

# collective bargaining

Issue 4/2020 | April

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.



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## European sources

### **Governments allocate aid for self-employed workers**

*April 29, 2020*

A growing number of governments are stepping up their assistance to self-employed workers by providing unemployment benefits to minimise the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic. In order to salvage their coronavirus-hit economy, countries like the UK and France are offering unemployment benefits for gig workers affected by the pandemic. Gig workers, including freelancers, independent contractors, and temporary or part-time hires, are part of the labour market that now makes up a third of the global workforce, according to estimates from the International Labour Organization.

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### **Consequences of COVID-19 on labour markets**

*April 29, 2020*

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has monitored the impact of the coronavirus outbreak on the world's labour markets over the past weeks. In the report, the labour organisation stresses the need to uphold labour rights and strengthen health protection but also the need for fiscal and monetary responses to support the most affected sectors and vulnerable people, including financial assistance for enterprises.

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### **SURE: €100 billion to keep people in jobs**

*April 22, 2020*

The EU will provide additional financial support to Member States to protect jobs and workers affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Many businesses are experiencing economic difficulties as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and have had to temporarily suspend or substantially reduce their activities and the working hours of their staff. To support employers and to protect workers and the self-employed from losing their jobs or incomes, the European Commission proposed a new temporary instrument called SURE (Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency), to complement national efforts to protect employment. It is expected to be operational by 1 June 2020.

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### **Help for over 40 million new unemployed**

*April 22, 2020*

The ETUC is urging EU leaders to agree and implement, without delay or conditions, proposals to help workers, companies and public services hit by the coronavirus crisis. With over 40 million workers now temporarily or permanently in unemployment since the crisis began, there can be no repeat of the days-long wrangling between Member States' finance ministers witnessed at the Eurogroup meeting earlier this month.

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### **A quarter of Europe's jobs at risk**

*April 20, 2020*

According to an analysis from McKinsey, more than a quarter of all jobs in Europe could be impacted by the economic fallout of the coronavirus pandemic. The consultancy estimated that up to 59 million jobs are at risk of things like reduced working hours, temporary furloughs or permanent job losses. Unemployment could almost double in the coming months, with staff most affected in areas like customer service and sales, food services and building occupations.

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## **Austria**

### **Trade union demands an extra €1,000 for workers**

*April 21, 2020*

The national trade union federation ÖGB (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund) started a petition stating that it is not enough to just say 'thank you' to the workers that keep the country going. They should be rewarded with an additional payment of €1,000, tax free.

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### **Mitigating layoffs through short-time work**

*April 7, 2020*

To mitigate the rising number of unemployed persons due to the COVID-19 crisis, the social partners have developed a new model of subsidised short-time work that could become an international role model. The Austrian model allows a temporary reduction in working hours of up to 90% while maintaining the employment relationship and granting almost full public wage compensation. This measure can help to bridge the economic fallout as it helps to stabilise demand and fosters a fast return to pre-crisis economic activity.

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## Belgium

### **Measures to address staff shortages in vital sectors**

*April 28, 2020*

On 28 April 2020, the Emergency Powers Decree No. 14 was published in the Belgian Official Journal in order to guarantee an adequate work organisation during the COVID-19 crisis. In particular, the Decree adopts several employment law-related measures in order to address staff shortages in certain vital sectors. This newsflash provides an overview of the most important measures which may be relevant for certain employers.

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### **Trade union demand for guarantee of worker protection**

*April 28, 2020*

The FGTB/ABVV union fears that the reopening of business from 11 May 2020 is happening without sufficient guarantees of worker protection. Defining COVID-19 as an occupational disease would make the employer responsible for safeguarding workers and also for bearing the costs if an employee falls ill.

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### **Agreement in construction sector**

*April 20, 2020*

The construction union and employers have come to an agreement which makes the rules of social distancing in workplaces a priority. They will also draw up a joint protocol to allow construction activities to resume as early as 4 May 2020.

