

# collective bargaining

Issue 3/2015 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



etui.

## contents

### European sources

Third European Company Survey presented  
Expert group calls for a more caring Europe  
ETUI report concludes sectoral social partners join forces in lobbying not in bargaining  
European Court of Justice rules restrictions on agency work illegal  
Gender gap still here to stay

### Austria

Collective bargaining results in several sectors  
Mixed feelings about tax reform  
Women on the labour market

### Belgium

Protests against austerity continue  
Busses and trams strike  
Social dumping in construction

### Bulgaria

Car tyre maker Vidachim lays off a third of its staff  
Workers Dunarit military plant on strike after ministry suspends export and trade license  
Strike action at Yazaki plant

### Croatia

Wage statistics illustrate broad range

### Cyprus

Electricity workers oppose privatisation, strike suspended  
Hotel workers protest

### Czech Republic

Women earn 23% less

### Denmark

Cleaners in direct employment serve as role model  
Underpayment of metro construction workers sentenced  
Solidarity strike for Norwegian workers

### Estonia

Joint statement on economic policy

### Finland

Youngsters and women over-represented in zero-hours contracts

Union assists underpaid worker

Citizens back up tripartite labour market model

---

## France

Radio France paralysed by strike

Large builder accused of slavery

Champagne workers on strike demanding profit sharing

Rail workers strike

---

## Germany

Public sector signs pay deal

Chemical workers come to an agreement

Further strikes at Lufthansa ground 700+ flights

Amazon workers on strike again, renew invitation to negotiate

Warning strikes in private waste management

Trucking companies sue Germany for applying minimum wage for passing through

---

## Greece

IKEA being re-unionised

---

## Hungary

Health care workers earnings too low

---

## Iceland

Protest song against wage inequality

Workers want shorter work week

High season for collective bargaining

---

## Ireland

Permanent employment rights and extra pay for teachers

Dunnes workers vote for action, company reacts with intimidation

Diverging positions on higher minimum wage

Investment in education pays

---

## Italy

Uffizi Gallery workers strike illegal?

Talks in banking disrupted – strike looms

Metal workers on strike against redundancies

Protest against unilateral cancellation of agreements

---

## Latvia

Health care workers rally

---

## Liechtenstein

Generally binding agreements published

---

## Lithuania

Minimum wage increase discussed

---

## Luxembourg

Use of state paid reduction of working hours increases

Cargolux unions demand guarantees against outsourcing

---

## Malta

Five priorities for trade union

Bus drivers on strike receive warning letters

---

## **Netherlands**

Flexworkers want permanent job  
Social plan agreed at retailer Blokker  
Talks at V&D strained  
New collective agreement for hospital workers

---

## **Norway**

Mediation and possible strike averted  
End of Norwegian pilots' strike after 11 days

---

## **Poland**

Gdansk container terminal bans union organisers

---

## **Portugal**

Health workers suspend historic strike  
Youngsters protest against precarious work  
High mobilisation for civil servants strike  
The work of the food bank

---

## **Romania**

Ford deal reduces mass redundancies

---

## **Serbia**

Teachers strike  
Job cuts in the public sector

---

## **Slovakia**

Strike looming at Peugeot Travna  
Bus drivers come to an agreement

---

## **Slovenia**

State rail cuts jobs and hires new staff

---

## **Spain**

Madrid home helps call strike  
University workers strike against reform  
Unemployed assisted in times of crisis

---

## **Sweden**

Labour cost index updated

---

## **Switzerland**

Lack of training in listed companies

---

## **Turkey**

Medical workers on strike  
Union busting at Egger Group

---

## **United Kingdom**

Royal Household workers protest  
Right to strike endangered by Tory proposals  
Workers Barking and Dagenham on strike against wage cut  
Picket lines at the National Gallery  
Pay deal for Co-op retail staff

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## **European sources**

**Third European Company Survey presented**

March 30, 2015

The Dublin-based Euro found institute published a report that provides policymakers and practitioners with comprehensive information on workplace practices in terms of work organisation, human resource management, direct participation and social dialogue. The report reveals that the use of outsourcing is substantial and that flexible working time arrangements are on the increase. Almost two thirds of the establishment in the survey sample use (some kind of) variable pay schemes. 67% of managers reported that employees in their establishment were covered by one or more collective wage agreements. The highest level of coverage is reported for establishments in transport (71%) and the lowest level for establishments in the other services sector (64%). Differences between countries are much more pronounced: coverage levels exceed 90% in Austria, Finland, Italy and Spain but are below 10% in Estonia and Latvia.

English: <http://eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files ...>

### **Expert group calls for a more caring Europe**

March 23, 2015

An initiative by the NGO Friends of Europe has led to a report by an expert group that pleads for a more caring Europe. The report assesses the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the social policies that have been fundamental to the creation of the European Union. On the basis of these findings, the group recommends to the European Commission and the EU institutions actions both to reaffirm Europe's social principles and to address its competitiveness goals. One of the recommendations is that the EU should invest in the social partners' capacity to play a more meaningful role, for instance by revisiting the role of the tripartite summit, rather than persistently emphasising that collective bargaining needs to be decentralised. Europe also has to consider the gradual introduction of 'a guaranteed wage floor'.

English: <http://www.friendsofeurope.org/media/uploads/2015/02/Social-Report-2015-WEB.pdf>

### **ETUI report concludes sectoral social partners join forces in lobbying not in bargaining**

March 19, 2015

A recent report by the European Trade Union Institute has examined the European sectoral social dialogue, which has been characterised as more advanced than the intersectoral dialogue. The ETUI examined 730 joined texts from 43 sectors of the European economy. Researchers found widely diverging results, varying from dynamic bargaining in some sectors to the near absence of any social dialogue in others. The ETUI points out that there are far more joint lobbying texts to the European Institutions among the 730 joined texts than joint agreements on working conditions, training facilities or health and safety. Regarding the joint agreements, the researchers also note that member states have been reluctant to transpose the agreements, despite provisions in the EU Treaty to do so.

English: <http://www.etui.org/Publications2/Working-Papers/The-European-sectoral ...>

### **European Court of Justice rules restrictions on agency work illegal**

March 18, 2015

In its first ruling in a case regarding the Directive on Temporary Agency Work, the European Court of Justice decided member states must remove unjustified restrictions on the use of temporary agency work. The court stated that restrictions are only permitted on grounds of general interest; namely the protection of temporary agency workers, the requirements of health and safety at work, or the need to ensure that the labour market functions properly and abuses are prevented. While the wider repercussions of the ruling remain unclear, employers' organisation Eurociett has welcomed the ruling as a step towards a better functioning labour market; Eurociett president Muntz said the organisation expects a number of adjustments in laws and collective agreements to be set in motion by the court decision.

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

### **Gender gap still here to stay**

March 5, 2015

Eurostat revealed that women earned on average 16.4% less than men in the European Union in 2013, with the gap even greater in many northern countries. At 29.9%, the biggest salary gap was in Estonia, followed by Austria at 23%, the Czech Republic at 22.1% and Germany at 21.6%. Eurostat published the figures ahead of International Women's Day on Sunday. The gap between women and men is not just in pay. Two thirds of the directors, executives and managers are men, while two thirds of office workers are women.

