strike-disrupts-hamburg-airport...)

Siemens announces job cuts

February 6, 2015

Siemens - the engineering firm that makes everything from trains to turbines - says it is cutting 7,800 jobs to streamline management and speed up decision-making, looking for one billion euros in savings by the end of 2016. The layoffs, to be completed within two years, are expected as part of an overhaul which Siemens hopes will let it catch up with more profitable rivals such as General Electric and Switzerland's ABB. The cuts represent around 2% of the total workforce of 343,000. In Germany, where Siemens has around a third of its employees, 3,300 posts will go.

English: [http://www.euronews.com/2015/02/06/siemens-chases-profitability ...](http://www.euronews.com/2015/02/06/siemens-chases-profitability...)

Suspension of minimum wage control in transport

February 2, 2015

The government has suspended the controls by state authorities to check whether foreign drivers are being paid the minimum wage of €8.50 an hour. Several governments have urged Berlin to change the system and have complained to Brussels, where the European Commission opened a preliminary case to look into whether the legislation complies with European law. The European Commission is assessing whether or not it hinders free movement of goods and services.

English: <http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/germany-poland-wage.znx>

Greece

Labour minister vows to strengthen collective bargaining

February 17, 2015

Meeting with European trade unions, Labour Minister Panos Skourletis said the new government intends to re-build collective bargaining and workers' rights. Over the last years, while agreements with the troika of ECB, IMF and European Commission introduced a broad spectrum of austerity measures, collective bargaining rights have been under attack.

English: [http://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/greece-uni-europa-well-bring-back ...](http://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/greece-uni-europa-well-bring-back...)

Hungary

Proposal for radical change of labour code

February 25, 2015

The Socialist Party in parliament has proposed to entirely change the 2012 Labour Code, which 'leaves employees unprotected'. In addition, it was proposed to allow men, similarly to women, to retire after 40 years of service and to place services for people living with disabilities on new foundations. The head of Parliament's welfare committee, said a constitutional amendment was necessary to stipulate that citizens shall have the right to social security and are entitled to appropriate support for their livelihood in case of old age, sickness, disability, widowhood, losing parents or becoming unemployed through no fault of their own.

English: <http://www.politics.hu/20150225/socialists-seek-radical-changes-to-labour-code/>

Sharp wage growth in 2014

February 20, 2015

The Hungarian Statistical Office reported that wages rose sharply in the end of 2014. In December 2014,

compared to one year earlier, gross wages rose by 6.7%.

English: http://www.xpatloop.com/news/hungary_wage_growth_accelerates_sharply ...

Iceland

Employment report 2014

February 12, 2015

Labour Force Survey data indicate that there were 177,700 employed persons on average in 2014, 52.2% of which were men and 47.8% women. The distribution of workers by economic activity in 2014 (NACE Rev.2) shows that the largest sectors were: Wholesale and Retail Trade, 13.6%; Education, 13.3%; Human Health and Social Work, 12.2%; Manufacturing, 11.5%; Accommodation and Food Services, 6.8%; Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities, 6.5%; Construction, 6.1%; and Transportation and Storage, 6.1%. In 2014 the real wage index has increased by 5.5%.

English: <http://www.statice.is/Pages/444 ...>

Ireland

Forum on living wages prepared

February 28, 2015

The government has published draft legislation aimed at establishing a commission on low pay. The forum will include trade unions, employers and representatives of civil society. It will have to discuss the meaning of a living wage 'in a structured way'. This commission is to be given the power to recommend the national minimum wage should be increased progressively over time. However, the Government is set to argue that the higher proposed 'living wage' can be introduced on a voluntary basis only. The actual minimum wage stands at €8.65. The Minister of State for Business and Employment stated that the minimum wage is the floor beneath which nobody should be allowed to fall. The government has been working with UK agencies exploring how the living wage concept had been developed and implemented.

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/ged-nash-says-forum ...>
<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/low-pay-group-to-get-powers-to-gradually ...>

Dunnes Stores refuses talks with unions

February 11, 2015

Retailer Dunnes claims it has the constitutional right not to negotiate with trade unions. In a letter to its staff the company accused the trade union Mandate of seeking to generate a dispute that does not exist with its employees with a view to securing negotiation rights. The letter came in advance of a move by about 5,000 members of Mandate in Dunnes Stores to ballot on industrial action over what the union said was the company's refusal to accept a recent Labour Court recommendations. The Court had instructed the company to sit down with the union to discuss the issues at the heart of the dispute: the implementation of banded hour contracts which would give workers security of hours and earnings; individual and collective representational rights for workers; a review of the excessive use of temporary contracts of employment and fair pay for all workers in Dunnes Stores.

