

collective bargaining

Issue 1/2011 January

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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UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM



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Austria

Oil workers get 2.5% increase

January 25, 2011

The GDA-djp and PRO-GE unions report that they have succeeded in agreeing a collective agreement for the oil industry, including an increase for the regular wage scales of 2.5%. The increase for the lowest scales, for apprentices and for overtime and other fees will be 2.7%, while travel costs will be lifted by 2.2%. The agreement will cover the period 1 February 2011-31 January 2012

German: [http://www.gpa-djp.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GPA ...](http://www.gpa-djp.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GPA...)

Health and social care workers get 2% increase

January 24, 2011

After difficult negotiations the VIDA and GPA-DJP trade unions have agreed a 2% pay increase for the 80,000 workers in the private health and social care sector. The agreement runs for 12 months from February 2011. The unions argue that they have secured a small real pay increase as well as improvements in two areas: leave to look after seriously ill relatives and past service entitlement. The new rules on past service will benefit workers who change employers within the sector as it will mean their past service will have to be taken into account in setting their pay level (See also this

Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 3 December 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/398>

German: [http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=S03 ...](http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=S03...);

[http://www.gpa-djp.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GPA ...](http://www.gpa-djp.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GPA...)

Belgium

Private sector agreement goes out to consultation

January 24, 2011

The three trade union confederations have agreed a new framework agreement for the private sector for 2011-2012. A key element of the deal is maintenance of the system of wage indexation which had recently been a target of employer criticism. There is also a small additional amount of wage increase (0.3%) that is available above the level of indexation. The other main elements of the agreement, which now goes out to consultation, include increases to welfare benefits, extension of some temporary agreements including early retirement pensions and continued commitment to a very long-running aim to harmonise the different legal provisions covering blue- and white-collar workers (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 3 December 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/398>

Dutch: http://www.fgtb.be/web/guest/news-nl/-/article/102390/&p_1_id=10187;

http://www.acv-online.be/Actualiteit/Nieuws/Detail/IPA2011_2012.asp

French: http://www.fgtb.be/web/guest/news-fr/-/article/102570/&p_1_id=10624;

http://www.csc-en-ligne.be/Actualite/Nouvelles/details/aip_projet.asp

Call centre workers have had enough

January 24, 2011

The three union federations representing call-centre workers employed by the federal government have submitted a number of key demands to management over staffing levels and working conditions. The unions argue that failure to recruit adequate numbers is putting an intolerable burden on employees who are being forced to work excessive hours as well as regular weekend shifts. The unions warn of strike action if nothing is done and are calling for better training, working conditions and career development for call-centre workers.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/398>

French: [http://www.cgsp-ministeres.be/index.php?option=com ...](http://www.cgsp-ministeres.be/index.php?option=com...)

Bulgaria

Ministers clash over minimum wage increase

January 30, 2011

The country's Finance Minister, Simeon Djankov, has made a too hasty statement regarding the freeze of minimum wage and pensions, according to Social Policy Minister Totyu Mladenov. The two ministers clearly have different opinions on the subject. Mladenov reiterated that there is a possibility to increase the minimum incomes, saying "pensions can go up in the second half of the year." In contrast, Djankov is firm that minimum wages are to remain frozen in 2011 since the budget for 2011 has already been passed and it does not include extra funds for salaries and pensions. A few days earlier Lyuben Tomev, Director of the Research Institute with the KNSB union confederation, pointed at the "unreasonably high" increases of the cost of living in Bulgaria. He argued that there were no valid grounds for the price increase of 6.4% in December 2010.

English: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=124683;

http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=124473

Railway union waits for expert group outcomes

January 26, 2011

The trade unions have requested a meeting with Prime Minister Boyko Borisov and Finance Minister Simeon Djankov to discuss the future of the State Railway Company BDZ and the National Railway

Infrastructure Company. Petar Bunev, president of the KNSB railway union, stated that a high-level meeting would be necessary, also because of the absence of the Finance Ministry in recent meetings. Bunev pointed out that an expert working group is developing plans for railway development and reconstruction. He said that before 15 February, the deadline for the working group, his union would not take action (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 December 2010).

