

collective bargaining

Issue 4/2011 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.



AMSTERDAM INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED LABOUR STUDIES
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Austria

Legal backing for minimum wages in collective agreements

April 6, 2011

By 1 May, new legislation comes into effect that will impose tougher sanctions on employers who fail to pay the minimum wage that has been negotiated in their sector. Restrictions on migration to Austria (and Germany) from the EU Member States in central and Eastern Europe end by then and the ÖGB trade union confederation argued for the new law on minimum wages to ensure that neither domestic nor foreign employers could exploit the opening of the labour market to avoid paying collectively agreed minimum wage rates.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/415>

German: <http://www.gpa-djp.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename ...>

Pay rise for Viennese utilities workers

April 6, 2011

The GDG-KMSFB local government union has negotiated a new agreement covering around 15,800 employees of Viennese municipal companies, including energy workers. The basic increase is 1.65% plus a flat rate increase of € 5. This means that the actual increases range from 2.02% for the lowest paid up to 1.81% for the higher paid.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/415>

German: <http://www.gdg-kmsfb.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename ...>

Belgium

Chemical sector agreement accepted

April 14, 2011

Lay officials of both the ABVV/FGTB and ACV/CSC unions have accepted the two-year basic agreement that their negotiators reached for blue-collar workers in the chemical industry; most recently the ACV/CSC building, industry and energy unionists did so, with a 77% 'yes'. Nevertheless, the ACV/CSC union notes that was not easy to accept the limited increase in purchasing power, and confronts the 0.3% wage increase agreed on top of the price indexation with the large bonuses of the CEOs, also in the industry in question. The ABVV/FGTB union emphasises that the agreement also includes an increase of the minimum wage scales, the abolishment of the youth wages and the increase of the daily allowance of temporary unemployment with 5.5%.

Dutch: http://www.skynet.be/nieuws-sport/nieuws/belgie/detail_acv ...

http://www.nieuwsblad.be/article/detail.asp?articleid=DMF20110406_086

Bulgaria

Unions challenge government's budget prognosis

April 26, 2011

The Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB) and the Podkrepa Labour Confederation are to appeal against the government's three-year budget prognosis in the Supreme Administrative court. This reaction follows a statement of Finance Minister Simeon Djankov, according to which the country's pensions and wages may increase only after 2013. CITUB President Plamen Dimitrov said that under the Labour Code, all acts concerning labour, insurance and the living standard should first be agreed at the National Council for Tripartite Cooperation. "This is a violation of the Labour Code and that is why we will appeal against the decision of the Council of Ministers," Dimitrov added.

English: <http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=n248123>

<http://paper.standartnews.com/en/article.php?d=2011-04-27&article=36123>

Wage gains in metallurgical industry

April 7, 2011

The minimum monthly salary in the metallurgy sector has been increased from BGN 350 (€ 179) to BGN 400 (€ 205), according to a new collective agreement signed by the metallurgy unions of the major confederations, the Confederation of Independent Bulgarian Trade Unions KNSB and the Podkrepa Labor Confederation. The deal provides a 14.3% monthly salary increase together with a 12.5% increase in food allowances and 20% additional pay for night shifts. The new agreement also provides for investments in education and human capital.

English: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=127084

Czech Republic

Unions walk out of tripartite meeting

April 22, 2011

On 21 April, representatives of the trade unions walked out from the tripartite (government, unions, employers) talks concerning the government's reform package, Jaroslav Zavadil, chairman of the Bohemian and Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (CMKOS), told journalists. He said that the

trade unionists had submitted a number of comments and their own draft pension reform to the government, but that it did not take them into consideration. The Association of Independent Trade Unions (ASO) also walked out from the meeting. The union leadership has called on Prime Minister Petr Necas, who was absent in the meeting, to arrange a special meeting of the tripartite leadership to discuss further communication.