## Austria

### Collective bargaining results in several sectors

*March 26, 2015*

The bargaining season has started and the social partners are negotiating in several sectors. The trade unions and the employers in the banking and insurance sectors reached an agreement on a 1.78% pay increase for the 50,000 employees in the finance sector. The electro and electronics industry bargaining partners agreed to a 2% wage rise for the 50,000 employees in the sector. In the ceramic and stone industries a pay increase of 2%, with a minimum of 40 euro, was agreed, starting 1 May 2015. The agreement includes a further wage increase in 2016 (with 0.35% plus inflation index). Most unions are also pushing forward the free time option, a provision that was introduced in the collective agreements of 2013. This provision allows employees to receive their raise in time rather than money.

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

[http://www.oegb.at/cms/S06 ...](http://www.oegb.at/cms/S06...)

[http://www.gpa-djp.at/cms ...](http://www.gpa-djp.at/cms...)

### Mixed feelings about tax reform

*March 17, 2015*

The government has agreed on a plan for wide-ranging reforms of the tax system. People with lower earnings will pay less income tax, with the initial income tax rate reduced from 36.5 percent to 25 percent on yearly incomes under €18,000. The top tax bracket will increase to 55 percent, but only for those who earn more than €1 million a year. The reforms will come into force in 2016.

English: <http://www.thelocal.at/20150317/austria-to-pass-tax-reforms-amid-protests>

### Women on the labour market

*March 4, 2015*

Data from the statistical office reveal that women have successfully caught up in education and employment in the past decades. In 2012/13, 58.7% of all high school graduates were female. The employment rate of women aged 15 to 64 years rose from 61.6% (2003) to 67.6% (2013). Yet, the increase in female employment is mostly due to a rise in part-time work. There has been a slight decrease in the gender pay gap. In 2013, the average gross hourly earnings of women were by 23.0% lower than those of men, while in 2006 this difference had been 25.5%.

English: [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_en/dynamic/press/081122](http://www.statistik.at/web_en/dynamic/press/081122)

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## Belgium

### Protests against austerity continue

*March 30, 2015*

Trade unions and various interest groups continue with their protests against the government's social policies. 20,000 people have taken part in a march in the Brussels city centre to campaign against the right-wing choices of the federal and regional governments. The discussion is about how actively laid-off workers in early retirement should seek a new job. During renewed negotiations between the social partners and the government it became clear that the tabled modifications proposed by the government were critically received by the trade union negotiators as these proposals will water down the deal that was reached in the so-called Group of Ten. Trade union confederation ABVV/FGTB rejected the proposals as these do not respect the social pact that was agreed in the Group of Ten (see our December Newsletter).

English: <http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/News/1.2287262>

Dutch: [http://www.demorgen.be/binnenland/brugpensioen-abvv-wijst-voorstel-regering-af ...](http://www.demorgen.be/binnenland/brugpensioen-abvv-wijst-voorstel-regering-af...)

French: [http://www.rtbfb.be/info/belgique/detail\\_accord-sur-les-prepensions-la-tension ...](http://www.rtbfb.be/info/belgique/detail_accord-sur-les-prepensions-la-tension...)

## **Busses and trams strike**

*March 24, 2015*

The Bus and tram services of the Flemish local transport company De Lijn were disrupted in a number of places across Flanders. The protest coincided with a big demonstration against government austerity in Antwerp. Apart from bus services, municipal day care centres, libraries and swimming baths were hit. The disruption is a result of industrial action by the socialist public sector trade union, the ACOD. The union has called for a general strike on Wednesday 22 April.

English: [http://www.expatica.com/be/news/features/Flander-Strike-hits-buses-and-trams ...](http://www.expatica.com/be/news/features/Flander-Strike-hits-buses-and-trams...)

## **Social dumping in construction**

*March 1, 2015*

The so-called Social Inspectorate carried out a total of 15,000 inspections in 2014 across various branches of industry. This Inspectorate has the right to control compliance with agreed pay and working conditions. In just over one third of cases (5,568) employers were in breach of the rules on issues such as underpayment and the non-respect of collectively agreed pay and working conditions. The problem of social dumping is particularly acute in construction with posted workers forced to work in sub-standard conditions, often earning less than the legal minimum wage. In some cases employers don't pay the statutory social security contribution for their workers. Member states need more competences to control the regularity of posting.

English: <http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/Economy/1.2255474>

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## **Bulgaria**

### **Car tyre maker Vidachim lays off a third of its staff**

*March 15, 2015*

Car tyre manufacturer Vidachim will lay off 150 of its 446 workers due to a lack of orders. The workers, based in the poor northwest region of Vidin, will lose their jobs within a week. Vidachim management has said that due to the lack of orders, it can no longer afford to pay salaries and social security for its workers, leaving it no choice. Original plans involved the layoff of 314 workers, which was lowered to 150 after talks between workers and management.

English: [http://www.novinite.com/view\\_news ...](http://www.novinite.com/view_news...)  
[http://www.novinite.com/view\\_news.php?id=167224](http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=167224)

### **Workers Dunarit military plant on strike after ministry suspends export and trade license**

*March 13, 2015*

Employees at the Ruse plant of arms and ammunition manufacturer Dunarit announced strike action after the plant's export and trade licenses were suspended for four months, endangering the 750 workers' jobs. The ministry said its decision, based on undisclosed sources, was for the sake of the country's economic and financial stability and would prevent Dunarit from exporting its production as well as importing raw materials. Workers threatened to block the bridge between the Bulgarian city of Ruse and Romanian Giurgiu, but staged a peaceful protest after the Sofia court suspended the withdrawal of the licenses.

English: [http://www.novinite.com/articles ...](http://www.novinite.com/articles...)  
[http://www.novinite.com/view ...](http://www.novinite.com/view...)

### **Strike action at Yazaki plant**

*March 4, 2015*

Workers started a strike at Yazaki, a manufacturer of automotive electrical equipment and one of the biggest factories in the Yambol vicinity. The reasons behind the strike are violations of the labour code as registered by the labour inspectorate and a lack of effective results after a series of negotiations with the employer. Trade union KT Podkrepa stated that the demands of the workers in the factory include a 50% increase in salaries, implementation of 'effectiveness bonus', based on outstanding results, removal of discriminatory practices, including not paying bonuses if three sick leave days are taken by the employee, implementation of supplementary payments for three-shift work days, as well as facilitating trade union activities.

English: [http://www.novinite.com/articles ...](http://www.novinite.com/articles...)

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## Croatia

### **Wage statistics illustrate broad range**

*March 2, 2015*

The statistical office published data on the average salaries. The average monthly net salary in the country is 5,716 kuna (745 euros), well below the average in many developed nations. The average monthly paid off net earnings per person in paid employment in legal entities was 2.9% (nominal) and 3.4% (real) higher in December 2014, than it was compared to December 2013. Jobs with an average of less than 4,000 kuna (520 euros) were those in the service industry, wood manufacturing, administration and furniture retail.

English: <http://www.croatiaweek.com/tag/salary/>

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## Cyprus

### **Electricity workers oppose privatisation, strike suspended**

*March 27, 2015*

An overwhelming majority of Electricity Authority of Cyprus (EAC) workers has given their union leaders a blank cheque to call strikes, in a bid to thwart plans to privatise the state-owned power utility. Votes taken at regional meetings yielded percentages of 95 to 98% in favour of authorising EAC-affiliated trade unions to carry out 'dynamic measures', including strike action, should the government proceed with privatisation plans. After the government agreed to delay the first stage in a process seen as culminating in the power utility's privatisation the trade unions said they would suspend any industrial action until April 15, as a goodwill gesture in order not to inconvenience the public.