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## Bulgaria

### **Employment aid scheme for preserving jobs**

*April 15, 2020*

The European Commission has approved a €770 million Bulgarian wage subsidies support scheme for preserving employment in the sectors most affected by the confinement measures put in place due to the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State Aid Temporary Framework.

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### **Strong growth in employment**

*April 21, 2020*

Bulgaria had the strongest growth in the employment rate of people aged 20 to 64 in the European Union in 2019 according to Eurostat. The employment rate in Bulgaria rose by 2.6 percentage points to 75% in 2019. Its Europe 2020 Strategy target is to reach an employment rate of 76%. The figure for Bulgaria put it above the EU average employment rate in 2019.

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## Croatia

### **Dismissal of 20,000 employees**

*April 17, 2020*

Since mid-March, when most economic activity was frozen due to the coronavirus crisis, especially in hospitality and services, the official number of unemployed people has increased by 19,122, an increase of almost 15%. More than 560,000 workers received the first payment of government aid in wages for the month of March, and that number is likely to be even higher for April.

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### **IKEA guarantees jobs and wages**

*April 14, 2020*

The IKEA Croatia company guarantees jobs and 100% of wages to all its 611 employees as long as the government's measures are in place. The company underscores that it has made product donations to the Croatian healthcare system and as support to the community.

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## Cyprus

### **Government pledges to close digital gender gap**

*April 23, 2020*

The government pledged to bridge the digital gender gap by encouraging greater involvement of girls in information and communications technology (ICT) education. The pledge was made in an announcement by the deputy ministry of research, innovation and digital policy to mark the International Girls in ICT Day 2020 celebrated on April 23, and after data showing that Cyprus has the lowest number of girls choosing to study in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (Stem), both in comparison with the number of boys and with the corresponding average of the EU.

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### **Higher payouts after complaints**

*April 21, 2020*

The Ministry of Labour announced that it is tweaking the calculation method for coronavirus-related special unemployment and sick leave benefits after recipients complained that payouts were too low. In a statement, the ministry said it has determined that the low sums paid out were due to the normal way of calculating pensionable earnings based on the Social Insurance Law.

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## Czechia

### **Hotels offer free accommodation for front-line workers**

*April 9, 2020*

An initiative to help the hospitality industry after the decision by the government to close down the whole sector, also wants to provide those working on the front lines with free accommodation. Around 50 hotels have so far joined the project. The general public can support the initiative by buying vouchers to stay in one of the hotels after the crisis.

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### **Employment sustainability programme**

*April 6, 2020*

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs launched a targeted antivirus employment sustainability programme. The aim is to mitigate the negative impact of anti-crisis, quarantine and other emergency measures taken in connection with the spread of COVID-19. One way that this objective is to be achieved is by reducing the salary costs of employers, in the form of a contribution from the state to the total labour costs. In other words, employees' salaries will be partially reimbursed if they have experienced obstacles to working due to the coronavirus.

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## Denmark

### **Extension of aid programme**

*April 18, 2020*

The government extended the duration of its aid programmes to businesses and workers and added some new measures to increase spending by about DKK 100 billion (€13 billion). The government agreed with all parties in parliament to keep aid measures available until 8 July, a month longer than previously planned. Companies will now be able to get back some value-added tax (VAT) payments they made last year as zero-interest loans.

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### **Flexicurity model is dumped**

*April 9, 2020*

Under Denmark's flexicurity model, employers have been given free rein to hire and fire workers, in order to help businesses adapt to the ups, downs and shifts in markets. But the coronavirus crisis is not about adapting to market changes. Denmark, like many other countries, ordered many businesses to shut down to stem the spread of COVID-19. To encourage firms to not let go of their employees, the government is compensating them for 75% of wages of up to €4,000 per month. For those on temporary hourly contracts, the state will pay 90%.