English: <http://praguemonitor.com/2011/04/22/trade-unions-walk-out-govt-talks>

Denmark

Low turnout but large 'yes' for local and regional deal

April 6, 2011

The two-year agreement in local and regional government has been approved by the members of the main municipal union FOA. The union was pleased about the 84% "yes" vote but conceded that the lack of enthusiasm for the deal probably explained the low turnout of only 32.6%. At the time of the last agreement in 2008, the turnout was 65.2%. The FOA hopes that the modest pay increase (0% in 2011 and 2.65% in 2012) will be acknowledged by the employers and that they will not push for further cuts and job losses (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 February and March 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/415>

Danish: [http://www.foa.dk/Forbund/Presse?newsid ...](http://www.foa.dk/Forbund/Presse?newsid...)

Estonia

Unions call for increase in minimum wage

April 29, 2011

The Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions has proposed to the Employers' Central Confederation to start negotiations on raising the national minimum wage from € 278 to € 325 euros per month by June. According to Harri Taliga, chairman of the Trade Union Confederation, the constantly growing cost of living has severely curbed the purchasing power of minimum wage earners. "As prices have shot up compared to last fall, and are predicted to grow further, we also had to adjust our minimum wage proposal from the previous € 320 to € 325 euros," Taliga added.

English: <http://news.err.ee/Economy/1a6329ec-efc4-4d89-aebb-c3f35e2041e6>

Wages of miners to increase

April 27, 2011

On 25 April the oil shale production company Eesti Energia Kaevandused and the Association of Oil Shale Producers' Trade Unions signed a new collective agreement which foresees a 5 to 11% increase in miners' wages. Miners who have worked in the company for three to four years without a raise will receive the 11% increase, and although some benefits were excluded from the new agreement, the pay of each miner will rise by at least 5%.

English: <http://news.err.ee/Economy/0c6dc4b4-a428-4cfb-9d44-9bf0c19a0f05>

Finland

Strikes in paper industry continue

April 27, 2011

On 26 April, white- and blue-collar pulp and paper workers continued strike activity after the national mediator Esa Lonka did not succeed in resolving the dispute in the sector. According to the Pro union, the walk-outs included 1,500 of its members at the Stora Enso and Metsaliito plants. Pro moved the strike one day forward as it accused the employers of recruiting outside labour during the union's overtime ban. Union official Jukka Hämäläinen said that this happened at least at Efora, the maintenance joint-venture of Stora Enso and ABB, in the Stora Enso factories in Oulu and Imatra. Indeed, the Finnish Forest Industries Federation has advised its member companies to use outside labour. As announced, from 6 to 20 April about 1,000 office workers, members of Pro, were already on strike at all UPM operations in an effort to speed up negotiations (See also this Collective

Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 March 2011).

English: [http://www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2011/04/26/business-materials-eu-finland ...](http://www.forbes.com/feeds/ap/2011/04/26/business-materials-eu-finland...)
[http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Union+accuses+paper+industry+of+using ...](http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Union+accuses+paper+industry+of+using...)

France

Unions demand better conditions at Sodexo

April 28, 2011

On 27 April, trade unions from six countries gathering in Brazil launched a global campaign against Sodexo, demanding the French catering and food services giant to respect the rights of employees. Unionists from the United States, France, Colombia, Morocco and the Dominican Republic joined organisations from Brazil at a press conference to highlight what they say are glaring abuses by the company which employs some 380,000 people in 80 countries. "Sodexo must respect the rights of workers to organise, respect the laws of different countries," Jean-Michel Dupire, representative of the French CGT union CGT, told a press agency, "We also have demands for decent wages, better working conditions and respect for workers in general." Just over half of Sodexo's global work force is employed in the six countries from where unions gathered in Sao Paulo.

English: [http://www.expatica.com/fr/news/french-news/labor-unions-demand ...](http://www.expatica.com/fr/news/french-news/labor-unions-demand...)

EDF and GDF SUEZ workers on strike because of rate reductions

April 11, 2011

Turnout by EDF and GDF SUEZ workers for a day-long strike on 7 April called by five unions (CFDT, CGT, FO, CFE-CGC, and CFTC) was enough to cut power output by over 15,000 megawatts across the country, according to one of the unions. Over 80% of workers of the two former French government companies were on strike over a plan by the companies to reduce the preferential rates that workers get on electric and gas bills. The unions endorsed the industrial action as a way to express workers' displeasure with the proposed take-aways. The partial rate discounts amount now to between € 1,000 and € 1,500 annually; workers consider the discounts an addition to their stagnant wages.