English: <http://cyprus-mail.com/2015/03/26/eac-unions-call-off-strike/>

### **Hotel workers protest**

*March 24, 2015*

The three trade unions SEK, PEO and DEOK organised a demonstration in Nicosia after claiming hotel staff would work six 12-13 hour shifts a week for €500-€600 a month. Workers fear if they object they will lose their jobs. They also said people have not been paid for three years and have not received provident fund payments.

English: [http://cyprus-mail.com/2015/03/24/hotel-workers-demonstrate-threaten ...](http://cyprus-mail.com/2015/03/24/hotel-workers-demonstrate-threaten...)

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## Czech Republic

### **Women earn 23% less**

*March 16, 2015*

The average wage of women is 23 percent lower than that of men, and their median pay differs by about 20 percent, according to data from the information system on the average pay of the Labour and Social Affairs Ministry. In the public sector, the difference in salaries is lower than in the private sector, the difference being 17 percent. The differences are partly caused by the fact that women work in worse-paid professions and work less hours.

English: <http://praguepost.com/economy/45879-women-earn-23-percent-less-than-men>

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## Denmark

### **Cleaners in direct employment serve as role model**

*March 23, 2015*

At least once a year the cleaning workers at the Regional Hospital of Randers put down mops and dusters to undergo supplementary training. The hospital's unique training scheme for cleaning staff has now earned it a place – as the only Danish hospital – in an EU project that aims to develop European standards for



hospital staff training. In the FOA trade union magazine for cleaners it was said that hospital cleaning staff have become highly skilled workers. Keeping such a high level of training is only possible, because the hospital employs its own cleaning staff (currently 150 out of a total staff of 1,800).

English: <http://www.europeancleaningjournal.com/magazine/articles/latest-news/danish ...>

### **Underpayment of metro construction workers sentenced**

*March 10, 2015*

In what is being called the largest industrial arbitration case in the country's history, the Italian firm Cipa, one of three Italian firms serving as subcontractors on the massive expansion of Copenhagen's Metro system, has been found guilty of underpaying its workers. An arbitration court ruled that Cipa has underpaid around 200 employees from Portugal, Italy and Romania. The company must compensate the employees with 22 million kroner (2.95 million euro). Trade union 3F represented the employees and although the ruling was less than the 30.5 million kroner in compensation the union hoped for, it was still the largest arbitration ruling in the construction industry's history and 3F called it a major win against social dumping.

English: <http://www.thelocal.dk/20150310/italian-firm-found-guilty-of-underpaying ...>

### **Solidarity strike for Norwegian workers**

*March 5, 2015*

Some 650 Norwegian pilots, 100 of them Danish, are striking over concerns that their employer, the Norwegian subsidiary Norwegian Air Norway (NAN) will go bust, leaving the pilots with worse contracts under a new structure. Norwegian has brought in the operator Small Planet Airlines, a budget carrier based in Lithuania and Poland, as an alternative for long-range flights. The Danish trade union Serviceforbundet, representing airline security personnel and other airline workers, warned that it would carry out a sympathy strike if a solution to the Norwegian conflict is not found.

English: <http://www.thelocal.dk/20150308/norwegian-strike-drag-on-after-talks-collapse>  
<http://www.thelocal.dk/20150305/norwegian-strike-grounds-22-danish-flights>

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## **Estonia**

### **Joint statement on economic policy**

*March 5, 2015*

In a joint position the social partners listed their wishes to the next government. Fewer workers are entering the labour market than leave, the number of taxpayers is shrinking, the proportion of dependents and the costs to society continues to increase. The only possible way to provide for a more expensive society with a smaller number of working hands is to do more work and more complex work with fewer workers. Thus, the society's biggest short-term aim has to be a decisive leap in the value chain, and a fast increase of competitiveness. The partners state that this is feasible if educational, economic, environmental and social policies are dedicated to it in a coordinated way.

English: [http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/markets\\_and\\_companies/?doc=103335](http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/markets_and_companies/?doc=103335)

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## **Finland**

### **Youngsters and women over-represented in zero-hours contracts**

*March 27, 2015*

Statistics Finland estimates that some 83 000 employees (4% of the workforce) aged between 15 and 64 fall into the category of workers with zero-hours contracts. A majority of those with zero-hours contracts, 57%, were women. Those who worked on zero-hours contracts were mainly young: nearly one-half were aged under 25 and 65% were aged under 30. These contracts were most common among persons aged 15 to 19 with 20% of them 'employed' on zero-hours contracts.

English: <http://heikkijokinen.info/en/trade-union-news-from-finland/734-83-000-employees ...>

### **Union assists underpaid worker**



March 7, 2015

The service trade union PAM has asked for an investigation of suspected job discrimination against a Bangladeshi cook who worked at the New Bombay restaurant in the northern city of Oulu. According to the union, the young man was recruited from Bangladesh in 2012 with promises of a good salary. However his wages were not enough to live on and his work days lasted 10-17 hours. PAM estimates that the man is due 80,000-100,000 euro in back pay for a period of two years.

English: [http://yle.fi/uutiset/union\\_alleges\\_mistreatment\\_of\\_bangladeshi\\_chef ...](http://yle.fi/uutiset/union_alleges_mistreatment_of_bangladeshi_chef...)

### **Citizens back up tripartite labour market model**

March 3, 2015

According to a survey commissioned by trade union confederation SAK the country's labour market system whereby trade unions, employers' organisations and the government negotiate and agree on major issues receives a clear endorsement from the population. More than three-quarter of the respondents backed up the existing tripartite system. A similar result was revealed in another survey, commissioned by the union Akavas Special Branches.

English: [http://www.sak.fi/english/news/finns-support-tripartite-labour-market ...](http://www.sak.fi/english/news/finns-support-tripartite-labour-market...)

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## **France**

### **Radio France paralysed by strike**

March 27, 2015

The country's main public radio broadcaster, Radio France, has been paralysed by a strike since 19 March in what is now the longest such action to affect the company in a decade. The company, which is 90 percent state funded through license fees, is in deep financial trouble. The strike is in protest against the outsourcing of jobs, and reforms to production and cleaning services, as well as Radio France's decision to fire one of its two orchestras as a cost-saving measure. The trade unions have also warned against the possibility of mass job cuts, a fear that was exacerbated after the company floated the idea of a voluntary redundancy plan for between 200 and 300 positions.

English: <http://www.france24.com/en/20150327-france-public-radio-paralysed-labour-strike/>

### **Large builder accused of slavery**

March 24, 2015

A campaign group called Sherpa, referring herewith to the many Nepalese workers on site, has filed a legal complaint against construction giant Vinci for grave mistreatment of migrant workers and forced labour in Qatar, the host country of the 2022 World Cup. Sherpa declared to have testimonies claiming that migrants worked an average of 66 hours per week, lived as many as eight to a room, and operated in 'difficult even dangerous' conditions and in 'stifling heat'. The complaint, if acted upon by French prosecutors, could increase pressure on Qatar and companies engaged there to improve conditions for migrant workers.