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/dunnes-stores-claims-right ...>

Central bank interferes in wage policy debate

February 4, 2015

With a statement that competitiveness gains secured during the crisis shouldn't be lost in the push to drive up wages, the Central Bank has directly interfered in the ongoing debate to improve wages for workers who took a hit during the recession. According to trade union Siptu it is time to embark on a major campaign for pay increases of 5% across the economy and on a new battle to establish a minimum living wage of €11.45 an hour across all sectors. A pay survey by business group Ibec showed workers at more than 57% of companies are set to get a pay rise in 2015 - the first widespread increases since the economic crisis.

English: <http://www.independent.ie/business/irish/dont-give-in-to-push-for-higher-wages ...>

Italy

Looming industrial dispute at ThyssenKrupp

February 26, 2015

The joint trade unions are ready to start a labour dispute at ThyssenKrupp's Terni facility if the company continues its policy of marginalising the most vulnerable temporary workforce. After a long dispute an agreement was signed in December 2014 that guarantees sub-contracted workers their outplacement and training (see our December Newsletter). However, the agreement between unions, employers and different governmental institutions remains so far only on paper, according to the unions.

English: [http://www.industrial-union.org/tyssenkrupp-imposes-cuts-at-the-expense-of ...](http://www.industrial-union.org/tyssenkrupp-imposes-cuts-at-the-expense-of...)

OECD backs up reforms

February 19, 2015

An OECD report states that changes to the country's political and institutional systems are crucial to ensuring the success of ambitious reforms currently underway to boost economic growth and raise living standards. The report adds that labour market reforms will improve Italy's low productivity growth and will also help potentially high-growth, productive firms to overcome barriers to their development. Additional efforts should also be made to improve the skills of people that often do not match the jobs available.

English: [http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/economics ...](http://www.keepeek.com/Digital-Asset-Management/oecd/economics...)

Teachers rally against exclusion from social dialogue

February 13, 2015

Teachers' unions have called a rally in front of the education ministry on 17 February. The teachers are protesting against the lack of consultation regarding measures announced in the government's law on work stability, which if adopted will change the structure of remuneration in education. While teachers and trade unions have not received any formal information on the reform, rumours say that the law includes a change from annual salary increases based on tenure to one based on merit. Trade unions have requested to be officially informed and consulted on the changes, but have not received a response from the ministry.

English: http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/news_details/3427

Finmeccanica plans massive job cuts

February 6, 2015

Finmeccanica reported plans to cut at least 3,000 jobs from its current workforce of about 54,000 over the next two years in an effort to boost growth and profitability. The management of the aerospace, defence and transport conglomerate said Finmeccanica could change its name as part of a major new business plan.

English: [http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/english/127815/Finmeccanica-poised-to-cut ...](http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/english/127815/Finmeccanica-poised-to-cut...)

Latvia

OECD insists on reform

February 25, 2015

According to an OECD Economic Survey continued reforms will promote a rapid and sustainable pace of convergence with upper-income countries while limiting the risk of repeated boom-and-bust cycles. While continued efforts on structural policies are needed to dismantle the various obstacles hindering Latvian firms' productivity and sustainable convergence with Europe the reduction of high levels of inequality and the risk of poverty will be challenging.

English: <http://oecd.org/economy/surveys/economic-survey-latvia.htm>

Risk of poverty and social exclusion reported

February 4, 2015

Data of the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) show that in 2013, 645 thousand persons or 32.7% of the population were at risk of poverty or social exclusion. It was 2.4 percentage points less than in 2012. The number of persons facing severe material deprivation also decreased significantly, from 24% in 2012 to 19.2% in 2013. However, 21.2% of the population in 2013 were subjected to the risk of poverty, which is 1.8 percentage points more than in 2012. Growth in the share of population at risk of poverty was most significantly affected by the fact that growth in income from labour was more rapid than growth in income from pensions, allowance and other payments from the budget.