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## Estonia

### **Unemployment rising**

*April 15, 2020*



Statistics from the Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund indicate that the overall rate of unemployment in Estonia has risen to 6.9%, but the rate among young people is 7.2%.

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### **Wage compensation**

*April 14, 2020*

The state has paid €19 million in wage compensations to more than 22,000 workers of over 3,907 firms. A total of 4,300 companies have applied for wage compensation since the scheme opened.

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## **Finland**

### **New collective agreement for the state sector**

*April 6, 2020*

A new collective agreement for the state sector came into effect at the beginning of April. The agreement will be in place until February 2022. The pay rise included in this 23-month agreement will be 3.07%, which follows the general line in this round of negotiations.

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### **Employment crisis**

*April 2, 2020*

Redundancies and temporary lay-offs due to the coronavirus pandemic are rising. Some 9,000 employees were made redundant between 16 March and 1 April, and the number of temporary layoffs was 58,000. A total of 3,670 companies have called for co-operation in negotiating further temporary layoffs or redundancies, as the law requires.

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## **France**

### **Partial unemployment due to lockdown**

*April 30, 2020*

Some 11 million workers are currently temporarily or partially unemployed during the lockdown. With much of France's economy at a standstill as a result of COVID-19 measures, millions of people are unable to work and 337,000 companies – many in the tourism and leisure sectors – have halted work entirely. France has unveiled a package of measures that offer support to self-employed people and small businesses. For employees who either cannot work at all or who have had their hours drastically cut, '*chômage partiel*' (partial unemployment) is available.

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### **Schemes for self-employed workers**

*April 24, 2020*

The government is to expand the financial help offered to businesses and self-employed workers to help them cope with the economic downturn caused by the coronavirus lockdown. The government has put in place schemes to help them stay afloat during the lockdown as part of a €110 billion emergency plan.

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### **Unions threaten to strike**

April 23, 2020

Unions have filed strike notices demanding the government increase security measures to protect workers against the coronavirus before reopening schools and businesses in May. The teacher's union Fnec FP-FO – the country's third largest union representing the education sector – filed an official strike notice until 30 May, listing demands that the government must comply with before opening schools in May.

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### **Valeo reaches agreement with unions on resumption of work**

April 21, 2020

The automotive supplier Valeo has announced an agreement with the trade unions on the measures for resumption of activity, in the context of the coronavirus epidemic. The management and the unions have agreed on the modes of deployment of enhanced security measures in order to prepare for the upcoming restart of production activities, suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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## **Germany**

### **Strong increase in unemployment and short-time work**

April 30, 2020

By 26 April, companies had registered short-time work for 10.1 million people, and there were 2.1 million unemployed workers in the corona crisis. These unexpectedly high figures were announced by the Federal Employment Agency.

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### **Labour Ministry publishes 10 health measures**

April 17, 2020

Since the government announced the first gradual steps to ease the lockdown, debates have begun in the country's economic sphere on the scope of the announcements and the necessary economic and health conditions for ending remote working. The steps of a post-lockdown plan still need to be outlined and clarifications regarding the conditions under which companies can call their staff back into offices and factories are still required. However, the Labour Ministry did publish a catalogue of 10 measures and advice regarding the prevention of the spread of the virus in the workplace.

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### **Bonus for care workers and short-time work in municipalities**

April 7, 2020

Public service union ver.di and the German employers' organisation have agreed on a €1,500 payment for all care workers in recognition of the work they have been doing during the corona crisis. This payment will be made in July 2020. Part-time workers are to receive a proportional amount, while trainees will get €900.

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## Greece

### Average monthly wages

*April 29, 2020*

The average daily pay and monthly wages for full-time workers came to €50.55 and € 1,153.57, respectively, in October 2019, official figures showed. For part-time workers, average daily pay and monthly wages were €24.52 and €402.80, respectively.