English: http://www.novinite.com/view_news.php?id=124579

Cyprus

General strike against reform package

January 31, 2011

On 28 January, more than 30 000 Turkish Cypriot workers participated in a massive meeting and a general strike organised by the union movement and supported by opposition parties and NGOs. Over 10,000 participated in a rally in northern Nicosia. The aim of meeting and strike was to say no to the “reform package” of the Turkish Cypriot government, which would hurt fundamental workers’ rights. Dubbed the “destruction package” by the organizing platform, the raft of austerity measures will cut civil service salaries by up to 40%, and foresees the sell-off of a number of state-owned firms such as the electricity and telecommunications providers.

English: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/cyprus-30-000-workers-say-no-to.html>;
[http://www.cyprus-mail.com/cyprus/we-re-stuck-between-turkey-and-greek-cypriots ...](http://www.cyprus-mail.com/cyprus/we-re-stuck-between-turkey-and-greek-cypriots...)

Czech Republic

Unions plan nationwide action on labour code reforms

January 18, 2011

At a press conference of the CMKOS trade union confederation, it has been announced that the unions in 2011 will focus on health care, pensions and the labour code reforms that are currently being prepared by the government. Against this backdrop, the unions plan to organise what is called a nationwide union meeting on 19 February. At the same press conference, CMKOS economist Jaroslav Ungermann said that the development of the Czech economy in 2011 will be worse than unions estimated last year, partly due to the development of prices on global markets. He explained that the Czech economy has arrived in a deflationary state and that foreign trade is developing unfavourably.

English: [http://praguemonitor.com/2011/01/18/unions-economic-development-be ...](http://praguemonitor.com/2011/01/18/unions-economic-development-be...)

Denmark

Work-sharing saved jobs in crisis

January 28, 2011

Work-sharing, in the form of short-time arrangements, has saved a considerable amount of jobs throughout the crisis in Denmark, two assessments concluded. Companies were allowed to introduce work-sharing for up to 13 weeks. If necessary, they could extend that with 13 weeks after consulting the Regional Employment Council. The conditions for work-sharing were set out in collective agreements, and work-sharers received supplementary state unemployment benefit. A check of the Employment Region Copenhagen and Zealand found that 94% of the workers taking part in a work-sharing arrangement remained in work when it ended. A survey of the 3F union concluded that in 2009 83% of its members that were into work-sharing schemes continued in full-time employment afterwards. Many 3F members, working in manufacturing and construction, were hit by the crisis.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2010/03/articles/dk1003021i.htm>
Danish: <http://forsiden.3f.dk/assets/pdf/SD1868722830.PDF>

No progress in bargaining with regional government

January 24, 2011

The FOA public service union is concerned about the lack of progress in the main collective bargaining round with the regional and local authority employers. The current three-year

agreements expire at the end of March 2011 and FOA says that negotiations are already well behind schedule with the regional employers. According to the union these employers refuse to budge on their demand to abolish extra leave for older workers and also reject union proposals for extra protection for shop stewards curing restructuring and redundancies.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/398>

Danish: <http://www.foa.dk/Forbund/Presse?newsid ...>

Finland

Packaging group forced to pay workers

January 27, 2011

The Finnish-Swedish packaging group Stora Enso announced on Tuesday 25 January that it will adhere to the decision made by the Finnish High Court in December 2010, implying finally paying performance bonuses to employees whose bonuses it had withheld because of their participation in strikes in 2005-2009. The dispute originates from spring 2006 when Stora Enso refused to pay bonuses to employees who had taken part in industrial action. The Trade Union of Salaried Employees (now Pro, after the merger with the Pro union) took the company to the court on behalf of about 1,000 members concerned. Prior to its announcement on Tuesday, Stora Enso had refused to pay the performance bonuses despite the High Court ruling. Faced with this situation, shop stewards of Pro decided to organize a two-day strike, set to begin 27 January. The move of Stora Enso meant that the strike was called off. The company said on Tuesday it will book an extra charge of € 21 million due to the payout of the bonuses.