English: [http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4366-French-Power-Cut ...](http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4366-French-Power-Cut...)

Public service unions sign new agreement

April 6, 2011

Public service federations have been trying for some time to negotiate improved rights for around 900,000 workers in central and local government and the health service who have employment contracts rather than full civil service status. Although the unions want to see more of these workers given civil service status they have signed the current agreement in order to provide more protection for those on contracts. They are also pleased that the agreement acknowledges that civil service status should be the normal state of affairs in the three parts of the public sector.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/415>

French: <http://www.spterritoriaux.cgt.fr/spip.php?article4645>

<http://www.fo-fonctionnaires.fr/>

Germany

GDF SUEZ tries to divide workforce

April 21, 2011

In November 2010, on request of GDF SUEZ collective bargaining between this energy company and the ver.di services union were broken off, as the employer wanted time to consider things. Five months later, on 21 April, talks were reconvened, but now it turned out that GDF SUEZ tries to divide the workforce. According to the company's proposal, for the incumbent workforce of the power stations the collective agreement for the energy sector would be applicable, whereas new employees were supposed to work under another collective agreement, that for energy supply at municipal level. Even though for the latter a so-called bonus of 10% was suggested, this would mean lower pay for new entrants. Ver.di urges strongly for one uniform collective agreement, that for the energy sector, and refuses to continue negotiating on the

terms proposed by GDF SUEZ.

German: leaflet ver.di

Sizeable wage increases for chemical workers

April 11, 2011

On the final day of the second round of negotiations for an agreement covering 550,000 workers of 1,900 chemical companies, the IG BCE union won a 14-month wage increase of 4.1%. The increase will become effective at different times in different regions: retroactive to 1 March for chemical workers in North Rhine, Rheinland-Pfalz, and Hessen; on 1 April in Westfalen, Bayern, Baden-Württemberg, Niedersachsen/Bremen, Schleswig-Holstein/Hamburg, and Berlin; and 1 May in Saarland and the North-East. The agreement also gives flexibility for employers still recovering from the economic crisis to effectuate the wage increase in May, while most of the major chemical companies that are on strong standing will have already given the increase. The 2011-12 accord also grants current apprentices an increase of € 35 per month. "Last year, we signed an agreement that was a bridge between crisis and recovery," said IG BCE President Michael Vassiliadis, "Now, as we predicted, we signed a growth agreement. This shows the social partnership in chemicals remains on solid footing in solving some very difficult problems."

English: [http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4362-IGBCE-Carves ...](http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4362-IGBCE-Carves...)

Union calls for regions to implement pay deal

April 6, 2011

Ver.di union members in regional government voted 83% in favour of the recently negotiated pay deal that runs to December 2012. The deal includes a 1.5% increase this year plus € 360 as a lump sum. The increase in 2012 will be a flat-rate amount of € 17 per month plus 1.9% which the union says is worth around 2.55%. Ver.di is now urging all regional governments (except Hessen and Berlin that have separate agreements) to implement the new agreement immediately. This is in response to threats from regional employers in Bayern and Saarland not to honour the deal (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 3 December 2010 and Year 4 January and March 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/415>

German: [http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id ...](http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id...)

Union criticises government position on church employers

April 6, 2011

The ver.di services union has attacked the federal government for failing to take account of two recent regional court judgements which backed the union's right to organise strike action against church employers. In a recent statement the Labour ministry said that church organisations had a special status in relation to the constitution and the issue of labour rights. Ver.di maintains that church employers are just like any other employers. They operate in the same labour markets, attempt to worsen pay and conditions and get together in employer associations (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 3 February, April and June 2010 and Year 4 March 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/415>

German: [http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id ...](http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id...)

Greece

Strike announced against privatisation of electricity producer

April 29, 2011

The trade union representing workers at the country's biggest electricity producer PPC has announced to stage rolling 48-hour strikes in protest at government plans to reduce the state's share in the firm. "We decided to move to rolling 48-hour strikes," said Costas Koutsodimas, vice-president of the GENOP union. "We want to show the government that keeping the (state's) 51% stake is a matter of principle," Koutsodimas added. The strikes would start a week before the government submits fiscal and privatisation plans to the parliament, which is expected by May 15.