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### Schemes to tackle unemployment

*April 26, 2020*

The government is considering different schemes to tackle reduced employment that would see it subsidising part of lost salaries or social security contributions, once the country enters the stage of a gradual return to 'normality'. The main tool that will be employed by the Finance Ministry will be the European Union's SURE program, which is aimed at bolstering employment and reducing unemployment risks during emergencies.

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## Hungary

### Single-digit wage growth

*April 30, 2020*

The drop in non-regular wages continues, so wage growth remained in the single-digit territory in February. The data is still unaffected by the coronavirus epidemic. The Hungarian average gross and net wages rose by 9.1% year-on-year in February, showing a 0.1 percentage point slowdown compared to January.

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### Job protection and wage subsidy

*28 April 2020*

The Employment Protection Wage Subsidy will support employees on reduced working hours. An employee may receive support on the basis of an application submitted jointly with the employer to the county government office. In the programme, the employer undertakes not to terminate the employee's employment and pays wages for the employee's working hours and personal development time. The employee agrees to perform work and is available to the employer during the personal development time.

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### Unions outraged about flexible working time

*April 14, 2020*

The government modified the overtime bill without prior consultation and made it possible for employers to unilaterally apply even more flexible working time arrangements. According to the Vasas trade union's vice president, the government is moving to fully pass the cost of managing the pandemic onto the workers. According to the union, workers will now become completely vulnerable to the multinationals. The employee now becomes indebted to the employer, who can give an advance on wages for one to two weeks or even a month due to downtime and demand the debt be repaid within 24 months.

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## Iceland

### **Icelandair lays off 2,000 people**

*April 29, 2020*

Icelandair announced the layoffs of more than 2,000 out of its 3,400 employees by the end of the month. This is the largest mass layoff in Iceland's history, announced the director of the Directorate of Labour. The company had already laid off 240 people a month ago. Most of the remaining 1,300 employees are working at a reduced employment ratio, while full-time employees have taken a pay cut. Last year, the company employed on average 4,715 people.

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### **Workers resume strike**

*April 29, 2020*

Workers employed by five municipalities in the capital area and south Iceland will resume striking on 5 May. Members of trade union Efling working for the municipalities voted overwhelmingly in support of strike action. The union's negotiation committee postponed strike action during the peak of the coronavirus pandemic, but announced that the strike would be voted on again.

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## Ireland

### **Emergency employment support**

*April 29, 2020*

The Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (COVID-19) Act 2020 (the Emergency Act) was signed into law. It includes the Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme. The aim of the scheme is to help employers experiencing significant economic disruption as a result of COVID-19 to maintain their relationship with their employees so that they are in a position to get up and running again as soon as the crisis passes.

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### **Top-up of childcare workers' wages**

*April 16, 2020*

In addition to an existing revenue wage subsidy scheme, the Department of Children will top up the wages of childcare staff to a maximum of €586 per week, the maximum amount allowed under a coronavirus subsidy scheme.

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## Italy

### **People giving up the search for work**

*April 30, 2020*

The unemployment rate dropped steeply to 8.4% in March, the lowest for almost nine years, data showed, as people stopped looking for work due to the coronavirus emergency. February's jobless rate was revised down

to 9.3%. Some 27,000 jobs were lost in March compared with the month before, but 267,000 fewer people were looking for work than in the month before.

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### **Businesses plead to return to work**

*April 7, 2020*

Many Italian companies and academics are pressing the government to reopen factories to prevent an economic catastrophe. Italy faces a particularly pressing dilemma, not only because its lockdown has been in place longer than most nations and it had the world's highest death toll, but because the novel coronavirus has hit hardest in the northern industrial heartlands that generate a third of its economic output.

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## **Latvia**

### **Proposal for a more flexible approach towards Labour Law**

*April 23, 2020*

The Ministry of Economics has submitted to the cabinet a proposal to take a more flexible approach towards using the Labour Law in relation to the wages of employed persons during periods of 'downtime'. The proposals addresses the use of the Labour Law in certain COVID-19 crisis measures intended to preserve employment levels.