English: <http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/analytics ...>

Liechtenstein

Twenty years of European Economic Area

February 26, 2015

The government has commissioned a survey (among 500 respondents) in order to assess opinions on the European Economic Area (EEA) that integrates the three EEA EFTA States (Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway) into the EU Internal Market governed by the same basic rules. Three quarter of the respondents is of the opinion that the EEA-membership has been a success for the country. Another finding is that the relationship with Switzerland has to be the basic reference for the country's European policy.

German: <http://www.liechtenstein-institut.li/Portals/o/contortionistUniverses ...>

Lithuania

Overview of strikes published

February 27, 2015

Statistical information on strikes has been collected since 2000. In 15 years, there were 635 strikes in Lithuania and 27,200 people participated. In November and December 2014 78 strikes were organised with on average 1,591 employees participating; 45 of these strikes were warning strikes. The average strike lasted for 2.05, while warning strike for 0.33 working days.

English: <http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/analytics ...>

Employers' confederation supports minimum wage hike

February 10, 2015

The Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists (LPK) has said that it will support the government proposal to raise the minimum wage per July 2015. The Government is planning to raise the minimum wage to €325 per month, starting from 1 July. A spokesperson of the LPK said industrial employers are already paying wages above the statutory minimum and would not be affected by the raise. According to the confederation, a higher minimum wage could mainly be an obstacle to employment in small businesses and in the more rural regions.

English: <http://en.delfi.lt/lithuania/economy/lithuanian-industrialists-welcome ...>

Luxembourg

Cross-border workers entitled to child care vouchers

February 10, 2015

Recent changes have ensured that cross-border workers will be entitled to child care vouchers. Child vouchers are a benefit scheme in which workers contribute part of their wage to buy subsidies vouchers for child care facilities. The benefit scheme was opened to cross-border workers after a recent court ruling charged Luxembourg with illegally excluding children of cross-border workers from student subsidies. Under the adapted benefit scheme 355,800 cross-border workers, comprising 44% of the country's workforce, will be entitled to child vouchers.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/luxembourg/family-and-career-cross-border-workers ...>

Malta

Trade union concerned about high turnover in education services

February 6, 2015

Trade union UHM has called attention to the working conditions and high turnover rate in the Foundation for Educational Services, which provides a range of programmes and services to improve quality education. UHM said the high turnover rate is a direct consequence of low pay and poor working conditions. The union will initiate meetings with management to negotiate improvements.

English: http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/49310/uhm_calls_for_better ...

Netherlands

Department store V&D may cut wages of non-unionised workers

February 23, 2015

In a controversial ruling, an Amsterdam court denied department store V&D the right to unilaterally cut wages of trade union members. However, the court did not extend the same wage protection to the store's non-unionised employees. Trade unions and management of department store V&D are in a large and mediatised conflict over an average 5.8% wage cut requested from employees. V&D is on the verge of bankruptcy after it was bought by US private equity firm Sun Capital Partners, who leveraged debts against V&D's assets. In an effort to save the company from bankruptcy, V&D requested a temporary lower rent for the properties it rents as well as an average 5.8% wage cut. Trade unions refused the requested wage cut earlier, countering with a 2% offer that failed to reach a compromise. As the management attempted to press on unilaterally, trade unions took the department store to court demanding the current wages for all employees, unionised or not. The court ruled that unionised members' wages cannot be cut; but the pay cut is allowed for all other employees 'because there is insufficient evidence that non-unionised workers support the trade union position'.

English: <http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2015/02/court-stops-vd-slashing-union ...>

Social plan for private security

February 5, 2015

Workers at money transport company Brink's have been on strike several times over the past months because the company plans to sack 650 out of 1,000 staff after losing the contract to fill Rabobank and ABN Amro cashpoint machines. The trade unions FNV and CNV have reached an agreement with the company. The original social plan for those being made redundant has been improved. Pensions have been guaranteed and better provisions for those who end up on unemployment benefit are included.

English: <http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2015/02/unions-reach-agreement ...>

Norway

First ever strike threat at Norwegian Air

February 28, 2015

After state mediation between the management of Norwegian Air and the pilots trade unions broke down a strike started. Management claimed they would keep flights running with pilots hired in from other airline subsidiaries, but the union claimed that this would amount to strike-busting. The dispute started with management efforts to cut pilots' pensions, pay, benefits and insurance costs. This caused months of labour tension and negotiations that stranded, leading to the mandatory arbitration.