English: <http://www.balkans.com/open-news.php?uniquenumber=103399> via

http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Greece

Confederation calls general strike over austerity measures

April 19, 2011

The private sector union confederation, GSEE, has called a 24-hour strike for 11 May to protest the government's latest austerity measures. Its General Secretary, Nikos Kioutsioukis, argued: "The government's policies are not bearing fruit and we will fight against them." ADEDY, the country's largest public sector union, will also take part in the strike, its spokeswoman Despina Spanou confirmed (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 September, October, November and December 2010; Year 4 January, February and March 2011).

English: [http://greece.greekreporter.com/2011/04/19/greek-union-calls-24-hour ...](http://greece.greekreporter.com/2011/04/19/greek-union-calls-24-hour-...)

Hungary

Unions call attention to worsening labour laws

April 30, 2011

Trade unions have demanded talks with the government on both its implemented and planned changes to labour laws. Istvan Gasko, chairman of the LIGA union organisation, said workers' rights have been curtailed by new government measures and that there are further changes tabled for adoption. As an example, he mentioned strike laws, which government has restricted. Gasko also said that raising the trial period at work from three to six months makes employees more vulnerable to dismissal. He argued that there are "very bad signs" regarding further changes to the Labour Act planned, of which little has been revealed thus far. Gasko said that LIGA will initiate talks with the government on these problems and "if there will be no results, employees will revert to other methods", adding that talks can take place within the framework of the National Interest Coordination Council (OET) or in bilateral meetings. The OET has not yet been convened this year.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent

Union opposes plans to increase teachers' working hours

April 30, 2011

The Democratic Trade Union of Teachers opposes the plan to increase the number of working hours of teachers, according to its chairman Laszlo Mendrey. He argued that the proposal was prepared by the Economy Ministry without coordination with the parties affected. Mendrey quoted a study prepared last year showing that the average weekly hours teachers had to spend in class or preparing class was 51, and argued that it would be impossible to increase this any further. In addition the increase would result in thousands losing their jobs, according to the union chairman. The government is expected to discuss the plans later.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent

Ireland

Union delegates vote against co-operation with Croke Park deal

April 19, 2011

Delegates at the Civil, Public and Services Union (CPSU) annual conference on 16 April voted to withdraw their co-operation with reforms to be made under the Croke Park deal. Delegates told the conference that their co-operation up to now had been dependent on the guarantee there would be no further cuts to their pay before 2014, but that guarantee had not been kept, they claimed. Delegates also voted unanimously to take industrial action if the government would introduce further pay cuts. However, the CPSU executive said that lack of co-operation with reforms would constitute industrial action, which cannot be undertaken without a ballot of members. General secretary of the union, Blair Horan, said its executive would consider the issue of a ballot on the Croke Park deal when it met late April, but would not change its position in the meantime (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 July-August 2010).

English: [http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2011 ...](http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2011-...)

[http://www.independent.ie/national-news/union-will-vote-on-strikes-if-pay-cuts ...](http://www.independent.ie/national-news/union-will-vote-on-strikes-if-pay-cuts-...)

Minimum wage cut reversed

April 16, 2011

The minimum wage will be restored to its previous level and employers will have their social insurance contributions reduced under the revised terms of Ireland's finance deal with the European Union, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The € 1 or 11.6% cut to the minimum wage will be reversed, taking the rate back up to € 8.65 an hour, Minister for Finance Michael Noonan confirmed. This will be offset by a 50% reduction in the amount of social insurance employers must pay on wages up to the level of the minimum wage. Mr Noonan described the move as the "quid pro quo" for the reversal of the minimum wage cut. It is hoped the legislation will be in place by the summer (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 January 2011).