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### **Support for unemployed persons**

*April 15, 2020*

The government work group for support of entrepreneurship and the employed discussed the introduction of an unemployment benefit. This support would be paid if a person fails to find a job after the payment of unemployment benefits has ended.

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## **Liechtenstein**

### **Trade union finds gap in packages of measures**

*April 4, 2020*

The trade union LANV noticed a number of cases in which people 'fall through the net' of the recent measures taken by the government. One example are the people who did not find any childcare facilities since the closure of schools and day care centres, and hence are unable to do their work.

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## **Lithuania**

### **Support to employers in case of idle time**

*April 8, 2020*

Amendments to the Labour Code regulating idle time due to the state of emergency and quarantine came into effect. From now on, additional conditions will apply to declaring idle time. Subsidies will be paid to employers who declare idle time because they cannot provide employees with agreed-upon work and if due to the work organisation there is no possibility to work remotely or the employee does not agree to take on another job.

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## Luxembourg

### **Trade union positive about government measures**

*April 9, 2020*

The trade union confederation OGBL is positive about the measures taken to stem the spread of the COVID-19 virus. It also criticises measures which go against the interests of employees and their families such as the authorisation of dismissal for 'serious reasons' during a period of incapacity for work, which according to the Labour Code is not allowed in normal times.

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## Malta

### **Employment aid scheme**

*April 27, 2020*

The European Commission has approved a €215 million wage subsidies scheme to support companies operating in the sectors affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State Aid Temporary Framework adopted by the Commission. The scheme will be accessible to companies of all sizes and also self-employed individuals operating in sectors that are strongly affected by the current health crisis and the containment measures adopted by national authorities.

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## Netherlands

### **Agreement between trade union and construction employers**

*April 14, 2020*

The construction workers' union FNV Bouwen en Wonen closed an agreement with construction employers on how to manage COVID-19 risks in the workplace. The agreement was concluded after the union investigated the effects of the pandemic on working in the sector. Only a third of the workers felt safe to continue working during the crisis.

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### **Collective agreement for online supermarket Picnic**

*April 10, 2020*

Trade union De Unie reached an agreement on employment conditions for the 4,000 employees of the online supermarket Picnic. On 17 April 2020 the agreement was accepted by a majority of the employees who voted. The other unions, however, refuse to sign it, as they want Picnic to be under the jurisdiction of the supermarket collective agreement.

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## Norway

### **Study finds unions make companies more productive**

*April 29, 2020*

A study on the effects of union density found that tax subsidies for Norwegian unions led to ‘substantial increases’ in firm productivity and wages, increases that grew even larger the more productive a firm was or the more bargaining power a union had. Researchers established a correlation between union density and productivity by first looking at how tax subsidies affect union membership.

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### **New scheme for self-employed**

*April 16, 2020*

An arrangement for self-employed persons and freelancers who have lost all or part of their income due to the coronavirus epidemic was approved by the government on 8 April. The new temporary scheme covers up to 80% of income and applies to workers whose income does not entitle them to unemployment benefit.

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## Poland

### **Purchasing power of wages**

*April 27, 2020*

The purchasing power of wages in Poland could reach the EU average level in 2037, according to a report of the Polish Economic Institute (PIE). As emphasised, the report was written before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, but many of the scenarios described are still likely to be implemented.

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### **Union pleas for higher funding for education**

*April 17, 2020*

During the current COVID-19 pandemic, education unionists in Poland are calling for increased funding for education and broad access to remote teaching and learning so that education can continue and the health of educators and their students can be safeguarded.

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### **Union and health professionals calling for guarantees**

*April 7, 2020*

The NIPIP nurses’ and midwives’ union, along with four other organisations representing health professionals, has written to the government calling for guarantees that it will cover life insurance costs of health workers who fall ill or die as a result of contracting COVID-19. The organisations say that the commitment should be the same as that already made to some hospital and health sector employees.