English: <http://www.artto.kaapeli.fi/unions/T2011/003>;

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/01/26/storaenso-idUSLDE70Po3920110126>

Main public sector negotiations to start

January 24, 2011

The JHL union is preparing for negotiations in the state and municipal sectors and is concerned to secure pay increases for its members, arguing that workers' salaries should be increased in line with general labour market developments and not be used as the way of tackling the public sector deficit. The union will also be looking to continue moves to reduce the gender pay gap and to ensure equal treatment for temporary workers. Concerning negotiations in the state sector JHL's President Tuire Santamäki-Vuori wishes to make it clear that employees must not be forced to foot the bill for the "sustainability deficit" in state finances, and that pay rises must match rises in other sectors. Concerning the municipal sector, JHL insists that the parties must come to an agreement, at the very minimum, on pay rises for the first half of 2011.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/398>;

<http://www.jhl.fi/portal/en/news/archive/?bid=672>

France

Port strikes to continue

January 27, 2011

On 28 January, for the third successive weekend dockers and other port workers led by the CGT-affiliated union Syndicat General des Ouvriers Dockers du Havre have staged a four-days nationwide strike in the conflict over working conditions and pensions. The union spokesman said that there has been no progress in the negotiations. He added that the strike would not affect oil traffic and passenger ships, but would halt mainly container traffic and bulk shipments. In May 2010, the union reached a basic agreement with port employers for 6,000 dockers with arduous jobs to retire four to five years before the national pension age. Yet the government, which would have to partially finance early retirement, insists the agreement must comply with the new national pension rules introduced in November 2010. On 21 January, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and ETF, its European arm, called on European dockers' unions to stand by their French colleagues (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 3 October 2010).

English: http://www.portworld.com/news/i100185/French_ports_set_for ...;

<http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/5559>

French: <http://actualutte.info/?p=948>

Unions criticize precarious employment in public sector

January 24, 2011

As negotiations are set to begin over employment conditions in the public sector, seven trade union federations have set out their main demands and criticized the way that precarious employment conditions have spread in the three main areas of public service: national administration, local government and the health service. The union federations want more workers to be on full civil service terms and conditions rather than being taken on as public sector employees or temporary contracts. They are also calling on the government to withdraw its proposal for new short-term, “project-linked” contracts (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 December 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/398>

French: <http://www.spterritoriaux.cgt.fr/spip.php?article4458>

Germany

Energy companies face warning strikes

January 31, 2011

Ver.di has called on its members in the Vattenfall and RWE energy companies to support warning strikes in order to strengthen the unions’ position in the next round of collective bargaining. In Vattenfall the union has criticised the company for failing to make a concrete offer after two bargaining rounds in response to the union’s demands for a 6.5% increase for the 20,000 employees. The ver.di and IG BCE unions in RWE also want a 6.5% increase and there the employers have so far offered only 2.4% plus a lump sum after already five rounds of collective bargaining. These unions report that the widespread support for the warning strikes of 24 January proves that workers’ discontent at RWE is “wide and loud” (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 December 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/398>;

[http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4216-German-Power-Workers ...](http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4216-German-Power-Workers...)

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

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

Employers’ federation calls union demands illusory

January 28, 2011

The president of the German Employers’ Federation (BDA), Dieter Hundt, has characterized the unions demands for the upcoming bargaining rounds “straight out of never-never land and completely illusory”, though he said that employers are prepared to pay their workers more than a cost of living increase. According to Hundt, even if the country’s economy grew last year at its fastest rate since reunification, the catastrophic plunge in 2009 means that output will only reach pre-crisis levels at the end of this year.