English: [http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/24/us-vinci-qatar-labour-conditions ...](http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/24/us-vinci-qatar-labour-conditions...)

### **Champagne workers on strike demanding profit sharing**

March 23, 2015

Vineyard and winery workers at Epernay's famous champagne houses went on strike demanding to share in 2014 profits. The region recently announced a record sales of €4.5 billion in 2014, while workers have not seen any wage increases. Trade unions report 80% of the 3900 unionised workers joined the strike, filling up the Avenue de Champagne. The workers are demanding a profit sharing mechanism as well as improvement of working conditions.

English: <http://www.wine-searcher.com/m/2015/03/champagne-protesters-take-to-the-streets>

### **Rail workers strike**

March 9, 2015

A railway strike has been called by the CGT trade union in protest against planned rail reforms. The contentious reforms were put into place in January and are intended to tackle the rail sector's soaring debt,

which stands at more than €40 billion. The reforms aim to cut costs by bringing together 149,000 employees at train operator SNCF and the 1,500 at RFF railway network to eventually open up parts of the service to competition. The CGT is of the opinion that the reforms will lead to job losses without reducing debt.

English: <http://www.thelocal.fr/20150309/french-rail-strike-minimal-disruption-expected>

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## Germany

### **Public sector signs pay deal**

*March 29, 2015*

A series of public sector labour stoppages that spread across the country due to a labour dispute on wages came to an end as an agreement was reached. The public sector workers trade unions and public employers agreed on a two-stage pay rise of more than 4 percent for public sector workers. The trade unions had stated at the start that it was high time for an increase in public sector pay which has lagged wage increases in the private sector in recent years. With the agreement, around 800,000 state workers will see their pay rise by 2.1 percent retroactively from March and by 2.3 percent from March 2016. The deal is likely to be adopted by the 16 state governments for a further 2.2 million civil servants. Thus, over three million people will probably profit from the wage agreement.

English: [http://www.euronews.com/business-newswires/2992640-german-state-workers-win ...](http://www.euronews.com/business-newswires/2992640-german-state-workers-win...)

### **Chemical workers come to an agreement**

*March 27, 2015*

Trade union IG-BCE and the employers in the chemical sector concluded a sector-wide collective agreement with a 2.8% wage rise over 17 months. In addition the employers' contributions to the sector's 'Demographic Fund' will increase substantially over a period of 24 months from 550 euros in 2015, up to 750 euros in 2017. The agreement will apply to 550,000 employees across 1,900 companies. IG-BCE said the funds should help older workers reduce their hours.

English: [http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-3014927/German-chemical-industry ...](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-3014927/German-chemical-industry...)

### **Further strikes at Lufthansa ground 700+ flights**

*March 23, 2015*

New strikes by Lufthansa pilots have grounded over 700 flights and affects over 200,000 passengers. The pilots, as reported in previous newsletter, are in an ongoing dispute with Lufthansa management over the early retirement package. Four days of strikes were organised started from 18 March. Further strikes have been announced for April.

English: [http://www.dw.de/lufthansa-flights-back-to-normal-after-pilots-strike ...](http://www.dw.de/lufthansa-flights-back-to-normal-after-pilots-strike...)

### **Amazon workers on strike again, renew invitation to negotiate**

*March 17, 2015*

Strikes at online retailer Amazon are going into their third year and continue to grow in intensity. Strikes that started in Bad Hersfeld and Leipzig have now spread to Graben, Rheinberg, Werne and Koblenz, covering six of the company's eight fulfilment centres. As reported repeatedly in this newsletter, Amazon has refused to apply to sector's collective agreement and has been unwilling to enter into negotiations with trade union representatives.

English: <http://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/amazon-germany-workers-strike-again>

### **Warning strikes in private waste management**

*March 16, 2015*

Workers at private waste management firms are organising warning strikes as collective bargaining negotiations yielded a disappointing wage offer. In the second round of negotiations for a new collective agreement, employers offered a 1.1% wage increase, while trade unions have asked for a 7% increase in a 12 month agreement.

German: [http://www.verdi.de/themen/nachrichten ...](http://www.verdi.de/themen/nachrichten...)

## **Trucking companies sue Germany for applying minimum wage for passing through**

*March 12, 2015*

Trucking and haulage companies from Austria, Poland and Hungary are filing a legal complaint against the application of the minimum wage of €8.50 per hour for all truckers using German roads. Contrary to most countries, Germany did not exempt transit workers from its recently adopted minimum wage, thus obliging foreign trucking companies to pay the German minimum wage while on German roads. The suing companies argue that the application of the minimum wage is leading disproportional administrative burdens, while Germany has argued the measure is needed to fight wage dumping.

English: [https://uk.news.yahoo.com/germany-forces-transit-truck-drivers-minimum-wage ...](https://uk.news.yahoo.com/germany-forces-transit-truck-drivers-minimum-wage...)

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## **Greece**

### **IKEA being re-unionised**

*March 11, 2015*

Workers at IKEA are reinvigorating their trade union in a fight to save jobs and maintain decent wages. The union is in the process of renewing its mandate and holding elections for workers' representatives. The activists have the aim of setting up a real social dialogue in order to maintain employment and wage levels, as well as decent working conditions.

English: [http://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/ikea-greece-trade-union-continues-fight-decent ...](http://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/ikea-greece-trade-union-continues-fight-decent...)

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## **Hungary**

### **Health care workers earnings too low**

*March 5, 2015*

The average wage in the case of health workers is among the lowest, according to national economic data, if not the lowest and wage increases nearly always only pertain to doctors, even though some 100,000 people work in public health care who are not doctors. In the case of professional nurses and other workers the ratio of Western wages to those of Hungary is 10 to one, just as in the case of doctors. Doctors and expert health workers are moving abroad because of the low wages and poor working conditions. As a result patient security is jeopardized in certain areas because institutions cannot provide the minimum personnel necessary to care for the sick. Several associations have criticised this situation.

English: [http://budapestbeacon.com/public-policy/hungarian-health-care-workers ...](http://budapestbeacon.com/public-policy/hungarian-health-care-workers...)

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## **Iceland**

### **Protest song against wage inequality**

*March 27, 2015*

HB Grandi fish factory workers in Akranes were recently 'rewarded' for record profits at the company by being treated to free popsicles. The ice cream comes at a time when workers have been fighting for wage increases, and are likely to soon go on strike. Assisted by the trade union one worker, Jónína Björg Magnúsdóttir, decided she was not going to take this sitting down, and put together a response to management in the form of a song. The protest is against the fact that there is no money for improved wages, whilst at the same time it is possible to pay 2.7 billion ISK in dividends to the owner of the company.

English: <http://grapevine.is/news/2015/03/27/fish-factory-worker-fights-back-with-song/>

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### **Workers want shorter work week**

*March 5, 2015*

Research presented at a conference on balancing work and family life shows that 40% of the population supports the idea of working fewer hours for the same pay. Most workers said they were balancing work and home life well, but other questions regarding conflict and stress in the workplace showed that 40% supported shortening the working hours in a week. There were also 24% who said they could see themselves

refusing to work overtime, and 22% who want to reduce their work percentage.