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2011/0416/1224294802972.html>
<http://www.rte.ie/news/2011/0413/economy.html>

Italy

Confederation calls general strike for 6 May

April 6, 2011

The CGIL trade union confederation is organising a general strike on 6 May with a set of 12 key demands. These include calls for changes to taxation and public finance, measures to deal with precarious employment and the opening of negotiations in the public sector where the government has frozen pay and announced there will no negotiations for three years.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/415>
Italian: <http://www.cgil.it/DettaglioDocumento.aspx?ID=15960>

Netherlands

Basic agreement for hospitals

April 29, 2011

On 29 April, basic agreement has been reached for a new 3-year collective agreement in the hospital sector, covering nearly 200,000 employed. Negotiators of the largest union, Abvakabo FNV, are satisfied with the results and will recommend the outcomes to the membership. The total wage increase will be 5.05%, built up as follows: 1% by 1 July 2011; 0.55% by 1 October 2011; 1.5% by 1 July 2012, and 2% by 1 July 2013. During the three years' period, the end-of-year-payment will be increased from 6.73% to 8.33%, or to a full 13th month. The commuting allowance will be enlarged with an amount worth 1 to 3% of the total wage. A major achievement is the gradual disappearance of the youth wage scales. Workers aged 58 and older will be allowed to voluntarily refrain from irregular shifts.

Dutch: <http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/nieuws/nieuws/akkoord-ziekenhuizen>

Substantial wage increase in metal and electronic engineering

April 19, 2011

On 19 April, employers' association FME-CWM and the four unions involved, FNV Bondgenoten, CNV Vakmensen, De Unie and VHP2, reached a basic collective agreement with a duration of 26 months, from 1 May 2011 to 30 June 2013, for the metal and electronic engineering industry ('large metals'), covering about 150,000 employees. Central are measures to retain workers and have them reaching the pension age in a healthy way. The wage deal is 4.75%, divided as follows: 1.15% by 1 July 2011; 1% by 1 January 2012; 1.1% by 1 July 2012, and 1% by 1 January 2013. The employers will pay the full fee for the transitional arrangement for early pensioning, which means an extra net wage advantage of 0.5%. The youth wage scales for over 22 of age will be abolished, implying that entrants in that age group will be paid the wages of craft workers. All union negotiators showed their satisfaction with the results and advised their membership to vote in favour.

Dutch: [http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/mijnbranche/branches/metalektro/nieuws/343019 ...](http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/mijnbranche/branches/metalektro/nieuws/343019...)
[http://www.cnvvakmensen.nl/actueel/nieuws/artikel/item/cnv-vakmensen-tevreden ...](http://www.cnvvakmensen.nl/actueel/nieuws/artikel/item/cnv-vakmensen-tevreden...)

Trendsetting agreement in small metals sector

April 6, 2011

Mobilisation toward strike action won 380,000 metal workers a 25-month basic agreement in the small metals and electric-technical sector, in which one overarching collective agreement covers five sectors, including metal fabrication, gold and silver manufacturing, isolation, plumbing, heating, and electrical installation. The earlier agreement expired 1 April. The pay package worth 4.45%, to be paid in four steps, is expected to set the pace for other major contracts in manufacturing. Late on 6 April the three unions involved, FNV Bondgenoten, CNV Vakmensen and De Unie, reached a tentative agreement with the Metaal & Techniek industry association. "The employers didn't want a fight and we were quickly mobilising toward strike action," said Jan Berghuis, main negotiator for FNV Bondgenoten, who called the deal "trendsetting." All three unions will recommend the agreement for ratification. In the basic agreement it is also agreed that short-term contract labour can only go via labour-hire firms that have collective agreements with the unions.

English: <http://www.imfmetal.org/index.cfm?c=26260&l=2>

Dutch: http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/mijnbranche/branches/metaal_en_techniek_/

Norway

Public sector unions not to accept lower increase than in private sector

April 27, 2011

The trade unions representing 130,000 state employees and 338,500 workers in local and state authorities have indicated that they will not accept a lower pay rise than their private sector counterparts in anticipation of the wage negotiations starting on 27 April. Leaders of the four main unions involved have made this abundantly clear. Jan Davidsen, president of the Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees (NUMGE), with 300,000 members the largest union in the LO confederation, even said to believe that the state and local workers' deal would be better than the one agreed during private sector negotiations "because of the lag in wage growth and what management has received in the state sector."