English: [http://www.forexpros.com/news/interest-rates-news/german-employers-say ...](http://www.forexpros.com/news/interest-rates-news/german-employers-say...)

German: [http://www.arbeitgeber.de/www/arbeitgeber.nsf/res ...](http://www.arbeitgeber.de/www/arbeitgeber.nsf/res...)

Unions highlight work of regional government employees

January 24, 2011

The ver.di services union and dbb civil service union are co-operating in a week of activities to highlight the work of regional government employees. In the week of 24-28 January there will be a series of events in major cities that will focus on different occupations – such as hospital and college employees, teachers and tax workers. The unions want to emphasize the important services provided by these workers and the challenging working conditions they face. The unions want a 3% pay increase plus a flat-rate rise of €50 for 585,000 workers in 14 of Germany’s 16 Länder (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 December 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/398>

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

Earlier wage hike for large share of metal workers

January 20, 2011

The IG Metall union has announced that almost half of its members will receive a wage hike two months earlier than originally scheduled, signaling a more aggressive approach to negotiations with employers. Union chairman Berthold Huber said an agreed 2.7% wage increase will be accelerated by two months for more than 40% of its members. The wage hike will start as from February instead of April, Huber said at a press conference at IG Metall's Frankfurt headquarters.

English: [http://www.automatedtrader.net/real-time-dow-jones ...](http://www.automatedtrader.net/real-time-dow-jones...)

German: [http://www.igmetall.de/cps/rde/xchg/SID ...](http://www.igmetall.de/cps/rde/xchg/SID...)

Greece

Further strike action against austerity measures

January 27, 2011

The ADEDY civil service confederation is planning another nationwide 24-hour strike on 10 February in protest against the harsh measures adopted by the government in line with its agreements with the European Commission and International Monetary Fund. The Confederation has also called for support from the GSEE private sector confederation. The GSEE, in turn, has announced to organise a 24-hour general strike on 23 February. Most recently ADEDY has said to join this last strike (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 September, October, November and December 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/398>;

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/01/17/greece-strike-idUSATH00587820110117>;

http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_wsite1_1_26/01/2011_375282

Hungary

Wage agreement at Hungarian State Railways

January 19, 2011

On 18 January the employer and trade unions with the Hungarian State Railway (MÁV) have concluded three agreements, on wages, an amendment with the collective agreement, and on employment. According to the wage agreement, the gross wages of those earning less than HUF 293,400 (€1,070) per month will be compensated for the decline in net wages stemming from personal income tax changes. Under the scope of the collective agreement parties agreed to raise the gross value of benefits-in-kind (cafeteria items) by HUF 12,000 (€44) to HUF 350,000 (€1,280) annually.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent

Ireland

Air Lingus talks still in deadlock

January 30, 2011

The Labour Relation Committee (LRC) is expected to soon make an renewed conciliation attempt as to restart talks between Aer Lingus and cabin crew members of the IMPACT union. The conflict, leading to the grounding of dozens of flights daily, is already in its third week. It focuses on new rosters for cabin crew, that have seen some 300 members of staff suspended by the airline after it claimed they refused to co-operate with the new work practices. Earlier talks in the LRC were adjourned without agreement. Efforts by the ICTU union confederation and the IBEC employers' association to find a solution also shipwrecked.

English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2011/0130/aerlingus.html>;

<http://www.rte.ie/news/2011/0128/aerlingus.html>

Confederation to consider widespread stoppages

January 27, 2011

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) is actually considering proposals to organise widespread work stoppages as part of a campaign against government cutbacks and austerity measures. Earlier, the Irish regional secretary of the Unite union, Jimmy Kelly, said Unite would put proposals for a national strike to the ICTU confederation and would seek support from other unions. Informed sources argue the meeting of the ICTU general purposes committee as of 27 January would have to take account of recent political developments, notably that a general election was now imminent.