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## Portugal

### **Increase of health professionals' wages postponed**

*April 24, 2020*

The Independent Doctors Union (SIM) has criticised the government for not paying health professionals the 0.3% increase for civil servants for the month of April, especially considering that this figure is already very low with respect to the work they are carrying out.

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### **Hotels struggle to pay wages**

*April 16, 2020*

Hoteliers in the Algarve say government support measures are not enough. The warning came from the Algarve hotelier association (AHETA), which explained that hotels are struggling to pay wages and that the sector does not expect to return to normal until next year.

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### **Football players' wages cut by 40%**

*April 12, 2020*

Football players at Sporting will have their salaries cut by 40% for three months as the club attempts to mitigate financial losses from the suspension of games during the coronavirus outbreak. With the pandemic shutting down global sport on an unprecedented scale, Sporting is the first of Portugal's three major football clubs to announce the cuts.

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## Romania

### **Three in five SMEs ready to return to full employment within three months**

*April 23, 2020*

According to a survey conducted by the National Council of Small and Medium Private Enterprises, 57.5% of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) estimate that they will be able to employ all their pre-crisis personnel within three months after they resume operations. Furthermore, 20.4% of the entrepreneurs surveyed estimate that they can reintegrate the personnel at the pre-crisis level within 3-6 months, 8.8% within 6-9 months, and 5.3% within 9-12 months.

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### **80% of firms will still increase wages**

*April 22, 2020*

About 60% of the 160 companies polled by Mercer Marsh Benefits have already increased wages based on targets agreed for this year, or are about to implement increases. Another quarter, which had decided to raise wages later in the year, are waiting for economic stabilisation. Only 17% of the companies plan to freeze wages this year while 3% are considering cutting wages.

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## Serbia

### **Digital job fair**

*April 17, 2020*

A new online-only job fair is trying to help jobseekers during the corona pandemic. The event will run from 21 April to whenever the current crisis ends. The concept is that of a standard job fair, but held exclusively online. Companies will be able to set up virtual booths where they can post text, pictures, video and even chat with virtual jobseekers.

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### **Partizan cuts wages**

*April 8, 2020*

The football club Partizan Belgrade has slashed player, staff and board wages by 50% for the next three months to cut losses during the coronavirus pandemic. Leagues across Europe have been trying to reach agreements over wage cuts after global sport came to a virtual standstill due to the coronavirus pandemic.

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## Slovakia

### **Aid scheme for preserving employment and supporting self-employed**

*April 21, 2020*

The European Commission has approved a €2 billion aid scheme for preserving employment and supporting self-employed individuals affected by the coronavirus outbreak and the emergency measures taken by states. The measure is expected to support the jobs of close to 400,000 employees and 300,000 self-employed persons. Support will be granted to employers affected by emergency state measures, to cover a part of their wage costs and their social security contributions, and to the self-employed and employers affected by lower revenues to partly compensate their reduced revenues.

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## Slovenia

### **Labour force increases by 1.5%**

*April 16, 2020*

The labour force was estimated at 898,250 in February, up 1.5% year-on-year, according to the country's statistical office. On a monthly comparison basis, the number of persons in employment was 0.3% higher in February.

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### **€3 billion package to help overcome coronavirus**

*April 3, 2020*

The parliament approved measures worth about €3 billion, or 6% of GDP, to help companies and individuals overcome the coronavirus epidemic. Under the new measures, the state will pay compensation and obligatory taxation for the national pension and health systems for businessmen and farmers hit by the virus, as well as to those who are temporarily laid off.

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## Spain

### **Employment falls**

*April 28, 2020*

Employment figures fell by 285,600 between January and March, according to the EPA active workforce survey released by the National Statistics Institute (INE). This is the greatest drop since the recession of 2012. The number of people claiming jobless benefits grew by 121,000 during this period, pushing the unemployment rate up to 14.4%, more than twice the EU27 average of around 6.5%.