English: <http://grapevine.is/news/2015/03/09/40-of-icelanders-want-a-shorter-work-week/>

### **High season for collective bargaining**

*March 5, 2015*

Most collective bargaining agreements between unions and management ran out 1 March and there is little optimism that new agreements will be made by Easter. As in previous years, the main point of contention rests on pay rises. The president of the trade union confederation ASÍ told reporters that there is 'a wide gap' between contract negotiators on both sides and that it is 'very likely' workers will have to resort to strikes.

English: <http://grapevine.is/news/2015/03/05/strikes-could-be-around-the-corner/>

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## **Ireland**

### **Permanent employment rights and extra pay for teachers**

*March 28, 2015*

The Department of Education has planned casualization reforms giving teachers a contract of indefinite duration after a period of continuous employment in excess of two years, rather than three. Separately, the department confirmed that money owed under the Haddington Road agreement to about 1,500 teachers who joined the profession in 2011-2012 will be paid in the payroll on April 9th. Each teacher is due to receive about €900 in arrears after teacher unions renegotiated the entry grade from 2012 onwards.

English: [http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/teachers-to-get ...](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/teachers-to-get-...)

### **Dunnes workers vote for action, company reacts with intimidation**

*March 27, 2015*

With a large majority (more than two-thirds) workers at the Dunnes stores have voted in favour of industrial action. The Mandate trade union says a national strike committee will meet to determine the type of industrial action and the date. The union has been embroiled in an ongoing row with management at the chain over pay and conditions (see our January Newsletter). Earlier on a Labour Court recommendation stated that the company had an obligation to sit down with the trade union to discuss all of the issues in dispute including: a review of Dunnes' excessive use of temporary contracts of employment; the implementation of banded hour contracts which would give workers security of hours and earnings and individual and collective representational rights for Dunnes workers. The company is making a number of claims including that it will 'never meet' the union.

English: [http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/dunnes-stores-attempt-to-intimidate ...](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/dunnes-stores-attempt-to-intimidate-...)  
<http://www.newstalk.com/Dunnes-Stores-workers-strike-ballot-pay-redundancy>

### **Diverging positions on higher minimum wage**

*March 24, 2015*

Employers' groups have warned that any increase in the national minimum wage would have a serious knock-on impact on wages and competitiveness. They claim that such an increase would put upward pressure on pay for those on salaries above the minimum wage. Some representatives called for the scrapping of Joint Labour Committees which set legally binding wage rates higher than the national minimum wage in other areas. During the same meeting other groups, representing women, migrants and the charity, stated that an increase in minimum wage would narrow the gender pay gap, reduce exploitation, and tackle poverty among the working poor. The trade union confederation Irish Congress of Trade Unions said it was vital to provide protection for workers who came forward to pursue their rights on wages and poor contracts.

English: [http://www.rte.ie/news/2015 ...](http://www.rte.ie/news/2015-...)

### **Investment in education pays**

*March 10, 2015*

In a larger article on investment in education it is revealed that countries that prioritise education see the benefits decades later. The publication of a report in 1965 entitled *Investment in Education* resulted in a change in policy and the introduction of free secondary education in 1967. Evidence does suggest that this

educational transformation had a major economic effect in terms of participation rates, albeit decades after the initial investment took place. Figures published by the Central Statistics Office show that, since the recovery in employment began, a majority of the net jobs created have been for graduates and there have been no net new jobs for those who had not completed the Leaving Certificate. It is to be hoped that the economic recovery will bring growth in jobs for those with more limited educational attainment too but it is clear that the bulk of the employment being created requires quite a high level of education.

English: [http://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/how-our-education-system-affects ...](http://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/how-our-education-system-affects...)

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## Italy

### **Uffizi Galery workers strike illegal?**

*March 25, 2015*

The national strike authority has warned that a strike planned by trade unions representing workers at Florence's popular Uffizi Gallery would be illegal. Around 400 workers, providing services as the ticket office, the cloakroom and the bookshop decided to go for a strike after the announcement by the heritage ministry of a reorganisation and privatisation. Workers ask for a social safeguard clause and maintenance of pay and contract conditions. The authority called two days 'excessive' for a first action in the dispute and said that sanctions were possible if the unions go ahead with the walkout. The unions claim that they have been ignored for too long.

English: [http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/english/134578/Strike-at-Uffizi-Easter-week-illegal ...](http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/english/134578/Strike-at-Uffizi-Easter-week-illegal...)  
[http://www.corriere.it/english/15\\_marzo\\_20/strike-to-close-uffizi-on-easter-weekend ...](http://www.corriere.it/english/15_marzo_20/strike-to-close-uffizi-on-easter-weekend...)

### **Talks in banking disrupted – strike looms**

*March 24, 2015*

Workers in the banking sector prepare for strikes after the talks on the renewal of their collective agreement broke down. The trade unions have not yet decided when the strikes will take place. They are planning other forms of protest, including a boycott of overtime. Union leaders have decided to take legal action if the Italian Banking Association (ABI) stops applying the existing collective agreement following the breakdown of negotiations.

English: [http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/english/134433/Bank-unions-declare-two-days ...](http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/english/134433/Bank-unions-declare-two-days...)

### **Metal workers on strike against redundancies**

*March 12, 2015*

Metal workers at the Tenaris Group's Dalmine factory held a one day strike against 406 redundancies. In February, Tenaris Group announced it would not prolong the contracts for 406 jobs, including 120 apprentices. Workers of the Dalmine factory went one strike, with colleagues from other plants organising solidarity actions. Trade unions demand the use of solidarity contracts and to be involved in talks about making the business profitable.

English: [http://www.industrialunion.org/metalworkers-mobilize-against-redundancies ...](http://www.industrialunion.org/metalworkers-mobilize-against-redundancies...)

### **Protest against unilateral cancellation of agreements**

*March 2, 2015*

For the first time in 15 years credit cooperative BCC workers are on strike to protest a contract decision taken by the national association of credit unions Federcasse. The protest is against the withdrawal of the two bargaining contract levels, national and regional, the first of which is already in effect and the second of which will go into effect April 1. The cancellations were both unilaterally decided by Federcasse, resulting in a removal of workers' rights that were previously agreed between the national association and workers.

English: [http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/english/131360/Up-to-95--of-Italian-credit-union ...](http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/english/131360/Up-to-95--of-Italian-credit-union...)

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## Latvia

### **Health care workers rally**

March 17, 2015

The Council of the Trade Union of Health and Social Care Employees will organise a protest in Riga on 20 April when the city will host an informal meeting of the European Union's health ministers. The rally will be organised to protest insufficient funding, which this year is at just 3 percent of gross domestic product. Another major problem is that two largest hospitals in Latvia may be on the verge of insolvency. The European Commission's latest report on the economic development and implementation of the EU recommendations states that the proportion of residents with unmet healthcare needs in Latvia is the highest in the European Union, about three times above the EU average indicator. The main reasons for this include high healthcare costs, long waiting lines for specialist consultation visits, and shortages of healthcare access regionally. Healthcare access for vulnerable groups remains restricted, and primary care and referral systems are not sufficiently strong. Furthermore, waiting times for specialist consultations and cancer diagnostics are relatively high, and there is a lack of sickness prevention and health promotion.

English: [http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/markets\\_and\\_companies ...](http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/markets_and_companies...)  
[http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/analytics ...](http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/analytics...)