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2011/0127/1224288404443.html>

European Commission oversteps bounds to seek pay cuts

January 25, 2011

In a letter as of 11 January sent to EU Commissioner Olli Rehn, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) denounces the diktat pressures from European Commission officials to cut minimum wages and pensions, to reduce wage “rigidities” and to make labour markets more flexible in Greece and Ireland. In an interview with an Irish newspaper, ETUC General Secretary John Monks argued that the Commission was overstepping its bounds in Ireland in particular by seeking to influence a review of the registered employment agreements (REA) system that was earlier envisaged at national level. It has become clear that with the €85 billion bailout package agreed between the Irish government, the EU and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) the government has signed up to begin an “independent review” of the REA system before the end of March. The REA system allows employers and unions to set minimum wages and conditions above the National Minimum Wage (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 November 2010).

English: [http://www.independent.ie/national-news/elections/eu-oversteps ...](http://www.independent.ie/national-news/elections/eu-oversteps...);
<http://www.etuc.org/a/8155>; http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf/110111_Olli_Rehn.pdf

National minimum wage cut by 11.6%

January 20, 2011

On 19 January Minister for Enterprise Batt O’Keeffe signed a ministerial order authorising the reduction in the National Minimum Wage (NMW) by one Euro to €7.65 per hour as from 1 February, implying a cut of 11.6%. The memorandum of understanding on the €85 billion bailout package stated the cut in the minimum wage would take place by May. A government spokesman said it was the government that decides when to sign the order to give effect to the minimum wage cut and it had decided it was important to address competitive cost issues as quickly as possible. Jack O’Connor, president of Siptu, the country’s largest union, commented bitterly: “This has been slickly presented as a response to the EU-IMF negotiation when in fact it was already the objective of the Minister for Finance.” The new NMW would mainly apply for new entrants; the government says existing employees should be protected from wage cuts if already working under a contract that sets wages at or above the NMW. Yet, workers on the minimum wage may be working on contracts stipulating they are paid at the prevailing national minimum wage hourly rate (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 November 2010).

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2011/0120/1224287943617.html>

Italy

Strike against labour concessions at Fiat

January 28, 2011

In reaction of the agreement that Fiat reached on 23 December 2010 with two unions for investing in the Mirafiori plant in exchange for labour concessions, FIOM, the CGIL-affiliated metal union federation, staged an eight-hour nationwide strike. On Friday 28 January, protests were clearly at hand in Rome, Turin, Milan and Cagliari. Addressing a crowd of some 10,000 people on the square facing Milan's Cathedral, FIOM secretary-general Maurizio Landini called again for a general strike, to fight against what he said was the undermining of the country’s national contract system (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 July-August, September and December 2010).

English: [http://www.upi.com/Business_News/2011/01/28/Italian-autoworkers ...](http://www.upi.com/Business_News/2011/01/28/Italian-autoworkers...);
[http://www.google.com/hostednews/canadianpress/article ...](http://www.google.com/hostednews/canadianpress/article...)

Union criticizes health plan

January 24, 2011

The FP-CGIL public service federation has criticised the government's latest plan for the health service. The union points out that the plan has lots of proposals about improving services at the same time as needing to implement large cuts in funding. FP-CGIL also highlights what the plan says about social integration and ensuring services to all groups of citizens, including the elderly but with no funding provision for long-term care. In particular, the union asks how this can be done at the same time as freezing pay and employment and cutting the jobs of 50% of fixed-term workers in the service.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/398>

Italian: <http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/16493>

Latvia

Union prioritizes combating shadow economy

January 7, 2011

According to the vice president of the Union of Independent Trade Unions of Latvia (LBAS), Egils Baldzēns, when considering further consolidation measures the government should turn special attention to combating the shadow economy. Baldzēns said to believe that the shadow economy is too large in Latvia, mentioning the illegal fuel trade as an example. According to law enforcement statistics, it forms up to 15-20% of the market. Baldzēns said the figure could actually amount to 20-30%, implying a huge loss for the state budget.