English: <http://www.newsinenglish.no/2015/02/28/norwegian-pilots-go-out-on-strike/>

Poland

Nationwide coal miners' strike ends in pay deal

February 23, 2015

Trade unions and coal producer JSW have signed a deal on cost saving and wages. The dispute in the mining industry (see our January Newsletter) entered a new phase with a nationwide strike in the beginning of February. Workers from the largest coal mining nation in Europe went on strike in support of employees of JSW (Jastrzebska Spolka Weglowa SA), the largest metallurgical coal producer in the EU. Talks between the trade unions and JSW failed to reach agreement about company plans to scrap social benefits and the dismissal of union leaders. JSW recently dismissed ten workers from the Budryk mine who organised a protest in January 2015, which the company said was illegal and had endangered workers at the mine. After an extended strike, JSW has reached an agreement with trade unions, which averts dreaded job losses but includes a pay freeze, a six day working week and the 2014 bonus to be paid in two instalments.

English: [http://af.reuters.com/article/energyOilNews ...](http://af.reuters.com/article/energyOilNews...)

<http://www.miningaustralia.com.au/news/nationwide-coal-strike-to-begin-in-poland>

Portugal

Lisbon metro closed by strike

February 24, 2015

A strike was called by Lisbon underground workers to protest against 'terrible working conditions the workers have to suffer, particularly in the operating area'. It was also the first action by the Lisbon underground workers to defend the status of Lisbon Metro as a state-sector company, along with jobs and worker dignity.

English: <http://www.peprobe.com/new/lisbon-metro-closed-by-strike>

[http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/lisbon-metro-underground-workers-announce ...](http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/lisbon-metro-underground-workers-announce...)

Teacher union criticises decentralisation

February 19, 2015

A decree law is set to open the way for certain State responsibilities, such as education, local health services, social inclusion and culture, to be decentralised. According to the largest teachers union FENPROF the government has legislated on matters that are structural to education and to the country, without taking into account the portions of the educational community, namely teachers' organisations, the Council of Schools, school management organisations, or even the National Association for Portuguese Municipalities.

English: [http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/teachers-unhappy-at-govt-plans ...](http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/teachers-unhappy-at-govt-plans...)

Public debt, budgetary rules and the preservation of minimum standards

February 2, 2015

In a column of the global labour university a triangle of impossibility is described with the following vertices: the first is the full payment of the public debt according to the prevailing interest rates and maturities; the second is compliance with EU budgetary rules; the third corresponds to the preservation of minimum welfare state standards. The triangle of impossibility suggests that, given the current conditions, it is not possible to fulfil all three conditions at the same time. In order to comply with the EU's budgetary rules in the absence of debt restructuring, Portugal would have to implement significant cuts in education, health and social protection budgets, and tax increases over and above those that were implemented in the past four years. Alternatively, if the country is to preserve minimum levels of Welfare State, it must either restructure its debt and/or postpone compliance with EU budgetary rules.

English: [http://column.global-labour-university.org/2015/02/trouble-ahead-in-portugal ...](http://column.global-labour-university.org/2015/02/trouble-ahead-in-portugal...)

Romania

Warning strikes in public sector

February 23, 2015

Public administration clerks organised a warning strike on 20 February, demanding higher wages and food vouchers. The country's 29,000 public administration clerks earn between RON 900 and 1,900(€202-426) per month, according to union spokespersons. Commenting on the strikes, Prime Minister Ponta said he sympathised with the clerks, taking his own salary as an example of the 'unsolved issue' of public sector pay.

English: [http://www.romania-insider.com/public-sector-wages-a-disaster-says ...](http://www.romania-insider.com/public-sector-wages-a-disaster-says-...)

Average net salary goes up

February 6, 2015

The average net salary was of 1,866 lei (419 euro) in December 2014, up by 123 lei (27 euro) or 7.1% compared to November 2014. The increases of the average net earnings were mainly due to occasional bonuses, including quarterly, annual or holiday bonuses. Compared to December 2013, the increase was of 6%, according to the latest data from the National Statistics Institute.