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## Liechtenstein

### Generally binding agreements published

March 16, 2015

The government has published a long list of 2015 collective agreements and pay arrangements that are declared generally binding. The agreements for the retail and metal have become binding as a whole. In other sectors, like the cleaning, IT and several building trades, the wage paragraphs are declared binding. In several sectors the duration of the binding period was prolonged. The decisions have been published on 16 March 2015 in the official journal (volume 79-86, in German).

German: <https://apps.llv.li/Amtsblatt/kundmachung/displaySel>  
[https://www.gesetze.li/chrono/o/pdfs ...](https://www.gesetze.li/chrono/o/pdfs...)

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## Lithuania

### Minimum wage increase discussed

March 25, 2015

The acting coalition has agreed to raise the minimum monthly wage to 325 euro. It has to be noted that this would still be one of the lowest figures in the Baltic States. The country's presidency has stated that social security and the reduction of social exclusion should be some of the main priorities for parliament's spring session. According to the president, it is necessary to increase the lowest salaries, social payments and pensions. The minimum monthly wage increased in October 2014 to EUR 300. Data from the statistical office reveal that in October 2014 the number of employees with gross earnings of 300 euro and less in the whole economy (including individual enterprises) stood at 19.4% (211.4 thousand). More than half of employees (124.7 thousand) earning 300 euro and less were working part-time.

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

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## Luxembourg

### Use of state paid reduction of working hours increases

March 25, 2015

The number of employees working reduced hours under the so-called 'chômage partiel' scheme is set to increase for the third consecutive month in April. Under the programme, companies can reduce labour costs by cutting hours. Employees meanwhile are compensated by the state for the wages lost as a consequence. The measure is aimed at helping companies in difficult financial circumstances. The economic committee decided to grant all of the 15 applications submitted for April. Out of 2,038 workers employed by the involved companies, 927 will work reduced hours (in February 692 employees were working reduced hours).



English: <http://www.guichet.public.lu/entreprises/en/actualites ...>

### **Cargolux unions demand guarantees against outsourcing**

*March 15, 2015*

Trade union LCGB has asked for written assurances against outsourcing from air freight company Cargolux before proceeding to the next stage of collective agreement negotiations. The negotiations, which started in the end of 2014 as reported in previous newsletters, seemed completely stalled until the dispute was referred to the national conciliation office in January. Unions and management have now agreed on a number of compromise solutions as well as to establish of several working groups to discuss remaining problems in more detail. Before agreeing to send delegates to the working groups, however, LCGB has now demanded guarantees against outsourcing. In particular, the demands are meant to stop the transfer of three planes to Cargolux Italia, taking jobs away from the Luxembourg sites.

English: <http://www.wort.lu/en/business/cargolux-contract-negotiations-union-wants ...>

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## Malta

### **Five priorities for trade union**

*March 25, 2015*

Trade union UHM has called the pension time-bomb, the sustainability of Malta's transport network, a more efficient healthcare system, the state of the environment and the educational system the major concerns for workers. The five concerns were expressed on a large canvas in front of the new parliament building, in the form of a cartoon by MaltaToday cartoonist and illustrator Mark Scicluna.

English: [http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/51083/uhm\\_lists\\_the\\_five\\_top\\_concerns ...](http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/51083/uhm_lists_the_five_top_concerns ...)

### **Bus drivers on strike receive warning letters**

*March 18, 2015*

Bus drivers who took part in a two-hour strike organised by trade union Haddiema Maghqudin (UHM) have received warning letters from Malta Public Transport management. The dispute is partly caused by a fight in union ranks, as both UHM and the General Workers Union (GWU) aim to represent the MPT workers. Despite a court ruling that workers have the right to choose to be represented by either, GWU is the only recognised union at MPT and therefore strikes called by UHM without GWU are technically illegal.

English: [http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/50856/union\\_protests\\_warning\\_letters ...](http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/50856/union_protests_warning_letters ...)

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## Netherlands

### **Flexworkers want permanent job**

*March 25, 2015*

Trade union research, involving 4,200 people, reveals that nine in ten people on flexible contracts would rather have a permanent job. Four out of ten workers with a flexible contract say they have difficulty making ends meet, compared with fewer than one in five people with a traditional fixed contract. Some 30% of people with 'on call' contracts and 40% of temps say it is hard to find an affordable place to live, compared with one in ten people in permanent jobs. The research also shows 15% of people on flexible contracts earn less than the minimum wage, which is currently €9.58 an hour.

English: <http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2015/03/nine-in-10-workers-on-flexible ...>

### **Social plan agreed at retailer Blokker**

*March 19, 2015*

Management of the retail group Blokker and the trade unions have reached an agreement on the main components of a social plan to cover employees affected by a reorganisation. The deal outlines a compensation for those who are dismissed, employee training, as well as legal assistance and financial advisory for workers. The measures come into effect on April 1, 2015.



English: [http://www.nltimes.nl/2015/03/19/blokker-unions-agree-on-buyouts-social-care ...](http://www.nltimes.nl/2015/03/19/blokker-unions-agree-on-buyouts-social-care-...)

### **Talks at V&D strained**

*March 17, 2015*

Trade unions FNV and CNV and the management of V&D had long discussions regarding the eventual wage moderation for the store's employees (see also our January Newsletter). According to the unions, the discussion started constructive. However, soon after the trade unions decided to freeze the negotiations with V&D, because V&D still intends to continue with the appeal against the recent ruling by the court that forbade a pay cut.

English: <http://www.nltimes.nl/2015/03/17/vd-union-negotiations-increasingly-strained/>

### **New collective agreement for hospital workers**

*March 5, 2015*

The 120,000 workers in the hospital sector have a new collective agreement. The agreement, which follows heated negotiations, will raise wages of the lowest paid workers by 6.5% over the next 34 months. After 10 rounds of negotiations, talks broke down in January when trade unions refused the hospitals' final wage offer of 1.5%. Following an extended strike threat, negotiations were resumed and led to a new deal in March. The new collective agreement will run retroactively from 1 March 2014 to 31 December 2016. Workers receive a 1.5% wage increase per 1 January 2015 and a once-only payment of 0.5% with a minimum of €400 in July 2015. In 2016, workers will receive a structural increase of 1.5% as of 1 January as well as a once-only payment of 0.5% with a minimum of €125.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/11280>

<http://www.nltimes.nl/2015/01/02/hospital-strikes-possible-failed-contract-talks/>

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## **Norway**

### **Mediation and possible strike averted**

*March 26, 2015*

Trade union confederation LO and the Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise NHO have reached an agreement in their collective bargaining for workers in manufacturing industries. The deal is estimated by both sides to result in an average pay increase of 2.7 percent for the 175,000 workers involved, below the central bank's forecast for wages to rise nationally by 3% in 2015. Both sides have emphasised the need for moderate wage growth in 2015 as the economy faces a slowdown with lower activity in the oil sector.

English: [http://www.rigzone.com/news/oil\\_gas/a/137869/Norways\\_Industrial\\_Workers\\_Reach ...](http://www.rigzone.com/news/oil_gas/a/137869/Norways_Industrial_Workers_Reach_...)