English: [http://bnn-news.com/2011/01/07/social/latvian-free-trade-union ...](http://bnn-news.com/2011/01/07/social/latvian-free-trade-union...)

Latvian: [http://bnn.lv/2011/01/07/sabiedriba/1600-lbas-parvaret-krizi ...](http://bnn.lv/2011/01/07/sabiedriba/1600-lbas-parvaret-krizi...)

Netherlands

Small majority of union members backs TNT deal

January 28, 2011

One of the Dutch unions involved in the basic agreement reached on 15 December with TNT Post on limiting job losses, Abvakabo FNV, has stated that its membership has endorsed the deal; 57% voted in favour. Union negotiator, Peter Wiechmann, commented to have expected no more than this small majority, also because of the major unrest and the high work pressure at the TNT shopfloor. A second union, CNV Publieke Zaaak has until the end of January to finalise its vote, but a CNV spokesman has told a press agency that he thinks CNV members will also back the agreement (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 3 June, October, November and December 2010).

English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/01/27/tnt-idUSLDE70Q1U020110127>

Dutch: *De Volkskrant*, 28 January 2011;

<http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/nieuws/nieuws/leden-tnt-akkoord>

Unions focus on abuse of flexible contracts

January 11, 2011

The leaders of the major trade union confederations, FNV and CNV, in their New Year speeches both announced to focus on the widespread abuse of flexible and short-term contracts, as they called it. FNV president Agnes Jongerius referred to figures of the official UWV institute that one-third of all Dutch employees is currently working on a flexible contract. According to a FNV survey of December 2010, 60% of flexible workers is not working as call-out or short-term staff by choice. According to Jongerius, the FNV wants the government to make sure workers on flexible contracts have better rights, including better access to social security benefits. CNV president Jaap Smit said to agree that working patterns are changing and labour market reforms needed, but "We must ask ourselves how we can put healthy limits on these developments."

English: [http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2011/01/unions_to_focus ...](http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2011/01/unions_to_focus...)

Dutch: *De Volkskrant* and *NRC-Handelsblad*, 11 January 2011

Portugal

Government wants to cut lay-off compensation

January 26, 2011

The government wants to cut the lay-off compensation that employers must pay to fire workers by one third, from 30 to 20 days' wage per year, as part of its drive to boost the economy's competitiveness, Labour Minister Helena Andre announced on 25 January. She said the government also wants to limit compensation to a maximum of one year's salary. The proposals would apply only to new contracts, and would also include a fund financed by companies as to pay the compensations. Concerning the unions' viewpoints, the CGTP federation has said it is against the proposals, but the UGP reacted to be available to negotiate the matter as long as the compensations are guaranteed by the new fund.

English: [http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/01/24/portugal-compensation ...](http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/01/24/portugal-compensation...) via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Portugal

Romania

Social partners ask Minister of Labour to resign

January 19, 2011

Leaders of union confederations and employers' associations have both asked for the resignation of the Minister of Labour, Ioan Botis. They are highly dissatisfied with the way negotiations took place on the new Labour Code. The minister blocked any resolution on talks over the Code, the President of the ALFA Cartel union confederation, Bogdan Hossu, declared. He said that there were many issues with the new Code to be solved, related to working time and termination of employment but also to the right to strike, and voiced his belief that Parliament would not vote such a project.

English: [http://www.actmedia.eu/2011/01/19/top+story/trade+unions,+employers ...](http://www.actmedia.eu/2011/01/19/top+story/trade+unions,+employers...) via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Romania

Slovakia

Unions initiate petition on labour code

January 24, 2011

The confederation of trade unions (KOZ) has initiated a petition in an effort to try and collect the 350,000 signatures needed for a referendum over the Labour Code. The government is scheduled to discuss the draft Code in April. Labour Minister Jozef Mihál has declared he will not yield to the pressure, nor become involved in any eventual referendum. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Iveta Radičová has said that the government is ready for a dialogue with the trade unions, "but not in the form of pressure or threats" (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 November 2010).