English: [http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/statistici/comunicate/castiguri ...](http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/statistici/comunicate/castiguri-...)

Serbia

New collective agreement for teachers

February 12, 2015

After three months of strike, four teachers unions and the ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development have agreed on a collective agreement for teachers in primary and secondary education. The agreement includes better protection of employees, regarding amongst others, cases of redundancy, service jubilee awards, the annual award, solidarity support, severance pay, as well as better protection of union representatives in schools. Crucially, the partners agreed to mitigate the 10% salary cut that teachers experiences through a solidarity support fund and the annual award.

English: [http://www.csee-etuce.org/news/archive/622-ended-the-long-lasting-strike ...](http://www.csee-etuce.org/news/archive/622-ended-the-long-lasting-strike-...)

Slovakia

Strike alert for bus drivers

February 26, 2015

Trade union KOVO announced a strike alert of employees of bus companies over what they called a stand-off following bargain talks on pay increases. The union wanted a pay increase to the average salary of €550 by €40 per month, before later cutting the demand to €36. Employers first proposed a zero increase before suggesting a 1.5% rise, some €9.50 a month for employees with the lowest salaries.

English: [http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20056326/kovo-union-announces-strike-alert ...](http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20056326/kovo-union-announces-strike-alert-...)

Online job seekers expect monthly salary of €831

February 12, 2015

Online job portal Profesia.sk released data showing visitors to the site anticipate an average salary of €850 per month. On average, men expect to earn €232 more than women do, whereas jobseekers with a university degree anticipate salaries that are twice as high as the expectations of workers with just elementary education. Young workers and those aged over 55 expected to earn lower wages than people aged 35-44. General expectations are 10 per cent higher than five years ago.

English: [http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20055054/job-seekers-seek-monthly-salary-of-831 ...](http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20055054/job-seekers-seek-monthly-salary-of-831-...)

Slovenia

Final labour market data for 2014

February 27, 2015

In the last quarter of 2014 the number of unemployed persons increased by 2,000 or 2.3% in comparison

with the third quarter. The registered unemployment rate increased by 0.2 percentage point and stood at 12.7%. The unemployment rate was the highest in the age group 15–24 (20.3%). Average monthly gross earnings for December 2014 amounted to 1,566.09 euro and average monthly net earnings to 1,018.67 euro.

English: [http://www.stat.si/eng/novica_prikazi ...](http://www.stat.si/eng/novica_prikazi...)
[http://www.stat.si/eng/novica_prikazi.aspx ...](http://www.stat.si/eng/novica_prikazi.aspx...)

Social pact signed for 2015/16

February 6, 2015

The social partners signed a document that represents a step towards the restoring of mutual trust. Due to unresolved issues - like the minimum wage which has been left out of the social pact - social peace among partners will be put on test in the coming period. The trade unions have already announced new action in order to improve the minimum wage. The government has acknowledged that they will soon need to begin negotiations on the minimum wage.

English: [http://www.rtvsl.si/news-in-english/social-pact-signed-after-three-months ...](http://www.rtvsl.si/news-in-english/social-pact-signed-after-three-months...)

Spain

Wind turbine manufacturer Gamesa signs global framework agreement

February 18, 2015

Spanish based wind turbine manufacturer Gamesa has signed a global framework agreement with representatives from CCOO Industry, MCA-UGT and FITAG-UGT. The agreement, which will apply to Gamesa's subsidiaries across the world, contains clauses regarding workers' representation and respect of workers' rights. The agreement protects social, labour and environmental rights, as well as committing the company to principles of gender equality and non-discrimination. Gamesa and the trade unions jointly will monitor the implementation of the agreement.

English: [http://www.industrialunion.org/industrial-global-union-signs-global-framework ...](http://www.industrialunion.org/industrial-global-union-signs-global-framework...)

Employment figures published

February 3, 2015

The number of people registered as unemployed crept up in January as seasonal Christmas hires ended, to a total 4.53 million. The unemployment rate remains extremely high at close to 24%, the second-highest unemployment rate in the Eurozone, after Greece. Nevertheless, the government claims that the economy is recovering, ahead of regional and general elections this year.

English: [http://elpais.com/elpais/2015/02/03/inenglish ...](http://elpais.com/elpais/2015/02/03/inenglish...)
[http://www.ine.es/en/daco ...](http://www.ine.es/en/daco...)