### **End of Norwegian pilots' strike after 11 days**

*March 11, 2015*

The ten-day pilots' strike which has seen nearly all of budget airline Norwegian's Scandinavian flights grounded has been resolved. Norwegian, Europe's third-largest budget airline, and the trade unions struck a deal that secures the jobs of the airline's Scandinavian pilots until October 2017. In return, the pilots made concessions on wages and pensions. After marathon talks that ended earlier this month without a deal reached a representative of the pilots' union had already stated that the unions and the airline agreed to focus on resolving the conflict rather than arguing in the media.

English: [http://www.thelocal.no/20150311/norwegian-cancels-160-flights-after-brokering ...](http://www.thelocal.no/20150311/norwegian-cancels-160-flights-after-brokering-...)

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## **Poland**

### **Gdansk container terminal bans union organisers**

*March 17, 2015*

The DCT Gdansk container terminal, the largest and fastest growing port terminal in the country, has banned dock union organisers and terminated the employment contract of the union leader. The union, which is representing nearly half of the dock workers, has been organising protests demanding collective bargaining procedures to be set up in the company. The union wants to negotiate, amongst other things, on

wages, contracts and holidays.

English: [http://www.itfglobal.org/en/news-events/news/2015/march/polands-largest-container ...](http://www.itfglobal.org/en/news-events/news/2015/march/polands-largest-container-...)

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## Portugal

### **Health workers suspend historic strike**

*March 30, 2015*

Healthcare technicians have suspended a planned open-ended strike, after the government agreed to union demands to reopen negotiations on salary and career structures. Thus, the trade unions have achieved one of their first objectives, the resumption of the negotiations with the health ministry that broke down in July 2014. The decision of the health technicians to call an unlimited stoppage reflects deep discontent at worsening pay and conditions. Career structures and salary rates have been effectively frozen since 1999.

English: [http://www.equaltimes.org/portuguese-healthcare-workers ...](http://www.equaltimes.org/portuguese-healthcare-workers-...)

### **Youngsters protest against precarious work**

*March 29, 2015*

Youngsters organised a protest against precarious working conditions and deterioration of workers' rights. Although the country has returned to growth, the youth unemployment rate is still extremely high, standing at around 33.6% in January 2015 (figures by Eurostat). The bailout program that forced the country to change the social welfare system and reform the labour market has led to mass layoffs and pay cuts.

English: [http://www.globaltimes.cn/content ...](http://www.globaltimes.cn/content-...)

### **High mobilisation for civil servants strike**

*March 13, 2015*

Unions report a mobilisation of above 80% in the 13 March civil servants' strike. The workers are striking to demand higher wages, accumulation of tenure, the maintenance of the 35-hours working week and a halt to a draft law that would allow workers to be fired without just cause. The strike affected rubbish removals, hospitals, fire departments, school, health and social services and judicial workers.

English: [http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/large-participation-in-strike-action ...](http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/large-participation-in-strike-action-...)

### **The work of the food bank**

*March 10, 2015*

The observatory on the Fight Against Poverty in the city of Lisbon reported that some 6,700 households and 18,273 citizens received support from the food bank Banco Alimentar during 2014. Banco Alimentar collects foodstuffs direct from shoppers on several different occasions over the year and runs an extensive volunteer network for such purposes.

English: [http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/food-bank-helps-feed-18273-in-lisbon ...](http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/food-bank-helps-feed-18273-in-lisbon-...)

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## Romania

### **Ford deal reduces mass redundancies**

*March 7, 2015*

After negotiations with the factory's trade union carmaker Ford has annulled the layoffs for 170 employees at its plant in Craiova, by reducing their work schedule. However, the management has not yet announced what the reduced work schedule would mean. In November 2014, the company announced it would lay off 680 of its 3,200 employees, due to falling demand on the European car market. Almost 500 employees volunteered to leave by the beginning of this year. Workers' representatives have been trying to determine the employer to limit the layoffs to nearly 500.

English: [http://www.romania-insider.com/ford-avoids-mass-layoffs-romania-union-deal ...](http://www.romania-insider.com/ford-avoids-mass-layoffs-romania-union-deal-...)

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## Serbia

### **Teachers strike**

*March 24, 2015*

Members of the association of trade unions of education workers have suspended classes in a protest against reduced salaries. Some education workers had received unreduced salaries, while some had received pay reduced by 33 percent, in line with the Education Ministry's request. The reduction in the pay depends on the schools' principals and the schools' administration, which has caused chaos. The unions have been on strike since 17 November 2014, by shortening classes to 30 minutes.

English: [http://inserbia.info/today/2015/03/teachers-strike-classes-suspended ...](http://inserbia.info/today/2015/03/teachers-strike-classes-suspended...)

### **Job cuts in the public sector**

*March 5, 2015*

The government said that a program to cut the number of employees in the public sector would most probably be adopted in April, and it could be anywhere between 7,000 and 15,000 in 2015. The program, which is prepared in cooperation with the World Bank, would establish precisely the numbers to be cut in all branches.

English: [http://inserbia.info/today/2015/03/udovicki-public-sector-to-be-cut-by-15000 ...](http://inserbia.info/today/2015/03/udovicki-public-sector-to-be-cut-by-15000...)

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## Slovakia

### **Strike looming at Peugeot Trnava**

*March 9, 2015*

Trade unions at the Peugeot Trnava plant are at negotiating salary increases, with a potential strike looming. It is reported that there is no consensus in sight and the Economy Ministry should send a mediator to find a solution acceptable for both sides. .

English: [http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20056460/carmakers-expand-production-strike-may ...](http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20056460/carmakers-expand-production-strike-may...)

### **Bus drivers come to an agreement**

*March 2, 2015*

Negotiators of the KOVO trade union and the bus transport association ZAD agreed on a guaranteed pay-rise of 2.5 percent in bus transport (see our January Newsletter). The agreement managed to avert the strike alert and the threat of general strike planned for future. The percentage rise amounts to €22 per employee per month on average.

English: [http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20056356/union-scraps-strike-alert-after-pay-rise ...](http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20056356/union-scraps-strike-alert-after-pay-rise...)

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## Slovenia

### **State rail cuts jobs and hires new staff**

*March 22, 2015*

The heavily-indebted national railway operator Slovenske železnice (SŽ) plans to cut 740 jobs by the end of the year and spend 20 million euros on severance payments. An agreement between the social partners rules that workers must receive severance payments equivalent to 12 months' pay. The company says it wants to streamline its operations, but at the same time it keeps hiring new employees.

English: [http://www.rtv slo.si/news-in-english/state-railway-company-s-staffing-problems ...](http://www.rtv slo.si/news-in-english/state-railway-company-s-staffing-problems...)

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## Spain

## **Madrid home helps call strike**

*March 20, 2015*

Trade unions representing 10,000 home helps in the Madrid region have called a strike for 6 April. The sector's employers' organisation ASEMAD and trade unions have been negotiating a collective agreement for the helps, who provide care to around 50,000 homes. On 17 March, ASEMAD made its final offer including a pay and seniority freeze for 2015, a 0.3% increase in 2016 and an increase of the working week by half an hour. Trade unions are outraged by the offer, which falls even short of the national employers' proposal of 0.9%, and have announced the start of an indefinite strike.

English: [http://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/madrid-home-help-workers-go-indefinite-strike ...](http://www.uniglobalunion.org/news/madrid-home-help-workers-go-indefinite-strike...)