English: [http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/41394/3/unions_initiate_petition ...](http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/41394/3/unions_initiate_petition...)

Spain

Government and unions reach pension deal

January 28, 2011

After long negotiations, taking place since early January, the government has struck a deal with the two major union confederations to raise the age of retirement. The parties have agreed that the compulsory retirement age will increase from 65 to 67. As part of a compromise the government agreed that workers could retire at 65 if they had contributed to the state pensions system for at least 38.5 years. Earlier, the government had threatened to impose the changes by decree if necessary, whereas trade unions had warned of another general strike (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 December 2010).

English: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-12305246>;
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/28/world/europe/28iht-spain28.html?_r=1

Unions continue protest against regional government

January 24, 2011

The FSC-CCOO and FSP-UGT public service federations are mobilising at regional level in response

to attacks on pay and pensions in the public sector. The federations are working together in the region of Andalucia with mobilisations on 19, 25 and 28 January that they hope will push the autonomous government of the region to negotiate agreements that generate employment, guarantee employment rights and maintain social protection. Earlier this month, the two federations also organised a major demonstration in Murcia in protest at the regional government's proposals on public spending. The unions have threatened a general strike in the region if the autonomous government does not respond to their demands.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/398>

Spanish: [http://www.fspugt.es/40000_se_manifiestan_en_Murcia_contra ...](http://www.fspugt.es/40000_se_manifiestan_en_Murcia_contra...)

Switzerland

Union federation launches minimum wage initiative

January 25, 2011

The Swiss Federation of Trade Unions (SGB/USS) has launched a people's initiative to establish a national minimum wage. The campaigners have until July 2012 to gather at least 100,000 signatures to force a nationwide vote. "There has been massive pressure on lower and average wages for the past 20 years," federation president Paul Rechsteiner argued at a press conference. SGB/USS proposes that minimum wages should also be achieved via a general contract, which lays down conditions covering all workers in a particular industry or enterprise (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3 December 2010).

English: [http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/swiss_news/Unions_launch_minimum_wage ...](http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/swiss_news/Unions_launch_minimum_wage...) via
http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Switzerland

United Kingdom

Unions discuss mass strikes in protest at spending cuts

January 28, 2011

On 28 January, leaders of the TUC affiliates joined to co-ordinate their response to the government's spending cuts and explore the possibility of staging mass strikes. Co-ordinated industrial action against proposed job losses is one course of action being examined. The TUC confederation already announced a major march and rally in London on 26 March to protest against the cuts and highlight the damage being caused to public services. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers is preparing to ballot its members for industrial action against proposed pension changes.

English: [http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/jan/28/unions-mass-strikes ...](http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/jan/28/unions-mass-strikes...)

48-hours strike by call centre staff

January 24, 2011

Around 2,400 members of the PCS civil service union, working for the Job Centre Plus part of the Department of Work, took two days' of strike action in protest at call targets set by management. They argued that the targets put them under excessive pressure while failing to take account of the level of service provided to enquirers who may have serious worries about their welfare benefits.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/398>;

[http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/index.cfm ...](http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/index.cfm...)

Local government employers fail to make pay offer

January 24, 2011

The three local government unions, UNISON, Unite and GMB, representing more than 1.6 million workers, have criticised local government employers for failing to respond to the unions' pay claim covering April 2011-March 2012. The unions pointed out that in 2010 pay was frozen and the employers did not even pay the UKP 250 (€290) payment for those earning under UKP 21,000 (€ 24,380) a year that had been part of the government's budget. Furthermore, local government workers had suffered below-inflation increases for five years and were now looking at an increase in pension contributions of 3%. Heather Wakefield, UNISON Head of Local Government, said: "Our members – people who provide vital local services like home care, who work as teaching assistants and bin men – are facing severe hardship" (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 3

October 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/398>;

http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=2119

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