Sweden

Unions resist increase of unpaid job trials

February 18, 2015

Trade unions have expressed concerns about a rising number of employers requiring potential hires to perform an unpaid job trial before offering a formal employment contract. In a newspaper article, Leif Håkansson of Swedish labour union IF Metall said that workers will do almost anything to attain a job in times of high unemployment, and that employers preying on them by offering exploitative job trials. Job trials are only common in companies without collective bargaining agreements, which set out the minimum wage per sector or firm.

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

Truck maker Volvo plans dismissals

February 5, 2015

Volvo, the world's second-largest maker of trucks, reported a fall in annual profits in 2014 and announced 1,000 redundancies in its construction equipment business. The group reported a 30% drop in construction

equipment deliveries towards the end of the year caused by falling demand from China. However, overall sales grew by 4% in 2014 to 282.94 billion kronor. The management stated that the company's cost-cutting measures - including the loss of 3,200 white collar workers since the end of 2013 - were 'paying off' and helped cut its net financial debt by 10 billion kronor in 2014.

English: <http://www.thelocal.se/20150205/1000-job-cuts-at-swedens-volvo>

Switzerland

Work stoppage against redundancies at Tamoil

February 12, 2015

Trade unions UNIA and SCIV have started organising work stoppages and protests in solidarity with 250 Tamoil workers who fear being laid off without a proper social plan. Tamoil Collombey announced earlier this year that it would be closing its refinery in Valois, expecting 250 redundancies. In response, the unions immediately started organising for a real social plan and instate temporary layoffs instead of the collective redundancy procedure that Tamoil initiated.

English: <http://www.industrialunion.org/switzerland-workers-fight-to-save-jobs-at-tamoil>

Strong Franc initiates union action

February 6, 2015

The trade union confederation SGB/USS has spoken out against some firms' plans to pay cross border workers in euros or extend working hours. The rapid rise in the franc's value threatens worsen industrial relations. The SGB/USS reported of 40 companies planning to take similar measures that would adversely affect staff. Workers are threatened with layoffs and outsourcing to pressure them into accepting wage cuts, payment in euros and longer working hours. For instance, dental implant specialist Straumann asked employees to take pay cuts and asked those who live outside of Switzerland to accept payment in euros. Technology firm Bühler reported that it had reached an agreement with workers to extend working hours to 45 hours per week for the next seven months.

English: [http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/union-rails-against-strong-franc-measures ...](http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/union-rails-against-strong-franc-measures...)

German: [http://www.sgb.ch/themen/wirtschaft/artikel/details/der-franken-muss-nuetzen ...](http://www.sgb.ch/themen/wirtschaft/artikel/details/der-franken-muss-nuetzen...)

French: <http://www.uss.ch/themes/economie/article/details/le-franc-doit-servir-pas-nuire/>

Trade unions report on wages and distribution of wealth

February 1, 2015

In a detailed report (in German with a French summary) trade union confederation SGB/USS provides an excellent overview of the distribution of earnings and wealth. During the last 20 years inequality has increased between the low paid and the top of the income earners. Fiscal policy and other levies have contributed to a further rise of inequality instead of having a redistributing effect. The situation accelerated from the mid-1990s with an increase of 40% for the highest earners, whilst the lower paid were confronted with a reduction of 8% (and middle class with 12% reduction). The increase in inequality was to an important extent the result of the pay of bonuses to the top earners. Further information is given on the gender gap and on a series of other wage and income indicators.

German: [http://www.verteilungsbericht.ch/wp-content/uploads ...](http://www.verteilungsbericht.ch/wp-content/uploads...)

Turkey

Health workers protest

February 26, 2015

Protesting health workers set up camp in front of a hospital to demand the reinstatement of 98 workers dismissed for demanding higher wages and shorter working hours, and for joining Dev Sağlık-İş - the health union of the trade union confederation, DISK. In a new protest in front of the Maltepe University Hospital in Istanbul the general secretary of DISK, together with 34 more people, was detained.

English: [http://world-psi.org/en/turkish-health-workers-attacked-and-arrested ...](http://world-psi.org/en/turkish-health-workers-attacked-and-arrested...)