English: [http://www.newsinenglish.no/2011/04/27/state-unions-to-demand ...](http://www.newsinenglish.no/2011/04/27/state-unions-to-demand...)

Private sector deal targets low paid

April 6, 2011

Negotiations between unions and the NHO private sector employers' organisation have delivered a NOK 6,000 (€ 768) per year increase for lower paid workers – those workers who are paid less than 90% of the average wage in the manufacturing sector. The average yearly wage in manufacturing is currently NOK 378,573 (€ 48,430) and so the 90% threshold is NOK 340,715 (€ 43,600). The deal also includes improvements to severance pay for older workers and an agreement that unions, employers and the government will work together on a seven-point plan on gender equality. The private sector deal includes companies involved in the utilities and health and social care (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 March 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/415>

Norwegian: http://www.fagforbundet.no/forsida/?article_id=62509

Poland

Strike paved way for negotiations over pay and privatisation threat

April 25, 2011

A 24-hour warning strike started 16 April by the Solidarnosc union, representing the majority of 22,000 workers at Jastrzębska Spółka Węglowa (JSW) in the Silesian coal mines, has produced negotiations with the state-run company involving government and union representatives and the provincial Committee on Social Dialogue. Miners took industrial action in resistance to the government's plan to list JSW, Europe's largest coking coal producer, on the stock exchange. They are also seeking a 10% wage increase from the state company that has seen massive earnings, posting net profits of € 300 million in 2010. The government, meanwhile, is anxious to proceed with the listing on 30 June because of current high raw materials costs for steel production. It is offering free-of-charge shares to JSW staff as it intends to float 30% of JSW, while retaining 51%. However, the door has been left open to future sales of shares.

English: [http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4397-Warning-Strike ...](http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4397-Warning-Strike...)

Portugal

Protest planned against austerity measures

April 18, 2011

The main union confederation, General Confederation of Portuguese Workers (CGTP), has announced that it will hold two major events in Lisbon and Oporto on 19 May to protest against the austerity measures that will accompany the country's financial bailout. CGTP secretary general Manuel Carvalho da Silva said that Portugal needs to fulfill its financial obligations but at the same time ensure the economic and social wellbeing of the population, and any future plan should not cut the pensions of the poorest or lower minimum wages. Public sector workers, who have already had their wages cut, are also planning to strike, already at the beginning of May.

English: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-13111910>

<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90777/90853/7366899.html>

Portuguese: [http://www.cgtp.pt/index.php?option=com_content ...](http://www.cgtp.pt/index.php?option=com_content...)

Slovakia

Tensions remain over Labour Code reform

April 4, 2011

Tensions remain between the government of Prime Minister Iveta Radičová and the trade union movement concerning the Labour Code reform. By the end of March, after the end of the review process, unions jointly walked out of talks over the changes in the code, which they deem are unnecessary. The KOVO union organised a rallye in the Bratislava capital. The Labour Ministry called the unions uninformed, while they replied that the decline in the economic and social status of employees left them with no other choice but to launch protests. Employers' organisations have also expressed objections to the government's proposals, but they say they are still committed to negotiations. Prime Minister Radičová has argued that there is still enough time to find a compromise since the Labour Code is due to be adopted in May (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 3 November 2010 and Year 4 January 2011).

English: [http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/42173/3/better_to_protest_or ...](http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/42173/3/better_to_protest_or...)

Spain

Union wins backing from tribunal over right to strike

April 6, 2011

The FSC-CCOO public service federation has welcomed the ruling from an administrative tribunal against the Ministry of Justice over minimum services during industrial action. The Ministry of Justice had set out excessive requirements for the provision of minimum services during the general strike on 30 September 2010. The tribunal found that the Ministry had undermined the right to strike of public sector workers and the FSC-CCOO is particularly concerned to highlight the fact that it is the Ministry of Justice that is the subject of the tribunal ruling.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/415>