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### **Recommendations by social partners in chemical industry**

*April 27, 2020*

On 27 April, the employers' organisation Feique presented a joint document with the Fica UGT and CCOO Industria trade unions containing recommendations for protecting chemical sector workers' health and preventing the spread of COVID-19, while still allowing production to resume.

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## Sweden

### **220% pay rise**

*April 15, 2020*

Dozens of medical workers are earning more than double their salary during the coronavirus pandemic, thanks to an existing emergency agreement between the country's medical unions and employers. The pay rise comes under a 'crisis situation' agreement that currently applies to around 100 unionised doctors, nurses, and nursing assistants working in intensive care units in Stockholm, according to the Swedish Medical Association (SMA). The deal also offers a 120% 'crisis compensation' on top of their existing pay, yielding a 220% pay rise.

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### **Higher compensation for wages**

*April 14, 2020*

The government will increase the amount it pays to companies to cover salaries of employees who have been put on reduced hours, as it fights to lessen the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak on the economy. The government said it would temporarily cover up to 86% of wage and labour tax costs for workers who were partially laid off.

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## Switzerland

### **Aid for short-time work**

*April 7, 2020*

The government launched the largest ever aid package to counter the economic impact of the coronavirus epidemic and to avoid a massive wave of joblessness. Companies employing 1.45 million workers — or nearly 29% of the entire workforce — have applied so far for short-time work compensation. Under the ‘Kurzarbeit’ scheme, employees get 80% of their wages from the government.

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## Turkey

### **Energy sector prioritises securing employment**

*April 9, 2020*

The leading energy companies, including Petrol Ofisi and the largest foreign investor SOCAR Turkey, announced that they will make no layoffs and work to secure employment during the country’s fight against the coronavirus pandemic, along with taking all necessary measures to protect employees’ health.

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### **Protecting SMEs**

*April 7, 2020*

The government has taken significant steps to cushion the economic fallout of the coronavirus pandemic to protect both employers and employees. Among the measures, the protection of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is a top priority as they constitute a large part of the country’s employment.

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### **Support for workers taking unpaid leave**

*April 7, 2020*

Financial aid was announced by the government for employees forced to take unpaid leave amid the coronavirus pandemic, while 2.3 million more families adversely affected by the outbreak will be provided with cash aid. The government will also provide cash aid for a total of 4.4 million families with low income.

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## United Kingdom

### **More than half of university workers on insecure contracts**

*April 28, 2020*

According to recent figures, 54% of university staff are employed on some form of insecure contract, most of them women, making them cheaper and more easily sacked. In many universities, up to a third of the teaching is provided by such staff, and 46% of universities use zero-hour contracts to deliver teaching.

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### **Employment rate at record high before lockdown**

*April 21, 2020*

In February, 76.6% of people aged 16 to 64 were in paid work, up from 76.4% in the previous quarter. Unemployment was estimated at 4%, up slightly from the last quarter, the Office for National Statistics announced. However, early estimates for March showed a slight drop in the number of paid employees

compared with February. The figures fell by 0.06%, although they were still 0.8% higher than the same period last year.

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### **The Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey (BICS)**

*April 23, 2020*

The government unveiled an analysis on the temporary laying off of workers amid the lockdown measures that have been put in place across the country. Entitled the Business Impact of Coronavirus Survey (BICS), the study reveals that between 23 March and 5 April, 27% of the UK workforce was furloughed, while less than 1% of workers were made redundant.

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### **Youth employment prospects**

*April 20, 2020*

Some of the UK's biggest employers have cancelled or delayed recruitment schemes and internships, amid concerns that the coronavirus pandemic could hit the job prospects of young people the hardest. Lloyds Banking Group, HSBC and the accountants PwC and BDO are among the large companies that have been forced to make changes to their recruitment plans because of the crisis.

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