Metal strike ban handed over to Council of State

February 4, 2015

United Steel-Work (Birleşik Metal-İş) Union submitted a request to the Council of State (Danıştay) for the ban of a strike by a cabinet decree (see our January Newsletter). The trade union wants the ban order to be cancelled by the Council of State. In the meantime the struggle has been taken to the factory. The United Steel-Work union had announced a strike after failing contract negotiations with the employers' organisation MESS. Around 15,000 workers started a strike in 22 factories across 10 cities. However, the cabinet suspended the strike for 60 days, saying that the strike was 'compromising the national security'.

English: <http://bianet.org/english/labor/161989-worker-strike-ban-taken-to-council-of-state>
[http://www.equaltimes.org/the-right-to-strike-only-exists-on ...](http://www.equaltimes.org/the-right-to-strike-only-exists-on-...)

United Kingdom

Debate on zero-hours contracts

February 25, 2015

Figures of people who are employed on zero hours contracts in their main employment, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and coming from the Labour Force Survey, estimate that, by the end of 2014, the total number of people employed on zero hours contracts represented 2.3% of total in employment - up on the previous year when the figure stood at 1.9%. In its release, the ONS note that it is 'not possible to say how much of this increase is due to greater recognition of the term 'zero-hours contracts' rather than new contracts'. The trade union confederation TUC stated that zero-hours contracts sum up what has gone wrong in the modern workplace: anyone on such a contract has no guarantee of any work from one day to another. In many sectors, especially social care, zero-hours contracts are used to drive down costs regardless of the impact on services and the workforce.

English: [http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2015/feb/25/zero-hour-contracts ...](http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2015/feb/25/zero-hour-contracts-...)
[http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lmac/contracts-with-no-guaranteed-hours/zero-hour ...](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lmac/contracts-with-no-guaranteed-hours/zero-hour-...)

Bakery union wants £10 minimum pay

February 19, 2015

The Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU) started a campaign to increase the minimum hourly wage. BFAWU stated that the 'minimum wage should be increased to £10 per hour so that working people do not have to be supported with benefits'. The union spreads this message via an animation on YouTube.

English: [https://www.youtube.com/watch ...](https://www.youtube.com/watch-...)

Pay deals for defence workers and for police workers

February 13, 2015

Workers at the Defence Support Group (DSG), a group that maintains, repairs and overhauls military equipment, have overwhelmingly accepted a 'significantly' improved pay offer drawing to a close a long running dispute at the Ministry of Defence (MoD) facility. The members of trade union Unite backed the revised pay offer of 1% plus a £1,250 bonus by 91% in a ballot. The pay deal, representing a 66 per cent increase on what was on the table before the dispute, followed 16 days of strike action. Members of Unite, UNISON and GMB, working for police forces in England and Wales backed an improved pay offer. In a ballot civilian staff, including 999 call handlers, scene of crime officers, police community support officers and custody officers, accepted the revised pay offer of 2.2%, or £400, whichever is greater. The workers had been offered a one per cent pay rise by the police employers on the Police Staff Council, but received an improved offer after a threatened strike in January. The police agreement will cover the 18 months from 1 March 2015 to 31 August 2016.

English: [http://www.unitetheunion.org/news/defence-workers-end-dispute-after-accepting ...](http://www.unitetheunion.org/news/defence-workers-end-dispute-after-accepting-...)
<http://www.unison.org.uk/news/police-members-say-yes-to-pay-offer>

Young fathers not eligible for parental leave

February 4, 2015

Trade union confederation TUC has calculated that two in five (40%) new fathers won't qualify for new rights to shared parental leave. The TUC welcomes shared parental leave, but is concerned the scheme will have a very limited impact because of the rules around eligibility and low statutory pay. From April 2015

mothers will be allowed to share up to 50 weeks of their maternity leave and 37 weeks of their pay with their partners. However, the TUC-analysis shows that two-fifths of working dads with a child under one would be ineligible, mainly because their partner is not in paid work. Mothers who don't have a job (whether employed or self-employed) don't have a right to maternity leave or pay that they can share.

English: <http://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/work-life-balance/employment-rights ...>

For more information, please contact the editor Jan Cremers, Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies (AIAS) cbn-aiaas@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.

You may find further information on the ETUI at www.etui.org, and on the AIAS at www.uva-aiaas.net.

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