Sweden

Union emphasises need for better pay and conditions in elder care

April 6, 2011

Municipal workers' union Kommunal has published a new report that reveals a dramatic decline in the number of young people interested to work in elder care. It points out that the average salary for a nurse in the sector is several thousand SEK less than that of an industrial worker, while working hours also make the job less attractive with frequent weekend service and split shifts. The sector has a high proportion of hourly-paid and temporary employment workers with 60% working part time. Kommunal wants legislation to provide a right to work full time.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/415>

Switzerland

Community campaign to keep paper mill open

April 25, 2011

The Unia union and ICEM, its international federation, are engaged in a community campaign to save 550 jobs. Sappi, a global leader in the manufacture of coated papers, announced on 31 March that it intends to close its Biberist graphic papers mill it purchased late in 2008 along with three other European printing and writing papers mills from M-real. Unia, with membership numbering only one-tenth of the total Biberist workforce, has taken the lead to preserve jobs. Workers, managers, mill suppliers, and area businesses of Canton Soleure have joined the effort. Unia's campaign asks Sappi to do one of three things, with a priority being the first: maintain operations because production, productivity and sales have been buoyant since Sappi bought the mill; re-think the decision to shut down the mill completely, and sell it to an enterprise that will operate it; if layoffs occur, ensure that superior severance is paid, and job re-training and other social criteria are met to the fullest.

English: [http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4393-ICEM-Joins-Swiss-Workers ...](http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4393-ICEM-Joins-Swiss-Workers...)

German: <http://www.papierfabrik-biberist.ch/>

Unions campaign for legal minimum wage

April 6, 2011

The VPÖD/SSP public service union is working with other unions to win support for a peoples' initiative calling for a national minimum wage. The union believes that this is an important step to protect the pay of workers and as a way of undermining the case for privatisation. VPÖD/SSP is currently campaigning with cleaning workers in the Zürich region against plans to privatise the service. The VPÖD/SSP believes that a monthly minimum wage of CHF 4,000 (€ 3,040) would be a major disincentive to privatisation (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 January 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/415>

German: [http://www.vpod.ch/aktuell/nachrichten/ansicht/article/drg-schulterschluss ...](http://www.vpod.ch/aktuell/nachrichten/ansicht/article/drg-schulterschluss...)

United Kingdom

Union ballots for industrial action at BBC

April 28, 2011

Thousands of BBC journalists are being balloted for strike action in response to the threat of compulsory redundancies across the Corporation. Around 100 BBC journalists based in the World Service, BBC Monitoring, Online, and in Scotland and Wales are threatened with compulsory redundancy. The NUJ (National Union of Journalists) is to ballot members after the BBC management refused to consider further moves to secure redeployment or find alternative opportunities for around 100 staff. NUJ General Secretary Jeremy Dear said: "For months we have been negotiating with the BBC and have been able to resolve most cases by agreement. But the BBC's refusal to consider workable alternatives for around 100 staff has left us with no choice but to ballot members for industrial action to defend jobs and services."

English: <http://www.nuj.org.uk/innerPagenuj.html?docid=2063>

Union rejects pay offer at London Underground

April 26, 2011

RMT (Rail Maritime and Transport union), the union representing staff of the London Underground (Tube) services, has rejected a proposed five year pay offer from the TFL (Transport for London) authority. The union is launching a campaign for a substantial, above-inflation one-year deal that reflects the additional workload placed on staff as a result of the repeated breakdown in services, a large increase in passenger numbers and the knock-on effect from a programme of staff reductions. RMT General Secretary Bob Crow said: "When you peel away all the spin from TFL, the reality is that with February's RPI (increase in retail price index) being 5.5% it means that the first year of this offer is not a rise at all, but is actually a real-terms pay cut of 1.5%" (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 3 November 2010).

English: <http://www.rmt.org.uk/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=144166>

Government plans to end two-tier code in public sector

April 6, 2011

The coalition government is moving closer to the abolition of the two-tier workforce code that is an important element in the protection of pay and conditions of public service workers. The code was negotiated with the previous Labour government and was established to ensure that private contractors providing public services would apply the minimum rates that applied in the public sector and that these rates would also apply to any new workers taken on. The UNISON union fears that abolition of the code will mean wages will be cut as private companies undercut the public sector and each other to win contracts (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 3 December 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/415> ;
http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=2230

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