## **University workers strike against reform**

*March 8, 2015*

Trade unions of teachers and students have called for a general strike in universities on March 24 against what they see as a disguised reform affecting public education. The protest has an impressive public support and is backed by many organisations and social groups. The initiative collected in four weeks over 140,000 signatures against the project of the government.

English: [http://www.plenglish.com/index ...](http://www.plenglish.com/index...)

## **Unemployed assisted in times of crisis**

*March 5, 2015*

The negative effects of unemployment are well-documented. Depression, anxiety, substance abuse and low self-esteem are just some of the consequences of being out of work, especially over a long period of time. The initiative Psicología Solidaria aims to help people combat those feelings. The free counselling service put together by psychologists, community workers and social workers was born in 2013 to offer support to Madrid's unemployed.

English: [http://www.equaltimes.org/counselling-service-offers-crucial ...](http://www.equaltimes.org/counselling-service-offers-crucial...)

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## **Sweden**

### **Labour cost index updated**

*March 2, 2015*

The Labour Cost Index (AKI) for the private sector in December 2014 was 116.6 for wage-earners and 118.3 for salaried employees. Compared to December 2013, labour costs have increased by 2.3 percent for wage-earners and 3.0 percent for salaried employees. The statistical office has updated the 2008 to 2014 data.

English: [http://www.scb.se/en\\_/Finding-statistics/Statistics-by-subject-area/Labour ...](http://www.scb.se/en_/Finding-statistics/Statistics-by-subject-area/Labour...)

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## **Switzerland**

### **Lack of training in listed companies**

*March 9, 2015*

The public television SRF surveyed the top Swiss Market Index (SMI) companies, and looked at how measures to tackle the lack of skilled workers through further training, integration of the older workforce and steps to improve the balance between work and family are currently being addressed by these large companies. The SMI is a list of the 20 largest companies being traded on the stock exchange. The government has put forward plans for quotas for EU citizens, priority hiring for Swiss residents (except in professions experiencing a skills shortage) and boosting the potential workforce within Switzerland, including older employees, women and refugees. For firms, training skilled workers from the ground up is one solution to avoid a labour shortage. However, the SRF investigation shows that most of the SMI companies were doing little to promote apprenticeship schemes.

English: [http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/the-labour-shortage-facing-the-top-20-swiss-firms ...](http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/the-labour-shortage-facing-the-top-20-swiss-firms...)

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## Turkey

### **Medical workers on strike**

*March 13, 2015*

Representatives from 14 medical personnel trade unions have decided to walk off the job on March 13, calling for better working standards. Media report that thousands of doctors participated in the strike, demanding five urgent changes. The demands include better working conditions, increased base pay for pensions, payment of overtime fees, better access to health care and more attention to quality delivered instead of the quantity of patients treated. Doctors said they are forced to work for low wages and that only five minutes are allotted per patient.

English: [http://national.bgnnews.com/thousands-of-turkish-doctors-go-on-strike ...](http://national.bgnnews.com/thousands-of-turkish-doctors-go-on-strike...)  
[http://www.todayszaman.com/business\\_medical-workers-to-go-on-strike-next-week ...](http://www.todayszaman.com/business_medical-workers-to-go-on-strike-next-week...)

### **Union busting at Egger Group**

*March 12, 2015*

Trade unions report large scale union busting practices at Roma Plastic, the Gebze plant of the subsidiary of Austrian building materials manufacturer Egger Group. Management is reportedly offering unions members bonuses if they leave the union and 14 activists have been fired. The union busting activities only intensified after Lastik-Is union received the necessary certificate to represent the plant's workers from the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. Asked by international and European trade union confederations to help, Egger Group headquarters in Austria responded it views the issue as a local problem.

English: [http://www.industrial-union.org/egger-group-continues-union-busting ...](http://www.industrial-union.org/egger-group-continues-union-busting...)

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## United Kingdom

### **Royal Household workers protest**

*March 30, 2015*

The trade union of staff workers at Windsor Castle will open a ballot over allowances. It would be the first such action specific to the Royal Households and comes after years of pay restraint has left loyal workers paid below the widely-recognised living wage, with new recruits starting on as little as £14,400 a year. Despite this, workers are expected to carry out extra unpaid duties, including giving tours of the castle - even though visitors are charged for these - and acting as language interpreters and first aiders. The PCS union, which represents 120 of the 200 staff at Windsor, says non-strike industrial action would involve withdrawal of this goodwill, and would have a significant impact on the services provided to visitors. An unsatisfactory pay offer for 2014 was only narrowly accepted by staff on the understanding that the additional allowances would be considered in 2015.

English: [http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news\\_and\\_events ...](http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events...)

### **Right to strike endangered by Tory proposals**

*March 20, 2015*

Len McCluskey, the general secretary of trade union Unite, has warned that he would be prepared to hold unlawful strikes if the Conservatives change the law after the general election to enforce a higher threshold on strike ballots. The leadership of trade union Unite is openly questioning the Tory plans that could push the legitimate democratic work of trade unions outside of the law: it is a union's job to fight for working people's rights; if the government wants to challenge fundamental rights of the citizen, when the law is misguided, when it oppresses the people and removes their freedoms, can the unions respect it? Meanwhile the Liberal Democrat cabinet minister, who is responsible for union laws, has criticised the Conservatives for having an ideological aversion to trade unions.

English: [http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/mar/20/len-mccluskey-issues-warning ...](http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/mar/20/len-mccluskey-issues-warning...)  
[http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/vince-cable-draws-up-plans-to-let-unions ...](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/vince-cable-draws-up-plans-to-let-unions...)  
[http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/19/unions-fight-workers-bad-law ...](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/19/unions-fight-workers-bad-law...)

### **Workers Barking and Dagenham on strike against wage cut**

*March 18, 2015*

Frontline workers employed by the Barking and Dagenham municipality are on strike against a major wage cut, which would leave them €1385 worse off per year. The cut follows years without pay rises, meaning that the workers have already suffered a loss of purchasing power. The strike action received widespread support from inhabitants. Bin lorry drivers taking strike action from 18 until 20 March and 7 and 8 April, however, may yet find their protests disturbed after learning that the city council has hired security guards and dogs to oversee the sites where actions are planned.

English: <http://www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/b-and-d-strikers-shocked>

### **Picket lines at the National Gallery**

*March 17, 2015*

National Gallery workers are organising picket lines after hearing the museum intends to outsource 400 of its 600 jobs in order to increase flexibility. Employees have received letters from management threatening legal consequences if they participate in industrial action and the gallery's senior local rep was suspended on the eve of the last strike. Trade unions are seeking public and political support to stop the outsourcing plans.

English: [http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news\\_and\\_events/pcs\\_comment ...](http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/pcs_comment...)

### **Pay deal for Co-op retail staff**

*March 10, 2015*

The shop workers trade union Usdaw has reached an agreement with the Co-operative Employers Association that will see pay increase by 8.5% over the next two years. The package includes proposals to simplify existing reward practices, improve consistency and better align the Co-op to market practices among major food retailers. The deal will now be put to a ballot of Usdaw members.

English: [http://www.usdaw.org.uk/About-Us/News/2015/March/Usdaw-negotiates-an-8-5-pay ...](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/About-Us/News/2015/March/Usdaw-negotiates-an-8-5-pay...)

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